

THE CROSS AND THE OLD MAN

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Romans 6:6—Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us together this morning. We do gather unto Thy holy name. We do thank and praise Thee that where Thy name is, there is Thy presence. Dear Lord, we are in Thy very presence. We stand on holy ground. We want to remove our shoes before Thee. We want to prostrate ourselves before Thee and say, "Lord, what hast Thou to say to us? Thy servants heareth." We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

We do thank the Lord for gathering us together this time. We know that we are living in the last days. The coming of our Lord Jesus is so near, and this is the time that we should all be prepared to meet Him face to face. And that is the reason why we are gathered here.

Our theme is "The Way to the Eternal Purpose of God—the Cross." Even though our emphasis this time will be on the cross, I hope that we still remember that the cross is only a means to an end; the cross is not the end. The end is God's eternal purpose; we must not forget that and we must put that before us all the time.

What is God's eternal purpose? To put it very simply, God's eternal purpose is concerning His own Son. He wants His Son to have the first place in all things. It is God's will to sum up, to gather up all things in Christ Jesus—the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. His heart is centered upon His beloved Son. And because of His love for His Son, He gave His Son a precious gift. That gift is the church; that we, the redeemed, should become the bride of the Lamb. So the eternal purpose of God is simply this: Christ and the Church. There is only one way to arrive at this eternal purpose of God. There is no other way to arrive at God's eternal purpose except the way of the cross. The cross is God's prescribed way unto His purpose, and we must go by that way because this is the only way that will lead us back to God's eternal purpose.

We know that the cross was originally a sign of shame, of curse, of death. And why is it that today the cross has become a sign of blessing, of glory, and of victory? It is not because of the cross itself; it is because of Him crucified. It is our Lord Jesus who changes the cross from shame to glory, from curse to blessing, from death to victory. So as we fellowship on this matter of the cross, it is not the cross itself; it is Christ crucified. Therefore, we must keep our Lord Jesus Christ always before us. The reason we must go by way of the cross is because it leads us to Christ; it leads us to the church; it leads us to God's eternal purpose.

This time the emphasis is more on what the cross means to us. Therefore we emphasize the cross and the world—how the cross delivers us from the world. We emphasize the cross and the law—how we are delivered from the law by the cross, that we may be married to another One, our Lord Jesus Christ. We will fellowship on the cross and the flesh because unless the flesh is put to death, Christ will not be increased in us.

My responsibility is on the cross and the flesh. We would like to approach this from three areas: the cross and the old man, the cross and the flesh, and finally the cross and the self-life.

OUR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN

This time we will center upon the cross and the old man. May we read Romans 6:6 again. "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin."

We would like to approach this matter from the personal, experiential side. We know the book of Romans gives us a full account of the glad tidings of God. How do we approach the glad tidings of God from our personal standpoint? Of course, first of all, we have to realize that we have sinned. Not only does the word of God tell us so, but the Spirit of God will convict us of our sin. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." There is no exception.

What is sin? Sin is coming short of the glory of God. Sin is: not being like God, because it is the will of God that we should be like Him. He created us according to His image, after His likeness, and He is willing to give His own life to us, that we may be transformed and conformed to the image of God's Son. This is the will of God for us, and anything that is short of that is sin in the sight of God. So as we were convicted by the Holy Spirit of our sins, how should that problem be solved? The book of Romans tells us it is the precious blood of our Lord Jesus that will cleanse us from all our sins. It is by the blood of our Lord Jesus that we are justified before God. We can stand before God not because of what we have done, nor because of our merits; it is because of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe all who are here (hopefully there is no exception), have all experienced the precious blood of our Lord Jesus.

Thank God He has forgiven us our sins. Thank God He has given us a new life. Thank God we have a living relationship with God today. As a matter of fact, we are in favor before God. In Romans 5:1-11, we find that we have been justified by the blood of our Lord Jesus and we now boast in hope of the glory of God, knowing how He died for us when we were yet sinners. Now how much more that we should live by Him! So we really boast in God, thinking that now everything is solved. We can go on and on until we reach glory.

But to our surprise, when our first love began to wane, we discover that we are not fully saved from sin. Our sins in the plural number may be forgiven, but we find that the power of sin is still upon us. Because of that, unfortunately we find ourselves continuing to commit sin, and we do not know the reason for it. We want to do the will of God, but what we want to do, we cannot do; what we do not want to do, we do it. And I believe we have all gone through this period. Sometimes we begin to doubt whether we are saved or not, but we do know that we believe in the Lord Jesus; we know we are saved. But why is it that the power of sin is still upon us? How can we be delivered from the power of sin? This is something that we find in Romans from chapter 5 verse 12 on.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ONE AND MANY

In order to understand the situation, there is a principle that we have to understand first, found in Romans 5:12-21. It is the principle of "one and many." Because of the offense of one man, all were condemned, but thank God, because of one Man's righteousness, all will be justified. In the sight of God, there are only two men. Through the ages, in the whole world, in God's sight, there are only two men. The first man is Adam, and the second Man is Christ. All those who are born into this world are in Adam and all who will be reborn in Christ will be in the second Man. This is God's way. So even though there are countless people in this world, in the sight of God there is only one man, and that is Adam, our father. Every one of us is in him. And because Adam sinned, we have all sinned. We know that Adam became a sinner because he committed sin, but we, the sons and daughters of Adam, when we were born, we were sinners. And because we were sinners, therefore we sinned. So even though our sinful acts have been washed away, cleansed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus, we as sinners were still there. That is the reason why we continue to sin. So the problem now is not with sin; the problem now is with the sinner. How can we sinners be delivered?

DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF SIN

Romans 5:18—“So then as it was by one offence towards all men to condemnation, so by one righteousness towards all men for justification of life.” That is what happened when we believed in the Lord Jesus; we were justified.

Verse 19—“For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous.”

Verse 19 tells us how we became sinners, not because we sinned but because of Adam. Because of one man, that is, Adam, the many have been constituted sinners. So the problem today is the old man.

Who is this old man? A dear brother, H. C. G. Moule, said, “All that you were as the unregenerated sons of Adam is the old man.”

And Theodore Monod had another definition, and I think it is a very, very simple one. He said, “The old man is the man of old.” So who is the old man? Of course it is Adam and then all who are in Adam, because Adam is more than just an individual. He is a corporate man; he is the head of a federation. So we who were born into this world, we were all in Adam. And because Adam sinned, sin came into the life of Adam and sin ruled over that life. And we who were born to Adam were born with sin in our soul and it ruled over us. So unless we are delivered from Adam, unless we are delivered from the old man, there is no way to overcome sin because we are under its power. So when we come to this matter of how we can be delivered from the power of sin, we have to be delivered from the old man, from Adam.

How do we get into Adam? We get into Adam by birth. How can we get out of Adam? There is only one way, and that is through death. So here you find the gospel, the salvation that God has provided for us. When we come to this practical matter of how we can be delivered from the power of sin, we have to go back to the old man. We have to go back to Adam.

THE SECOND MAN AND THE LAST ADAM

Now we can see the marvelous work of God because in the word of God 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that the first man is Adam and the second Man is Christ, but the second Man is also the last Adam. So you find when our Lord Jesus came into this world, the Word became flesh and tabernacles among men, full of grace and truth. God became Man, and as He came to become a man, He became the last Adam. Being the last Adam and at the same time the second Man, salvation is centered upon Him. We ourselves have no way to wash away our sins, and in like manner, we ourselves have no way to be delivered from the power of sin. We can try, but we cannot. So the only way that we can find deliverance from the power of sin is through Christ Jesus because He came into this world as the last Adam and also the second Man. In other words, He is the one who concludes the first man, and He is the one who introduces the second Man. And that is one reason why we find our Lord Jesus had to be crucified. On the cross, He bore our sins in His body and because of His shed blood, judgment came upon Him and we are being saved. But not only had that, at the same time, as the last Adam, when He died on the cross, the Adamic race come to an end in Him.

In *The Normal Christian Life* our brother Nee used an illustration. I think it is very evident, especially to the Chinese, because we always trace our beginning to the Yellow Emperor. The Chinese race came from the Yellow Emperor. According to legend, once there was a battle, a war between the Yellow Emperor and Zhu-Yeu. During that battle there was heavy fog around. How can you fight in heavy fog? Fortunately, Yellow Emperor invented the compass, and because he had the compass, he was able to fight to victory, and Zhu-Yeu was killed. Suppose during that battle the Yellow Emperor did not have the compass and he was killed by Zhu-Yeu. Then brothers and sisters of the Chinese race, where would you be? There would be no you or me because he is our federal

head. So when he died, we would all die because we were all in him. But fortunately, he lived, and that is how you and I are here. I think this is a good illustration to show us that we do have a federal head.

There is another illustration we can use. In China today, when a person passes away, his name will be on the tombstone. Above is his surname, which will be black, and following it will be his own name in red. Why? It is because he has died but his family still has some people living to bear that surname. But suppose you are the last of that family and you die, then even the surname will be in red because that family is finished. So I believe people know about such things, that you are not just yourself; you have a root, and we all belong to that root.

So God used a marvelous way to deliver us from the power of sin. When our Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, oftentimes we only know a part of what He has done for us. We only know that part of how He bore our sins in His body and died for us. In other words, He is our substitute, but we oftentimes neglect the other part, that He died as the last Adam. When He died, the whole Adamic race was terminated in Him. So far as God is concerned, this Adamic race is finished, and we who were in Adam died in Christ and with Christ. Put it in another way: when Christ went to the cross, He took all of us with Him, so when He died, we too died. He died not only as our substitute; He died as our representative. He died not only *for* us; He died *as* us. When He died, we died too. The Adamic race is finished. So when He was raised from the dead as the second Man, then we all are being raised together with Him. In Romans 6, we find how we were identified with Him in His death and identified with Him in His resurrection.

KNOWING THIS

Now read Romans 6. It says, “Knowing this....” This is a spiritual knowledge that we must have. Knowing this—knowing that something has been done. It is concerned more with what we call objective truth.

What is objective truth? Objective truth is what God has done in Christ Jesus. All that our Lord Jesus has done on Calvary’s cross is objective truth. It is not in any way affected by circumstances or by you and me. What Christ has done on the cross is once forever, because in the sight of God it is finished. You cannot take away from it; you cannot add anything to it. It is true for all ages. It will not be affected by time or space. So when Christ died two thousand years ago, in the sight of God all the sins of the world have been redeemed. Whether your sins are forgiven or not, in your personal experience you have to believe, but in the sight of God it is all prepared. The same thing is true when Christ died on the cross. He died not only as an individual person; He died as the corporate man. So when He died, the entire Adamic race died. In the sight of God, the Adamic race is finished. But of course, in our experience we have to know and believe. So first of all, we need to know this eternal truth, and this eternal truth is very simple. When Christ died, you died in Him.

Again, in *The Normal Christian Life* our brother Watchman Nee gave his personal experience. He was saved and for seven years after he was saved, he struggled over this matter. He knew that his sins were forgiven, but he discovered that after he had believed in the Lord Jesus, he continued to sin. He did not want to, but he could not help it. So he struggled over this matter for seven years. He fasted, he prayed, and he asked people’s help. And whenever he asked for help, he was told, “You must reckon yourself as dead to sin.” So he said he tried to reckon himself as dead to sin, but the more he reckoned, the more lively is the power of sin. And he struggled over this matter for a long time. He even came to the point that if he could not be freed from sin, he should not preach anymore.

One day he was in his room reading the word of God and suddenly a light came to him. He saw that God has put him in Christ; so when Christ died, he too died. It is not a matter of how he will die; it is a matter that two thousand years ago, he was already dead. It is in Christ. And when he saw that, to reckon himself as dead to sin was simple because it is reckoning upon a fact; it is not reckoning upon a feeling. He was so emancipated. He walked downstairs and met the brother who worked in the kitchen. He laid hold on him and said, "Brother, do you know that I have died?" And that brother looked at him. He could not understand what he meant. Brother Nee said he wanted to go through all the streets of Shanghai and shout that he had died.

This is "knowing this." We need to know this. This knowing is not just a mental understanding. If you only understand this mentally and you try to reckon yourself as dead, you find that you are more alive. But if you know this in your spirit, the Lord opens your understanding, and in your spirit you see the cross. You see Christ crucified, and you see your old self in Him. You see that when He died, you died. This is an eternal fact. It is done. You do not need to do anything. You just reckon it as true, and it becomes very easy. And when you reckon yourself as dead unto sin and alive unto God, do not forget it is in Christ. Whenever you turn to yourself, it is not true because the truth is not there; the truth is in Christ Jesus. So you only reckon it in Christ Jesus, and you find how it is true.

THE SIN NATURE ISOLATED

So Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him..." And then what happened? "...that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin."

I was saved among the Holiness people, and among the Holiness people there was a teaching: "We need a second blessing. The first blessing is when you confess your sins, believe in the Lord Jesus, and have your sins forgiven. But you need a second blessing. And the second blessing is when the root of sin in you is eradicated. When that root of sin is eradicated, then you sin no more." I was saved among these people. But unfortunately, even in that very conference, the founder of that organization lost her temper among the crowd. But they have a kind of reasoning: "This is not sin; this is weakness." And I just could not accept it.

The way to be delivered from sin is not by eradication. Sin, as a power, will be in us until we die. As long as we still live on this earth, it is there. So what is God's way of deliverance? God's way of deliverance is not eradication; God's way of deliverance is isolation.

So it says in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin." Sin here is a power. We know that after our forefather Adam sinned, sin as a power came into his life and sin became the master of his being. And this sin dwells in our soul, dwells in our old man. Our old man is like a steward. Sin as the master will give his command to the old man, and the old man will relay that command to this body because this body is now a body of sin. To sin is the work of this body.

THE BODY OF SIN IS ANNULLED

What is the way of deliverance? Instead of rooting out the sin from us—it is still there—the way of deliverance is putting the old man to death. In other words, when sin gives his command, nobody is receiving that command, and because nobody receives that command, the body of sin is annulled. Annulled does not mean "annihilated;" it means "unemployed." This body was employed by sin, and now this body is unemployed. That is the way that we no longer serve sin.

So brothers and sisters, we thank God for His marvelous way of deliverance that He uses the way of isolation. He will allow sin to still be there. I think He has a good reason for it. We have to be

careful, we have to be humble, and yet, sin is so isolated that it cannot work any more, and our body of sin is unemployed.

RECKON THE OLD MAN AS DEAD

After you have known this thing, then the first step will be in Romans 6:11: “So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

First, you see the old man is dead, and then you reckon it as dead in Christ Jesus and also reckon yourself as alive to God. This is faith. Faith is based upon fact, not upon feelings, because whenever you begin to look into feelings, you will find that your old man is very much alive because you have gotten out of Christ. But whenever you look at Christ, you find that your old man is dead and you are alive in Christ Jesus. This is the first step.

THE BODY OF SIN IS UNEMPLOYED

Here is the second step. How about this body? This body is now unemployed. Now he needs to be reemployed. So in verse 13, it says, “Neither yield your members instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as alive from among the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God.”

Since this body of sin has been unemployed, there is no reason why you should still yield to unrighteousness. What do you do now? You seek new employment. You yield yourself to God as alive from among the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. What will be the result? “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace.”

So we do thank the Lord for His perfect salvation. He not only forgives all our sin, but He opened the way for us to be delivered from the power of sin, that He even will accept us to serve Him. Even in our daily life we can live righteously unto holiness. This is the salvation of the Lord, and this is the foundation upon which we can talk about the cross and the flesh, and the cross and the self-life. So may the Lord help us.

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for Thy perfect salvation, because Thou hast not only borne our sins in Your body and by the shedding of Thy precious blood our sins were forgiven, Thou hast also made provision for us to overcome even the power of sin, that we may live a life holy and righteous unto Thyself. We do pray that this will not be just mental understanding to us. We pray that Thou will reveal Thy cross so vividly to each and every one of us that we may be drawn into all the goodness of it. We want to glory in the cross of Jesus Christ. We ask in Thy precious name, Amen.

THE CROSS AND THE FLESH

Galatians 5:24—But they that are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts.

We will repeat it. As we read it, I hope we will notice every word in that sentence. *Galatians 5:24—But they that are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts.*

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, we pray that Thy cross will be before each and every one of our eyes so vividly that it may deeply touch our hearts and draw each one of us into that cross and allow that cross to enter into our very being, that Thy glory may be manifested even in us earthen vessels. We commit this time totally into Thy hands. With man it is impossible, but with Thee all things are possible. So we expect Thee to do the impossible things, to plant Thy cross into our very being. And we give Thee all the glory. In Thy precious name we pray. Amen.

We have fellowshiped on the cross and the old man. Now we would like to continue on with the cross and the flesh. First of all, we need to recognize what flesh is. What is the difference between the old man and the flesh? As you read the Bible, you will find the word *flesh* is used in many different ways.

Sometimes the word *flesh* refers to our physical body. For instance, in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given Himself for me." The word *flesh* there refers to our physical body.

Then you find the word *flesh* can mean one substance of our body. For instance, in I Corinthians 15:50, it says "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." So we find that flesh is part of the body.

This word is also being used as the expression of union. For instance, in Ephesians 5:21 it says, that man and woman are united into one flesh.

This same word *flesh* can refer to man, to yourself. In Romans 7:18 it says, "In me, that is, in my flesh, there is no good."

Again you find in the Bible that the word *flesh* can refer to the unregenerated man. Therefore, sometimes in English, it is translated the "natural man." The natural man refers to the unregenerated man.

So we find that this word *flesh* is used in many different ways. Even in the Old Testament, the English word *flesh* is used in various ways. It may refer to the body. You remember in Genesis 2:21 how God did a surgery on Adam and took out something from him, and then God closed his flesh. That means his body was being restored. And after God led Eve to Adam, Adam looked at her and said, "This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." In other words, it is part of the human body. Then in verse 24 they are united into one flesh—unity.

When you come to Genesis 6:3, man had sinned so much that God said, "My spirit will not strive anymore with man because man has become flesh." In other words, man's spirit was dead and it remained the soul and the body. He did not have the Holy Spirit and his whole life was governed by his soul and his body.

This morning, when we talk about this matter of the flesh, we limit ourselves to one meaning and that is the unregenerated man, a man who is motivated by his soul and body without the Holy Spirit. So this is the flesh that we will be talking about.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD MAN AND THE FLESH

What is the difference between the old man and the flesh? The old man is a corporate man. In other words, the old man is Adam and all who are in Adam. And the flesh refers more or less to the personal, individual being. When we talk about the old man, we touch the objective truth; that is to say, in the old man, every one of us who are born of Adam was there. But thank God, Christ is the last Adam. So when He was crucified on the cross and died, every one of us who believe in the Lord Jesus died in Him and with Him. You do not personally experience that death because you were already dead before you were born. You were dead in Christ Jesus because He was the last Adam and the second Man. So this refers to the objective truth. It is something that we must believe, and as we believe and receive it, we find that it is ours. But when you talk about the flesh, it more or less emphasizes the subjective side; that is to say something that we will experience ourselves. So in one sense, the old man and the flesh are one, but in another sense, you find that these are the two sides of one thing.

On the cross our old man was crucified with Christ; this is what He has done for us. And remember, the old man is always singular in number. In other words, there is only one old man and that is Adam. All of us are in that Adam. So when Christ was crucified, that old man, that Adamic race was terminated in His crucifixion. Therefore, we can reckon that we are dead to sin in Christ Jesus and alive to God in Christ Jesus. There is nothing simpler than this accounting because you have a fact there, an eternal fact that has been completed, and it never changes. You just reckon it as yours, and it is yours. Thank God for that!

When you talk about the flesh, we all are flesh, but your flesh and my flesh are different because the combinations are all different. We all inherit from Adam, but the combinations are so varied. Therefore, your flesh is different from my flesh, and yet it is flesh. So just remember that when we come to this matter of the cross and the flesh, we are moving on into the subjective side of experience.

Before we were saved, our spirit was dead unto God; we had no contact with God. But thank God, when we believed in the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior, He washed our sins away by His shed blood, because the Bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins no matter what you do. You may try to accumulate your merits, but that cannot wash your sins away. It is through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus that our sins were all remitted. But God did something more than that. When we believed in the Lord Jesus, our dead spirit was quickened into new life because our Lord Jesus has cleansed our conscience and made our spirit a new spirit, a living spirit that can communicate with its proper environment, our God Himself. So the moment we are saved, we will cry out, "Abba Father" because that connection was made. The life of Christ came into our new spirit by the Holy Spirit and we are born again. We receive the life of God. Christ Himself dwells by the Spirit in our new spirit. That is what we usually call initial salvation. Christ dwells in our spirit. His life is the life of our spirit and that begins our spiritual life.

Even so, we find that the old nature, the Adamic nature, is still in us. So far as our spirit is concerned, we have a new life, a new spirit; we have the Holy Spirit in us. But so far as our soul and body are concerned, we find that life in our soul is still the old Adamic nature, and that can be easily experienced.

In I Corinthians 3:1 it says, "And I, brethren, have not been able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly; as to babes in Christ."

When the apostle Paul was in Corinth, he preached nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and many Corinthians turned to the Lord. Paul continued to minister to these believers, but he said, "I have not been able to speak to you as to spiritual." Now we would think that after we have the new spirit, the new life, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in our spirit, surely we should be spiritual

now. But strangely, Paul said, “I cannot speak to you as to spiritual because I can only speak to you as fleshly, as babes in Christ.”

Now brothers and sisters, even though we do have a new life, we have a new spirit, and the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit, but so far as our soul is concerned, it is still being animated by that old Adamic life. We are not instantly becoming spiritual because so far as the rest of our being is concerned, it is still under the life of the old Adam. It is still in a fallen state, and our flesh, our self is still the very life of our being. Gradually, we need to grow out of the old life and grow in Christ Jesus. Then we will enter into more of the spiritual condition. So when we are first saved, do not think that we are instantly spiritual now. We are still babes in Christ and because we are still babes in Christ, we are still fleshly.

A CARNAL CHRISTIAN

In the Greek this adjective has a little variation. For instance, in I Corinthians 3:1 it says, “But as to fleshly.” The word “*fleshly*” there refers to the substance, the material of a thing. So it is neutral.

When you come to verse 3 that say, “Ye are yet carnal,” this word *carnal* is another variation of the adjective. But that word can mean the material or substance of a thing, or it can refer to the moral sense, or it can be a combination of both. For the sake of simplifying it let us use it this way. In I Corinthians 3:1: “But as to fleshly,” let us translate it to, “But as to fleshy.” In other words, it is the material. It does not include any moral sense in it and in the Bible sometimes this word is translated into “natural man.” For instance, I Corinthians 2 says, “The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit.” It is the same word. In other words, we can say it refers to a person who is a fleshy man, and that means he is a babe in Christ.

We all love babies because they are so natural; there is no pretension. But at the same time, they are terrible because they are so self-centered. Even at midnight when they are hungry, they will cry. They do not mind who you are. “I am the most important person in the world. Everybody has to serve me.” That is being fleshy. So when we are babes in Christ, we are very fleshy. Thank God we do not pretend. Unfortunately, the more we grow, the more we become not very true. But a babe does not care what you think about him. This is what he is. So it is very natural, but very fleshy.

When we first believe in the Lord Jesus, that is what we are in the spiritual world. So Paul said, “When I was with you, in the very beginning of your being saved, I treated you as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk because you could not digest hard food.” But that condition should not last too long. We will be able to consider you because you are a babe, but if you remain a babe too long, then something is terribly wrong. After so long a time, Paul said, “I still cannot give you solid food because you are yet carnal.” In other words, you are still fleshly. That old Adamic nature is still dominating your life. You should outgrow it that Christ may become your life. And this is being abnormal. We will endure brothers and sisters who are newly saved. If they are fleshly, in a sense, we enjoy it because they are so real, but such a situation should not last too long.

You remember that the Corinthian believers were not the only ones who were in that situation. Even when you go to the book of Hebrews, you find the same thing. They were still not being spiritually exercised, and they remained as babes in Christ. They had not left the foundation and pressed on to full growth, and that is a tragedy.

When a baby is first born in your family and he is in his babyhood, everyone enjoys him. But after ten or twenty years, if he remains the same, that will be a tragedy to the family. Spiritually, this is the same. When we are talking about the flesh, actually we are referring to the condition of being fleshly. So Paul said, “You are still carnal.”

The flesh is the natural man. It should refer to the unregenerated people, but unfortunately, this same term is now being applied to Christians. Why? Because we act like the people of the world. It shows that we are not much different from the people of the world. This is something that should not be.

SIGNS OF A CARNAL CHRISTIAN

What are the symptoms of being fleshly? What are the signs of the carnal Christian? In the first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul gives us all the symptoms manifested by the carnal Christian. Remember, Paul did not refer to the people of the world. He refers to the carnal Christian, Christians who are still living in the flesh instead of living in the spirit. Now what are the symptoms?

A Babe in Christ

The first one, of course, is a Christian who remains in the carnal state; he is still a babe in Christ. As a baby he cannot take solid food because he has not been exercised. So he has to be fed with milk. What is milk? Milk is predigested food. Your mother takes food and digests it, and then you suck the milk out of your mother. In other words, it has been already digested, so you can just absorb it without exercising yourself.

That is one of the signs of being in the flesh. Now today, among Christians, there are people who really appreciate ministry. They appreciate ministry more than the Lord's Table, because at the Lord's Table we give to the Lord. What He has given us, we give back to Him. We remember Him; we honor Him; we express our appreciation to Him; and we serve Him. But when we listen to a message, we receive and receive. We receive what has been digested so we do not need to exercise ourselves before the Lord. And because we never exercise ourselves, we never grow. We hear and hear and hear, and nothing happens because we never exercise. So that is one sign of being in the flesh.

Walking According to Man

The second sign is found in I Corinthians 3:3b: "Are ye not carnal, and walk according to man?" In other words, our walk, our life upon this earth is according to man. What the people of the world do, we do too. Even what the people of the world think, we too think. What the people of the world seek after, we also seek after. We are no different from the people of the world. Even though we do have eternal life in us, that eternal life has not been expressed because we are still living according to the flesh.

Divisions

As you read on, you find there are divisions among God's people. How they followed man instead of following Christ! "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, and I am of Cephas." And some say, "I am exclusively of Christ." Paul said, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Are you baptized in the name of Paul? Christ is not divided." So when we see divisions among God's people, this is a sure sign that we are walking according to the flesh.

Immorality

Among the Corinthians, there were people committing fornication to such an extent that even the world rarely saw it. And the whole church thought nothing about it. They thought they were so liberal. They were able to allow anything and everything. There was no sense of righteousness.

Love of the World

How they loved the world! They loved socials. They loved to eat and to drink, and because of that, they went to the idol temple to do that because in Corinth this is the social time. It is always being in the temple. So they said, "Well, there is only one God; these idols are nothing so we can go in and enjoy ourselves.

Defrauding One Another

How they defrauded one another! They even accused one another before the worldly court.

Love of Self

And then they just loved themselves! They enjoyed themselves and neglected the other brothers. They did not care about the weak brothers and sisters. They said, "We have the truth, so we can do whatever we want to." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Disorder

Then there was disorder among them. Even at the Lord's Table, some got drunk and some were hungry. There was no order among them. Even in the exercise of spiritual gifts, it was a display of themselves, and it was not edifying.

Unbelief

There was unbelief. They did not believe in resurrection. How can you believe in resurrection if you live such a life?

Disobedience

They were very disobedient. There was no authority, no order. All these are the symptoms of men and women of the flesh.

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

Romans 7 show us that those who walk according to the flesh cannot please God. The apostle Paul describes himself when he was still in that stage, when the flesh was still dominating his life. Verse 14 says, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am fleshly, sold under sin." In other words, sin was still ruling over the flesh.

Verse 18: "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell: for to will is there with me, but to do right I find not."

Romans 8:5-8: "For they that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh; and they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit life and peace. Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be: and they that are in flesh cannot please God."

Do not think that you can live according to the flesh and please God. Do not think that we can serve God according to the mind of the flesh because so far as God is concerned, God has condemned flesh to death. So people who are walking, living according to the flesh, can never please God.

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

Galatians 5:19 says, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest.” When the flesh works, it is very clear; you can easily recognize them—“which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness.” I think these three refer to the passions of the flesh because they all refer to the passions, the physical urge of the body.

Then, “idolatry, sorcery.” These refer to some of the lusts of the flesh. In Colossians it says, “will worship” because our will is darkened, is against God. They are alienated from the life of God. So instead of worshiping the true God, they worship the idols. Instead of seeking to know God’s will by His Spirit, they go to sorcery to seek for mediums. It is the degradation of the human will.

Then, “hatred, strife, jealousy, anger, contentions” are the emotional things. It shows that our emotions are all being distorted.

“Disputes, schools of opinions, envyings...” These refer to our mind, and our mind is all darkened.

“Murders, drunkennesses, revels...” These refer to how we are so earthly because we are natural. If it is natural, it is earthly. And the Word says that they who do such things shall not inherit God’s kingdom.

So we find that the flesh can be easily detected because its deeds, its works are very manifested. And we need to ask a question. Since we have believed the Lord Jesus, have we grown out of our babyhood? If we are measured by what we have read, whether it is in 1 Corinthians, Romans, or Galatians, do we still walk according to the flesh? Do we still serve according to the flesh? Or are we now walking according to the spirit and serving God in our spirit? I think this is a very practical question that we have to ask ourselves. We must go to the Lord and let His light shine upon us, that in His light we may see light, that we may repent and abhor ourselves, and then turn to the Lord to seek for deliverance.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE FLESH

How can we be delivered from our flesh? This is a very personal question and it is a very subjective one. It is not like the old man, something objective, something that Christ has done for us. All we need to do is to reckon it and believe in it. But now we come to our personal experience. How can we be delivered from our flesh? And you find the way is the cross. But it is more than the cross that was erected on Calvary. It is that cross that has to be implanted into our very soul. The objective cross has to become the subjective cross. The cross of Christ has to become my cross and your cross. Now how do we experience it?

In Galatians 5:24 it says, “But they that are of the Christ.” First of all, we need to remember that we are in Christ. Oftentimes we forget it. Experientially speaking, we come out of Christ. When we live in the flesh, we do not live in Christ. So, oftentimes we come out of Christ; that is from the experience point of view. From the truth point of view, it will not happen. We are in Christ, and we are always in Christ. So we need to remember that we are of Christ. In other words, we need to take our new position in Christ Jesus. Today, we are in Christ, and in Christ the old man was crucified. No longer live I; it is Christ who lives in me. So first of all, we have to take that stand in Christ Jesus.

What is temptation? Temptation is leading you out of Christ and taking you back into Adam. When temptation comes, it cannot touch Christ; it only has that living relationship with Adam. Outside of Adam, it has no power. In Christ, he is finished. So temptation is drawing us out of Christ, and then we find ourselves being in Adam. And if we are in Adam then sin has dominion over us.

So first of all, by faith we have to take our stand in Christ Jesus, declaring that the old Adam was crucified. We are dead to sin in Christ Jesus and we are alive unto God in Christ Jesus. And when

you take that position, when you take that stand, how does it work? Galatians 5:16 says, “But I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfill flesh’s lusts.”

This is the subjective work of the Holy Spirit. Two thousand years ago, Christ died on Calvary’s cross, and God has already put the whole Adamic race in Christ. So when Christ died, the whole Adamic race was terminated. That is an eternal truth. You stand on that, then the Holy Spirit begins to work, and He will bring the finished work of Christ on the cross into your experience. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. He will bring us into all truth.

After we have taken that stand in Christ Jesus and we learn to walk in the Spirit, what happens? You find that the flesh will lust after the Spirit, and the Spirit will lust against the flesh. “And these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do those things which ye desire.”

In other words, the fight is not done by you or me. If we try to fight against the flesh, we will fail no matter how determined we are. Let the Holy Spirit strive against the flesh. It is a battle between the Holy Spirit and the flesh, not between you and the flesh, because you are the flesh. So let the Holy Spirit work against the flesh. And when the Holy Spirit strives against the flesh, you are not able to do what your flesh wants to do because the Holy Spirit will put to death the deeds of the body. Then you will be delivered from the flesh.

Romans 8:13 says, “For if you live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

GRAFTING

Let me use the illustration of grafting. Suppose you have a peach tree and the nature of that peach tree is very bad. All the peaches that are produced are sour. How are you going to improve that peach tree? You use this matter of grafting. Near the root of that peach tree you cut off, and then you make another incision. You take a twig out of a good peach tree that bears sweet fruit. You graft this twig into the old tree, and then the tree begins to grow. When it grows up, all the branches will bear sweet peaches because it has taken up the new nature. But you have to be very careful because below that cut branches will also come out, and when these branches come out, they will bear sour peaches. Above the incision you have sweet peaches; below that incision, you have the old, sour peaches. What will the farmer do? He will watch, and whenever branches come out below that incision, he will cut them off. Then the whole peach tree will bear sweet fruit.

That is our story. We are the poor, bad fruit, but the cross cuts into our life, and Christ is being grafted into us. So naturally, supernaturally-naturally, you find that it will bear the fruit of the Spirit. But unfortunately, underneath that cut, branches are still coming out. So, the Holy Spirit will do this work. He will put the deeds of the body to death that you may live. “They who are of the Christ have crucified their flesh with the passions and the lusts.” This is how the Spirit of God will work. This is how we experience the cross in our daily life. So may we believe in what the Lord Jesus has done for us, and let us obey the Holy Spirit as He works the cross into our daily life. This is the way of deliverance. Thank God.

Dear Lord, we just lay this word at Thy feet. If it is of Thee, use it. If anything is not of Thee, put it to death. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

THE CROSS AND THE SELF - LIFE

John 12:24-26—verily, verily I say unto you, except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If any one serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall be my servant. And if any one serves me, him shall the Father honour.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, our hearts bow before Thee. Thou hast once again exhibited Thy great love towards us. Thou hast placed before us the cross and You crucified. Dear Lord, Thy love has constrained us. There is only one way before us. We must follow Thee. Do show us once again the way of following Thee. We want to follow Thee as close as possible. Deliver us from the world, deliver us from the law, and deliver us from our flesh, that our whole being may be possessed by Thee. May Thy name be honored in us. Prepare us for Thy return. Lord, we long to see Thee. Come quickly. In Thy precious name we pray. Amen.

We thank the Lord for gathering us together these days. Even though we seem to be talking much about the cross, we must remember that it is Him crucified. He is the One who makes the cross what it is today. The cross is only a way, a means, the only way, the prescribed way of God, and this way will lead us to Christ. This way will lead us to the eternal purpose of God. What should always be before us is God's eternal purpose—Christ and His Church. So by going in the way of the cross may we really arrive at God's eternal purpose.

We talked about the cross and the world. Why must we be delivered from the world? So that Christ may be our world. We talked about the cross and the law. Why? It is that Christ, His grace, may be our law. And we talked about the cross and the flesh. Why must we be delivered from our flesh? Why can we not be ourselves? It is because we want Christ to be all and in all to us. So let us have Christ always before our eyes, and as we look steadfastly upon Christ, it will give us strength to take up our cross and follow Him.

We first talked about the cross and the old man. The old man is Adam, but that Adam is a corporate person. All who were born into this world are in Adam. This was our position before, but thank God, when our Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, the Bible tells us that our old man was crucified with Him. Thus we are delivered from the power of sin that we may be able to serve our God. This is a position that we have in Christ Jesus. We, today, are no longer in Adam; we are in Christ Jesus. And because we are in Christ Jesus, we are dead to sin and made alive unto God. This is a position that we must always maintain by faith.

Then we talked about the cross and the flesh. From our position we now come to our condition. From the eternal truth, we now come into experience in the Holy Spirit. They who are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts. We know that the deeds, the works of the flesh are very manifest. They can easily be seen. But thank God, those who are in Christ Jesus will walk by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit will strive against the flesh and deliver us from our flesh, that we may live according to the Spirit, and that will be life and peace.

THE LIFE OF THE FLESH

Now we would like to go a step further. We will fellowship on the cross and the self-life. The self-life is the life of the flesh. In other words, the cross deals not only with the works of the flesh; the cross will go deeper into the very life of the flesh. Unless the life of the flesh is being touched, even though the deeds of the flesh have been dealt with, the work is still unfinished. So in the work

of the cross of our Lord Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, He will go very deep into the very life of our flesh, that Christ really will be our very life. In order to understand this, for the sake especially of the younger people, probably we need to go back to the very beginning when God created man.

CREATION OF MAN

In Genesis 2:7, we find that God used the red earth, the dust of the earth to form a human body. The Psalmist said, "Our body is fearfully and wonderfully made." Just think that God could take the most common, cheap material and make a human body, which is a masterpiece. By this body we have world consciousness because by the five senses of this body, we are in touch with the world around us. And the Bible tells us that God breathed His breath of life into the nostril of that form. There is the breath of life coming out of God Himself that reaches into that earthly form. That breath of God becomes the spirit of man because God is Spirit. So He breathed into man and that breath becomes the spirit of man, that man will be able to communicate with God. So our spirit gives us God-consciousness.

Then, when God's Spirit, God's breath, entered into that earthly form, a third element was formed, and the Bible says, "Man became a living soul." Soul is where our personality dwells. With our soul we know ourselves. It gives us self-consciousness. You are what you are. You know what you are because you have a soul. Through your thinking, through your emotion, through your will, your opinion, you express yourself. So the Bible says, "Man became a living soul." There is a created life in man, and that created life in our soul makes us "living." That is how we are created.

When we were created, so far as God's order is concerned, our spirit should be at the top because it is by our spirit that we are in touch with God the Spirit. So far as our soul-life is concerned, when it was created, it was neutral; that is to say, it was neither sinful nor righteous nor holy, because at that time, the living soul did not have the knowledge of good and evil. So it had to look to the spirit for direction; it was dependent upon the spirit. And by the spirit, it knew God's will, so that it was able to obey God and work it out in the body. That was how we were created.

THE TREE OF LIFE

Then you remember that God put man in the Garden of Eden. It was a garden of pleasure because God created all kinds of fruit trees to be the food for the physical body of man. Then in the midst of the garden, God planted the tree of life. God had already given people a created life. They became living souls. Why did God put the tree of life in the midst of the garden? It is because that tree of life represents the very life of God. It is the divine life, the uncreated life of God. It shows that God's heart is to give His own life to man. Man was created in the image of God and after His likeness. In other words, in the whole creation, man is the only one who has the capacity of receiving God into himself. It is God's will that man should receive His uncreated life into his created life. That will enable him to fulfill all the missions that God has commissioned him with, and fulfill God's purpose for man.

THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

By the tree of life, God planted another tree. It is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Some people think that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a bad tree because God told man of all the trees in the garden he could freely eat including the tree of life. But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he could not eat because on the day that he should eat thereof he would surely die. So people think that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must be a bad

tree. I wonder if you would agree with me? I feel that God would never put a bad tree in the Garden of Eden, so it cannot be a bad tree. I feel it is the second best. The tree of life is the best because it gives us God's own divine life, and if we should eat that tree, that divine life will come into our spirit and become the life of our spirit. And this tree of the knowledge of good and evil is actually the food for our soul, as all the other trees are food for our body. There is no knowledge that is higher than the knowledge of good and evil. Scientific knowledge or philosophy cannot be compared with the knowledge of ethics, the knowledge of good and evil. That tree will be the food of the soul of man because our soul longs for knowledge. Our soul is satisfied with knowledge, with the knowledge of good and evil.

Why did God forbid man to eat that tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Number one, He wanted them to eat of the tree of life. Number two, He knows that without the life of God and if you have the knowledge of good and evil, it will bring you to death. You know what is good, but you do not have the life, the power to do the good. You know what evil is, but you will yield to evil, and the result will be death. That is the reason why God wants people to seek after the life of the Spirit, and by that life he will be able to live and fulfill God's purpose. But if man should take the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would decide what is good and what is evil. He would become independent of God. And as Satan suggested, they would be gods, and the result is death. Unfortunately, our forefathers, instead of eating the tree of life, they took the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because of that the Lord said, "On the day that you eat, you shall surely die." But Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, and he had many sons and daughters. In other words, his body seemed to be living, and his soul seemed to be living, but what is it that was dead? His spirit was dead. His spirit lost the ability to communicate with God the Spirit.

DEATH OF THE SPIRIT

What is death? Death is the cessation of communication with its proper environment. When the body is dead, it has lost its communication with the world around, and when the soul is dead, he is dead to himself. When the spirit is dead, it has lost its communication with God. So, what is the condition of a fallen man? The condition of a fallen man is that his spirit is dead. It does not mean that his spirit does not exist. The spirit is still there, but it has lost its proper function. That is why you find people can communicate with evil spirits, but they cannot communicate with God the Spirit. So man became flesh—soul and body without the spirit.

What about the life of man? In the Bible, sometimes the word *soul* is used as representing man. For instance, when Jacob went into Egypt, in Genesis it says that seventy souls entered into Egypt because the soul represents the man. The soul is I, is me, where my personality dwells. So after man fell, this living soul, the life of that soul was not only contaminated, but it was even dominated by sin. And instead of man looking to God for direction, man falls into himself. So what nature, what kind of life is there in man? Man is a fallen man. Man is a man of the flesh. Man is a selfish, self-centered person. Self is the very life of the soul. That is our situation.

If you only deal with the deeds of the flesh, it is just like you are dealing with all the branches. You have to deal with the very root of the tree. How does the cross of our Lord Jesus deal with the very life of our fallen man, the life of the flesh, which is self? So this is what you find in the word of God. In the word of God in many, many places, life and soul are the same word. For instance, our Lord Jesus said, "If you love your life, you will lose it." And that life can be translated as soul. If you love your soul, you will lose it. If you lose your soul in this world for the Lord's sake, you will gain it to eternity. So this matter of soul and life is one, and it is actually self; it is I, it is me, myself. That is our condition. And the cross of our Lord Jesus has to dig deep into the very core, the very life of our flesh. This very life of the soul, which is self, must be dealt with.

THE GRAIN OF WHEAT

In John 12, when our Lord Jesus entered into Jerusalem for the last time, great crowds followed Him. Even some of the Greeks that came to the festival wanted to see Jesus. It seems as if the whole world went after our Lord Jesus. It was a most glorious time in the life of our Lord Jesus when He was on earth. So when these Greeks asked for help from Andrew and Philip, what did our Lord say?

John 12:23 says, "But Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Maybe even the disciples thought this was the time that our Lord would be glorified, that He would now sit on the throne and rule over the whole world. But strangely, immediately after our Lord said, "The time of my being glorified is now here," He continued and said, "Verily verily I say unto you [truly truly I say unto you], Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit."

In other words, to our Lord, the time of being glorified was His death. He is the grain of wheat. In the whole world, you have only tares, darnels, because all who are in Adam are darnels, are tares. Our Lord Jesus is the only grain of wheat. God became Man; the Word became flesh and tabernacled among men, full of grace and truth. He is *the* grain of wheat. He said, "If the grain of wheat fall into the ground but abide alone...." It falls into the ground, but it does not die. It abides alone. He speaks of Himself because He is the grain of wheat that fell into the ground. He came into this world and took up the form of a man. He lived in this world for thirty-three years and demonstrated to the world what man should be. What is the man that God is after? He demonstrated it.

On the Mount of Transfiguration He was suddenly transfigured; glory filled Him. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked to Him about His exit. How would He go out of this world? He came into this world by emptying Himself and taking up the form of a man. Now how will He exit from this world? They were talking about this matter, and as they were talking, suddenly Peter woke up and saw that Moses and Elijah were going to leave. He wanted them to remain, so he blurted out, "Lord, it is good to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. We will just stay here." And God cut him off. A cloud of glory overshadowed them and they heard a voice: "This is my beloved Son in whom I have My delight. Hear Him." Suddenly Moses and Elijah disappeared. When they opened their eyes, they saw Jesus only.

If our Lord Jesus had made His exit from the world on the Mount of Transfiguration, then there would be only *the* grain of wheat. But thank God, our Lord Jesus refused to make His exit on the Mount of Transfiguration. Instead, He came down from the mountain and faced towards Jerusalem, because this grain of wheat not only must fall upon the ground, but it must die. And if it dies, it bears much fruit. In other words, the outer shell of that wheat must be decayed in order that the life within it may be able to come forth and multiply into many grains. So our Lord Jesus explained this parable to us.

DEATH OF THE SOUL-LIFE

In verse 25 He says, "He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal." Our Lord is the first grain of wheat, and He fell into the ground and died. His outer man was decayed, so the life within Him was able to be released and produce many fruits. And you and I are the result of that.

The soul-life of our Lord Jesus is without sin. His soul-life is selfless, but even He must go to the cross and die so that His life may be released and be given to all of us. How much more must our soul-life, our self go to death? If our soul-life does not go to death, then the life of Christ in us will have no opportunity to bear fruit. So our Lord Jesus said, "If you love your soul-life, that is

your self, you will lose it and if you hate your soul-life in this world, you will keep it to life eternal.”

TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS

Let us use another illustration. Second Corinthians 4:7-12 says, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us: every way afflicted, but not straitened; seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body; for we who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh; so that death works in us, but life in you.”

We who have believed in the Lord Jesus we are but earthen vessels. Look at us. Even if this body is so wonderfully made, yet it is earthly in nature. So we are but earthen vessels. But thank God, He put a treasure in the earthen vessels. I always wonder, if you have a treasure, would you put it in an earthen vessel? You will not. You will put a treasure in a golden box. But that is the wonder of God. He is willing to put the treasure in an earthen vessel. And the treasure, of course, is our Lord Jesus. God puts Christ Jesus into you and me, earthen vessels. But the purpose of putting that treasure there is not for that treasure just to be kept there unnoticed. God’s purpose is that the surpassing greatness of the power of that treasure may be manifested through the earthen vessel. It is not the power of the earthen vessel; it is the power of the treasure. The earthen vessel is opaque. Only the treasure has light. God’s purpose is that the light of that treasure may be manifested and the surpassing power may be manifested.

A CRACKED VESSEL

But how can that be when the treasure is hidden in the earthen vessel? Unless that earthen vessel has cracks, unless that earthen vessel is broken, then the power of the treasure will have no chance to exhibit itself. Now that speaks of all of us. We have Christ, the treasure, in us, and the power of that treasure is going to be manifested; but our soul is like an earthen vessel and we just imprison that treasure within us. We love ourselves, and because we love ourselves, we refuse to be cracked, and we refuse to be broken. We treasure the earthen vessel more than we treasure the treasure within the earthen vessel. Is it not true that we all love ourselves, even though we are so ugly? We still love it; we do not abhor it. And because we love our self-life, therefore Christ has no opportunity to manifest His power. But thank God, that is where the Holy Spirit begins to work. The Holy Spirit will arrange our environment. He will arrange people around us. He will arrange our circumstances. He will arrange things to happen according to His wisdom. He will arrange everything around us in order to crack us, to break us.

That is why Paul says, “In every way afflicted, but not straitened.” Sometimes we find ourselves being surrounded. We have no way out, but thank God, even though we are surrounded, there is still an upward way God opens to us. Sometimes “We see no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut out.” I like Phillips’ translation. He said, “We come to our wit’s end but not to our life’s end.” We do not know any way out, but somehow God opens the way out.

You know, it is almost like scenery in China. We say that the scenery in Qui Ling surpasses all other scenery, But Yangshuo’s scenery surpasses Qui Ling. Now I have been there, and actually in Yangshuo itself, there is nothing. But on the way from Qui Ling to Yangshuo, you have to take a boat. As the boat begins to sail, you come to a point where it seems as if the river ends, but when you arrive there, you find there is a passage sideways, and that is where the scenery really is. And in

our life, it is like that. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will lead us forward and we come to a dead end. We think that we are finished, but suddenly, God opens a way out. That is the way.

Then it says, "Persecuted, but not abandoned." People may persecute us but God will never abandon us.

Then, "Cast down, but not cast out." I like Philips translation again. He said, "Knocked down but not knocked out." In boxing you may be knocked down but you are not knocked out yet. You stand up again and continue to fight.

I believe we have all gone through such experiences. These are the arrangements of the Holy Spirit. Why is it that He put you in such a condition? He has a purpose behind it. He wants to break you, to break your self-life, that Christ may be manifested. So the Bible says, "You bear in your body the dying of Jesus." In the original it has the meaning: "You bear in your body the putting to death of Jesus." The death of our Lord Jesus has power. His death is able to put you to death. Who wants to die? Who is willing to die? But the death of our Lord Jesus has the power to put you to death, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in you. So this is the way that God has provided for us to break us down that He may build us up. What is broken down is ourselves; what is built up is Christ. There is no other way. If you try to keep your life, you lose it. If you are willing to lose your self-life in this world for the sake of Christ and for the gospel's sake, then you will gain it to eternity. You will inherit the kingdom of the heavens.

We would like to analyze it a little more. We will see how the cross will deal with every aspect of our soul-life. Your soul-life, your self, is expressed in your emotion. Who is using your emotion? It is your self, your soul-life that is using your emotion. So your emotion expresses yourself. Your emotion is different from the other one. And then at the same time, it is our mind, our thinking that expresses ourselves. And it is our will, our desire, and our opinion that expresses ourselves. And we will see how the cross will work in these areas.

THE CROSS DEALS WITH THE EMOTION

In Matthew 10:34-39 our Lord Jesus told his disciples, "Do not think that I have come to send peace upon the earth: I have not come to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter with her mother, and the daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law; and they of his household shall be a man's enemies." He who loves father or mother above me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter above me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He that finds his life [that his is soul, self-life] shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it."

Our Lord Jesus knows that our soul-life, our self, needs to be purified. Even in this matter of human love, which is the highest, noblest expression, behind it is self. It is not pure love. It is governed by self, selfishness. So our Lord Jesus wants to purify even our emotion. He said, "If you love your father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, children, even your own life above Me, you are not worthy of Me." This is a very strict demand. If you want to follow the Lord, if you want to be like your Lord, you have to love Him above all these loves. Now God wants us to love our father and mother because this is the first commandment with promise. In the Old Testament time if a child did not love his father or mother, even cursed his father and mother, he would be killed. So God wants us to love our father or mother, but God wants to purify our love from self.

So there will be times when the demand of our Lord Jesus and the demand of our parents seem to cut across each other. And when there is such a situation, what will you do? Will you love the Lord even more than you love your father or mother? It does not mean that you should not love your father and mother, but do you love your Lord more than your father and mother? Will you follow the Lord or will you follow your parents? If your parents say, "You should not believe in the

Lord Jesus,” will you obey your parents or will you obey the Lord Jesus? And you find the cross is constituted and the Lord calls us take up our cross and follow Him. So death will come into the love side of our self-life, so that our love may be purified and Christ will be able to express through our love. That is concerning our emotion.

THE CROSS DEALS WITH OUR MIND

In Matthew 16, God revealed our Lord Jesus to His disciples, and our Lord revealed the church to His disciples. Following that He said, “I must go to Jerusalem and be killed, but on the third day I will be raised from the dead.” Then Peter took hold of the Lord and maybe shook Him a little bit: “Don’t do that; You should not die.” Our Lord turned back and said, “Satan, get behind Me because you are not mindful of the things of God; you are mindful of the things of man.” Immediately following that in verse 24 it says, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, If any one desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

And there you find our Jesus is dealing with our natural mind. The mind of Peter was self-centered. He did not want Jesus to go to the cross and die because he himself did not want to do that. So behind that mind was self. Our Lord dealt with that because behind self is Satan. So we must learn to take up our cross in this area of our mind in order that we may be delivered from it.

THE CROSS DEALS WITH OUR WILL

In Luke 14:26-27 our Lord Jesus turned to the crowd and said, “If any man come to me, and shall not hate his own father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple; and whoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

Following that He said, “You sit down and count the cost. Are you able to pay the cost of following Me? Are you able to forsake all and follow Me?” It is not just being stirred up emotionally for a moment. You sit down and count the cost, and then you make your decision. That is to say, our will has to be purified. Now if you are willing to do that, He will give you the power to do it. If you are not willing to do that, then you will not experience His surpassing greatness of power.

Why is it that the Lord calls us to take up our cross and follow Him? It is because by doing that, the self-life, the life of the very soul of the flesh may die. And the life of Christ within us may be released and may be manifested, so what come out of you will be Christ and not yourself. So first of all the Lord said, “Deny yourself.” Give up your right. Deny yourself. Peter denied the wrong person. He should have denied himself, but he denied Christ. And how often we are doing the same thing.

Brothers and sisters, who can deny himself? No one can. Martin Luther said, “I am not afraid of the pope and the cardinals; I am afraid of the pope within me. It is my self. I am afraid of that.” Do we like Job? Job said, “I abhor myself.” How can we do that unless we see the Lord Jesus? If He should reveal Himself to us, nothing is impossible.

SEEING THE LORD

During the last few days, we have talked about Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Brothers and sisters, when we were having the Lord’s Table this morning, Jesus Christ and Him crucified is openly exhibited before us. He reveals Himself to us. If we see Him, nothing is impossible. If we see Him, we will deny ourselves. If we do not see Him, we cannot deny ourselves. Job saw the glory of God, so he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. This is what we need. We

need to see our Lord. We need to see His bleeding hands. We need to see His bleeding feet. We need to see His bleeding head. We need to see the blood and water coming out of His side. We need to hear Him say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" We need to see His love. Only His love can constrain us to deny ourselves and make us willing to take up our cross and follow Him.

So may the Lord help us, that we may not only know that our old man was crucified with Christ, but we who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. Then we will be willing to lose our self-life for Christ's sake, that we may follow Him. So may the Lord lead us in the days ahead. May He always be before our eyes, and if we look up unto Jesus, by His love and by His grace, we will be able to follow Him.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, a sight of Thee is all that we need. Reveal Thyself to us that we may all rise up, forsake all, take up our cross, and follow Thee. Where You are, there by Thy grace we will be. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.