

## TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

### Message Two

#### **Taking the Lead to Experience Life**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; Psa. 36:7-9; John 12:24-26; 2 Cor. 4:10-12;  
Rom. 8:13; Matt. 7:13-14

#### **I. Christ as life is the reality of the tree of life, which is the center of the universe—Gen. 2:9; John 1:4; 10:10; 14:6; 15:1; 6:35, 63; 1 Cor. 15:45b:**

- A. Life is the goal of God's creation—Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:7-9.
- B. God's organic salvation, being saved in Christ's life, is the goal of the process of God's judicial redemption—John 19:34; Rom. 5:10; Col. 3:3-4; Rev. 22:1-2.
- C. Life is God Himself in Christ as the Spirit flowing out to be enjoyed by man and to please and satisfy man—Psa. 36:7-9; Rev. 22:1; Jer. 2:13.
- D. God is in Christ, Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit is life—John 14:9-10, 17-19; 6:63; Rom. 8:2.
- E. Life is the Lord Himself as the bread of life for us to eat—John 6:35, 57, 63; Matt. 15:22-27.
- F. Life is the light, light overcomes darkness, and light is in God's word—John 1:4-5; Psa. 36:8-9; John 6:63:
  - 1. If we want to touch life, we need the word, the inner feeling given to us by the Spirit; such a feeling is the living word of God—v. 63; 1 Sam. 3:19-21.
  - 2. If the Spirit in us gives us a word or a feeling to open our mouth and praise the Lord, we should receive this word and open our mouth to praise the Lord; thus, we will have light within, and this light is life, the Spirit, Christ, and God.
  - 3. When we respond to this feeling and offer a prayer of praise to the Lord, we sense the satisfaction of life, the sweetness of Christ, the presence of God, and the moving of the Spirit.
- G. All the beauty, power, brightness, and ability of the church come from the fact that Christ as life is her inward content; the church is the result of life, and life is the content of the church—Gen. 2:2; John 19:34; 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17.

#### **II. We need to see the obstacles that God's life encounters in man:**

- A. The first problem that God's life encounters in us is that we do not realize the darkness of our human concepts:
  - 1. We need to see that the only thing that matters in the Christian life is how we take care of the living Christ in us—Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:19-21; Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 3:18.
  - 2. Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; many people have difficulty in their spiritual life after they are saved because they do not know the pathway of life, and they do not take Christ as their life.

- B. The second problem that life encounters in us is hypocrisy—Matt. 6:2, 5; 7:5; 23:13-29:
  - 1. A person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of the indwelling Christ.
  - 2. Our natural goodness is false spirituality and is actually a great hindrance to life; the expression of life involves the rejection of our natural disposition and preference and simply allowing Christ to operate in us and break us.
  - 3. If we always do things according to our disposition and natural being, the outcome will always be hypocrisy.
- C. The third problem that life encounters in us is rebellion:
  - 1. Christ operates and moves in us in order to make us clear about His will and requirements for us and about His leading and dealing with us.
  - 2. However, if we do not obey but go against the feeling within, not accepting His leading or paying the price, this unwillingness and opposition are rebellion.
  - 3. The sin that we commit the most frequently and most severely is not outward and visible; rather, it is the sin of disobeying the sense of Christ in us; Christ is living in us, and He is constantly giving us an inward sense of life—Rom. 8:6; 1 John 2:27; cf. Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; 2 Cor. 2:12-14.
- D. The fourth problem that life encounters in us is our natural capability:
  - 1. Many brothers and sisters truly love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, and are very godly; nevertheless, their greatest problem is the strength and greatness of their capabilities and abilities; consequently, Christ has no ground or way in them.
  - 2. We may be capable and talented, but we do not consider these things as sin or filthiness; instead of despising our natural capabilities, we treasure them; if they remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life.
- E. There is one solution to all these obstacles in us—we must pass through the cross and let the cross break us; if we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross and allow these obstacles to be dealt with and removed—Matt. 16:24-25.

### **III. We need to see the subjective obstacles encountered by God's life in us:**

- A. A proper Christian is one whose mind, will, and emotion cooperate with his spirit; an abnormal Christian is one whose mind, will, and emotion cannot cooperate with, and even contradict, his spirit; thus, he lives under a veil.
- B. The first subjective problem is the problem of our mind:
  - 1. If the things we want to do originate from our thoughts, then these things will be nothing more than religious activities, even if they are successful; they are not a testimony of Christ lived out from our spirit—cf. Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2.
  - 2. Although we have the life of Christ within, we do not cooperate with Christ's life in our thoughts and actions, and so this life cannot be lived out from us.
  - 3. When our mind is set on the spirit, our outward actions are in agreement with our inner man, and there is no discrepancy between us and God; He and we are at peace, not at enmity; the result is that we feel peaceful within—8:6.

- C. The second subjective problem is the problem of our will:
  1. Even though our mind often understands the intention in our spirit, and we know the will of God, we are unwilling to submit and obey.
  2. We may understand, know, apprehend, and deeply sense that the Lord wants us to do a certain thing, but our will refuses to submit and surrender, and we lose the Lord's presence.
  3. Both a strong will and a weak will to carry out the Lord's will are hindrances to God's life; a will that has been dealt with is both strong and pliable by being subdued and resurrected by the Lord; having a will that can cooperate with God is a great matter—Phil. 2:13.
- D. The third subjective problem is the problem of our emotion:
  1. Our emotion needs to have God's emotion, and we need to fully enter into God's emotion—2 Thes. 3:5; Phil. 1:8.
  2. We should love whatever God loves, like whatever God likes, and hate whatever God hates; our emotion and His emotion should become one emotion—Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 16:24; Rev. 2:6.
- E. From all this we can see that our person is truly an obstacle for the living out of God's life; this is why we need to be broken and why we daily need to be strengthened into the inner man so that Christ can make His home in our heart, the main parts of which are the mind, will, and emotion—Eph. 3:16-17.

#### **IV. We need to see the pathway of life—Matt. 7:13-14:**

- A. A part of God's work in His salvation is to pave a clear way for His life in us; this work is accomplished through the death of the cross—Phil. 3:10.
- B. There is life in a grain of wheat, but unless the grain falls into the ground and dies, the life within the grain will not be released—John 12:24-26.
- C. The way of life is the way of death; when there is the death of Christ operating in us, there is a way for the life of Christ to come out of us—2 Cor. 4:10; Phil. 3:10; Gal. 2:20.
- D. The cross of Christ is experienced by us through the Spirit—Gal. 5:16, 24; Rom. 8:13-14; Exo. 30:23-25; Phil. 1:19.
- E. The stronger the Holy Spirit's work in us is, the stronger our experience of the cross will be; wherever the Holy Spirit works, there is a putting to death by the Spirit, and resurrection life can be manifested in and through us—2 Cor. 4:11-12.
- F. The discipline of the Holy Spirit also carries out the work of the cross in us:
  1. For our spiritual understanding, it is not enough only to know the Holy Spirit; we must also know the "all things" in our circumstances (Rom. 8:28); a Christian who is spiritual and lives before God needs to "read" three things every day: first, he needs to read the Bible; second, he needs to read his inward sense of the spirit; third, he needs to read his environment and circumstances, which are the persons, matters, and things around him; God arranges our environment and circumstances to cause all persons, matters, and things to work together for good, that is, for transforming and conforming us to the image of God's firstborn Son—vv. 28-29.
  2. The environment that the Lord has created for us causes us to know the Lord's grace and experience the Lord's power—2 Cor. 12:9.

**V. We need to see a vision of how the life of God can be lived out of us:**

- A. We need to realize and know that the life of God is in us—Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:10.
- B. We need God to open our eyes to see that our natural man, our very person, is a hindrance to the life of God.
- C. We need to see that we have been crucified on the cross, and we must hate our self; the more we see God, know God, and love God, the more we abhor ourselves and the more we deny ourselves—Col. 3:3; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6; Job 42:5-6; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:26.

**VI. “There is a very heavy burden within me, a very deep feeling, that what every church today needs most is the things of life. All our work and activity must come out of life...Unless it comes out of life, our work and service will neither last nor bear much weight. If we want our work to bear abundant and lasting fruit, we must have a foundation in life. We ourselves must touch the Lord in life...Only thus can we fit into the work which God desires to do in this age...We should have only one desire—to know and experience the life of the Lord more, and to be able to share with others what we have known and experienced so that they too may obtain something...Our work should just be the releasing of the life of the Lord, the imparting and supplying of the Lord’s life to others. May the Lord have mercy upon us and open our eyes to see that the central work of God in this age is that man may gain His life and grow and mature in His life. Only the work which comes out of His life can reach His eternal standard and be accepted by Him”—*The Knowledge of Life*, pp. 57-58.**

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**EXPERIENCING THE PUTTING TO DEATH OF THE CROSS**

The meaning of the cross is death, and the function of the cross is to put us to death. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, He was not just suffering; He was dying. The ultimate significance of the Lord Jesus being on the cross relates to death. The death of the cross is applied to us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and its effect is to put us to death, to kill us. Every day the Holy Spirit operates to work the cross of Christ and the death of the cross into us so that every part of our being can be brought into death.

The truth concerning death is not an easy matter. No one’s death is simple and easy. In our spiritual experience, when the Holy Spirit enlightens us to see that we have been crucified, we rejoice, we are happy, and we praise the Lord. Many saints have this experience. When we first see that we have been crucified with Christ, we praise and rejoice. About twenty years ago, when I saw this light, I was in my study, and I was so joyful and exultant that I was jumping, running, praising, and giving thanks. Even though I was corrupt, full of lawlessness, offensive to God, opposed God, and incurable, I still saw that I was crucified. Even a person such as myself had been dealt with on the cross. The Lord said, “You have died,” and I also said, “I have died.” I believed the Lord’s word. On that day I died. This caused me to rejoice in exultation; I was happier than when I was saved. However, after a short time, I realized that I was still alive and had not died. I was the same as before and had not changed at all. Consequently, I became confused. I continued to fail, and my failures were greater, more serious, and more severe than before. Although I saw that I had been crucified with Christ, I realized that I was still alive.

Then the Lord's Spirit showed me that dying with Christ involved more than just passing through the gate of death. I still needed to be led by the Spirit to walk on the way of death and to live the life of death. From that day forward, the Spirit applied and worked death into me. Death began to operate and have an effect in me. This operation put me to death daily, killing every part of my being. The first day it killed some of my emotions; the next day it put some of my opinions to death; the day after it put some of my thoughts to death; on yet another day it dealt with some of my concepts. Elements of my person were being killed every day. The Holy Spirit used the death of the cross, which I had seen, to do a killing work and to put me to death. The killing of the Spirit gradually became deeper, stronger, and more intense. The Spirit worked in me continually. In terms of my living, I lived under the cross every day; in terms of my walk, I was on the way of the cross every day.

Some people may ask, "What does it mean to apply the death of the cross to kill the natural element in us? What does it mean for the cross to put us to death every day?" As an example, a brother may see the vision that he has died with the Lord and realize that he has been crucified with Christ. He will tell himself that he has seen the matter of his death and termination on the cross. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, when he wakes up the next morning, he will have a thought of doing this or that, and he will decide what he is going to do based on his own likes and dislikes. While he is thinking and choosing, however, he marvelously will sense the Holy Spirit working in him, as if the Holy Spirit is speaking and asking, "Is this your thought or Christ's? Is this your decision or the Lord's? Are these your likes and dislikes or the Lord's?" The Holy Spirit will operate in him in this way. If he thinks and chooses according to his own choices and preferences, the Holy Spirit will fight against them strongly, and the Spirit will stop, condemn, or rebuke him. As a consequence, the brother clearly will know his choices are not of the Lord.

As the Holy Spirit operates, shines, and rebukes in this way, and as the brother confesses his sins, a killing work is being carried out invisibly in him, putting a nail into his ideas and opinions. Even though the Holy Spirit condemns him, he still may have a strong will and hold on to his opinion. Nevertheless, even though he insists on his opinion, there is now a hole in his opinion, and his opinion has changed a little. The Holy Spirit has done a little work of killing and breaking in him. As he continues on this way, the Holy Spirit will work in him more intensely to the point that he will be conquered inwardly by the Spirit. Then he will bow and say, "O Lord, I thank and praise You. I am already on the cross, and I have been crucified." His ideas, opinions, and thoughts will be crucified, and his likes and dislikes also will be on the cross. The cross can penetrate him to a point that his preferences, will, mind, and whole being are affected. This is the Holy Spirit's operation and application of the death of the cross in him, which produces an effect of putting his thoughts, preferences, and self to death. After this experience, there will be a few more holes and cracks in this brother's being because he has been broken a little more.

Although he still lives and walks, he has seen some light of the cross and has some experience of the cross. However, most of his natural element still exists and is present in his living. His self unconsciously rises up and continues to give opinions, to make decisions, and to choose. However, the process of death also repeats itself in him. Based on his seeing of the cross, the Spirit will shine on him and the light will condemn and question: "Is this you or the Lord? Is this you or Christ?" At a certain point, he will be conquered and subdued again, and once again he will bow and say, "O Lord, I thank and praise You. My person is already on the cross." Thus, his preferences, thoughts, and opinions will be put to death on the cross, and he will receive and experience the cross once again. As the Holy Spirit furthers His work in him, the mark and the breaking of the cross in him will be deepened. There will be a further breaking

in him, and more of his own element will be put to death. Consequently, little by little, day after day, and event after event, he will experience the cross in the Holy Spirit.

### **THE TWO-SIDED TRUTH OF THE CROSS**

From his Epistles we can see that Paul speaks of the cross in two different ways. First, he speaks of our having been crucified with Christ; this was accomplished by Christ. When Christ was crucified, He took us with Him so that we died in Him. This is an accomplished fact, and we simply need to believe and receive it. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him," and Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ." Both of these verses speak of Christ's accomplished fact. Paul speaks of the cross also in 5:24, which says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." Romans 8:13 says, "By the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body."

Those who teach the truth concerning the cross make a mistake of speaking only about one side of this truth in the Bible. Some people speak only of the eternal accomplishment of Christ by His crucifixion on the cross. They say that we do not need to be crucified, because we need only to receive this accomplished fact. This is true, but this is only one side of the truth. It is not enough simply to have this side of the truth, because there is another side in Paul's Epistles. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him," but Romans 8:13 says, "If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." On the one hand, we have been crucified on the cross; on the other hand, we need also to put to death the practices of the body by the Spirit. To put to death the practices of the body by the Spirit involves cooperating with the Spirit to put our flesh to death, which is putting a part of our element to death. This involves putting ourselves to death and also the Spirit putting us to death.

Through the Holy Spirit we are enlightened concerning Christ's accomplished fact. This enables us to pass through the gate. Then the Spirit executes and works this fact into us inwardly so that we condemn what the Spirit condemns, we criticize what the Spirit criticizes, and we put to death what the Spirit puts to death. In this way, we experience the death of the cross.

### **THE WAY AND LIFE OF THE CROSS**

On the day I saw the light of the cross and the fact that I have died with Christ in Romans 6, I was full of joy, thanks, and praise. Nevertheless, I was only passing through the gate; it was one side of the truth. At that time, I did not see the other side of the truth, that I needed to take the way of the cross. I saw only that Christ's death had terminated and solved everything. Nevertheless, even before I went downstairs the next morning, I saw that I was still alive. I did not realize that I needed to walk on the way after passing through the gate. I was helped by the Holy Spirit to pass through the gate, but I still needed to be led by the Holy Spirit to walk on the way. However, since the Holy Spirit wanted to apply the cross and daily shined the light of the cross in me, the light of the cross questioned, condemned, rebuked, and showed me what was of myself whenever I had a preference or opinion. When I was willing to obey, cooperate, and work with Him, I would bow and say, "Amen, Lord, I will put this matter on the cross." I would condemn it and crucify it.

As I was daily put to death, enlightened, and led and as I was cooperating with the Holy Spirit's continuing work of killing and putting me to death, the death of the cross was constituted into me. Thus, the work of killing and of being put to death in the Spirit, according to the Spirit, by the Spirit, and through the Spirit, was accomplished in me every day. This was not about putting others to death but about killing and putting my own inward element to

death. This is the way of the cross and the life of the cross; this is the leading of the Holy Spirit in us every day.

A brother who has seen the light of the cross may still quarrel with his wife at home because quarreling is according to his natural being. When he quarrels with his wife, however, the Holy Spirit will shine the light of the cross in him and question, "Is this Christ or you yourself?" When the Spirit shines and questions him in this way, he will be punctured by the cross and be unable to continue to quarrel with his wife. As long as he quarrels, the Holy Spirit will continue to ask, "Are you a crucified person? Are you hanging on the cross? Where is the light of the cross that you have seen?" As the Holy Spirit questions him, he will lose his ability to quarrel. Whenever this situation arises, the Holy Spirit will ask, "Is this from you or from Christ? Are you a crucified person? Is this what it means to see the light of the cross?" Thus, even if he is riding on a bus, he will be able to confess, and when he comes home from work, the Holy Spirit will ask, "Does a crucified person care about his face? Are you going to keep frustrating the Spirit and not apologize?" After such questioning, he will submit to the Lord and apologize to his wife. If a person wants to save his face, he does not have Christ; if he has Christ, he will be able to apologize. When we cooperate with the living Spirit, the Holy Spirit will kill our face and any effort to save our face. This is the experience and living of the cross.

#### **THE CROSS BRINGING IN RESURRECTION LIFE**

All of these Christian experiences are precious and cause us to pass through death. The more we pass through death, the more life will be expressed from us. For example, the same brother who quarrels with his wife also endeavors to express the Lord and to allow the Lord's life to flow out. However, his natural strength is insufficient to express Christ and to allow His life to flow out. Once he is under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, however, the Spirit will enable him to cooperate with and submit to the Holy Spirit. Then his wife will sense a flavor of Christ coming from him, and she will see a little of Christ's life in him because the death of the cross has been realized and is being carried out in him. The cross brings in both death and the expression of the resurrection life.

The Spirit will lead us into the death of the cross hour by hour and day by day. This is the leading of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in us wants to bring us into death every moment. The stronger the Holy Spirit's work in us is, the stronger our experience of the cross will be. Without the death of the cross, there is no work of the Holy Spirit; wherever the Holy Spirit works, there is a putting to death by the Spirit.

From morning until evening and from evening until morning, the Holy Spirit is working in us. He requires that we receive the cross, and He puts us into the death of the cross. When death operates in us, resurrection life can be manifested (2 Cor. 4:11-12). The way of life is death, and death is the way of life. When we walk on the way of life, we walk on the way of the death of the cross. The Christian life is a living of the cross and a living of death. Every day we experience death in the Holy Spirit, and we live and walk under death. Death deals with our person. As we are dealt with and broken, the life of God in us will have a free and smooth way. May the Lord be merciful to us! (*Knowing Life and the Church*, pp. 66-72)

#### **THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

God's arrangement, ordination, permission, and move in our environment are the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit rules over our environment, and He moves and arranges everything to break our person. Our spouse is God's helper in breaking us. Sometimes our spouse's cooperation with God is not sufficient, so He gives us children. If our spouse, as God's chief helper, is not sufficient to deal with us, He adds more little helpers to

deal with us. If these helpers are not sufficient, He can add three, four, or even five more helpers. Sometimes it is not enough to have sons, so God also gives us daughters.

Every brother and sister is created and redeemed by God, and we are all under God's grace and care. We are all led, cultivated, and perfected by God. Since we admit that this is true, we should see that every important matter in our human life, such as our husband, wife, parents, or children, did not come to us by chance. Nothing comes to us without a purpose. Everything is arranged by God; some things were arranged by God before we were born, and some things come to us through our prayer. For example, because a sister may have only daughters, she prays for a son and receives a son. However, this son should actually be named Dealing because the more he grows up, the more he brings dealings to his mother. These things are all accomplished and arranged by God.

I hope all the brothers and sisters would have a deep impression that God uses the tools of grace, the Bible, the Holy Spirit, the church, the saints, the light of the truth, and especially the environment. Strictly speaking, the environment and our circumstances are the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The discipline of the Holy Spirit is the greatest tool in God's ordination. Many people treasure the Bible and pay much attention to the Holy Spirit, but they do not pay attention to the environment; they do not pay attention to the people, things, and matters they encounter. A Christian who is spiritual and lives before God needs to "read" three things every day. First, he needs to read the Bible. Second, he needs to read his inward sense. Third, he needs to read his environment and circumstances, which are the people, things, and matters around him. Many people read the Bible well, and they also can read the sense in their spirit, but they are unable to read the people, things, and matters they encounter. Have we ever considered why God gave us our spouse? Why did God give us a certain kind of child? Have we ever studied them and tried to understand them? Many brothers and sisters memorize the Bible and are also keenly aware of the sense in their spirit, yet regrettably they have never studied and do not understand the environment around them. They neglect and ignore their circumstances and environment, and they miss the benefit that can be gained from them. This is a big mistake. Our circumstances and environment are a great means arranged by God for dealing with our person and subduing us.

**THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
CONFORMING US TO THE IMAGE OF GOD'S SON  
AND MANIFESTING GOD'S GRACE AND POWER**

Romans 8 speaks specifically about the Holy Spirit; the first half of chapter 8 speaks of the Holy Spirit, and the second half speaks of the environment, circumstances, and sufferings, including God causing all things to work together for good (v. 28). For our spiritual understanding, it is not enough only to know the Holy Spirit, we must also know the "all things" in our circumstances. The purpose of all things working together is to gain man's cooperation to conform him to the image of God's Son and to deal with man to the extent that he is exactly the same as God's Son. For this reason, the Holy Spirit raises up a yearning prayer in us, and He intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, causing us to desire God's grace within, to have Christ's image, and to be filled with Christ's life (v. 26). With this kind of desire and prayer of the Holy Spirit within us, these prayers and groanings pass through the Holy Spirit and reach God. When God hears such prayer, He prepares the environment around us to cause all things to work together to break and deal with us and, thereby, to transform us. When our desire to be filled with Christ and to bear the image of God's Son is matched with the Holy Spirit's intercession, God hears our prayer and raises up an environment to deal with us. This environment may be our spouse or children, but everything occurs in order to break and subdue us. This is a great discipline.



Even a person like Paul, who was greatly blessed and experienced grace in such a strong and deep way, spoke of a thorn that pierced and pricked him every day. When it reached a point where he could bear it no longer, he prayed that the Lord would remove the thorn. The Lord answered, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9). The thorn in Paul enabled him to enjoy the grace of God and experience God’s power being perfected in weakness. Some wives may be thorns to their husbands, some husbands may be thorns to their wives, and some children may be thorns to their parents, but all of these things are allowed by the Lord in order to deal with and break us. We may pray and hope that others will change, but the more we pray in this way, the clearer we are that nothing will change. Our thorn will continue to pierce us, trouble us, and bother us. This is the environment that God has created to cause us to know the Lord’s grace and to experience the Lord’s power.

In the eyes of unbelievers, a Christian’s circumstances often seem very strange, and they lack an understanding of what they mean. God, however, knows that He is the One who arranges everything. There is not one proper Christian who does not have some troubles and pressure in his life; there is not one proper Christian whose living is smooth and carefree. Every proper Christian has some difficulty or burden and is under some kind of oppression or affliction in all kinds of circumstances. This is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the inward shining and calling of the Holy Spirit and of the outward pressure of the environment is simply to defeat our person. If we see this, we will bow and say, “O God, I worship You. What You arranged can never be wrong. This is what I need. Even if I make mistakes, You never make mistakes, and I still worship You.” At such a moment, we will be blessed within, and the power of the Lord’s life will bear us, support us, and enable us to endure the things that we cannot endure in ourselves. At such moments, we will have the Lord’s inward presence and joy.

If we learn these lessons well, our spouse will produce the effect of the cross in us, and our self, preference, opinion, inclination, thought, and all that we are will be put to death. God often breaks us through our spouses. If we submit ourselves to the Lord and receive this, we will meet the Lord within, and we will be blessed by having life as the power that carries us through and enables us to endure what we could not endure.

## CONCLUSION

We need to see that real growth in life does not depend only on the outward shining of the Bible and our inward cooperation with the Holy Spirit; we also need our environment and circumstances, which are the discipline of the Holy Spirit. If we really live before the Lord, we will live in the Spirit and treasure the circumstances arranged by God. We will treasure the people, things, and matters around us. When truth is released, there will be a response in us, and through our prayer the Spirit will begin to work in us. At the same time, God’s hand will also arrange things in our outward environment to reinforce the light of His truth and the work of the Spirit. The purpose of this inward and outward work is to break, subdue, and deal with our person. If the Lord is merciful and gracious to us, these messages will help us see how the Lord’s life has become our life and how much His life wants to have the ground to live out of us.

God’s life, the revelation and light that we have seen, and the discipline of the Holy Spirit in our circumstances carry out the work of the cross in us. The cross brings in the life of Christ, and the death of the cross brings in resurrection. Those who have the expression of the death of the cross also have the expression of life. This is the way of life. (*Knowing Life and the Church*, pp. 79-82)