

The Overcoming Life,

by Watchman Nee

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THE OVERCOMING LIFE

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PREFACE

Volume 24 of The Collected Works is comprised of messages given by Watchman Nee in 1935. With the exception of chapter four, the messages were delivered in Shanghai during September and October of that year. Chapter four was delivered in Chuenchow, Fukien province, in November of the same year. We have included it in this volume because its subject and emphasis are consistent with the content of the Shanghai messages. These messages reveal the excellent Christ who is in us as our victory. Their content is rich and precious. May the God who commands light to shine out of darkness shine in our hearts through these words and lead us into the experience of the riches of life! Amen!

CHAPTER ONE

OUR EXPERIENCE

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:21; 3:23

THE LIFE THAT GOD HAS ORDAINED FOR A CHRISTIAN

The Bible shows us that God has ordained for every Christian a life that is filled with joy. This life is completely at peace, has no barriers in its fellowship with God, and is not contrary to His will in any way. The life that God has prepared for a Christian is one that does not thirst after the world. It walks apart from sin and is victorious over sin. It is holy, powerful, and victorious. It knows the will of God and fellowships with God without interruption. This is the life that God has ordained in the Scripture for a Christian.

God has ordained a life that is hidden with Christ in God. What can touch this life? What can affect or shake this life? Just as Christ is unshakable, we also are unshakable. Just as He is transcendent over all things, we also are transcendent over all things. Our standing before God is the same as Christ's standing before God. We should never consider that we are destined for weakness and failure. There is no room for such a thought for a Christian in the Bible. Colossians 3:4 says, "Christ our life." Christ is far above everything. Nothing can touch Him. Hallelujah! This is the life of Christ!

The life that God ordains for a Christian is one that is filled with peace and joy. It is a life that is full of activity, vitality, and God's will. But what kind of life do we live? If we are not living the life that God has ordained, we need to overcome and break through in this matter. Consequently, we need to consider our experience today. This is not an easy subject to speak on. Some of our experiences may be quite sad. However, we will see our lack when we humble ourselves. Only then will God grant us grace.

EIGHT TYPES OF FAILURE IN A CHRISTIAN

What kind of life do we live? It is a life that is bound by the law of sin. "For to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not" (Rom. 7:18). Our life is a life of failure; it is bound by sin. God has given us such a high life, but we live a life of failure. According to our experience and the record of the Scriptures, a Christian has eight types of failure, that is, eight types of sin.

Spiritual Sins

Pride is a spiritual sin. Jealousy is a spiritual sin. Unbelief is a spiritual sin. Picking out others' mistakes is a spiritual sin. Lack of prayer is a spiritual sin. Doubting God is a spiritual sin, and failure to commit ourselves to God is also a spiritual sin. There are some who are victorious in spiritual matters, but there are more who are defeated in these matters.

I once was beset by pride. Any kind of pride is a spiritual sin. Any kind of pride that hinders you from going on is a spiritual sin. A proud person cannot stand to see others being better than himself. He cannot bear to see others being more advanced in worldly affairs, and he cannot bear others being more advanced in spiritual matters. If there is anyone who is more advanced

spiritually, he will do anything to find his faults and put him down. Jealousy is a sin in our spiritual life as well as in the Lord's work.

Some are filled with an evil heart of unbelief. If you ask whether or not they believe, they will answer that there is not one word or sentence in God's Word that they do not believe. But if you ask whether or not they trust in God's promises, they will admit that they are unable. As soon as they suffer a little trial, they panic beyond measure. They cannot trust in God's Word at all. Martin Luther's wife once put on a funeral dress and told him that he was in such distress that it seemed as if his God had died.

Many people do not have a proper living or fellowship with Him. Day by day, they live in a loose way. They spend their days without praying or reading the Bible. They spend their days without seeing God's face or fellowshiping with Him. They even spend their days dreading the thought of fellowshiping with the Lord. This is a life of godlessness. We have sinned, we have failed, and we have not lived a spiritual life. Many of us have never been diligent to learn the proper lessons of dealing with the self. Many of us have never been diligent to learn the proper lessons of putting the self aside.

Once there were two brothers who were not on good terms with each other because of a very small matter. They ate meals together, taking their servings from the same plate. One always selected the few choice meats from the plate for himself. When the other saw this, he kept quiet for several days. After two weeks, he could bear this behavior no longer, and he separated himself from the other brother. The kind of person you are is manifested in the small things you do. I love to read the biography of Mr. Hudson Taylor. When he traveled in his preaching itinerary, he almost always chose the worst room and the worst bed. Although these are small things, the way in which a person deals with them shows whether or not he lives before God.

Sins of the Flesh

Not only are there spiritual sins. There are also sins of the flesh. Adultery is a sin of the flesh, undisciplined eyes are a sin of the flesh, and improper relationships with others are also a sin of the flesh. Many have failed in these things. Many have sinned with their eyes because their eyes have not been disciplined. Many are improper in their relationship with friends. These are sins of the flesh. They are sins in one's conduct. Some sins have nothing to do with the body. Other sins are related to the body.

Brothers and sisters, have your eyes been dealt with? I admit that today there are plenty of opportunities for the eyes to sin. You have to deal with this matter before the Lord. There are many Christians who will never experience God's overcoming life unless their eyes are dealt with by the Lord.

Friendship is another thing that we have to watch carefully. A brother may build up an extraordinary friendship with an unbeliever. According to the world, this is not sin. But according to God's ordained life for a Christian, this extraordinary friendship is a sin. This is true also with the sisters. A Western missionary once said that some unbelievers tried to develop extraordinary friendships with him. When he realized that it was a sin, he rejected the friendships.

Sins of the Mind

Not only are there spiritual sins and sins of the flesh. There are sins of the mind as well. Many do not have spiritual sins. To an extent, they have been dealt with in their flesh. But they cannot overcome their thoughts. Some have wandering thoughts. Others have circumventing thoughts. Some have unstable thoughts. Some thoughts are not wandering, circumventing, or unstable, but they are unclean or illusionary. Some are filled with doubts. Others are obsessed with a drive for knowledge. They want to know everything, and they will not stop until they do. Those who have these kinds of thoughts have not experienced the overcoming life. We should not think that there is nothing wrong with us. Few are actually victorious over their thoughts. Many have wandering, unstable, and drifting thoughts. Having drifting thoughts is serious, but having unclean thoughts is even worse. Some have unclean thoughts that tenaciously linger over them. I once met a sister who confessed that her thoughts were always wandering. I met another Christian who confessed that his thoughts were always unclean. This shows that we are not living out the life of God. We have to deal with all these matters.

Imaginations have damaged many Christians. Doubts have also damaged many Christians. For example, when we meet a brother on the street and he is not very friendly, we may think that he is angry with us or that he thinks unfavorably of us. But when we arrive home, we may learn that his unfriendly attitude was related to the fact that he did not sleep well the night before, that he had a headache, or that he was going through some terrible experience. We thought that it was a problem related to ourselves, but actually there was nothing wrong with us. Our imaginations often hurt us, yet we often think that we can discern the hearts of others. We must realize that only the Lord can search "the inward parts and the hearts" (Rev. 2:23). Many imagine that others are one way or another. We have sinned in our thoughts. We have made too many judgments. We have too many illusions. Brothers and sisters, we must come to the Lord and deal with these things. If our thoughts are not dealt with, we cannot enter into a life of victory in God.

There is a brother who has an obsession for knowledge. He has to know the reason for everything. He analyzes everything and wants to know everything. His mind is very active. He does not trust in God, yet he wants to know about every single thing around him. Brothers and sisters, this kind of drive for knowledge is also a sin. We must deal with this as well.

Sins in the Body

There are some sins that are related to the body. They may not necessarily be unclean things. Humanly speaking, they may not be big things. But to a Christian, these are sins. Some pay too much attention to eating. Others pay too much attention to sleeping. Some pay too much attention to health or to personal grooming. Some are bound by the habit of indulging in snacks. Some love their bodies too much. All of these are sins before the Lord.

Many Christians are bound by eating. They have never fasted as a Christian. It is possible to know the kind of person they are from the way they eat. The minute they pick up their chopsticks, others know the kind of person they are. A brother said, "I have a large appetite. My appetite is extraordinarily large." Brothers and sisters, overindulgence in eating is also a sin. Those who cannot control themselves in the matter of eating are committing a sin.

Some have a terrible look on their face when they only lose a little sleep. They become impatient in handling things and talk incoherently. This also is a sin.

Some indulge in eating snacks. They spend a great deal of money on snack food. Others pay too much attention to their personal grooming. They always insist on good clothes. There are also some who are obsessed with health. Everything has to be just right for them. They consider this or that to be poisonous or bad for the body. They are confined and threatened by everything. Brothers and sisters, these are examples of being obsessed with our bodies. Too many people love their own body too much. They cannot suffer at all, and they cannot bear to even approach those who are sick. They are bound by their body. Paul said, "I buffet my body and make it my slave" (1 Cor. 9:27). He put his body under his subjection. Failing to put one's body under one's subjection is a sin. The body should be put under our subjection. Many have sacrificed their prayer in the morning for sleep. Many have sacrificed their time in the Word for food. Many are unable to serve the Lord because they pay too much attention to snack foods and outward appearance. Any negligence in bridling ourselves in these areas is a sin.

Sins in Disposition

Disposition is related to man's character. It is his personal traits. Every person is born with a certain disposition. The Lord has not come to deliver us from sin only, but also from our disposition. Some are born stubborn. Others are born very legalistic. For them, two plus two must be four. They are very proper, but at the same time, they are very rigid. What they regard as right is right, and what they regard as wrong is wrong. They are very unbending. Wherever they are and whatever they do, they are always the supreme judge. There is no doubt that they are often very righteous, but their righteousness has horns. They lack gentleness and sweetness toward the brothers. Their righteousness is hard and unbending. Brothers and sisters, this also is sin.

Others are too weak. They are afraid of bearing any responsibility. Everything is acceptable to them. They are exactly the opposite of the stubborn ones just mentioned. Some are misled to think that a nice man is a holy man. But how many nice men has God used? Was the Son of God a nice man on earth? Brothers and sisters, this kind of disposition is also a sin and needs to be dealt with.

Some are not too hard and not too nice, but they like to exhibit themselves. Wherever they are, they want to be noticed. Wherever they go, they always want to speak. Even when they do not have the opportunity to do anything, they still want to walk around and greet everyone. Wherever they are, they are not satisfied until they let everyone else notice their presence. They make their presence conspicuous no matter where they go, and they can never be quiet.

Some brothers are very withdrawn. Wherever they go, they do not like to exhibit themselves. They always sit in a corner. This is also sin, and it should be dealt with.

Some brothers are very quick. Others are very slow. One brother said once, "Praise God! I have a quick disposition. I lose my temper quickly and I forget about it just as quickly. I can explode with a big temper in the morning, but in five minutes it is over. When I go to work I have forgotten about it." However, his wife and children suffer for the whole day. When he comes back from work, his wife is still suffering. This is very strange to him. He even considers himself to be very good! This is a sin, and it needs to be dealt with also.

Some are slow in everything. A matter can go unattended for a day or for ten days. This is laziness. This disposition also needs to be dealt with.

Every person has his own peculiarity. Although some are saved, they are very severe towards others; they antagonize situations. Everything is important to them. They never take advantage of others, but they never allow others to take advantage of them either. They never hurt others, but if others hurt them, they will take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. They are very calculating and never let anything go.

Some are not severe to others. But they are very mean. They take advantage of others even when it is only a matter of a few pennies. They do not rob others, but they take advantage even of their servants or chauffeurs.

Some are very talkative. Wherever they go, there is never a dull moment. They gossip about this family and criticize that family. Some are glib about the truths. Whatever they know, they have to speak to others about them. Some like to speak words of exaggeration. They are not lying, but whatever they say, they exaggerate. All these dispositions have to do with our speaking. If we desire to overcome and live an overcoming life, we have to deal with all these things. If we are unable to rid ourselves of these things, we need to overcome.

I have to talk about these matters because the daily walk of Christians today is far from being godly. Some brothers can only see the faults of others; they cannot appreciate the virtues of others. Only words of criticism come forth from their mouths. One time a brother from northern China had a breakthrough in overcoming. Formerly, he could never stop finding fault. When a person came to him, he would point out six or seven things wrong with him. When another came, he would point out six or seven more problems with the second one. I told this brother that he saw so many problems in others because he himself was the problem. This was his disposition, his nature. Brothers and sisters, all of these are sins. Every overcoming Christian lives above these things, not under them.

No Willingness to Obey God's Word

Not only do we have sins on the negative side. The Bible shows us that being negligent before God in our intention to obey His Word is also a sin. Brothers and sisters, how much of God's commandments have you read, and how much have you obeyed? How many husbands love their wives, and how many wives submit to their husbands? A wife once said that she knew that she should submit to her husband; however, she always argued a little before submitting. She eventually realized that she has never had any true submission according to the standard of God's commandment. This, of course, is sin.

How many Christians realize that being sorrowful is sin? The Bible says that we have to always rejoice. How many Christians have obeyed this commandment? We have to realize that being sorrowful is sin. Everyone who does not rejoice has sinned. God's commandment is to be anxious in nothing. If we become anxious, we have sinned. According to God's commandment, being sorrowful and anxious is to sin. Of course, according to man, being sorrowful and anxious is not sin. However, God's Word says that sorrow and anxiety are sins.

We should give thanks in everything. It is God's commandment that we give thanks in everything. In everything we should say, "God! I thank You and praise You!" Even when we encounter difficulties, we should still say, "God! I thank and praise You!" There is a story about a woman with nine children. She thought that the word on not being anxious must be very wrong. She argued that a mother has to be anxious. She thought that not being anxious was a sin. She had lost two children

through anxiety, and she thought she had to raise up the other seven in anxiety. This sister did not see that anxiety is a sin. She thought that it was her duty to be anxious.

To always rejoice is a commandment of God. To be anxious for nothing is also a commandment of God. To give thanks in everything, even more, is a commandment of God. Victory and strength enable one to keep the commandment of God. Those who are unable to overcome cannot keep God's commandments.

Failure to Render to God What He Requires

God requires that we consecrate ourselves absolutely to Him. He requires that we consecrate our wives and children to Him. He also requires that we consecrate our business entirely to Him. He requires that we consecrate all of our money to Him. Every Christian wants to save something for himself. But dear brothers and sisters, we have to realize that in the Old Testament there was the ordinance of tithing, the offering of one tenth; in the New Testament our consecration should be ten tenths. Our house, our land, our wife and children, and even ourselves must be fully consecrated to God.

Many Christians are afraid that God will trouble them. There was a Christian who was very afraid of consecrating himself to God. He said, "If I offer up myself to God, what will happen if He sends sufferings to me?" I said to him in a serious way, "What kind of God do you think our God is? If a disobedient child becomes yielding and tells his parents that he will be obedient to them from now on, do you think that the parents will purposely ask him to do what he cannot do? Do you think that the parents will make him suffer on purpose? If they do, they are no longer his parents but his judge. If they are truly his parents, they will surely care for their child. Do you think that God will give you sufferings on purpose? Do you think that God will play tricks on you on purpose? You have forgotten that He is your Father!"

Brothers and sisters, only those who are consecrated to God have real power. They can place their business in God's hands. They can place their fathers, mothers, wives, and children in God's hands. They can place their money in God's hands. They will not take what God has given to them and waste it in the world. They have consecrated even their own lives to the Lord. Those who are afraid of consecrating their belongings, their material goods, and their relationships with others to God have not yet overcome. The more one consecrates to God, the more strength one has. Those who willingly consecrate to God almost seem to encourage God to take more. They seem to say to God, "Please take more!" The life of consecration is a joyous life. It is a life of power. If a man does not consecrate himself, not only has he sinned, but he is also lacking in power.

Regarding Iniquity and Refusing to Repent of Sins That Should Be Confessed

Many people have dealt with many things, but in their heart they refuse to admit that the things they have dealt with are sins. According to Psalm 66:18, these ones "regard iniquity" in their heart. Their heart loves these sins; they are unwilling to relinquish them. Not only is there a desiring, there is the loving, the regarding, and the unwillingness to relinquish these sins. There is a hidden love toward sin, a heart that refuses to acknowledge the sins as sins. Although we would never admit our love for these things and although our mouth would never say that we crave these things, our heart goes after them even before our feet follow after them. Many times, sin is not a matter of

outward behavior, but a matter of love in the heart. If there are iniquities that we regard in our heart, we have to overcome them.

Many people not only have a heart for iniquity, but they also refuse to acknowledge many of their sins. A believer often offends a brother. When the matter is brought to his attention, he readily admits that he has offended the brother. Consequently, he makes some outward adjustments; he begins to treat the other brother better, shakes his hand in a warmer way, and receives him more affectionately. Brothers and sisters, the most we can do is change our attitude, but God does not recognize this. God does not recognize changes in our attitude. Many things require restitution. Money needs to be returned. Although many people do not have the time to listen to our long stories, we still have to confess our sins.

Concerning confession, the Bible never says that we should tell others of our sins in detail. The Bible never tells us to enumerate our sins like a novel. The Lord says, "If your brother sins..." (Matt. 18:15). It does not matter how many sins there are. When a brother comes to us and confesses, "Brother, I have sinned against you," we have to forgive him. Many hidden stories need not be told. No ear on earth is worthy of listening to all these stories, and no ear on earth could bear them all.

Brothers and sisters, how many sins do our hearts still cherish? How many sins are left untouched? If there are any sins, we have to overcome them. Unless we overcome, we will not be able to prevail over these sins.

OVERCOMING IS NECESSARY AND POSSIBLE

Brothers and sisters, if you find yourself with the sins mentioned above, surely you need to overcome. I do not know how many of these eight different sins you commit. Perhaps you commit only one or two. Perhaps there are more. But God will not allow one or two or more sins to entangle you. You may observe a few flaws in a brother, detect other blemishes in another, and find a few other shortcomings in a third. But brothers and sisters, it is wrong to have so many mistakes. It is unnecessary to have these mistakes. We should thank and praise the Lord that all sins are under our feet. Thank and praise Him. No sin is so great that we have to commit it. Thank and praise Him. No temptation is too great to overcome.

The life that the Lord ordains for us is a life of uninterrupted fellowship with God. Every Christian can carry out the will of God, and every Christian can be completely free from his natural affections. Every Christian can overcome sin completely, and every Christian can overcome his disposition. Every Christian can consecrate everything completely to God and be delivered from the love of sin. Thank and praise the Lord. This is not an idealistic life. It is a life that can be fully realized.

BEING HONEST AND NOT DECEIVING OURSELVES

We have to pray to God that we do not deceive ourselves. God can only bless one kind of people—those who are honest before Him. In Philip's preaching, we see that as soon as the lying before God stops, His blessing will follow. We have to say, "O God, I have lied to You. Forgive me." When we pray this way, the Lord will immediately bless us. Brothers and sisters, perhaps we have said, "O God! satisfy me." But we have to realize that those who are dissatisfied are not necessarily hungry. In order to be satisfied, we must be hungry. When the prodigal son left his father, he wasted everything and longed to be satisfied with the carob pods that the hogs were eating. No one gave him anything. This is being dissatisfied. Some are dissatisfied daily and filled with carob pods in

their stomach. It is one thing to be dissatisfied; it is another to be hungry. How can we be satisfied when we are weak and constantly failing? Although we are not satisfied, we fill ourselves this way and we live this kind of life day after day. What we need is not only dissatisfaction but also hunger. The Lord can only bless one kind of people at this conference: the hungry ones. God does not promise to fill up the dissatisfied ones. Brothers and sisters, let us stop all the lies. We have lied to God long enough. Brothers and sisters, we have failed! We have failed before God! Confessing before men in this way is a glory to God's name. Thank and praise Him! All those who are honest will be blessed. Thank and praise Him! I believe many will meet God this time, and God will bless them.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:3

THE EXPERIENCE OF FAILURE

When we were saved, the grace of God filled our hearts with joy. At that time, our life was filled with hope; we thought that from that point on, all our sins would be under our feet. We thought that, henceforth, we could overcome everything. At the time we were saved, we thought that no temptation was too great for us to overcome and no difficulty was too much for us to surmount. Our future was full of a glorious hope. For the first time, we tasted the peace of forgiveness and the savor of joy. At that time, it was so easy and sweet to fellowship with God. We were filled with joy and happiness. Heaven was so close to us. There was nothing that was impossible for us to do. At that time, we thought that every day would be a day of victory.

However, that wonderful condition did not last, and that wonderful hope did not materialize. The sins that we thought were gone suddenly came back. The sins that we thought we had overcome returned. We thought we had left them behind, but they came back to us. Our former temper came back. Pride returned, and our old jealousy flared up once more. We may have tried to read the Bible but to no avail. We may have prayed, but the sweet taste was no longer there. Gone was the former zeal for lost souls. Love began to wane. Some matters were indeed dealt with, but we found others impossible to deal with. Our daily song became one of defeat rather than victory. We saw more failures than victories in our daily life. We began to feel a great lack within. When we compared ourselves with Paul, John, Peter, and those in the first century, we felt that there was a great difference between their experience and ours. We could not help others. We could only speak to others about the victorious part of our experience. We could not tell them of the part in us that failed. We felt that our days of victory were few and that our days of failure were numerous. Daily we lived in misery. This is the common experience of many Christians.

When we were saved, we thought that since our sins were forgiven, they would never come back to us. We felt that once we had joy and peace, they would abide with us forever. Unfortunately, the sins and temptations came back. There were fewer high experiences, and low experiences became common. There were fewer joyful times, and sorrowful times became common. In these circumstances, we experience two things. On the one hand, temptations, pride, jealousy, and temper return. On the other hand, we endeavor to suppress ourselves. As soon as these sins come back, we struggle to suppress them and to stop them from manifesting themselves. Those who are successful in suppressing themselves think that they have overcome. Those who have failed live in a cycle of failure, victory, sin, and remorse. As a result they become extremely discouraged. Shortly after they are saved, either they consciously suppress their sins, or they resign themselves to the thought that victory is impossible. They become despondent and discouraged. On the one hand, they experience some victory; on the other hand, they also experience many failures. When they succeed in restraining themselves, their sins are temporarily stopped. But when they fail, they concede to the inevitability of committing sin.

Brothers and sisters, I would like to ask you a question before God: When the Lord Jesus went to the cross, did He expect us to have the kind of experience we have today? When He was crucified on the

cross, did He know that our life would be victorious one day and defeated the next? Did He know that we would be victorious in the morning and defeated in the evening? Are His accomplishments on the cross insufficient to make us serve Him in holiness and righteousness? Did He shed His blood on the cross only with a view to deliverance from the punishment of hell, without a view to deliverance from the pain of sin? Is His blood shed on the cross only sufficient to save us from the coming eternal pain of sin, without saving us from the pain of sin today? Oh, brothers and sisters, I cannot refrain from saying "Hallelujah!" The Lord has accomplished everything on the cross! When He was on the cross, He dealt not only with the pain of hell but also with the pain of sin. He was reminded not only of the pain of the punishment of sin but also of the pain of the power of sin. He has prepared a way of salvation for us. Such a way enables us to live on earth in the same way that He lived. Brothers and sisters, not only did Christ take care of the suffering of hell; He also took care of the suffering of sin. In other words, His redemptive work has given us not only the position and basis to be saved in a shallow way, but also the position and basis to be saved to the uttermost. We do not have to live the way we do today. We have to say "Hallelujah!" because there is a gospel for sinners and a gospel for "Christian sinners"! The gospel for Christian sinners is preached in the same way that the cross was preached to us before. Hallelujah! There is a gospel today for Christian sinners!

THE GOD-ORDAINED CHRISTIAN LIFE

In the last message, we saw our experience in ourselves. Today we want to consider the kind of life that God has ordained for Christians. According to God, what kind of life should a Christian live? We are not talking about advanced Christians; we are talking about every saved and regenerated Christian, every Christian who has received the eternal life. What kind of life should they live? Only after we know this will we see what our shortages are. What does the Bible say about the Christian life? Let us consider a few passages in the Bible.

A Life That Is Free from All Sins

Matthew 1:21 says, "And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." When I was in Chefoo and Peking recently, a few brothers remarked that in the past they loved calling the Lord the Christ, but that now they like calling Him "Jesus, my Savior!" He is called Jesus because He "save[s] His people from their sins." We have received Jesus as our Savior. We have obtained the grace of forgiveness. Thank and praise the Lord that Jesus is now our Savior and our sins are forgiven. But what has Jesus done for us? "He...will save His people from their sins." This is God's ordination. This is Jesus' accomplishment. The question now is whether we are still living in sin or whether we are delivered from it. Does our old temper come back to plague us? Are we still bound by our sins and entangled by our thoughts? Are we still as proud as before? Are we still as selfish as before? Or have we been delivered from our sins? I have mentioned one illustration many times, and I will mention it again: There is a difference between a life-saving ring and a life raft. When a man falls into the water and is thrown a life-saving ring, he will not drown if he holds onto the ring, but neither will he be delivered out of the water. He will not sink, but neither will he be lifted out. He is neither dying, nor is he living. It is different with a life raft. In the case of a life raft, the drowning person is lifted out of the water into the raft. Our Lord's salvation is not the salvation of a life-saving ring but the salvation of a life raft. He will not stop halfway between dying and living. He will save His people from their sins. He does not leave us in sins. Therefore, biblical salvation saves us from sin. However, even though we have believed, we are not yet saved from sin; we still live in sin. Is the Bible wrong? No, there is nothing wrong with the Bible; it is our experience that is wrong.

What else did Jesus do when He came to us? What does the Bible say about His work? Let us go on.

A Life That Is in Intimate Fellowship with God

Luke 1:69 says, "And raised a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant." Verses 74 and 75 say, "We, having been delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days." God has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David. We have this horn of salvation already. What has this horn of salvation done for us, and to what degree has it delivered us? He has delivered us out of the hand of our enemies. What kind of life does He want us to live after we are delivered? After we are delivered out of the hand of our enemies, is He only interested in our serving Him in holiness and righteousness? Is that all He wants? If this is true, we will only serve Him in righteousness and holiness sometimes. But thank and praise the Lord, His Word says that we should serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. We should serve Him in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live on earth. This is the kind of life that God has ordained for us. We should serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. Of course, to our shame we must admit that we have not served Him in holiness and righteousness all our days, even though God has delivered us from the hand of our enemies. Either the word of the Bible is wrong or our experience is wrong. The only way our experience can be right is for the Bible to be wrong. In the past, I always wondered what kind of life the Bible expects from a Christian. According to the Bible, everyone who is saved by the Lord should serve Him in holiness and righteousness all his days. If the Bible is wrong, our experience can be justified. But if the Bible is not wrong, our experience must be wrong.

A Life That Is Fully Satisfied in the Lord

John 4:14 says, "But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water gushing up into eternal life." How precious is this word! It does not speak of a special kind of Christian. It does not say that only those who have received special grace from the Lord can have a spring of water gushing up into eternal life. The Lord said this to a Samaritan woman whom He previously had never met. He said that if she believed, she would receive living water. This living water would be in her a spring that gushes up into eternal life. Brothers and sisters, what is the meaning of being thirsty? When one is thirsty, it means that he is not satisfied. Those who drink of the water that the Lord gives will never thirst again. Thank and praise the Lord! A Christian is not only a contented person but a person who is forever satisfied! It is not enough for a Christian to merely be contented. Everything that God gives to us makes us eternally satisfied. But how many times have we crossed the main streets without feeling thirsty? When we pass by the great department stores, are we thirsty? If we crave for this or that, is this not being thirsty? Are we thirsty when we consider our classmates or colleagues and envy their possessions? Yet the Lord said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water gushing up into eternal life." What He gives to us is one kind of life, yet we experience something else. The Lord says that He is all we need, but we say that He is not enough. We need this and that before we can be satisfied, but He said that He alone is enough. Is what we received from the Lord wrong or is our experience wrong? One of the two must be wrong. The Lord cannot possibly write us a bad check. Whatever He promises, He will surely give. Our experience in the past was, in the words of one hymn, "a half salvation" (Hymns, #513, stanza 2). Why does the Lord say that a believer will not be thirsty again? This is because he has become different inside. Within him, there are new demands and new satisfactions. Brothers and sisters, are we living before God and serving Him in holiness and righteousness all our days? Are we living

before God every day in holiness and righteousness, as the priest Zachariah spoke of in Luke 1:75? Do we have something within that gushes forth all the time to quench others' thirst? The Chinese have an expression, wu-wei, which means "to do nothing." Christians have to be those who are asking for nothing. We can say that the Lord is enough for us. Are we satisfied with just the Lord? Are we really satisfied with the Lord Jesus alone? If we are not satisfied, it means that there is something wrong with our living.

A Life That Affects Others

John 7:37 and 38 say, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." Rivers of living water will flow out of whose innermost being? They will not flow out of only special Christians or the apostles Paul, Peter, or John, but out of all those who believe, out of ordinary men like us. It is out of the innermost being of men like us that rivers of living water will flow. When men touch us, they should be satisfied and cease from their thirst. I had a friend whose simple contact with others made them feel the banality of the world, the foolishness of ambition, and the tastelessness of greed. Someone might feel dissatisfied about something. But as soon as he contacted her, he would find that the Lord is enough to satisfy. On the other hand, one might feel satisfied about something, but as soon as he contacted her, he would find these things to be worthless. The Lord said those who believe into Him will have rivers of living water flowing out of their innermost being. This should be the common experience of all ordinary Christians. What I am talking about is not the experience of special Christians but the experience of all common Christians. Brothers and sisters, do others stop thirsting when they touch us? Or do they continue in their thirst? If others complain about their sufferings and we also complain, if others feel sorrowful and we also feel sorrowful, and if others confess their failures and we also confess our failures, we are not rivers of living water but dry deserts. Even the grass of others will be dried up by us. When this happens, either God is wrong or we are wrong. God cannot be wrong, so it must be we who are wrong.

A Life That Is Free from the Power of Sin

Let us see what happens in Acts. Verse 26 of chapter three says, "God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds." Peter's message at the portico of the temple still speaks of our condition today. The Lord Jesus' accomplishment is more than able to deliver us from sin. One basic experience of a Christian should be deliverance from sin. As Christians, we should at least overcome the known sins. We may not overcome the sins that we do not know about. But we should overcome by the Lord all the sins that we know about. We may have many besetting sins that have plagued us for years. By the power of the Lord, we should overcome all these sins. This is the biblical standard. A man should only be occasionally overtaken by offenses. But our experience is that we only occasionally overcome. How abnormal is our experience!

Romans 6:1-2 says, "What then shall we say? Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Absolutely not! We who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it?" Every person who has believed in the Lord Jesus and has become a Christian is dead to sin. No one who has believed in the Lord Jesus and has become a Christian should live in sin any longer. But how do we know that we are dead to sin? The next verse provides the answer.

Verse 3 says, "Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" In other words, everyone who is baptized and saved is dead to sin. When a person is baptized, he becomes dead in Christ Jesus.

Verse 4 says, "We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life." This should be the daily life of every Christian. Everyone who is baptized should walk in newness of life. This is not a verse for some special Christians; it is for Christians who are saved and baptized. We all have been baptized; therefore, we all should walk in newness of life. This is the experience that God has ordained for every Christian. Are we those who walk in newness of life?

Romans 6:14 says, "For sin will not lord it over you, for you are not under the law but under grace." I treasure this verse very much! Brothers and sisters, who is not under the law but under grace? Is Andrew Murray the only one? Are Paul, Peter, or John the only ones? Or are all those who have believed not under the law but under grace? How many of you sitting here today are under grace? Thank and praise our God, we are all under grace! None of us is under the law.

However, there is another sentence prior to this sentence: "Sin will not lord it over you." Thank and praise the Lord, sin will not lord it over us! Thank and praise Him that victory is not only the experience of some special Christians. Thank and praise God that victory is the experience of ordinary Christians. Thank and praise Him that every saved Christian is under grace. When I was first saved, I saw this verse and treasured it very much. I realized that I had experienced many victories and had overcome many sins. I realized that God had graced me. But there was still one sin which lorded it over me. In fact, a few sins always came back to visit me. I had overcome several sins, but a few other sins often came back to visit me. This was like my experience with a brother one day. I met him on the street and nodded to him. Then I went into a shop to buy something. When I came out, I met him coming my way, and I nodded to him again. Then I went into a second store and bought something else. When I came out, I met him yet again and nodded to him once more. When I turned to the next street, I met him and nodded to him again. I turned on to a second street and met him once again and nodded to him yet another time. In all I met and nodded to him five times that day. We encounter sins the same way that I encountered this brother. It seems that sin purposely tries to meet us. We are always running into it; it seems that it is constantly following us. Temper seems to follow some all the time. Pride and jealousy seem to follow others all the time. Laziness seems to follow one, and lies seem to follow another. One finds himself always having an unforgiving spirit while another is plagued continually by base desires or selfishness. Some find unclean thoughts following them all the time, while others find unclean lusts following them all the time. Everyone seems to have at least one sin which follows him all the time. I had a few sins which continually plagued me. I had to admit that sin lorded it over me! God says that sin will not lord it over me, but I had to confess that something was wrong with me. I had to admit that the mistake was in me and not in God's Word. Brothers and sisters, if we are living a defeated life, we should know that this is not what God ordained for us. We have to know that it is not God's intention for sin to lord it over us. His Word says that sin will not lord it over us!

Romans 8:1 says, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." I have expounded on the word condemnation many times. About twenty years ago someone discovered some ancient manuscripts and found that there were two meanings to this word. One is used in a civil context and the other in a legal context. According to its civil application, it can be translated "impotence." Hence, this verse can be translated, "There is now then no impotence to those who are

in Christ Jesus." Brothers and sisters, how wonderful this is! But for whom is this verse written? Is it only for John Wesley? Is it only for Martin Luther or for Hudson Taylor? What does the Bible say? It says, "There is now then no impotence to those who are in Christ Jesus." Who are these ones? They are Christians. Every Christian is a person who is in Christ Jesus, and every one of them is no longer impotent.

Verse 2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." I will repeat a hundred times that it is not special Christians only who are delivered from the law of sin and of death. Every Christian should be delivered from the law of sin and of death. What is the meaning of being impotent? According to Romans 7, it means doing what one hates and not practicing what one wills. It is finding that "to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not." The meaning of impotence is being unable to do anything. The history of many Christians is one of constant resolutions and constant breaking of resolutions. They continually resolve to do something and continually fail. But thank and praise the Lord, God's Word says that no Christian is impotent any longer.

What is a law? It is something that happens again and again. With a law, the same action produces the same result under whatever circumstances the action is performed. A law is a steady phenomenon; it is a constant tendency, a condition that continues to come back. For example, there is the force of gravity. Whenever an object is dropped, gravity will draw it downward. This gravitational force is a law. With some people, losing their temper is a law. They may hold back once or twice, but they are provoked the third time. By the fourth time, they lose their temper. This happens to one brother after another. One may hold back at the beginning, but eventually his temper breaks out. Every time a temptation comes, the same result occurs. We observe that the same is true with the matter of pride. When others say one good word about you, you may not be moved. But when they say a second good word about you, your expression immediately changes and your face shines. A law is anything that gives the same result when it goes through the same steps. Sin has become a law for us. Many brothers are agreeable in some things, but they are provoked as soon as they are stirred up in other things. They can overcome many things, but as soon as they encounter certain other things, they are provoked.

Brothers and sisters, it does not take special Christians to overcome the law of sin. No Christian has to remain impotent. Every Christian can be delivered from the law of sin. All of the above verses are facts; they are not commands. Every Christian should have these experiences. Yet our experience does not quite match God's Word. How sad this is!

A Life That Overcomes All Environments

Romans 8:35 says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" Verse 37 says, "But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us." Oh, our Lord who loves us has more than conquered all these things! This should be the Christian experience. But in our case, we do not need tribulation or swords to come upon us; as soon as someone gives us a bad look, we lose the love of Christ. However, Paul said that he more than conquered in all these things. This should be the common experience of all Christians. Victory is the normal experience of a Christian; defeat should be the abnormal experience. According to God's ordination, every Christian should more than conquer. Whether we encounter tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, we should not only conquer it but more than conquer it! It does not matter whether there are difficulties. Outsiders may think that we Christians have gone mad. Hallelujah, others can say

that we are mad. We are not concerned about these things any longer, and we have more than conquered them because of the love of Christ. Thank and praise the Lord, this should be the experience of a Christian; it is the experience that God has ordained for us. But what is our actual experience? The Bible has not kept these experiences from us, but we often do not find the way to enter such a life. Before tribulation even comes in abundance, we are already shouting, "I need patience! I am suffering!" If we find the way to this life, we will more than conquer in all these things.

Second Corinthians 2:14 says, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place." Brothers and sisters, a Christian life is not one that overcomes sometimes and is defeated at other times. It is not one that overcomes in the morning and is defeated in the afternoon. A Christian life is one that overcomes all the time. If you encounter a temptation today and you overcome it, you should not be so happy about it that you can hardly sleep at night. Only the experience of not overcoming should be uncommon. Overcoming should be common and frequent.

A Life with the Ability to Do Good

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them." Brothers and sisters, remember that Ephesians 2:10 comes after verses 8 and 9. In the preceding verses, it says that we are saved by grace. Here it says that we are His masterpiece, created for good works which God has prepared beforehand for us to walk in. This is not a special experience for some Christians; rather, it should be the common experience of every saved Christian. God saves us in order that we may do good. Brothers and sisters, are our good works according to God's ordination, or are we always complaining while we are doing good? Suppose you are mopping the floor. While you are mopping, you may complain that only one or two people are helping and that others are not helping. This will either result in boasting or murmuring. This is not doing good. Every good work of a Christian should be accompanied by an overflow of joy; we should not be stingy, boastful, or selfish, but generous and ready to give to others. It would be a pity if only the best Christians could do good. God's ordination is that doing good should be the common experience of every Christian.

A Life Filled with Light

John 8:12 says, "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." This is the life that God has ordained for a Christian. Those who can stay away from darkness and who can walk in the light of life are not special Christians. Every Christian who follows Christ should not walk in darkness and should have the light of life. A Christian who is full of light is nothing more than a normal Christian, while a Christian who does not have the light is an abnormal Christian.

A Life That Is Wholly Sanctified

First Thessalonians 5:23 says, "And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the apostle Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian believers. Since he said "sanctify you wholly," there must be the possibility of being sanctified wholly. It is possible to find no fault in a Christian. God will sanctify us wholly, and He will preserve us complete and without blame.

We are speaking of the Lord's provision for a Christian. The Lord's salvation has given every Christian the power to fully overcome sin, to be fully delivered from the bondage of sin, to trample sin underfoot, and to have unhindered fellowship with God. This is the life that the Lord has ordained for us. This is not merely a theory but a fact, because this is the Lord's provision.

THE NEED TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S FULL DELIVERANCE

Brothers and sisters, what is your experience? If your experience is different from the Bible, you have not received full salvation yet. It is a fact that you are saved, but you have not received full salvation yet. Today I will announce a tidings to you: The Lord's accomplishment on the cross has not only delivered you from the judgment of sin but also freed you from the pain of sin. He has prepared a full salvation so that you do not have to remain in your initial salvation but can daily experience victory while living on earth.

What is victory? Victory is the making up of what is lacking in our salvation experience. It is true that many are saved, but they lacked something at the time of their salvation. God has saved us and graced us. He has no intention that we live a wandering life on earth. He wants us to experience a full deliverance. We need a make-up lesson today because we were not properly saved when we believed. We need the overcoming experience to make up for what was lacking in the past.

Brothers and sisters, has God saved us only to find us repeatedly sinning and regretting? Since God's Son has died for us, should we still sin? Before we were saved, we were bound to sin. Now that we are saved, are we still bound to sin? Before we were saved, sin reigned. Now that we are saved, should sin still reign? Sin is diametrically opposed to God. We should not allow a trace of sin to remain in us. Will God do something contrary to Himself? Certainly not! How evil sin is! A sin is a sin, whether it is a dispositional sin, a sin of weakness, a sin in the body, or a sin in the mind.

Let us say to the Lord, "Thank and praise You; Your accomplishment on the cross has not only delivered me from the punishment of sin but also saved me from the power of sin." May the Lord show us that our experience of salvation was not complete at the time we believed. May the Lord show us the need to overcome. Brothers and sisters, if our experience does not match the Scripture, it means that we need to overcome. May He shine on us and expose us. We should not deceive ourselves by saying that it is inevitable for a Christian to sin. No word will hurt the Lord's heart more deeply than this. Brothers and sisters, do we know what the cross has done? Do we think that the Lord went to the cross just for the sake of leaving us the way we are? We should not lie. We should not boast that we can suppress or control ourselves. Suppressing and controlling ourselves is not victory. The Lord's victory completely crushes sin. Hallelujah! Sin is under the Lord's feet! All of us who have not experienced a continual fellowship with the Lord and who have not experienced the sin-crushing power need to overcome. May the Lord grace us with His blessings.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OVERCOMING LIFE

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 15:29 (In Hebrew the phrase "the Strength of Israel" can be translated also as "the Hope of Israel." The margin of ASV contains the phrase "the Victory of Israel.")

What is victory? In the Bible, victory is first mentioned in 1 Samuel 15:29, where it says that Victory will not lie nor repent. Indeed, victory is a person. A thing is not a person, and a matter is not a person, but the Victory of Israel is a person. Victory is not a thing or an experience. It is not a matter; it is a person. We all know who this person is; He is Christ! In a previous message I told you that victory is not something from us. It is not our experience; it is a person! Victory is not a matter of what we are, but a matter of Christ living on our behalf. This is why the victory we have will not lie nor repent. Thank and praise the Lord that victory is a living person!

In this message, we will go on to consider what victory is. We need to consider the characteristics of the overcoming life. The Bible shows us many characteristics of the overcoming life. We cannot enumerate all of them in this message. We will instead mention only five of them.

THE MEANING OF THIS LIFE— AN EXCHANGED LIFE, NOT A CHANGED LIFE

Brothers and sisters, victory has to do with an exchanged life, not a changed life. Victory does not mean that one is changed, but rather that one is exchanged. We are very familiar with Galatians 2:20, which says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God." What does this verse mean? It means that our life is exchanged. Our life is no longer in the realm of "I"; it has nothing to do with us anymore. It is not an evil "I" being changed into a good "I," or a filthy "I" being changed into a clean "I." It is to be "no longer I." The greatest mistake we make today is to think that victory involves progress and that defeat involves the absence of progress. This is why we think that everything will be well if we do not lose our temper or if we have an intimate fellowship with God. We think that if we have these things, we will overcome. But we have to remember that victory has nothing to do with us. We play no part in this victory.

One brother once said to me in tears, "I cannot overcome." I answered, "Brother, indeed you cannot overcome." He continued, "I cannot overcome, and there is nothing that I can do." I said, "God has no intention for you to overcome in yourself. It is not His intention that your evil temper be changed to a good temper or that your stubbornness be changed to meekness. God has no intention to change sorrow to joy. His way is to make an exchange of your life. It has nothing to do with you."

One sister said, "It is easy for others to overcome. But it is very difficult for me to overcome. My temper is worse than anyone else's, my thoughts are more unclean than others', and I am more ill-natured than others are. I cannot control myself." I answered, "You are right. Not only is it difficult for you to overcome; it is impossible for you to overcome." Do you think that if a man is a little more honest, well-tempered, and simple, it is easier for him to overcome? Never! On the one hand, even if a person becomes gentler, holier, and more perfect, he still has to go, and Christ still must move in before he can overcome. On the other hand, even if he is viler, more evil, and more imperfect than

anyone else, he will still overcome if he lets go of himself and allows Christ to move in. A man who has a bad temper and is morally corrupt needs to believe in the Lord Jesus. A man who has a good temper and is very moral also needs to believe in the Lord Jesus. In the same way, it is not just ill-tempered and immoral ones who need victory; well-tempered and moral ones also need victory. Thank and praise the Lord that victory is Christ; it has nothing to do with us.

I met a sister once. I have never seen another person who found it as difficult to overcome as she did. She spent two hours telling me about all of her failures from the time she was a youth to the time she was fifty years old. She could not overcome her pride and temper. She was defeated again and again. No one was as eager to overcome as she was. Yet no one found it as impossible to overcome as she did. She told me that if there ever was a person who wanted to overcome, she must be one of them. Yet if there ever was a person who could not overcome, she must be one of them as well. She grieved over her failures and even attempted suicide once because of her failures. She was hopeless. While she was telling me all this, I smiled and said, "The Lord Jesus has another ideal patient for Himself today. There is business for His clinic again!" She was filled with her own sins, her own pride, and her own temper. If you did not know the way to overcome, you might have been infected by her barrage of words. If you did not know what it is to overcome, you may have concluded that she was hopeless. But thank and praise the Lord! Here is a glad tidings: You cannot change, but all you need is an exchange! Thank and praise the Lord! The overcoming life is not a change but an exchange. If it were up to you, you could not make it. But if it is up to Christ, He can make it. The question is whether it is you or Christ who overcomes. If Christ overcomes, it would not matter even if you were ten times worse than you are now.

Brothers and sisters, what is victory? Victory is not you overcoming by yourself. It is Christ overcoming for you. The kind of victory in the Bible is seen in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." When Fukienese argue, they often use a colloquial expression, si-bu-bien, which means that there cannot be any change until one dies. When I was in Peking, I told the brothers that every one of us has to tell ourselves that we are si-bu-bien. Thank and praise Him that we are not changed but exchanged!

A sister once asked me about the difference between a change and an exchange. I illustrated it with an old Bible. If we want the Bible to change, we have to give it another cover and add glue to the spine. Perhaps we can put new gold foil on the cover. If letters are missing from the pages, we have to make them up. If places have become blurred, we have to trace in the original words. After so much work and so many days, we still cannot be sure whether we have changed it the right way. But if we exchange it for a new one, we can do it within a second. All you have to do is give the bad one to me, and I will give a good one to you. Then everything is done. God has given us His Son. There is no need for us to strive for anything. Once we make the exchange, everything is done!

Let me give another illustration. A few years ago, I bought a watch. The company that sold the watch put a two-year warranty on the watch. But the days that the watch was in the shop were more than the days it was in my home. Every few days the watch would break down, and I had to send it back to the shop for repair. This happened repeatedly. I went to the shop once, twice, even ten or more times. Eventually, I was exhausted. The watch was repaired over and over again, but it was never quite fixed. I asked the company if I could exchange it for another watch. The company said that it could not offer an exchange; it could only repair the watch, but it was never fixed. I became so exhausted that eventually I said, "You can have the watch. I do not want it anymore." The human way is the way of constant repair. During the two years that I owned the watch, it was constantly under repair. With the human way, there is no exchange; there is only the way of repair.

Even in the Old Testament, we see that God's way was not to repair or to change, but to replace. Isaiah 61:3 says, "To grant to those who mourn in Zion,/To give to them a headdress instead of ashes,/The oil of gladness instead of mourning,/The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of heaviness;/That they may be called the terebinths of righteousness,/The planting of Jehovah, that He may be glorified." God's way is the way of replacement. God does not change the ashes. Rather, He replaces the ashes with a headdress. He does not change the mourning. Rather, He replaces the mourning with gladness. God's way is never to change, but to exchange.

Thank and praise the Lord. We have not been able to change ourselves for all these years. Now God is making an exchange. This is the meaning of holiness. This is the meaning of perfection. This is the meaning of victory. This is the life of the Son of God! Hallelujah! From now on Christ's meekness becomes my meekness. His holiness becomes my holiness. From now on His prayer life becomes my prayer life. His fellowship with God becomes my fellowship with God. From now on there is no sin too great for me to overcome. There is no temptation too great for me to withstand. Victory is Christ; it is no longer I! Is there any sin too great for Christ to overcome? Is there any temptation too great for Christ to surmount? Thank and praise the Lord! I am not afraid anymore! From now on, it is no longer I but Christ.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THIS LIFE— A GIFT, NOT A REWARD

Please remember that victory is a gift; it is not a reward. What is a gift? A gift is a present; it is something freely given. What we receive as a result of work is a reward. But what we freely receive without doing any work is a gift. The latter is given to us freely; it has nothing to do with what we have done, and we do not have to exert any effort to get it. The former requires our work; we must strive for it before we can have it. The overcoming life which we speak of does not require our own effort. We can look at 1 Corinthians 15:57, which says, "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Victory is something that God has prepared and given to us. Our victory comes to us free of charge; we do not have to earn it by our own effort.

Brothers and sisters, a great mistake is to think that salvation comes to us freely, while victory comes to us as a result of our own effort. We know we cannot trust in any merit or any work of our own for salvation. We simply need to come to the cross and receive the Lord Jesus as our Savior. This is the gospel. While we think that salvation does not require our works, we also think that we should have good works after we are saved. Even though we do not try to be saved through works, we try to overcome through works. But just as one cannot be saved through good works, one cannot overcome through good works. God says that we cannot have any good works at all. Christ has died for us on the cross, and He is living for us within us. What is of the flesh will always be of the flesh, and God wants nothing that is of the flesh. We think that salvation is through the Lord Jesus' death for us on the cross, but that after salvation, we should try our best to do good and hope for the best. But let me ask, "Though you have been saved for years, are you good yet?" Thank and praise the Lord. We cannot do good. We cannot produce any amount of good. Hallelujah! We cannot do any good. Thank and praise Him that victory is a gift from Him; it is something freely given to us!

First Corinthians 15:56 speaks of sin, the law, and death. First Corinthians 15:57 speaks of God giving us the victory. Victory is a matter not only of overcoming sin, but also of overcoming the law and death. The redemption that God has prepared enables us to overcome not only sin but also the law, and it enables us to overcome not only the law but also death. I wish that I could walk around

the meeting hall and say to each one of you that this is a gospel. God has given this victory to every one of us.

Perhaps you are trying to work out a way to overcome temptation. Perhaps you are trying to work out a way to overcome your temper. Perhaps you are trying to work out a way to overcome your pride or jealousy. You may have spent a considerable time to do what you want to do, but you are disappointed every time. I have a gospel for you. The meekness of the Lord Jesus is yours for free. The holiness of the Lord Jesus is yours for free. The Lord's prayer is yours for free. Everything of the Lord is yours for free. As soon as you receive the Lord Jesus, all that is the Lord's becomes yours. Hallelujah! If this is not the gospel, what is it then? You may think that you have to strive in order to pray unceasingly. You may think that you have to strive for uninterrupted fellowship with God. You may think that you have to strive in order to deal with all the negative things and stop sinning. You may think that you have to strive in order to control your temper. You can confess your sins, but you cannot stop from committing these sins. You lie often, and in spite of your great effort to kick this habit, you continue to lie. I have met many brothers who told me that they do not want to lie, but they cannot change themselves. As soon as they speak something, lies come out of their mouth. I have a gospel for you today! God has given you the holiness of the Lord Jesus for free, the endurance of the Lord Jesus for free, the perfection, the love, and the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus for free. God gives freely to all those who want these things. God gives to you the intimate fellowship that Christ enjoys with God. He gives you the holy life that Christ lived, and He gives you the beauty of the perfection of Christ. These are gifts. If you tried to overcome by yourself, you could not change even if you tried for another twenty years; your temper would not change, and your pride would still be with you. Twenty years from now, you would still be the same. But God has prepared a full salvation for you. This salvation makes Christ's endurance your endurance. It makes Christ's holiness your holiness, and Christ's fellowship with God your fellowship with God. It makes all of Christ's virtues your virtues. Hallelujah! This is the salvation that God has prepared for you! God desires to freely give them to you!

Brothers and sisters, have you ever seen a sinner trying to save himself with his works? I have met many such people. When you meet a sinner, you can tell him that he does not need to do anything because Christ has done it all. God has given him the Lord Jesus. All he has to do is receive Him. In the same way, brothers and sisters, I have a message for you today: you do not need to do anything; Christ has done it all for you. God has given Christ to you. All you have to do is receive. Once you receive, you will overcome. Just as salvation does not depend on your work, because it is free grace from God, victory does not depend on your work, because it is free grace from God. Salvation does not require any of your own effort. Similarly, victory does not require any of your own effort.

I have a Bible here. Suppose I want to give it to you. The words in this Bible were not written by you; the book was not bound by you. You did not put the gold foil on the cover. Everything was done by others, but it is now a free gift to you. This is what victory is to us. It is a free gift from God. We do not work ourselves gradually into victory. We do not work ourselves gradually into holiness or perfection. If there is a victorious man on earth, he must have received his victory from the Lord Jesus.

Recently I met a sister who told me that she had spent twenty years trying to overcome her pride and her temper. The result was not only defeat but also a gradual decline during the past twenty years. She could do nothing about herself. I told her, "If you expect to overcome your pride and temper by yourself, you would not make it even if you had another twenty years. If you want to be delivered from your sin, all you have to do is accept God's gift now. This is God's free gift to you. You

only need to receive and it will be yours. The Lord Jesus is victory. If you receive Him as your victory, you will overcome." Thank and praise the Lord! She has since received this gift of God! We should realize the vanity of our work and the failure in our life. If we accept Jesus Christ, we will overcome.

Romans 6:14 is a familiar verse: "For sin will not lord it over you, for you are not under the law but under grace." How can sin not lord it over us? This can happen only when we are not under the law but under grace. What is the meaning of being under the law? I have said many times that being under the law is for God to demand man to do something. Being under the law means for us to do something for God. What then is the meaning of being under grace? Being under grace means that God is doing something for man. Being under grace is for God to do something for us. If we have to do something for God, the result will be sin lording it over us. The wages of our work is the lording over of sin. If God is doing something for us, sin will not be able to lord it over us. Under the law, we work. Under grace, God works. When God works, sin will not lord it over us. When God works, there will be victory. Everything that comes as a result of our own effort is not victory. Victory is something that comes free.

If there is anyone here who is tired of sinning, who is sick of sinning, who sins so much that he no longer acts like a Christian, and who feels that there is no longer any sense in becoming a Christian, I will tell him that all he has to do is receive this gift, and he will be a victorious man instantly. The principle of overcoming is the principle of grace; it is not the principle of reward. Once you receive this gift, every problem will be solved.

THE WAY TO RECEIVE THIS LIFE— OBTAINED, NOT ATTAINED

The overcoming life is something that is obtained; it is not attained. This matter can only be obtained; it can never be attained. What does it mean to obtain something? To obtain is to acquire something. What does it mean to attain? To attain is to go through a long journey. One has to advance gradually, and there is no assurance of when he will arrive. Hallelujah, Christian victory is not attained by a gradual process. Once I was in Kuling, and Brother Shin-liang Yu was with me. We were climbing up a mountain slowly. The more I walked, the more tired I became. After a while I asked Brother Yu how much longer it would be before we reached our destiny. He told me that it would not be long. But while we plodded on, the destiny was still not in sight. Every time I asked Brother Yu, he would say, "Very soon." Eventually, we reached our destiny. If we had ridden up the mountain on a sedan chair, the situation would have been different; it would have been an "obtaining" instead of an "attaining" to Mount Kuling. Victory is something obtained; it is not something attained. Everything related to the Holy Spirit is received, and everything related to victory is received.

Romans 5:17 says, "For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." According to this verse, victory is a gift and we only have to receive. Victory is not something that is attained through a gradual process. Victory is a gift that is placed in our hand; no effort is required. If I give this Bible to Brother Chang, how much effort does he have to exert to get it? All he has to do is stretch out his hand and he will have it that very second. When I give the Bible to you, it is a gift. Do you have to go home and fast for it? Do you have to kneel down towards Jerusalem three times a day to pray for it? Do you have to make up your mind not to lose your temper? You do not have to do any of these things. Once you receive, everything is yours. What

steps do you have to go through to receive this Bible? You do not have to go through any steps. As soon as you stretch out your hand, it is yours. Victory is a gift. You cannot attain it; you can only obtain it.

First Corinthians 1:30 is a very familiar verse to us. I can recite it to you: "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Wisdom is the general subject, and we can set it aside for the time being. This verse says that God has made Christ three things to us: (1) righteousness, (2) sanctification, and (3) redemption. When did God make Christ our righteousness? God made Christ our righteousness when Christ died on the cross. We received the Lord Jesus as our righteousness at that time. Did we have to cry for three days before we received it? Did we receive it only after we apologized to God enough? Thank and praise the Lord! The Son of God has died for us. As soon as we believe, we receive. Unfortunately, in the matter of receiving the Lord Jesus as our sanctification, many of us are going around in circles; we are wasting our time and labor. Receiving the Lord as our righteousness was instantaneous. In the same way, receiving the Lord as our sanctification is also instantaneous. If we try to advance slowly, expecting that we will arrive one day at sanctification, we will never attain it. Those who try to establish their own righteousness will never be saved. In the same way, those who try to establish their own sanctification will never overcome.

What is the difference between obtaining and attaining? The only difference between the two things lies in the time. One is instantaneous, while the other is gradual. There is a story about a man who stole chickens. Originally, he stole seven chickens a week. Later, he resolved to behave better, intending to steal one chicken less each week, hoping that by the end of the sixth week he would cease his stealing altogether. He hoped that his stealing would gradually decrease until he stole no more. Stealing no more in this way is a slow attainment; it does not come instantaneously. Yet the victory that is from the Lord is obtained instantaneously.

The last time I was in Chefoo, I met a brother who had a very bad temper. When he lost his temper, everyone in his family would become very fearful of him. His wife, children, and the workers in his shop would all become fearful of him. Even the brothers in the church were afraid of him because he would disturb the meeting when he lost his temper. He told me that he could do nothing about his temper. I told him that if he would take the Lord as his victory, he would immediately overcome. Thank and praise the Lord, he accepted this word, and he overcame. One day he asked me, "Mr. Nee, how long has it been since I have overcome?" We counted and realized that it had been a month. He said, "During this past month, my wife was sick and dying one day. In the past, when my child was sick, I would be so worried that I would walk from one end of the room to the other and my countenance would drop and I would lose my temper. But when my wife was sick and her pulse was beating irregularly, I spoke to God softly, saying, 'It is all right if you want to take her away.' I do not know where my temper has gone." Later his wife's condition improved a little, and he called in an acupuncturist to give her some treatment. He patiently served his wife all the time. On the day I left, he purposely came to see me off. He said that during the past twenty hours, he felt as if someone else's wife was sick because he was not worried at all. This brother owned an embroidery factory, and there were many troublesome female workers working for him. During that same month, many things happened in the factory. In the past, he would have reacted and lost his temper over these things. But during this time, he felt as if they were not his problems. He could even smile when he discussed problems with the workers. He said, "I do not know where my temper has gone." This is obtaining. If this were a matter of attainment, I am afraid that he would not attain given another twenty years. Thank and praise the Lord, victory is obtained, not attained. While you are sitting here, you can obtain it as soon as you say that you want it.

A missionary who went to India brought nothing along with her except her temper. She always lost her temper. She told herself she would be the last person in the world who would ever be patient. A friend who had rendered her spiritual help had found the secret of taking Christ as the overcoming life. She wrote to her missionary friend and told her that the overcoming life is something obtained. When the missionary received the letter, she did according to what the letter said. Three months later, her friend received an answer. In the letter she said, "When your letter came, I realized immediately that this is the gospel! Christ is my patience. As soon as I received it, my temper left. But since I had failed so miserably in the past, I did not dare say anything until I had tried it out for three months. The Indian servants here are very undisciplined and foolish. When I was angry with them in the past, I would slam the door to let them know that I was angry. Since I began to practice what you said, I have stopped slamming the door, and I no longer have a heart to do such a thing." This shows us that victory over sin is something the Lord accomplishes for us; there is no need for us to exercise any effort of our own. If we tried to do it by ourselves, we would not succeed even if we tried for a hundred years.

Brothers and sisters, let me repeat: Victory is not attained but obtained.

THE RECEIVING OF THIS LIFE—A MIRACLE

You may remember that Paul once said, "For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Whatever we work out is according to God's good pleasure. It is God who causes us to work out everything. God is operating in us to make us holy. We do not have to exert our own effort, because everything is accomplished through God working in us. Such a holy and perfect life does not come about by our own effort; it is absolutely a work of God.

With many people, nothing short of a miracle can deliver them from their wickedness. Some people do not feel their failures; they do not realize how hopeless they are. Others have given up on their temper, pride, or disposition. They realize that they will never overcome unless God performs a miracle. Is there anyone here who can overcome sin? Man's way is to suppress sin. But God's way is to perform a miracle by removing the old man and cleansing the heart altogether. If you realize the meaning of God's victory, you will be overjoyed.

A sister had an exceptionally uncontrollable temper. Her husband, children, servants, and everyone around her were afraid of her. Yet she was a Christian. It was despairing to her to have such a hot temper. A few years after she was saved, she received the Lord Jesus as her victory. Immediately after she had such an experience, she faced a great test. The day after she had received the Lord Jesus as her victory, she woke up and came downstairs to the living room. Her husband and the servants were hanging a chandelier from the ceiling. The chandelier was expensive, but the husband and the servants were not being careful enough. It fell to the floor and shattered at the very moment that she came down the stairs. When her husband saw her coming, he froze and wondered if there would be an explosion of temper. To his amazement, she said calmly, "Just sweep away the broken pieces." Her husband began to wonder. In the past she would have shouted and yelled when even a small cup or saucer broke. He thought that this time she surely would be very mad. When he saw her reaction, he asked, "Did you sleep well last night? Are you sick?" She answered, "I am not sick. God has performed a miracle on me and has taken away my old man." The husband said, "This indeed is a miracle! What a miracle! Thank and praise the Lord! This is a miracle!"

Mr. C. G. Trumbull, the founder of the Sunday School Times Company, is a person experienced in the spiritual life. He realized that the overcoming life is a miracle. He testified once to an elder that after he received the Lord Jesus as his life, not only was his temper gone, but even his desire to lose his temper disappeared. The elder asked, "Do you mean to say that all of our old sins can be removed?" Mr. Trumbull answered, "Yes." The elder then said, "I believe that this is real in you because I believe in your word. But this can never happen to me." Later, Mr. Trumbull invited the elder to pray with him. After a long prayer, the elder also received this fact. Some time thereafter, Mr. Trumbull met the elder again, and he told Mr. Trumbull, "I have never experienced in my life what I experienced on that evening. It was a miracle! There is no struggling and no striving. The cravings are gone, and even the desire for sin is gone. This is indeed wonderful. It is a miracle." Not long after, he wrote a letter to Mr. Trumbull and told him of some improper evil influence existing among the board of directors at the place of his work. In the past he would always try to suppress himself. But when he was in the midst of it this time, he was not touched and did not even have an inclination for such sins. What a miracle!

Brothers and sisters, do you have some insurmountable barriers? Do you have some uncontrollable sins? If you do, the Lord Jesus can perform the same miracle on you. You may have been helpless in some areas for years. But the Lord can perform a miracle on you. It does not matter whether your sins are spiritual, carnal, mental, physical, or dispositional. It does not matter whether you can or cannot obey God's will or whether or not you are consecrated, and it does not matter whether or not you have confessed your sins. The Lord can perform His miracle on you. If you cannot consecrate yourself, the Lord can cause you to consecrate yourself. If you cannot endure, the Lord can enable you to endure. He can overcome all the sins mentioned. God is able. When He performs a miracle, everything becomes possible.

THE RESULT OF THIS LIFE— A LIFE OF EXPRESSION, NOT A LIFE OF SUPPRESSION

The result of an overcoming life is a life of expression rather than a life of suppression. The problem with our "victory" is that most of it comes by suppression. There was an old lady who always suppressed her temper when she was irritated. She would maintain her smile outwardly, but she would struggle to suppress herself inwardly. This kind of suppressed life will only result in internal bleeding when it is allowed to continue for years. All the bitterness remains inside with a suppressed life. But thank and praise the Lord! Our victory is a life of expression, not a life of suppression. A life of expression lives out what one has already obtained. This is what Philippians 2:12 means when it says to "work out your own salvation." In the past, we tried to hide ourselves as much as possible. Now the victory of Christ expresses itself. It is expressible. In the past, the more we suppressed, the better it was. Now the more we express, the better it is. Christ lives within us, and we live Him out before men.

Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis had a young lady friend who was a poet. She was very good at helping children understand the meaning of the overcoming life. One day Mrs. Penn-Lewis visited her and tried to find out from her the way to teach children. On that day her friend invited dozens of children to come together to eat. After the meal and before the table was cleaned, a visitor suddenly came. The lady asked the children, "The table is so messy. What shall we do?" The children proposed covering up the table with a clean piece of tablecloth. She agreed and covered the mess on the table with a clean tablecloth. After the visitor left, she asked the children, "Did the visitor see the mess on the table?" They answered, "No." She then asked, "Although he did not see the mess, was

the mess still on the table?" They answered, "Yes." Although the visitor did not see the mess, the mess was still on the table.

Brothers and sisters, many people allow themselves to be unclean within but do not like to be unclean on the outside. The thoughts and feelings in our heart cannot be exposed to men's eyes. We think that we are victorious. Others may commend us for our humility, and we may call it humility. We may appear to have much patience, but actually everything is merely locked up inside. Brothers and sisters, I must say honestly that there is no victory when we suppress everything within us. Victory is when we go and Christ moves in. Victory is something that is expressed.

There was a sister who easily lost her temper. One day her servant broke a vase. Immediately she went to her bed and covered herself with a blanket in an effort to keep from losing her temper. This is a life of suppression.

A hawker may come to you to sell his fruit. You may tell him that you do not want to buy and ask him to go away. He may come the second time, and you may refuse and send him away again. He may come to you the third time. He comes because he wants to sell his fruit. He can control himself and make sure that he does not lose his temper. But this is not overcoming; this is not victory. This is merely a business practice. Suppressing your temper is not victory. Christ overcame by purging man's heart. Hence, victory means purity in the heart.

A brother who is over fifty years old had been reading Confucius's teaching all his life. He had been a Christian for over three years. Although he believed in the cleansing of the Lord's blood, he did not know the difference between Christianity and Confucianism. The Confucian way of cultivation is the way of self restraint: it is trying to achieve sainthood through suppression and cultivation. After he became a Christian, he still tried to practice suppression, always attempting to look away from problems and even eliminating them altogether. Later, he experienced the way of victory. He testified that victory had nothing to do with him. Christianity is different from all other religions. The difference does not lie merely in the cross but in the fact that we have a living Christ living within us. We can preach a doctrine of redemption and also a living Christ. The aforementioned person was a true disciple of Confucius, and nothing inside was exposed. Yet he now testifies that he can let go of himself; he no longer has to suppress himself, and problems no longer arise.

Brothers and sisters, I have to say hallelujah to this! Victory is a matter of letting go of one's self and expression. An overcoming life is none other than Christ Himself.

These five points are the characteristics of this life. Finally, allow me to say an honest word. Please remember that victory, like salvation, is definite. There is a definite date when one experiences it. You are saved on a definite date. (Of course, some have forgotten the month and day of their salvation.) You should also write down the date that you overcome. There should also be a definite date. Everyone should have a definite date when they overcome. This is a specific gate which one passes through. You have either passed through it or have not passed through it; there is no "maybe" in this matter. No one in the world is "maybe" saved; if you are saved, you are saved. In the same way, no one in the world is "maybe" victorious; if you have overcome, you have overcome. Those who have "perhaps" overcome have not overcome at all. All of us should pass through this gate. I cannot speak further today. In the future we will see that victory is not just an individual matter; there is a greater issue at stake. This is all the more reason for us to overcome.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE OVERCOMING LIFE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Gal. 2:20

NO LONGER I BUT CHRIST

Galatians 2:20 is a very familiar verse to us. This afternoon we will speak more about it. In the last message, we covered the meaning of an overcoming life. We know that the overcoming life is Christ, and we know that the overcoming life is Christ living in us. The question is how can we enter into the experience of this life. Christ wants to be our life and He can make us victorious. But how can Christ be our life? How can Christ live out His life within us? We have heard the gospel and know that Jesus is the Savior, but how do we take Him as our Savior? We know the salvation of the cross, but how can we be joined to the salvation of the cross? The question we will address in this message is how to be joined to Christ, including what we should do before Christ can become our life and before He can live within us. This afternoon we need to look at Galatians 2:20.

We will not consider the beginning of this verse or the end of this verse. We will begin with the middle of the verse. There is a wonderful expression in this verse: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." We can say that it is no longer I but Christ. What does "no longer I...but...Christ" mean? These five words mean victory. They speak of the overcoming life which we have been talking about for the past few days. The overcoming life is simply (1) "no longer I" and (2) "but...Christ." This is the overcoming life. As long as it is "no longer I" and as long as it is "but...Christ," there is victory. "No longer I" plus "but...Christ" is victory, and all problems are solved.

We saw in the last message that the meaning of the overcoming life is no longer I but Christ. But some questions remain: How can a Christian be no longer himself but Christ? How can one attain such a life? What way should one take before he will become no longer himself but Christ? This is why we have to study Galatians 2:20 carefully. According to Galatians 2:20, "it is no longer I...but...Christ" is in the middle. Before this portion there is a sentence, and after this portion there is another sentence. We have to see Paul's starting point from which he experienced "no longer I...but...Christ." If we see this, we can take the same way, and we will also be "no longer I...but...Christ." Hence, we have to pass through what Paul passed through and follow the same way that Paul took. His way must also be our way.

HOW TO BE NO LONGER I BUT CHRIST

Now let us find out how one can be "no longer I...but...Christ." We have to start from the first sentence of this verse. "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." How did Paul reach the point where he could say that it was "no longer I...but...Christ"? This is a very familiar word. "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live." The "I" is out; it is on the cross. The "I" has passed away. Hence, I can say that it is no longer I. However, brothers and sisters, the truth concerning crucifixion with Christ on the cross is not being preached for the first time among us. We have known for a long time that we are crucified with Christ. Why has the doctrine of our crucifixion with Christ not worked with us? Brother Lu, how many years have you

heard about the doctrine of crucifixion with Christ? You have heard about it for over ten years. Is it working in you? Please be honest with us. How much has it worked in you? Not much. I would ask Brother Chi the same question. How much has the doctrine of the cross guided you? How effective is it in you? Do you have the power of Paul? Brother Chi said that he felt that he was beginning to have more power in the last few days. We have known the doctrine of crucifixion with Christ for over ten years, but it has not worked in us. We may say that it has worked a little, but it has been so little that it amounts to almost nothing. We cannot say as Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ," and we cannot follow with the words, "It is no longer I who live." It seems as if the doctrine has not produced much effect in us. I am not merely repeating the doctrine of the cross this afternoon; we know too much already. We want to see the extent to which this crucifixion with Christ should work in us and what we should do before we can say that we are crucified with Christ.

Brothers and sisters, when the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, we did not put Him to death, nor did we put ourselves to death. Christ Himself died there, and God included us in His death. We are all familiar with this. Yet I would ask one thing: While it is true that God has crucified us, what should we do and what process should we pass through before we can say in reality that we are crucified with Christ? In the past we saw what God has done for us, but we did not see where our responsibility lies. We have seen that God has crucified us, but we do not know how we should view our own crucifixion. This afternoon we want to consider the responsibility that we must bear in our crucifixion with Christ.

ACCEPTING GOD'S VALUATION CONCERNING US

Why did God crucify Christ? My intention is not to give a sermon this afternoon but to have a talk with you. This is something that concerns all of us; it is not just something for me. Every one of us should consider this carefully. Why did God want to crucify us with the Lord Jesus? I can illustrate this point with a story. A robber was found guilty before a judge. Since the crime was not too serious, he was sentenced to only ten years of imprisonment. Another robber was also found guilty and was told by the judge that he would be executed. Why was one executed while the other was only imprisoned for ten years? There was still hope for the one who was to be imprisoned. The judge still had hope in him, and the nation still had hope in him. There was still the possibility that this man would become a good citizen. After he was imprisoned for ten years, he would be released. But the nation had no hope in the other robber; he had committed too serious a crime. The nation had no need of such a person, and the only way to deal with him was to execute him. How does God see us today? God has crucified us on the cross. Why did He do this? This may not be a complimentary word, but it is the truth: God has no further hope in us. He has lost all of His hope in us. God considers us as being hopeless and impossible. The flesh is corrupt to the uttermost, and there is no other way for it except death. The work of the Lord Jesus does not change our flesh. God's power cannot change our flesh, and the Holy Spirit cannot change our flesh. Reading the Bible and prayer cannot change our flesh. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. There is no hope, and the flesh can never change. God considers death as the rightful destiny of the flesh. God has lost hope in us. Therefore, He included us in the crucifixion of Christ. There is no hope with us; the only solution is death. As a consequence, the first thing that God requires from a Christian after he is saved is baptism. Baptism is a declaration that God has given up hope in a person and has crucified him. It is also our declaration that we deserve to die and that we ask others to move us out of the way and bury us. Have we seen that baptism is God's declaration and our acknowledgement of our death? It is saying "amen" to God's valuation of us. God says that we deserve to die, and we take a further step by burying ourselves. I have lost hope in myself. There is absolutely no hope in me any longer. I deserve only to die, and I am standing on the ground of death today.

Many Christians have forgotten what they did at the time of baptism, and many have forgotten God's valuation of us. What is God's valuation? His valuation is that we should die. We only deserve to die. There is no other way to take. It is useless to try to repair or mend. There is no possibility of progress, and we cannot change ourselves. We are completely useless, and there is nothing we can do except die. Consequently, God included us in the death of the Lord Jesus. His putting us on the cross is an indication of His valuation of us. Please remember that the cross is God's appraisal of us. God has shown us that we only deserve to die and that there is no hope with us.

But do we accept this fact? Human beings are often self-contradicting, and they often have contradicting thoughts. On the one hand, we have been saying for years that we are crucified with Christ. But on the other hand, we are still full of hope for ourselves. On the one hand, we feel that we are not able, yet on the other hand, we hope that we can become able. We keep stumbling and failing, yet we still hope to overcome.

I once saw a picture of a woman who put the coffin of her dead husband in front of her door for thirty years. She would not allow anyone to bury her husband. She said that her husband was only sleeping, and she was waiting for him to resurrect. We have the same hope concerning ourselves. On the one hand, we believe that we deserve only to die and that we are dead in transgressions already. But on the other hand, we think that as long as there is a breath in our mouth, we can still be of some use. We think that we have failed because we have not been strong enough in our determination and that we will overcome if we do better the next time. We think that we have failed because we are not watchful and that we will be able to stand up to temptation if we are watchful the next time. We think that we have failed because we have not rejected temptation and that we will overcome if we reject the temptation the next time. We think that we have failed this time because we have not prayed enough and that we will overcome if we pray enough the next time. Have we seen what we are doing? God has crucified us on the cross and told us that we are dead. But we have not seen that we are dead; we have not acknowledged that we are dead. We keep hoping that the flame that has been extinguished will flicker again if we give it enough fanning. This is why we are still fanning all the time.

What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? In order to experience this truth, there is one necessary condition which we must fulfill on our part. We must say to God, "You have lost hope in me, and I also have lost hope in myself. You consider me as being hopeless, and I also consider myself as being hopeless. You think that I deserve to die, and I also think that I deserve to die. You consider me as being powerless, and I also consider myself as being powerless. You consider me as being useless in doing anything, and I also consider myself as being useless in doing anything." We have to stand on this ground all the time. This is the meaning of being crucified with Christ. What God has done can never be overturned; they are accomplished facts. But on our side, we have a responsibility that we must fulfill, which is accepting God's valuation of us. God has lost hope in us. We also have to lose hope in ourselves. Whenever we lose hope in ourselves, we will see that "it is no longer I."

The trouble today is that most Christians have refused to open their eyes. They have not seen that God has lost hope in them and given up all demands on them. He considers us as being absolutely useless. I am not afraid of offending Brother Lu here. I can declare this in front of everyone: "Brother Lu is an absolutely useless person." This is putting it in a polite way. Putting it in a less polite way, I would say, "Brother Lu, you are corrupt to the core; you are utterly wicked." But thank the Lord, I can say this not only about Brother Lu but also about myself. We are all corrupt to the core. We are absolutely useless. We are not useful for anything except death. The only way for us to

take is to die. We can never change, and there is no hope in us. We are utterly wicked, and we deserve only to die. This is God's valuation, and we should not have any other kind of valuation before God.

We have many concepts about ourselves. We are full of hope for ourselves. Therefore, we have to see in this message how we can appropriate the reality of the fact that we have been crucified with Christ. God has given up hope in us, but what should we do? We should tell God that we also have given up hope in ourselves, and we have to go one step further. For now we will put aside Galatians 2. Let us now look at Luke 18:18-27.

THE PRINCIPLE OF STILL LACKING ONE THING

I personally treasure this portion of the Word very much. It shows us the first condition for victory. I hope that you will bear with me and consider what this passage is really speaking of. There was a ruler who came to Jesus and asked for eternal life—God's life. This eternal life includes salvation as well as victory. Therefore, in the following verses both salvation and the entry into God's kingdom are spoken of. We see that the sphere includes both salvation and victory.

The ruler came to the Lord Jesus and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. The Lord listed five very severe conditions: "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother." No young ruler could keep these commandments. It would be impossible for a young ruler not to commit adultery, not to murder, not to steal, not to bear false witness, and to honor his parents. No young ruler could fulfill these five conditions. Yet this young man amazingly said to Jesus, "All these things I have kept from my youth." He had not broken any of these commandments even once. It was as if he were saying, "Master, are there any more conditions? If not, I should inherit eternal life. I am qualified to have the eternal life." But the Lord Jesus told him that he still lacked one thing. "Still you lack one thing: all that you have, sell and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow Me." Do you realize that you still lack one thing? What does it mean to lack one thing? The Lord Jesus said that he still lacked one thing and that he could not get by without having that one thing. Does this mean that everyone who comes to the Lord has to sell all that he has or that everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus has to give up everything? No, we admit that many rich people can receive eternal life. But why do we not see very many of them? Why are there so few of them? Some have said, "I cannot sell all that I have." Verse 26 indicates that some who heard this word murmured, "Then who can be saved?" In verse 27, however, the Lord Jesus said, "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God." The Lord was proving to the young ruler that salvation is impossible with man, but the young man would not admit that it is impossible with man. He thought that he could refrain from adultery, murder, stealing, and bearing false witness and that he could honor his parents. The purpose of the Lord's word was to prove to him that salvation and victory are impossible with man. Salvation is impossible with man, and victory is impossible with man. Yet the young man thought that it was possible. Therefore, the Lord laid out one more condition before him. He was saying, in effect, "Since you say that you can fulfill these five conditions, I will put one thing more before you. I may even add another thing and another thing to see if you can fulfill them all." When the young ruler realized that he could not fulfill the Lord's conditions, he became sorrowful and left.

If you try to be saved or if you try to overcome, God will often put "one thing" in front of you. We often feel that we have done a good work. We were quick in our temper, but now we can control it. We were proud, but now we can humble ourselves. We were jealous of others, but now we are not that jealous. We were talkative, but now we are no longer that talkative. We think that we are not

far from victory and that we have overcome a considerable amount. But even though we may not be impatient, proud, jealous, or talkative, we still have one thing, one flaw. It seems that everything else is taken care of, but we are still short of this one thing. It may be a very small thing. It may be a fondness for eating, or it may be that we cannot get up in the morning before eight or nine o'clock. It seems so strange that we can overcome many other sins, but that we are unable to overcome this one sin. We are helpless in this matter. We spend all our effort to overcome it. We may ask others to wake us up, or we may use an alarm clock, but we still cannot wake up. We cannot explain it. We can overcome many other things, but we cannot overcome this one thing. This is the principle of Luke 18, the principle of still lacking one thing. God is proving to us that we are not able. Eventually, we will have to concede that we are not able. The Lord may allow us to become able in something, but He will show us that we still lack one thing. He has to show us that there is at least one thing which we are not able to do. In order for God to bring us into victory, He must first show us that we are not able. Victory is a gift from Christ; we cannot overcome in ourselves. Consequently, God leaves behind one or two things which are impossible for us to overcome. He is trying to show us that we "still...lack one thing."

THE FIRST STEP TOWARD VICTORY BEING A REALIZATION THAT WE ARE NOT ABLE

The young ruler might have been able to fulfill five, fifty, or even five hundred conditions, but God put one thing in front of him to show him that he was not able. Friends, the first step toward victory is to realize that we are not able. Once we realize that we are not able, we have passed the first step. Everyone who is sitting here has one thing that he is not able to do. It is so strange that we always fail in that one thing. With some it is their temper, their unclean thoughts, their talkativeness, their inability to get up early in the morning, their inordinate suggestions, their jealousy, or their pride. We do not know why, but always there is one thing which a person cannot overcome. Everyone who intends to overcome has to find out before God the one thing that he lacks. Everyone has his particular "one thing." At least he has "one thing." Sometimes there are more. When we are before God, He will show us that we are not able.

One sister desired very much to overcome. She dealt with many things before God. Every day she wrote letters to others apologizing for her wrongdoings, and every day she went up to the mountain to pray. Every time she came down from the mountain, I asked whether she had overcome her hurdle. She would tell me that she had dug another grave on the mountain and had buried something there again. When I asked her the next day, she would tell me that she had found some more sins and had buried and dealt with them. For over twenty days, she dealt with her sins. At the end I asked her, "Are you almost done?" She answered, "After so many dealings, I think I have almost overcome." I then told a co-worker sister in private, "Just wait and see." One day I went to her house and saw her very sad. I did not ask her for the reason. It is always good to be sorrowful, and it is not always a good thing to stop a person from being sorrowful. I did not say anything. This went on for six days. Every day she appeared to be very sad.

After six days a brother among us invited everyone to a meal. The sister was also included in the invitation. She attended the meal but hardly ate anything. She was sitting in front of me and was smiling, but actually, she was very sad in her heart. There were over twenty brothers and only three sisters there on that day. I had written a new song, and after the meal I asked her to play it on the piano. After playing two stanzas, her tears began to roll down. I let her cry and did not do anything. After a while I asked, "What is the matter?" She said, "It is hopeless! I cannot overcome one thing, no matter how hard I try." She was a shy sister, but she wept right there in front of twenty or more

brothers. She could not contain herself, and she continued to weep. I asked about what she was not able to overcome. She said that she had been dealing with one matter for a week but was still unable to overcome. She said, "Brother Nee, during the past few weeks, I have been dealing with my sins every day. I have dealt with all my sins." I could testify that she had indeed dealt with her sins. She continued, "But despite all that I did during the past week, I have been unable to deal with this one sin." I thought that it must have been a very serious sin. I asked her what it was that she was not able to overcome. She said, "It is a very small matter. But I cannot deal with it. I have had this habit since my youth. I like to eat snacks. After breakfast I like to snack on something here and there. Before lunch time, I have a craving for some snacks again. After lunch I want something, and before going to bed at night, I again look for a snack. During the past few days, I felt that I had to deal with this matter. I should not be eating snacks constantly. I began to deal with this matter. However, I tried for six days, and I failed every day. I am worse than my three children. As soon as I see some snack food, I put it in my mouth. I cannot stop eating." While she was speaking, she was weeping. But when I heard this, I became very happy. I laughed. I was very happy. As she was weeping, some brothers walked away, and some sisters tried to avoid the scene. She was weeping bitterly, but I was laughing heartily. While she was weeping, I was laughing. She asked me what I was so happy about. I said, "I am very happy. My heart is leaping. Mrs. So-and-so, are you clear that you are not able? Have you realized your inability only after these twenty or more days? Thank God that you have finally learned that you are not able to do something. Let me tell you: Once you are unable, He becomes able. Here lies the principle of victory." An hour later she had a breakthrough and fully entered the overcoming experience.

The way to overcome is to be lacking in one thing. You may think that you are right in this and that matter. You may think that you can do something or that you are capable of doing something, but God has to prove to you that you cannot do anything. Brothers and sisters, everyone who wants to overcome must first find out the one thing that he is not capable of doing. He can only discover his inability through that particular thing. Do you have a particular sin? Do you have a sin that you cannot overcome? Those who are too general can never pass the gate of victory. You must know your own specific weakness. This will serve as a demonstration to you that you need to overcome. With some it is pride. With others it is jealousy. With still others it is gullibility—any slight change affects them. With some it is unclean thoughts. With others it is talkativeness. With still others it is fastidiousness. Some people like to speak behind others' backs and pass words around. Some people are unable to control their body. There is always one thing which a person cannot overcome. After this afternoon's meeting, I hope that you will go home and write in your Bible the words: "Still you lack one thing." You have to find out what that one thing is.

The young man in Luke 18 lacked selling all that he had. I am afraid that some among us are also unable to let go of their money. With some people, the problem may not be money, but they still have one thing that they lack. If it is not money for you, what is it? You have to write down the sin which you find impossible to overcome. If you know where your sickness lies, you will be specific before God in overcoming such a sin. Every person has to know where his specific sickness lies. Every person has his specific weakness, and he must ask God to enlighten him and show him his weakness. Every person has at least one thing that he cannot overcome. With some people there may be more than one thing. You have to find the very thing that you cannot overcome. Once you see that you are unable, you will see that God is able. If you do not see your own weakness, you will not see the power of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, why did God leave one or two unsettled things in our life? It is to show us that we are not able to do anything by ourselves. This is a general scriptural principle; it is also a most

important principle. When we declare that the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross for us, it is very easy to forget that this very principle is at work at the same time. God knows that you are powerless, and God knows that I am powerless. He knows that no good thing comes out of the flesh. He knew this a long time ago, but we do not know it. We do not know that there is no good thing from the flesh. As a result, we keep hoping and trying our best to please God.

God knows that our flesh is useless. But we do not know it. Therefore, He gave the law to us. The purpose of the law is to prove to us that man is sinful and powerless. The law was not given for us to keep; God knows that we cannot keep the law. The purpose of the law was for us to break it. It was not given for man to keep but for man to break. God knows that we will break the law, but we do not know it. Therefore, He gave the law to us and allowed us to break it. In this way we will come to know what God already knows, and we will become aware of our powerlessness. As Christians, we claim that we are beyond the law. We think that the Ten Commandments are the law. But we forget that all of the New Testament commandments are also the law. Through these commandments, God demonstrates to us that we cannot make it. God has to bring us to the point where we confess that we cannot make it. Only then will we acknowledge God's wisdom in crucifying us on the cross. Only then will we realize that we are useless, and only then will we realize that the only way to deal with us is death. Otherwise, we would consider it a mistake for God to crucify us, because we would still think that we could do something.

This is why Romans 7 is so precious. The person in Romans 7 was constantly struggling. Why did he struggle? He struggled because he was still filled with hope in himself, even though God had lost hope in him. He tried to please God and keep the law. But the result was total failure. In the end he had to acknowledge God's wisdom in crucifying him on the cross. It was right for God to crucify him. God said that he should die, and he conceded that he should die.

Many Christians do not overcome because they have not failed enough. Many Christians have not committed enough sins yet. Therefore, they have not overcome. If they committed more sins, it would be easier for them to overcome. If they saw the corruption of the flesh, it would be easier for them to overcome. The person in Romans 7 was so desperate that he eventually sighed and said, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" He saw that he could not make it, and he asked if there was anyone who could deliver him from the body of this death. Once he realized that it was a matter of "someone," he was on his way to victory. Once he saw that there was "someone," that someone could come to his rescue immediately. Therefore, brothers and sisters, the first thing we have to see this afternoon is that according to God's view, we are absolutely useless before Him. God sees us as being absolutely useless. We must likewise see ourselves as being absolutely useless. If we have not seen our absolute uselessness, we will never accept the appraisal of the cross, and we will never be able to say that we are crucified with Christ or that it is no longer we who live. If there is still hope in us, it means that we think we are still useful, and we will not say that it is no longer I.

UNABLE AND NOT INTENDING TO BE ABLE

I think we have to go one step further to consider something more. Many brothers and sisters already know that they are not able to do anything. Perhaps you know that you are not able to do anything. But I must ask once again: Are you able, or are you not able? Brothers, have you died to any hope in yourself? Do you still think that you can overcome? We saw objective facts yesterday. We are seeing something subjective for the first time this afternoon. There is no doubt that Christ will overcome for you, but there is a condition for His overcoming for you: You must not consider

yourself able. Are you able or not? God has allowed you to fail many times in the past, but your heart is still not dead. Are you able or not? Everything hinges on this crucial question. Whether or not you will advance in the future hinges on this. If you continue to say in your heart that you are able and that you can make it in yourself, Christ cannot live for you. Christ can only live for those who are absolutely unable. Victory awaits only those who have completely failed. Only those who have completely failed can overcome. If a man has not failed completely, God will not overcome for him. This is the first condition. The first condition is to confess that we are not able.

It is one thing to say that we cannot make it, and it is another thing to give up trying to make it. Have we seen that there are these two things? We cannot make it, and we should not try to make it. Many times, we know that we cannot make it, yet we continue to try to make it. The first condition to victory is to realize that we cannot make it, and the second is to give up trying to make it. If we will admit that we cannot make it and give up trying to make it, we will overcome. The problem is that although we know that we cannot make it, we try our best to make it. We want to use our own effort and strength. We think that if we prayed more, we would make it, or if we made more resolutions, we would stand. Even though we cannot make it, we try to make it.

Suppose that there is an object weighing three hundred catties [a Chinese unit of weight]. Suppose further that you know that you can only lift two hundred catties. There is no way for you to lift a weight of three hundred catties. However, many people try to lift a weight that they know very well they cannot lift. They say, "I know I cannot make it, but why don't I give it a try?" They cannot make it, yet they want to try. It is one thing for a person to be unable to make it, and it is another thing for him to give up trying to make it. Since we cannot make it, we might as well not try to make it. "Lord, I cannot make it, and I do not intend to try to make it. I will not try anymore." Your hands have to let go completely. Letting go is a big thing. Since you know that you cannot make it, you should stay in that position and not try to make it. Recently, I have met many brothers who have repeatedly committed some sins. They confessed that they could not overcome. But I asked whether they were still trying to overcome. Eventually, they conceded and said, "What more can we do? We give up." God has crucified you on the cross and has given up hope in you. But you must also admit that you cannot make it. You must also acknowledge this.

Unfortunately, we still try to make it by ourselves. What does it mean to try to make it? Let me take temper as an example. Suppose you are a quick-tempered person, and you cannot control your temper. The more you try, the more you fail. You admit that you can do nothing about your temper. What should you do? You know with certainty that there is no way to control your temper, yet you still try to control it. Then what do you do? You try to be more careful when you speak with others. You try to avoid those with whom you cannot get along well, and you try to talk to those with whom you can get along well. You avoid fellowship with those who agitate you and run away from their face. Every time you are about to lose your temper, you try your best to suppress it. You try to suppress it with more prayers. What is this? This is being unable, yet at the same time trying to be able. You cannot make it, yet at the same time you try to make it. You cannot make it, yet you exert some effort in an attempt to make it. This kind of person will never overcome. He will never be able to say, "I am crucified with Christ."

Brothers and sisters, please remember that the condition of victory is acknowledging that we are unable, and the greatest barrier to victory is trying to be able. Victory is from Christ; it is Christ who is living on our behalf. The overcoming life requires that we take a stand and declare, "I cannot make it and I do not intend to make it. Please make it for me. I will not fabricate my own victory." If we do this, we will overcome. God cannot deal with people who always try to make it. God can do

nothing for them. If we try to make it and if we resolve to make it, God will stop as soon as we start. Christ lives within us in order to live Himself out of us. The problem is that we try to preserve the wholeness of our own work. We must completely deny our own work before Christ can express His life through us. If we try to help Him a little and try to bring in man's work, God's grace will go away. If Christ does not overcome for us, whatever victory there is will be our own victory. Christ's power is not for the purpose of making up our lack. Christ's life is not for the purpose of patching the holes in our lives. He wants to live instead of us. If we want Christ to live instead of us, we ourselves must not live. We must first know that we cannot make it, before God will have His way. Do not try to linger on in the battle. The minute we fight we will lose. We hope to make it, and we think it would be wonderful if we could make it. But while we are struggling, Christ is not living within us.

In human endeavors there is always the possibility of overlapping. I have a servant in my home. When he quits, I have to hire another one, but I ask the first servant to stay for another two weeks and teach the new servant all the chores before he quits. There is always the need for overlapping with man. Before the first servant can go away, the new servant has to come two weeks prior to his departure. But Christ will not do this. If we do not go away on our part, He will never take any step on His part. Whenever we stop, He begins. If we think that He will do something while we are still doing things, it will never happen. Whenever we stop our work entirely, Christ will begin His work. Whenever we are still doing something, Christ will not move an inch. Yesterday we saw that "it is no longer I...but...Christ." But when will it be "but...Christ"? This will happen only when there is "no longer I." If we hope to see some overlap between Christ and us, it will never happen. We must not make it, and we must not try to make it. Our hands must let go completely. Everything must be in the Lord's hands; we have to hand over everything to Him. We cannot make it, and we should not try to make it. If we do this, we will overcome.

But this is not enough. Many people realize that they cannot make it; they weep and cry. Of course, it is good to weep. Many times, our sins can only be washed away by our weeping; they can only be washed away with tears. We often shed too few tears before the Lord. But we should also realize that many Christians follow the example of the young ruler by going away in sorrow when they try to overcome, because they only see their problems and only see that they lack one thing. Since they cannot make it, they think that God cannot make it either. They think that they are therefore without hope because they cannot distribute all their possessions to the poor. No, there is still hope.

I often consider it very significant that Luke 18 is followed by Luke 19. Do you know what is spoken of in chapter nineteen? Chapter nineteen is the story of Zaccheus. Who was Zaccheus? He was an old man. The ruler in chapter eighteen was a young man. The young man was rich, and Zaccheus was also rich. Humanly speaking, a young man should be more generous, while an old man should be more stingy. But when Zaccheus came down from the tree, it is amazing that he volunteered to restore four times as much as he had taken from others by false accusation and also to give half of his possessions to the poor, even though the Lord did not ask him to give away his money. He gave away his money immediately. The Lord Jesus asked the young man to give away his money, and he could not do it. But this old man was never asked by the Lord to give away his money, yet he did it on his own. Why was there this difference? It is because the things that are impossible with men are possible with God. With the young man, we see that it is impossible with man. With Zaccheus, we see that it is possible with God. It is possible with God to do what? The Lord Jesus said that Zaccheus was also a son of Abraham and that salvation had come to his house. This means that God had saved him. The young man knew that it was impossible with him. But he did not ask for God's salvation. With man it is impossible, but with God it is possible.

What does a Christian do when he realizes his temper, unclean thoughts, or carnal or spiritual sin? He aspires for the day when he will be free from these problems. I have heard a few sisters who remarked to me, "Brother Nee, it would be wonderful if my temper could improve a little." I always tell them, "You have to thank the Lord for your quick temper. It is wonderful for you to see that you cannot make it. You should rejoice in the fact that you cannot make it."

BOASTING IN ONE'S WEAKNESSES

Second Corinthians 12:9 says, "He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me." Have you seen this? Weakness is not something that one should lament over or weep about. Weakness is something that one should boast in. You may have said, "Thank and praise the Lord because He has made me overcome," but have you ever said, "Thank and praise the Lord because He has made me fail miserably"? You thank and praise the Lord for giving you patience, but have you thanked and praised Him for your impossible temper? Have you thanked and praised Him for your pride? Have you thanked and praised Him for your jealousy? Have you thanked and praised Him for your uncleanness within and for your sin? If you have these problems, you should thank and praise the Lord for them. The first thing you must do is realize that you cannot make it. The second thing you should do is give up trying to make it. The third thing you should do is thank and praise God for not being able to make it. Hallelujah! I cannot make it. Hallelujah, I cannot make it!

Why did Paul say, "I will rather boast in my weaknesses"? The word "boast" is "glory" in the original language. Paul said that he considered his weaknesses to be his glory. This is because his weaknesses afforded Christ the opportunity to manifest His power and the opportunity for this power to tabernacle over him. Christ's power cannot tabernacle over those who do not have any weaknesses. Only those with weaknesses can experience the tabernacling of Christ's power. I would rather boast in my weaknesses because my weaknesses afford the Lord an opportunity to work in me. They afford the Lord an opportunity to manifest His power and to do something in me.

Brothers and sisters, do you have a sin which you cannot even confess? Do you have something which you cannot consecrate to God? Do you have a hindrance which you cannot remove? Is there any grace which you miss before the Lord? What are you going to do? Are you going to be sorrowful? If you are, you are a friend of the young man. He was sorrowful, and you are sorrowful as well. In the end, you will take the same way he did. He went away in sorrow, and you also will go away in sorrow. But you do not need to be sorrowful. The mistake of the young man did not lie in his realization of his impossibility but in his failure to realize God's possibility. The mistake of the young man did not lie in his own inability but in his failure to apply God's ability. It is not a sin to discover one's own weakness, but it is a sin to refuse to believe in God's strength. It is not a sin to be unable to give away one's money, but it is a sin to refuse to believe that God can enable a person to give away his money. It is not a sin to have a bad temper, but it is a sin to refuse to believe that God can become one's patience. It is not a sin to have an insurmountable sin, but it is a sin to refuse to believe that God can overcome such a sin for a person.

It is a glorious thing for a man to realize that he is helpless. The Lord's purpose was to show the young man his helplessness. But when the young man returned home, he was not happy but sorrowful. Once the Lord shows you that you cannot make it, he will immediately show you that God can make it. The Lord does not show you your inability in order to discourage you. He shows you your inability in order for you to believe that He has an excellent opportunity to work in you.

You should say, "Lord, I cannot make it and I do not even want to try to make it. Thank and praise You that I cannot make it." When you see that you cannot make it and that you are totally incapable of doing anything, and when you see that only the Lord can make it, you will thank and praise Him. You will realize that it is very natural to thank and praise the Lord. In the past, you might have grieved over your weakness or wept over your sins. But today, you can boast and praise. You can say, "Lord, I thank You because I cannot make it. I thank You because I have no way to overcome. I am not able. I rejoice because I am not able. I rejoice because I cannot do anything. Only You can do everything." If you do this, you will overcome.

THE LORD JESUS ONLY TAKING UP IMPOSSIBLE CASES

Once I met a brother in Chefoo who was going through the overcoming experience. This brother came from Manchuria and had been an army doctor for over ten years. Some brothers brought him to the Lord when he was in Manchuria. After he believed in the Lord, he moved to Chefoo, where he practiced medicine for over a year. When I was in Chefoo for a one-week conference, he was also there. During that conference I spoke on the subject of overcoming. One day he came to me in a desperate manner and asked if he could have a time with me the next morning. I told him that I was busy the next day and that it would be better if he came to see me that evening. He said that it was something very important and that there was not enough time that evening; he needed a long time to talk about his problem. Subsequently, we made an appointment for the next day. He reminded me that he would come at 9:00 a.m. and that I should not have any other appointments that morning so that I could give the whole morning to him because his problem was serious. He looked very much like a military man; he was tall, strong, and husky. We made an appointment to meet each other at Brother Lee's house. Before 9:00 a.m. I arrived and found him already waiting for me there. Immediately after we sat down he said, "Brother Nee, I have a long story to tell!" He proceeded to tell me about his days in the army, how he came to know the Lord, and how he moved to Chefoo. He told me how he had overcome many sins and how he had stopped all the sins he used to commit when he was in the army. But there was one thing which he was unable to overcome. When I heard this, I was overjoyed again. Here was the "one thing" again. There is always one thing. No one can say that he does not have one thing. I asked, "What is this one thing?" He showed me his hands and told me that it was cigarettes. He said that he had overcome all kinds of serious and gross sins. But he could not overcome this one sin. He had been smoking for ten years and had been a Christian for three to four years. He came to Chefoo over a year ago. During those three to four years, he had tried seven to eight times every year to quit smoking but could not make it. He complained, saying, "It is a big suffering for me to smoke here. Chefoo is such a small place, and there are so many brothers and sisters. If they found out that I smoke, it would be disastrous. Therefore, I can only smoke in secret. I cannot smoke at home because my wife is also a sister in the Lord and constantly watches over me. If I smoke outside of my home, I am afraid that the brothers and sisters will see me. I cannot smoke openly and have to put my cigarettes inside of my pocket. If I am in the hospital where I work, I can smoke in my office. But I cannot smoke openly; I can only do it when I stand by the door. Whenever someone comes, I secretly try to put out the cigarette. I am afraid that the nurses in the hospital will find this out and tell the brothers and sisters about it. If my wife sees me smoking, there will be trouble. It is a big suffering for me to smoke. The brothers and sisters are all very warm, and they come to see us all the time. If they come while I am smoking, I have to put herb pills in my mouth so that they will not detect the smell of cigarettes on my breath. During the past year in Chefoo, I have suffered so much from cigarettes. I do not like to smoke, but I cannot quit, no matter how hard I try." He was sitting in front of me; his great and husky stature giving a perfect image of a soldier. But while he was speaking, he was crying like a little boy.

I told him that this was something to rejoice about and that he should thank and praise God for it. He answered, "You do not understand. Others can quit smoking, but I cannot. If you had seen how I tried to quit, you would have realized my suffering. Once I succeeded for three days. I did not smoke, and I did not carry any cigarettes with me during that time. But my mind and my brain were filled with cigarettes everywhere I went. Eventually, I gave in and smoked again. I hate myself, but I cannot help it." I said, "This is a happy thing. This is something worth rejoicing about." He asked what I meant by this. I answered, "Dr. Shi, you are a doctor, and you have earned a great name in your profession. However, you have nothing to do with me because I am so healthy. You are the best doctor in Chefoo, and I am the most healthy person in Chefoo. I have no need of you, and you have no need of me. If you could quit smoking today, you would be to the Lord like I am to you; you would not need the Lord. But if I am weak and sick and no doctor can heal me and if you are a famous doctor and I come to you, you will have the opportunity and the chance to demonstrate your skill. Dr. Shi, would you dare to put up a sign outside of your clinic that said, 'Terminal Cases Only'?" He said "Of course not. What if I could not take care of them?" I said, "Yet the Lord Jesus will not take any case unless it is terminal. The Lord Jesus will only heal the impossible cases. Are you an impossible case today? For you, quitting smoking is an impossible case." He agreed that it was an impossible case. "For four years, I have tried seven or eight times a year to quit. But I have not succeeded. If this is not an impossible case, what is it?" I said, "Very well. In that case, the Lord can heal you. Is that not something to rejoice about? You should thank the Lord because you are qualified to be His patient. Your case is a terminal case. You have to tell the Lord Jesus, 'Lord, I cannot quit. I have no way to quit. Lord Jesus, I commit myself to You.' The Lord will accept such a patient. This is why you have to rejoice." He told me, "Brother Nee, don't make fun of me. You have to realize that I am completely helpless." At that point, he broke out in tears again.

Later I opened 2 Corinthians 12:9 and read to him. I asked, "What should you do about your weakness? Should you weep? There is no need to weep. What then should you do? You should rejoice in your weakness. You should boast in your weakness. You should be happy to boast about your weakness because when you are weak, Christ's power will tabernacle over you." Then I challenged him, saying, "Can you go to the Lord Jesus today and say, 'Lord Jesus, I have been smoking for over ten years. I thank You that I cannot quit smoking. Lord Jesus, I have tried to quit smoking for four years and have completely failed. I thank and praise You because I tried to quit seven or eight times last year without success. I thank You because I can do nothing. I thank You because I am weak. I thank You because I cannot make it. Lord Jesus, I thank You because I smoke. From now on, I cannot quit smoking, and I do not intend to quit smoking. I pray that You will quit for me. If You do not quit for me, I cannot quit by myself. I will not use my own strength to quit anymore. I simply let You quit for me. Thank and praise You, because Your power is perfected in my weaknesses.' What if we kneel down to pray right now?"

He agreed and said, "All right, let's pray." He acted like a soldier and dropped abruptly to his knees. First I prayed, "Lord, I thank You because this is another opportunity for You to manifest Your power in a terminal patient. Here is a helpless person, and we want to see You perform a miracle on him." After I prayed, he also prayed. His prayer was excellent. He said, "I praise You because I smoke, and I cannot quit smoking. This is why I am coming to You. Lord, from now on, I will no longer try to quit. You quit for me. I will not try to quit anymore. I commit everything into Your hand. Thank and praise You. You are able." After the prayer, He was very happy. He got on his feet, picked up his hat, and was about to leave. I said, "Wait a minute. I have something more to say to you. Will you still smoke from now on?" He gave me a very good answer: "I will. Of course, I will smoke. I, Tsai-lin Shi, will smoke. But the Lord Jesus will quit for me." At that word, he left.

The next evening, he came to the meeting again. He testified that he had told his wife, "For over a year, you have been complaining and have been telling me that smoking is wrong. But I could not quit. Yesterday morning I went to God, and in half an hour, I quit. There is no need for you to complain anymore. All that I needed was to go to God for half an hour." I asked whether he would still smoke. He said, "Of course, I will." I then asked what he would do. He said, "I will always smoke. I, Tsai-lin Shi, will always smoke, even five or ten years from now. It is the Lord Jesus who will quit smoking for me." When I heard this, I became peaceful. I knew that the matter was settled. This man knew himself, and he knew God. He knew that the change did not come from him but from the Lord Jesus. Two months after I left Chefoo, I learned that he had not smoked even once. All the brothers testified that he grew and advanced in a quick way.

WE CANNOT MAKE IT, BUT GOD CAN

I must say that God can make it. If we want to have the realization that we are crucified with Christ, we must realize that we cannot make it, and we must not try to make it. Finally, we should thank and praise God that we cannot make it. Our weakness will not hinder us, our failure will not hinder us, our thoughts will not hinder us, our habits will not hinder us, and our temper will not hinder us. The Lord Jesus is able. I repeat, He is able. This afternoon the Lord Jesus will perform a miracle for everyone who acknowledges that he cannot make it. We must see that we cannot make it and must stand on the ground that God has placed us on. God has shown us that we cannot make it. In God's eyes we are only worthy of death. We should say, "Lord, I am only worthy of death. I do not intend to change or improve myself. I come to You just as I am with my weaknesses. I thank You because I cannot make it."

During the past few months, Satan has come to me and has spoken to me many times. He never gives up. He always asks, "Have you overcome? I see that you are still the same." I answer him by saying, "If it were up to me, I would worry. But the Lord is my victory." The devil tells me that I am no good in this and that matter, but I only say, "Thank and praise the Lord, I am no good." He tells me that I am weak, but I only say, "That is wonderful, now Christ has the opportunity to manifest His power." Here we see the preciousness of being weak. What a joy it is to be weak! We are not afraid, and our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and praises because we realize that we are not able in ourselves.

Brothers and sisters, our inability is not a hindrance but a help. The more we cannot make it, the more Christ will have the opportunity to manifest His power. He specializes in dealing with our inability and weakness. The more we become destitute, the more we fail, the weaker we become, and the more we cannot make it, the more opportunity there is for our Lord to manifest His power in us. Hallelujah! Jesus is the Savior! Hallelujah! He is our Lord. Hallelujah! He is our life. Hallelujah, His power is given purposely to tabernacle over our weaknesses. Our eyes should see Him and not ourselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE OVERCOMING LIFE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Gal. 2:20

During the past few evenings we have seen the kind of life that we live and the kind of life that God requires of us. We have seen the human way of victory and God's way of overcoming. We have seen what the overcoming life is and the characteristics of this life. Tonight we will speak on the way to experience this overcoming life. We will first consider a very important question: How can we enter into the experience of this life and how can we gain Christ?

The verse we read tonight shows us the way to experience this life. Let us skip the first part of Galatians 2:20 and concentrate on the part that begins with, "It is no longer I who live." This is the life we should experience. It is no longer I who live. On the negative side, I can say that it is no longer I who live. On the positive side, the overcoming life is "Christ who lives in me." This is what we covered in the last few days. Paul's letter to the Galatians shows us that he attained, experienced, and entered into the experience of such a life. Let us study the way he attained, experienced, and entered into the experience of this life. The way Paul entered is the same way that we should enter. Paul's entrance was according to two phrases. The first phrase occurs before the portion in verse 20 that says, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me," and the second phrase occurs after this portion. The first phrase is "I am crucified with Christ." This is the first condition for entering into the experience of this life. The second phrase is, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God." This is the second condition for entering into the experience of this life. Through these two conditions, Paul gained Christ as his righteousness, sanctification, and victory. Let us consider these two things in detail.

SURRENDERING—

"I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST"

The first condition is, "I am crucified with Christ." What does this mean? Why must we be crucified with Christ before we can have this overcoming life? Brothers and sisters, how many persons are living within us today? We know that as soon as we believe, the Lord lives within us. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?" We who have believed in the Lord know that we are not disapproved. It is a definite fact that the Lord is in us. But it is unfortunate that the Lord is not the only One who lives in us; we ourselves also live within us. In order to experience the Lord as our overcoming life, we have to move out. We have to move out, which means that we have to let go. If we move out, we will experience the overcoming life.

Yesterday, a sister asked me how she could have the overcoming life. My answer was that she had to relocate. If two families live within one house and the relationship is not good between them, the only thing that is needed is for one family to relocate. This is not a matter of whether or not we have Christ in us, because the minute we believed, Christ began to live in us. It is not a matter of whether or not He is in us; it is a matter of whether or not we have moved out. As co-tenants, we are very

unclean; we have committed all kinds of sins. As soon as we move out, everything will be all right. Hence, the first condition is that we move out; we have to relocate.

God's Word says, "I am crucified with Christ." But is it not true that we have not succeeded, even though we have tried to move out many times? We have pretended to die many times, but we are still alive. We have tried to kill ourselves many times, but we have not succeeded. Sometimes it seems that we have died, but we are still alive. We have often tried to crucify ourselves, but we are still not dead. What is the problem? We need to take a closer look at this matter tonight.

Not Being Able to Make It

Tonight all the brothers and sisters who are sitting here have seen the fact of the cross. We know that when the Lord was crucified on the cross, He not only took away our sins but also crucified our person. We are familiar with the teaching of Romans 6 already. We know that when the Lord died on the cross, He not only bore our sins, but He also crucified our old man together with Him. We know that the matter of sin has been dealt with, and that we ourselves have been crucified with Him. We have paid much attention to this truth for many years. It is true that we are crucified with Christ, but why has this truth not produced an effect on us? It is true that the Lord was crucified on the cross, but why are we not yet dead? The Lord has brought me to the cross, but I am still I. I am still bound, and I am still weak. I still fail, and I am still powerless. The Bible says that I have been crucified with Christ, but why am I still so powerless? Many saved Christians continue to strive and work, hoping that they can eventually overcome. Yet victory always seems to be far away from them.

Brothers and sisters, we have to realize that it is one thing for the Lord Jesus to accomplish salvation, and it is another thing for us to receive this salvation. Preparing a meal is one thing, but eating the meal is another. It is one thing for the Lord Jesus to accomplish something for us. It is another thing for us to receive what the Lord has accomplished. Paul showed us how we should receive the Lord's death. Romans 6 shows us that every one of us is dead. Hallelujah! Every one of us is dead! Romans 7 shows us that even though every Christian should be dead, in reality we are still alive. Since we should be dead already, why are we still alive? Romans 6 shows us the objective truth, while Romans 7 shows us the subjective experience. Romans 6 presents the fact, while Romans 7 presents the experience. Today many Christians are very familiar with Romans 6, which tells us that our old man has been crucified with Him. They know that we should no longer be slaves to sin, that we are delivered from the bondage of the law, and that we should reckon ourselves dead to sin daily. They know all this, yet nothing works for them. The teaching remains a teaching, and they are still the same. The teaching tells us that we are crucified with Christ, but we say that we are still alive. The teaching tells us that we are delivered from sin, but we say that sin is still in us. The teaching tells us that we are delivered from the bondage of the law, but we say that we are still under the law. What is the problem?

Romans 7 tells us a great fact—man does not agree with what God has done. Man is not willing to accept God's judgment. Brothers and sisters, why did God put us on the cross? He put us on the cross because He knows that we can do nothing and that we are absolutely useless. There is no way that we can be improved, corrected, or make any headway. We are completely useless. There is no hope for us except to be crucified. I once patted the shoulder of Brother Tsong-jie Hsu and said, "Tsong-jie Hsu is utterly corrupt. He is utterly corrupt. If there was any hope in punishing him, we could still punish him. If there was any hope in putting him in jail, we could put him in jail. But it is useless to punish him or to put him in jail. There is no hope in him. The only thing to do with him is

to execute him. Tsong-jie Hsu is utterly corrupt. There is no hope in him. The only way is to crucify him." You and I are as corrupt as Tsong-jie Hsu. Consequently, we only deserve to be crucified on the cross.

The cross is nothing other than an appraisal of ourselves! The cross appraises us and determines that we only deserve to die. God's appraisal is that we only deserve to die. God's evaluation of me is that I must die. If we realize that the cross is our appraisal report, if we know that we are absolutely useless, and if we know that we are not even capable of having right thoughts, we will agree that we only deserve to die. God says that we only deserve to die and that we are absolutely useless. But do we still want to produce some good of our own?

Recently the Chinese government announced a new law on the prohibition of opium. Anyone who goes through compulsory treatment and still takes opium will be executed. Suppose a person has been taking opium for a long time. He has gone through compulsory treatment but is back on opium again. When the government finds out about it, he will be put to death. What do you think the person will do? Since he is going to be executed, will he try to find a doctor from Shanghai to give him a few injections to stop his addiction, even though he is scheduled to die tomorrow? It would be meaningless for him to do this. A criminal that has been sentenced to death no longer thinks of improvement. He has no further need of progress. All he is waiting for is death. God says that we only deserve to die and that there is no way to improve or correct us. We cannot make any further headway. God's final ruling is that we should die; we only deserve to die.

We think that before we were saved, we could not improve, correct, or make any headway in ourselves and that we should let go of our past. But now that we are saved, we think that we should try to improve, correct, and make some progress in ourselves in order to please God. Consequently, after we are saved, we make up our mind to be good. Brothers and sisters, how many times have we made up our mind to be good? How many times have we succeeded in becoming good? We have made many spiritual promises to God. We have told Him that we will obey this and that word of His. We have promised that we will get up early in the morning and that we will be zealous the next day. In spite of all our promises, however, how much have we achieved? One Western sister said that she had promised God more than thirty things, but that she had fulfilled none of these promises. We have not accepted God's evaluation of us. We have not accepted God's judgment of us. We have been sentenced to execution already, but we are still trying to find a doctor.

What is the cross? The cross signifies God's despair of man! The cross tells us that God has given up hope in man! What is the cross? The cross tells us that God is proclaiming, "I cannot improve man; I cannot correct him. I cannot make any headway with him. I can only crucify him on the cross." The strange thing is that we already know this fact. We already know that God considers us as being hopeless and that we deserve only to be crucified. But at the same time, we still think that we are not that bad. Therefore, we make resolutions every day. We say, "God, I promise that I will do this and that. From now on, I will no longer lose my temper." But none of these promises work. Sometimes we think that our resolutions are not strong enough, and we try to do a better job the next time. We make more resolutions, and after we lose our temper, we vow that we will not lose our temper the next time. But we find ourselves still losing it, and we make a third resolution. This was the way Paul lived: "For to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not" (Rom. 7:18). He was always making resolutions, failing, making resolutions, and failing over and over again. This was not only Paul's life but the frequent experience of many of us today. Brothers and sisters, are we through making resolutions? God says that we only deserve to die and that we are absolutely useless. He says that there is no hope in us.

What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? It means that God has given up hope in us and that we have also given up hope in ourselves. For God to crucify us with Christ means that God has no further hope. For us to say that "I am crucified with Christ" means that we also have no further hope. God sees through our condition; He knows that we are completely useless and that there is no further hope in us. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? It means that we have given up all hope. We admit that we can never please God. God can do nothing except put us to death. There is no hope in a man of flesh. The only thing left for us to do is die. We only deserve to die.

Brothers and sisters, do you have any sick persons in your home? I have been to five or six homes where the husband, wife, or children were sick. Whenever the family lost hope in a sick person, they would say, "Mr. Nee, if it be God's will, I hope he or she goes quickly." Why would they say this? They said it because they had no further hope. When all hope was lost, they wished that the sick one would die quickly. Now God is telling you that there is no further hope in you; He can only crucify you. It would be well if you could also say that there is no further hope in you and that the only way is to be crucified.

Our problem today is that we are very familiar with Romans 6, but we are still making resolutions like the person in Romans 7. We still make promises to God and still think that we are somewhat useful. Although we are very clear about Romans 6, we are behaving in the way of Romans 7. In Romans 6 God told Paul that he was useless. In Romans 7 Paul told himself that he was useless. Brothers and sisters, God is clear about us. He gave up hope on us long ago. According to God's evaluation we are not worth anything. He has already told us that we are useless. The question is how do we evaluate ourselves. If we also give up hope in ourselves and say that we are useless, we will experience deliverance immediately. God allows us to lose our temper, to be proud, jealous, and dishonest. He allows sin to turn us upside-down. This is His way of telling us that we cannot make it. But how do we respond? We think that our first resolution was not strong enough and that we have to make a stronger resolution. We think that it may work the second time. But it still does not work. This is the experience of Romans 7. Romans 6 is merely the teaching, whereas Romans 7 leads us into the reality of Romans 6.

If anyone here told me that I am hopelessly corrupt, I would shout, "Hallelujah! I, Watchman Nee, am hopelessly corrupt." Hallelujah! Paul could do nothing about himself. He suffered many years. He only deserved to be crucified. Today if you declare that you are no longer useful, you will experience deliverance immediately. Those who try to be good will never be saved. Similarly, Christians who resolve to be good Christians will never overcome. Brothers and sisters, God's cross has not misjudged you. Day after day, I love to do one thing: I love to declare that I was useless yesterday, that I am useless today, and that I will be useless tomorrow. I will be useless forever.

God wants us to accept the appraisal of the cross because by accepting the appraisal of the cross, we accept the Lord as our sanctification, perfection, and victory. If we still cherish some hope and still have a glimmer of faith in ourselves, God will have to continue His work on us. He will not stop operating in us until we completely lose hope in ourselves. God has to take us to the point that we have no hope in ourselves at all. He does this so that we will accept the cross. God is leading us to this point because He wants us to realize that we are not able in ourselves, and He wants us to acknowledge this.

Many people realize that they cannot do anything in themselves. However, they still have not overcome. Why? This happens because God also requires that we fulfill another condition.

Not Trying to Make It

I met a sister yesterday who spent two hours telling me her history of failure. While she was speaking, I was smiling. Finally, I asked her, "Are you willing to concede now? Do you still have some hope in yourself? Have you failed enough?" She admitted that she could not make it, but she still lacked one thing. The first thing that God shows us is that we cannot make it. We have to lose hope in ourselves. But this alone will not bring us to victory. It is one thing for us to acknowledge that we cannot make it, but it is another thing for us to not try to make it. I said to her, "Your realization that you cannot make it is good and right. But you have not realized that you are still trying to make it. Don't you see that you are still trying to make it? Since you know that you cannot make it, you should have stopped your own work. Don't you see that you are still trying even though you say that you cannot make it?" She admitted that she could not make it, but at the same time, she did not see that she was working and hoping that she could make it. I asked her a few times, "Don't you realize that you are still working? Don't you realize that you are still trying to overcome?" She was struggling and trying. This is why she could not overcome. She asked me what she should do. I told her that she only needed to accept the cross, acknowledge her weakness, and stop trying or expecting to make it. I said that the minute she tried to do anything, she would fail. She asked, "If I fail in spite of doing everything, won't I fail even more if I don't do anything?" This is where the problem lies with many people. They know very well that they cannot do anything, and they know very well that they are absolutely powerless, yet they are still struggling and striving. The result is that there is still no victory, and they still cannot overcome.

In experiencing the overcoming life, there are two very important conditions in regards to surrendering. First, we have to acknowledge God's appraisal that we are not able in ourselves. Second, we should not try to become able. Rather, we should lose hope in ourselves completely. A brother once told me that he could not believe. I told him that he should give up trying to believe. He remarked, "What kind of teaching is this?" I said, "All you have to do is tell God that you cannot believe. God is waiting for you to acknowledge that you cannot believe."

What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? It means that henceforth I am not responsible for my own victory and I am not responsible for my own failure. My things are in Christ's hand. Suppose a sister serves a cup of tea, and while you are picking up the cup, she holds on to it and will not let go. On your side, you are trying to drink the tea, but on her side, she is still holding on to the cup. Even though she says that she is serving you the tea, she will not let go of it. Without her letting go, you cannot drink the tea.

What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? The first meaning of being crucified with Christ is to let go. The second meaning is to not try to take control. You should tell God, "From now on, I offer myself to You. From now on, victory is Your business, and patience is Your business."

A brother once asked what it means to be victorious. I told him that being victorious is resigning, and resigning is expiring. It means that victory is no longer his business.

Once I met a sister and told her, "You only have to do one thing. Just say to God that from now on, you can do nothing, and that you are not responsible for anything."

We cannot stop losing our temper, we cannot suppress ourselves, and we cannot surrender. From now on, we should give up and not worry or care about anything anymore. When we come before God, we often tell Him that we cannot make it, or that we cannot do anything. However, when we

walk away from His presence, we pick up everything ourselves again. Brothers and sisters, whatever we bring to God when we come before Him must be left with Him when we leave His presence. Those who know how to leave things with God will experience deliverance.

Once I delivered a manuscript to a sister and asked her to make a clean copy of it for me. But when I left, I took the manuscript with me. Although she was willing to do the copying work, there was no way that she could do it. This is how we pray today. We say with our mouth, "God, please help me." But after we pray, we take up everything ourselves again.

Hence, the most important thing is to let go. We have to say, "God, I cannot overcome, and I do not intend to overcome. Neither will I try to overcome." This is being crucified with Christ. How wonderful this is! "I am crucified with Christ!"

When you wake up in the morning, Satan may tell you that you are not good, that you are the same in this and that matter. You may become sad. However, what are you going to do? You should say, "I have known for a long time that I am utterly corrupt. I have given up hope in myself. I do not intend to make any more headway in myself." If you say this, you will immediately become well. This is very amazing! This is not a matter of a change but of an exchange. You have to grasp hold of God's accomplished facts. If there were any usefulness in you, God would not have crucified you on the cross. God has put you to the cross and put you in Christ because you are utterly corrupt. Therefore, you should let go. What should you do practically? You should say, "God, I cannot improve myself, and I do not intend to improve myself. Lord, from now on, I am through; I will not try to make it anymore, nor do I intend to make it anymore." Brothers and sisters, do you dare to let go?

I have mentioned the story of the doctor who smoked cigars. He was over seventy years of age and had been struggling with cigars for years. One day in a meeting, he began to talk about his struggle with smoking. A young man who knew the Lord said, "If I were you, I would not struggle." The old man said, "If I cannot quit even if I struggle, wouldn't it be more difficult to quit if I did not struggle?" The young man said, "No! If I were you, I would say to God, 'I cannot stop smoking. You quit for me.'" The old man thought that there was some sense to the young man's word, and he did so accordingly. He told God, "I cannot quit smoking. I will not struggle to quit any longer. Lord, I commit this matter to You. I will not take control any longer. Please quit for me." Every day he smoked twelve to twenty cigars and had been doing this for fifty years. He surrendered on that day, and the next day he told others that he had woken up for the first time without thinking about smoking.

Brothers and sisters, if you think that you can become holy, you will surely fail. If you think that you can become perfect, you will surely fail. If you think that you can become patient, you will surely fail. God sees us as being beyond any possibility of repair or improvement. Can you say with Paul that you are crucified on the cross? You are utterly corrupt and useless, and you only deserve to be nailed to the cross. This is what Paul meant. When I was in Peking, I asked a brother if he was through. He said, "Thank and praise the Lord, I am through!" This is a basic qualification: We must see before God that we are completely useless and that there is no way to improve or correct ourselves. All we have to do is to tell the Lord, "From now on, I commit everything to you. You do everything for me."

Some brothers and sisters acknowledge that they cannot make it. They acknowledge that they are through and that they have been crucified with Christ. But why have they still not overcome? Why

do they still fail? Why have they not yet realized victory? Brothers and sisters, there is another word which we must not forget.

FAITH—

**"THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH
I LIVE IN FAITH, THE FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD"**

I am crucified with Christ. I am through. God says that I am utterly corrupt, and I also say that I am utterly corrupt. God says that I am absolutely useless, and I also say that I am absolutely useless. God says that I only deserve to die, and I also say that I only deserve to die. "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." This is a fact. It is a fact that it is no longer I who live, and it is a fact that Christ now lives in me. Why is it that it is no longer I who live? Two minus one is one. When Adam is subtracted, what is left is, of course, only Christ. Formerly the two lived together. Now one has moved out, and Christ is the only One left. This is a fact. But how can this fact be manifested? The unique way is faith.

Faith in God's Fact

The gospel of God shows us that He has given us His Son. God's Son has become our righteousness, our redemption, and even our holiness. We do not have to receive Him as our life first and then expect Him to give us His perfection, patience, and meekness later; He is our life already. The Bible shows us that Christ is our Head already. Just as a head has a feeling for the body, being responsible for it and ruling over it, Christ is the Head to us. We do not have to ask Him to be our Head and we do not have to ask to be His Body. He is the Head already, and we are His members already. This requires faith on our part. On the negative side, we have surrendered to Him. But on the positive side, do we believe that Christ is our Head and that He has the proper place in us, bearing our responsibility and ruling over everything for us? Do we believe that He is our Head, as the Bible says, and that He assumes all of the responsibilities as the Head? God's Word says that He is the Head. Do we believe that He is indeed our Head? Do we believe that there is no responsibility upon us any longer and that He will be responsible for everything from now on, even being responsible this very minute?

God's Word also shows us that He is the vine and we are the branches. It does not say that He will be our vine and we will be His branches. We do not become His branches and He does not become our vine in the near future when our spiritual condition is more advanced. We should bear fruit the same way that He bears fruit. We should be full of virtues the same way that He is full of virtues. He is giving us all the juice, life, and power for fruit bearing. He is the vine, and we are already His branches. He is now supplying us within with His life, holiness, perfection, and all that He is. Brothers, do we believe this? Do we believe that He is now our tree and that we are now His branches? When we believed in Him as our Savior, we were completely joined to Him. (Of course, there was still the mixture. Now even the mixture is gone.) Do you believe in this? You do not have to try to do anything to join yourself to Him, because God has made you one tree with the Lord already. Do you believe that He will treat you in the same way that a tree treats the branches? You do not bear fruit for Him. Instead He bears fruit through you.

God has shown us also that the union between the Lord Jesus and us is like the relationship of food to our body. He is the blood that we drink and the flesh that we eat. He is the One who sustains our life. Just as food supplies all our inward needs, and just as we die when we are cut off from this supply, so also is the Lord Jesus to us.

God shows us in His Word that we are joined to the Lord Jesus. He is our Head, our tree, and our food. We do not have to ask God to empower us to live as Jesus lived. God has given us His Son, who is responsible for us, who is living for us, and who is the power of life to us. God gave Him to us in order that all His perfection, fellowship, joy, and riches may be lived out through us. In the past, we did not understand this truth, and we tried to build up our own holiness, thereby denying God's holiness. Now on the negative side, we have ceased from our own work. But this is not enough. God's Word says that He has given us His life. We must believe that He is our life. He can express through us everything that He has. He will give us whatever we need. We should believe that He has already done this.

The secret to victory is realizing that it does not come gradually. By faith we know that Christ has become our victory. Victory is just Christ, and faith substantiates everything that Christ is in us. God's grace has given the Lord Jesus to us. All that we need to do is receive what God has given to us by faith. When this happens, Christ's life, power, freedom, and holiness will be manifested in us.

This mysterious union has been accomplished by God. He has made Christ's unsearchable riches ours. Do we believe this? Do we believe that all that is Christ's is now ours? Do we believe that God has given His holiness, perfection, life, power, and riches to us? God has joined us to Him and made Him our Head, our tree, and our food. Now He is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption, and He is living His life out of us. Do we believe this? God is inviting us, as well as commanding us, to believe that our union with the Lord is the same as His union with God. In such a union all of His patience, meekness, purity, and goodness become ours. Just as we believed that He is our righteousness, we should now believe that He is our holiness. Brothers and sisters, many people have failed in this very matter. They know God's way of victory, but they do not have the faith. They know that they do not have the power, but they do not know the power of Christ. They know the utter corruption of their own flesh, but they do not see that God has given the riches of Christ to them as a gift.

How do we receive a gift? We do not have to do anything. All that we need to do is receive. When we believe in God's Word, we receive His grace. This is the gospel. When we receive by faith, the Holy Spirit makes our faith the starting point of God's miracles. If a man has never experienced God's power, he will not think much of it. But those who have experienced it know the reality of this faith. When we believe that everything that is in Christ is ours, the Holy Spirit will cause all that is in Christ to be ours. What a gospel this is! Everything that is Christ's becomes ours through faith! By faith Christ's perfect life is lived out of our mortal body day by day! By faith not only is it "no longer I who live," but it is also "Christ who lives in me!" Beyond any doubt, Christ is living within us and for us! But this can come only by faith!

Believing That One Has Received

Brothers and sisters, God cannot tell us to believe that which is unbelievable. Some brothers and sisters will let go and resign when you ask them to do so, but they cannot believe. While they say that they believe, they also say that they prefer to wait and see for a few days. It is true that letting go is an important step. But a more important step is allowing the Lord Jesus to live out His victory from within us. Once we let go, we should believe. God says that if we believe that the Lord has died for us on the cross, He will give us eternal life, and if we believe that the Lord is living within us, He will give us the overcoming life.

I know that this is where many people have failed. They cannot believe that the Lord is living within them, and they cannot believe that the Lord has overcome for them. When I asked one sister whether she had let go, she said yes. When I asked how she let go, she said, "I tell God that I can do nothing. I will not take charge of anything anymore. From now on, I will commit everything to Him whether I experience victory or failure." However, if you asked this sister whether she had experienced victory, she would say that she dare not say anything. Why would she dare not say anything? She answered that she did not feel that she had overcome and had not seen the effect of overcoming. I told her that if she believed in God's fact and if she believed that the Lord Jesus is the victory and that He lives in her, she should believe immediately that she has overcome. But if she looked for results, she would never experience victory.

Brothers and sisters, the way to receive grace to overcome is the same as the way to receive grace for forgiveness. We tell a sinner that Jesus has died for him on the cross and that when he believes, his sins will be forgiven. If this person believes, his sins will surely be forgiven. If you ask whether or not he has believed, he may say that he has. But if you ask whether or not his sins are forgiven, he may say no. Why is this? He may answer, saying, "I have heard that when a man is forgiven of his sins, he will have joy and peace. I do not have joy and peace yet. I must kneel down to pray until I have joy and peace. Then I can say that my sins are forgiven." If someone says something like this, you will surely say to him, "Even if you kneel and pray for a year for joy and peace, you will not have it. You will have joy and peace when you believe that they will come to you." In the same way, if you fulfill the condition for God to give you victory, if you let go, if you resign, and if you lose hope in yourself, you can immediately believe that you have received the overcoming life. God's Son is living out His victory within you. Once you believe, the result will follow. But if you wait for the result to come, you will never see the result even if you kneel and pray.

Brothers and sisters, if you want to wait for the result before you dare say that you have the overcoming life, you are believing your own experience and not God's Word. Brothers and sisters, once we believe in the Lord's Word, the experience will follow, the feeling will follow, and the victory will follow. Paul did not say that he felt that he had overcome. He said, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God." Although you may feel that you are cold and that there is nothing to smile about, you can still thank and praise the Lord, saying, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God."

I may look healthy and vigorous. But actually there is not a day when I do not feel tired. According to my feeling, there is not a day that is exciting to me. Every day that I wake up, I feel cold and indifferent. Satan comes to me many times and says, "You do not experience any feeling of joy; every day you are so cold and indifferent. Is this what you mean by having Jesus living within you? You were cold and indifferent in the past, and you are cold and indifferent now. Is this the experience of victory in Christ?" When this happens, God always gives me an answer. I tell Satan, "If I feel anything, it will be myself who is living. But if I believe, I will be living by faith in the Son of God. If I feel anything, it will be my flesh that feels it. But if I believe, I will live by faith in the Son of God. It is my flesh that feels, but it is God's Word that I believe." If you believe in God's Word, the Lord will live out His victory within you. God says that as long as you fulfill the condition, Christ will live out His victory for you. You can therefore say, "God, I thank and praise You! What I feel does not count. The greatest lie in the world is my feelings. Feelings and Satan are the best companions. God, I thank You, because I can believe in Your Word and not in my feelings." Only God's Word is real; all feelings are lies. Therefore brothers and sisters, no matter what kind of temptation comes and no matter what kind of feeling you have, you should say, "I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God. I do not bear any responsibility. I let go."

Once you let go and believe, you will see the Son of God fighting the battle for you. He will overcome for you. The Son of God has taken away your temper. He has taken away your stubbornness, pride, and jealousy. Hallelujah, there is only one Overcomer in the whole world! Hallelujah! Everyone is weak! Hallelujah, we are all failures, and we are all useless! Hallelujah, only the Lord is the Overcomer! Hallelujah, throughout history there is only one Overcomer! Hallelujah, this is the reason we boast in the Lord Christ! Brothers and sisters, what do we have that we did not receive? What can we boast? Do you point your finger at the robbers and the prostitutes? Except for God's grace, we would be the same as they are. Hallelujah, we are not changed but exchanged!

Brothers and sisters, all we have to do is fulfill the conditions. On the one hand, we cannot make it, and we should not try to make it. On the other hand, we live in the faith of the Son of God. This is victory. Hallelujah, He has accomplished everything! We have to ask God to show us that His Son has accomplished everything and that we do not have any part in His work. This is victory.

CHAPTER SIX

SURRENDERING

Let us read two verses. Luke 18:27 says, "But He said, The things that are impossible with men are possible with God." Second Corinthians 12:9 says, "And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me."

LACKING ONE THING

In Luke 18:27, the Lord Jesus said that the things that are impossible with men are possible with God. We know the occasion in which the Lord said this word. A young man came to the Lord and asked Him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 18). Since he asked what he should do, the Lord answered, "You know the commandments: `Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother'" (v. 20). The Lord mentioned five items. He told the young ruler that in order to inherit eternal life, God's uncreated life, through works, one would have to take care of these things. These involve things that one has to do and things that one should not do. The young ruler thought that if inheriting eternal life was only a matter of not doing certain things and performing other good things, he could fulfill those requirements; indeed, he had kept all of them from his youth. But then the Lord said, "Still you lack one thing" (v. 22).

Tonight we do not have time to expound this passage. I will only extract a principle from this passage. When the young man asked the Lord what he should do to inherit eternal life, the Lord told him only five things. Why did the Lord not tell him six things? Why did the Lord not tell him everything all at once? Why after the five things, did He say, "Still you lack one thing"? The only reason the Lord said this was to show him that he could not make it. Eternal life is a gift; it is the grace of God, and man cannot obtain it through any kind of work. The Lord first told the young man five things and then said, "Still you lack one thing," because He wanted the young man to know that he could not inherit eternal life by works; it is impossible to have eternal life through works. But the young man did not know this; he still claimed that he could make it. From his youth he had kept the commandments concerning not committing adultery, not murdering, not stealing, not bearing false witness, and honoring his father and mother. Therefore, the Lord added, "Still you lack one thing." The Lord realized that there was one thing that he could not do. The Lord saw through the young man and knew that there was one thing which he could not get through.

The Lord is doing the same thing with regard to the experience of the overcoming life among us today; He is applying the same principle to us. Perhaps some sisters or brothers say that they are not as proud as others or not as jealous or stubborn as others. They may think that they are better than others in many things, but God knows that there is one thing in each of us which we cannot overcome. God allows this one thing to remain with us in order to show us that it is impossible with man. As long as we have not committed adultery, murdered, stolen, or borne false witness, and as long as we honor our parents, we think that we can do everything. If others ask us whether we have overcome, we may say that we have overcome in this or that matter. We may think that everything is fine. But the question today is not how many things we have overcome but whether or not there is one thing that we have not overcome. God allows one thing to remain with us in order to show us that there is still something we cannot do.

Last Saturday evening we saw that according to God's appraisal we only deserve to be crucified. God fully realizes that we cannot overcome sin and that we can never do good. But even though God says that we are useless, we think that we are still somewhat useful. God is very clear about us, but we are not clear about ourselves. No matter how good we say we are, God will say that we still lack one thing. The temper of some follows them all the time. Stubbornness follows others all the time. Some are not proud or jealous, but their stubbornness never leaves them. They still lack one thing. We will always have one thing that we cannot overcome. We do not have the power to overcome that sin. Some people are not proud, jealous, or stubborn and do not lose their temper easily, but they are full of words; they cannot survive without constantly talking to others. They may boast that they have not committed this or that kind of sin, but the Lord will still say that they lack one thing. Some cannot let go of their money; they never commit any serious sin. Yet greed is their sin; it is a filthy spot that remains with them. God says that they still lack one thing. There is still one thing because God wants to prove to us that we cannot make it. We may want to live a perfect life, but there is one thing which testifies that we have not attained to such a life. Brothers and sisters, this is the first qualification—admitting that we still have "one thing." With some it is pride; with others it is jealousy, talkativeness, or filthy thoughts. Some people may even have more than one thing.

The Lord's words indicate that salvation is impossible with man, receiving of life is impossible with man, victory is impossible with man, and obtaining the more abundant life is also impossible with man. However, the young man did not believe in his inability. His answer was bold: "All these things I have kept from my youth." How proud was this answer! How confident were these words! He thought that he had everything. But the Lord said that he still lacked one thing. A man may say that he does not have the sin of pride, jealousy, stubbornness, talkativeness, or any of the sins that I have mentioned, but he still lacks one thing. If he would go home and consider a little, he would realize that there is still one thing.

GOD'S INTENTION BEING FOR MAN TO REALIZE HIS INABILITY

Brothers and sisters, God has concluded that we can never make it. God has determined that we cannot make it. He has discerned and realized that we cannot make it. He has said this already. The question is how will we respond. Brothers and sisters, from the time we were saved, why has God allowed us to frequently fail? Why have we been failing constantly from the day we were saved until now?

Many brothers and sisters confess to me in tears that they cannot overcome this and that sin. Brothers and sisters, I am not unsympathetic with your frustrations. I know that a sin has been bothering you. But I thank and praise God that you cannot make it. You have surrendered; you have acknowledged defeat. God has shown you that you cannot make it. He does not have to point out many sins. He only has to leave you one sin, and it will be enough to show you that you cannot make it.

One sister has overcome all kinds of sins. But she cannot overcome the sin of lying. The minute she opens her mouth, she lies. The minute she speaks, lies come out. She knows that this is one sin which she cannot overcome.

Another sister cannot overcome her temper. The minute she is stirred up, she loses her temper. As soon as she loses her temper, she confesses her sin. But as soon as she confesses her sin, she loses

her temper again. Every time she loses her temper, she finds that she has to confess her sin, and after she confesses her sin, she loses her temper again. This is very embarrassing for her, but there is nothing that she can do. She loses her temper over and over again.

One brother has overcome many sins, but he cannot overcome the sin of smoking. He is a good brother, but he cannot overcome his smoking.

One sister can overcome all sorts of sins but cannot overcome the sin of eating snacks.

Why do Christians have these different experiences? God allows them to remain in order to prove to us that we cannot make it. God knows that we cannot make it, but we still say that we can make it. God says that we are hopeless, but we still say that we are hopeful. We have to realize that our many heartbreaks and failures and our many shameful defeats are God's way of proving to us that we cannot make it. God is asking us whether we realize we have failed enough. He is proving to us that we can never overcome. He allows us to fail once, twice, ten times, and even twenty times so that we will realize we cannot make it. He allows us to continually fail in order to show us our inability. He allows such experiences to happen so that we will admit to God that we are not able. Brothers and sisters, the first step towards deliverance is admitting that we cannot make it. In order for a man to be saved, he must first acknowledge his inability. In order for a man to overcome, he must also acknowledge his inability. Once we reach this point, God will begin His work. Unfortunately, the young man who came to Jesus went away in disappointment! It is a pity that he turned away in despair even though he realized his own inability!

Why did God give the law to men? We do not have to consider all the laws that have been given by God throughout the past four thousand years. We only need to consider the Ten Commandments given by God to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. What was the purpose of these commandments? God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites not for them to keep, but for them to break. What does this mean? God knows that man cannot keep the law, and He knows that everyone is a sinner. But man will not acknowledge God's judgment. Only after man has tried and failed will he admit that he is a sinner. The book of Romans tells us that God gave the law for man to break, not for man to keep. When a man finds that he cannot keep the law, his will is subdued, and he will humble himself. God spent four thousand years to help man realize that he cannot make it; then He sent Christ to open the way for man to receive Him and be saved by Him.

Throughout the past two thousand years, many sinners have been saved. We were sinners, but we were saved. Logically speaking, this should have humbled us. But I do not know if this has led to any improvement at all in our temper and pride. There may have been some so-called improvement, but this is actually a kind of suppression. Formerly, the temper was manifested outwardly. Now it is suppressed within. Formerly pride was manifested outwardly. Now it is suppressed within. But when suppression reaches a certain point, we can suppress these things no longer, and everything goes out of control. God is showing us that we cannot make it. He is telling us that no one can overcome his sins or deal with his sins. As long as there is one thing that man cannot do, he has been proven to be helpless.

Brothers and sisters, we are helpless. In order for us to receive deliverance from God, the first thing that we have to do is admit to Him that we cannot make it and that we do not intend to make it. We have to tell Him, "God, I surrender to You. I am finished. I am over. I will not fight any further." This is the meaning of surrendering. Brothers and sisters, this is the first condition for deliverance. It is saying, "I cannot make it anymore, I will not fight anymore, and I will not struggle anymore. In the

past I tried to change my pride a little. But Lord, I do not intend to change myself anymore. In the past I tried to change my temper a little. But Lord, I do not intend to change it anymore. I had thought of correcting my quick tongue, but now I have given up on trying. I cannot do anything. I will not try to change myself any longer. I give up."

SURRENDERING BEING LETTING GO

Brothers and sisters, what happens when we see the Lord's death for us on the cross, and what happens when we believe? We immediately stop trying to do good. As soon as we believe, we are saved. Similarly, when we see that the Lord has brought us to the cross and crucified us there, we will cease fighting and stop improving ourselves. Once we believe that the Lord is living within us and overcoming for us, we will stop our own work and allow God to rescue us. We will say, "Lord, I will never improve, and I do not intend to improve. From now on I will not do anything, I will not manage anything, and I will not be concerned about anything. From now on I will let go, and problems will no longer be my problems." Brothers and sisters, this is surrendering. This is letting go.

Some have said that it is very difficult to let go. When temptation comes, they have to put up a fight, and when their temper rises up, they have to wrestle with it. When they resolve to stop doing something and fail, it only means that they make a stronger resolution next time. However, one more resolution only means one more failure, and one more promise only means one more broken promise. The more resolutions one makes, the more he fails. If the first resolution is not strong enough, the second resolution will not work even when it is stronger. Romans 7 describes this well: To will is present with us, but to work out the good is not (v. 18)! No promise that is made is appropriate because we have not let go. We are still managing our own affairs, and we cannot say that we are crucified with Christ and that it is no longer we who live. Dying is letting go, resigning. It is giving up our efforts to take control and ignoring it. When we are no longer able, God will become able. Hence, the first thing is letting go.

There was a brother by the name of Lee in Tientsin who once asked me how he could resign and let go. He said that he could not resign or let go. What should he do? I asked what he did in his company, and he told me that he was the manager of the textile department. I asked, "If the general manager of the company told you that you were no longer needed by the company the following month and that you were fired, what would you do?" He said that the only thing he could do would be to resign. Then I asked, "Suppose the next month came, the new manager arrived, and you transferred everything to him. What would you do if a buyer came to you and asked, 'Manager, what kind of new fabric do you have? What is its price? How much do you think this price will go up in two days?'" The brother answered, "If it happened a few days before the new manager arrived, I would make some calculations and find out what the company had in stock and how much it needed to stock up. But if I had already transferred everything to the new manager, I would have nothing more to do. All I could do would be to watch others work." This is letting go and surrendering. This is what it means to be crucified with Christ. We have to say to the Lord, "I am not resigning because I am capable. I am resigning because I cannot stand it any longer. I am not capable of doing anything. I cannot manage anything any longer. This is why I have to resign. My temper is still present. My pride is still present. My stubbornness and jealousy are all still present. I can do nothing about them. I can only make a transfer and resign. I can only say that everything is in Your hand from now on." However, when "the buyers from the street" show up, we must not be alarmed. There are many "buyers" who come every day to solicit business. All we have to do is

commit everything to the Lord's hand. We do not have to care for or manage anything. This is the meaning of overcoming. This is the meaning of surrendering.

SATAN'S TEMPTATION BEING TO TRY TO MAKE US MOVE

Do you know what temptation is? One brother said that he was always tempted to lose his temper. Another brother said that he was always tempted to be stubborn. One brother complained that he was always tempted by unclean thoughts. Another brother complained that he was always tempted by a quick tongue. It seems that there are a thousand different kinds of temptations to a thousand different kinds of people. But brothers and sisters, there is actually only one temptation in the world. We think that temptations lead us to temper, pride, greed, or adultery. But with Satan, there is only one temptation—the temptation to move. Satan does not induce us to lose our temper or to be proud, greedy, or adulterous. His temptation is to make us move. As long as we move, Satan prevails over us. It does not matter how we move. As long as Satan becomes successful in initiating a move, we have failed. In our prayer and reading of the Bible, he has won the victory the minute we move. I only wish I could speak with many tears in my eyes. We should not move. The minute we move, we are defeated. We can struggle with Satan. We can fight with him or withstand him. But the minute we move, Satan has gained the complete victory. We have to realize that the secret to our victory lies in our standing by; it does not lie in our taking control. Once we try to manage the situation, we will fail. Brothers and sisters, this is a most amazing thing! God wants to set us aside and allow His Son to overcome for us.

Galatians 5:17 says, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these oppose each other that you would not do the things that you desire." This verse does not say that we oppose our lusts or that our lusts oppose us. It says that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. We do not play any part. These two parties are opposing one another. What does this mean? A brother once lamented that his only desires were sin and uncleanness. He could not help himself. But it is the flesh who is fighting against the Spirit, and the Spirit who is opposing the flesh. We play no part in this fighting. This is God's way of deliverance. If we can stand back and allow the Spirit to fight against the lusts and the lusts to fight against the Spirit, we will experience deliverance.

When I was first saved, I heard a story about a young girl who knew the meaning of victory very well. During the Keswick Convention, a man asked the little girl how she overcame when the devil came to her. She answered, "In the past, if the devil came to knock at my front door, as soon as he knocked, I would say, 'Don't come in. Don't come in.' But the result was always a failure. Now when the devil knocks at my door, I say, 'Lord, You open the door for me.' If the Lord opens the door, and the devil sees the Lord, he will say, 'Sorry, I came to the wrong door,' and he will run away."

When we are tempted and say, "Lord, save me because temptation is coming my way again," the devil will come in even before the door is open. We have to allow the Lord to handle the matter completely. The more we pray, the more desperate we become, and the more we repeat our prayer, the harder it is to let go. A brother once said that when Peter was sinking, he only said, "Lord, save me." Praying with a short sentence is letting go. But if one continues to pray, "Lord, save me..." five or six times, he is already defeated. I call this kind of prayer a hangman's prayer. This is like a person who tries to hang himself a second and third time after having been unsuccessful the first time. When a person repeatedly prays this way, it shows that he has not let go. He is trying to grasp victory with his prayer. He is trying to overcome with his own strength. Invariably, the result is defeat. If he did not pray so much, he might still have overcome. Brothers and sisters, please

remember that Satan is trying to make us move. As long as we move, even if it is by praying, he will have his way.

Suppose you lose your temper every time you are agitated by others. What will you do today? What are you going to do when someone continues to agitate you with his words, and the agitation grows increasingly worse? "Lord, I do not take control of this matter; my temper is not my business; victory is Your business. I cannot control my temper. Lord, You must be responsible for this." If you can say this, you are indeed letting go. The Lord will take over, and you will live out His patience. You will even be able to thank and praise Him, saying, "Lord, I do not take responsibility for this anymore." However, if you feel that you cannot bear the agitation, and you pray, "Lord, deliver me, for I am about to lose my temper," fifteen minutes will seem like fifteen hours to you. You may not lose your temper outwardly, but inwardly you will be burning. This is not victory. Satan does not need to make you lose your temper in a big way. All you need to do is move a little, and he will have the victory.

Overcoming is refusing to move. Overcoming is disregarding the situation and turning away. If you do not move, and if you disregard the situation and turn away, you are letting go. Victory has nothing to do with you. You are dead already; it is Christ who overcomes for you. Victory is for you to die and for Christ to live.

Recently in Chefoo, many brothers and sisters discovered the overcoming experience. One sister had a difficult past. Her husband was very unkind to her, and she was ill-treated by her mother-in-law. She endured, but she did not overcome. After she heard my preaching on the overcoming life, she received the word. But after two days, she came to me and asked how she could let go and how she could put herself in the hand of the Lord. I tried to explain it to her, but she could not understand. Finally, I asked the Lord to give me a suitable illustration. I said to her, "Mrs. So-and-so, have you ever taken a rickshaw ride to a friend's house?" She said yes. I said, "Suppose you arrived at your friend's house, and while you were paying the rickshaw man, your friend stepped in and tried to pay for you. Even though you wanted to pay the money, your friend insisted on paying it. Then when you returned the money to her, she tried to return the money to you. Have you ever encountered something like this?" She said yes. I continued, "Suppose she paid the twenty cents, and the rickshaw man took the money and left. Since you did not want your friend to pay, you pressed your money into her palm. However, when you were about to leave, she stuffed the money back into your palm. After this back-and-forth exchange had been repeated several times, you decided to put the money on the ground and say good-bye to your friend. But then you wondered whether your friend would take the money and what would happen if she did not take it and someone walking along the road took it. You wondered what would happen if the rickshaw man took it or a little child saw it and took it. You therefore turned and looked to see whether your friend took it. When you saw that your friend had not taken it, you turned and peeped again. But as long as you turn and peep, your friend will never take it. However, if you put the money on the ground and said to your friend, 'The money is here; take it,' and you ran away without looking back anymore, your friend would probably take it." After I told her this illustration, she understood and entered into the experience of the overcoming life.

This is the way many people commit their affairs to God. On the one hand, they say that they have committed everything to God. But on the other hand, their hearts are not at ease, and all the time they glance back. If you want to take control, He will not take control; instead, He will allow you to take control of yourself. If you will not take control anymore, He will take control and will bear the full responsibility. If you want to take control, it will be up to you to suppress your temper and you

will have to pick up everything yourself. What does it mean to surrender? It means to leave the money on the ground and turn around and walk away. It means to ignore. It does not matter whether the children take the money away or the rickshaw man or a pedestrian takes it away. You do not worry about it anymore, and you do not take responsibility for it anymore. You only need to say to the Lord, "Lord, I give everything to You. From now on, I do not care whether I am good or bad." Once you commit yourself to God this way, God will surely receive what you have committed to Him. All that we need to do is to hand over what we have to the Lord.

We have to let go first before God will pick up what we have let go. However, we want to wait for God to pick it up first before we let it go. But God wants us to let go first before He will pick it up. I told the brother whom I mentioned earlier that if his boss decided to lay him off on the first day of the following month, and if a new person were hired, he would have to transfer everything over to the new man. During the interim period, he would be responsible for half of everything, and the new person would be responsible for the other half. This transition between the old and the new is an overlapping exchange. But for God, He either takes up everything or He takes up nothing at all. He will never take up half and leave it up to us to take up the other half. We have to quit on the thirty-first, and then God will move in on the first. If we try to quit gradually, God will not take over.

Brothers and sisters, one of our greatest sins is an evil heart of unbelief. We try to control ourselves and suppress ourselves every day. We are the ones who are controlling and suppressing ourselves. We wonder what would happen if we did not control or suppress ourselves. When we preach the gospel to an unbeliever, we tell him that he should not worry about anything because Christ has died for him; he only needs to believe and he will receive everything. In the same way, we have been crucified with Christ, and Christ is living within us. Thank and praise God that Christ is our Head and we are His members. Christ is the vine and we are the branches. He is our life and our everything. When we are removed, when we give up, resign, and turn away, Christ will begin to take over.

If an unbeliever tries to get rid of himself, the devil will move in. "Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came out. And it comes and finds it unoccupied, swept, and decorated. Then it goes and takes along with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter in and settle down there" (Matt. 12:44-45). For believers, it is a case of two households under the same roof. When one moves out, the other will still remain. If a man is not saved, he will not be victorious even if he ceases all his work. But if he is saved, the Lord will give him the full victory as soon as he stops his work. Once the self moves out, victory comes. Once we move out, we overcome. Letting go and resigning means doing away with ourselves and moving out. This is the meaning of full surrender.

In the book *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, there is a story of a Christian climbing down a dry well. There was a rope at the edge of the well, and the man lowered himself down the well by climbing down the rope. Suddenly, he came to the end of the rope. He wanted to get to the bottom, but he did not know how deep the well was. He thought about climbing back to the top of the well, but he did not have enough strength. The only thing he could do was tightly hold the rope and cry out for help. However, the well was in a wilderness, and the man was inside the well. No one responded to his shouts. Soon his voice was gone, his strength was exhausted, and he could no longer hold on. He prayed, "God, may I fall into eternity." After he prayed, he let go with his hands and fell, but it was only a three-inch fall! Whoever thinks that they will fall into the abyss when they let go will find that they have fallen onto the eternal Rock rather than into eternity. Brothers and sisters, let go! Let go! The first condition for the overcoming life is to let go. From now on, you do

not need to take control. This means that from now on, you will overcome. Resignation brings in victory.

In Chefoo recently, a sister heard of the two conditions for the overcoming life—surrendering and believing. I asked whether she had gotten through. She used to go to the mountain to pray all the time, and she answered, saying, "I went to the mountain today and dug another grave for myself and made another burial." I asked her a few times, and she always answered this way. I knew that she had dealt with many difficult sins already, but she was still not happy. I prayed for her, but there did not seem to be much result. One day I prayed that God would give me the utterance to help her to get through. She was playing a hymn that day. I asked how she was doing. That very question caused her to begin to cry. She told me that she had dealt with many things, but that she could not deal with the small sin of eating snacks. This might not mean anything to others, but to her it was a small sin. When she mentioned this, I laughed and said, "This is wonderful. Nothing can be better." She said, "You said that the condition for receiving the overcoming life is first to surrender and second to believe. I cannot surrender, and I cannot believe." I said, "Then why don't you just continue to not surrender and not believe?" She answered, "But didn't you say that the condition for overcoming is first to surrender and second to believe? Now I cannot surrender and I cannot believe. What should I do?" I said, "Just continue to not surrender and not believe. What is the meaning of surrender? To surrender is to let go. To let go is not a work, but you have made it a work. To believe is also not a work, but you have made it a work. If you cannot surrender or believe, just stay the way you are. There is no need to improve yourself, and there is no need to even let go. It is true that the condition for overcoming is to surrender and believe. But you have made surrendering and believing a formula for victory. This will not work. Just let go completely. There is no need for you to do anything. There is no need to even try to let go or believe. If you can utter a praise, then utter a praise. If you cannot, there is no need to try. If you can come before the Lord, come before Him. Come before Him no matter whether you are living or dead. That is all you need to do. This is the meaning of letting go." Friends, we are too complicated. God says that there is no need to do anything, but we still want to do many things. Many brothers and sisters say that they are letting go, but they still make letting go a kind of work. They struggle back and forth between letting go and not letting go. They are still exercising their own strength in this matter. Brothers and sisters, letting go means that you are through. This is victory. After the sister heard my word, she was confused for three days. The light was too much for her, and she was confused. But after three days, she made it through! Brothers and sisters, is there anything that you cannot get through? That sister had only one thing which she could not let go, and the Lord brought her through.

OUR WEAKNESS BEING OUR BOAST

Second Corinthians 12:9 says, "And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me." This shows us that we should not only consider ourselves weak, powerless, and incapable, but also rejoice in our weakness, powerlessness, and incapability. Does this verse say that we should weep for our weakness? No, on the contrary, it says that we should rejoice over our weaknesses, and we should not just rejoice but also boast in our weaknesses. What is boasting in one's weaknesses? The whole world mourns for its weaknesses, but the overcomers boast in their weaknesses because they have faith.

Brothers and sisters, do you feel that you have some problems? Do you feel that you have some failures? You have to realize that your problems and failures are a blessing to you; they are there to help you overcome.

Once in Chefoo I met a doctor who had been saved for three or four years. He had served in the army for over ten years, and his demeanor reflected that of a soldier; he was direct and forthright. There was no question about his salvation; however, he had a habit of smoking cigarettes. Smoking did not pose a major problem to him when he was in Manchuria, but when he came to Chefoo, things became a little more difficult. There were seventy or eighty people in the church, and Chefoo was a small place. The only place he could smoke was at home. But even at home, he dared not smoke in the open because his wife was a sister. In the hospital where he worked, there were a few nurses who were our sisters as well. On the one hand, he wanted to smoke, but on the other hand, he felt embarrassed. Whenever he heard someone approaching while he was smoking, he had to hurriedly extinguish his cigarette. When he smoked on the street, he had to first look in front and behind to see whether there were any familiar faces. He could not quit smoking, yet it was painful for him to continue smoking. He did not know what to do. After one of my meetings, he came to me and made an appointment to see me the next morning at 9:00. He told me that he had very important things to talk about. The next morning when he came, he told me his whole story. He said that he had been smoking for over ten years and could not quit. What should he do? The more he spoke, the more I turned my face towards the ceiling and laughed. He said, "Mr. Nee, this is a serious matter." I said that I knew it was a serious matter. He said that he could do nothing about it. I said, "It is wonderful that you can do nothing about it. Nothing sounds better than hearing that you can do nothing about it." He asked me why, and I said, "I rejoice because only the Lord can deal with this matter. I can do nothing about it, and you can do nothing about it. Your wife can do nothing about it, and the brothers and sisters can do nothing about it. With such an ideal patient, the Lord Jesus will have good business for His clinic again." He told me that it was not a light matter that he could do nothing about it for over ten years. I agreed, but said, "This is difficult for you, but there is nothing difficult with the Lord. He can turn the situation just like that." I went on saying, "Dr. Shi, you are a good doctor, and I have good health. Therefore, you do not need me, and I do not need you. If you want to demonstrate your skill on me, I must first be sick, and not just sick of an ordinary illness, but of a serious illness. The more serious my illness, the more your skill will be made manifest. Today the Lord Jesus is here. He can deal with what you, Dr. Shi, cannot deal with." He asked what I meant, and I quoted 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me." It was good that he wanted to quit smoking and wonderful that he could not quit smoking. But he still did not understand the words of 2 Corinthians 12:9. It was wonderful that he could not quit smoking. It would not have been that wonderful if he did not have to smoke, because 2 Corinthians says that the power of Christ is perfected only in man's weaknesses. I said, "To you, it is bad to smoke. But to God, your not being able to quit smoking is wonderful." He was dumbfounded, and his eyes stared at me. I told him, "Never think that your smoking is lamentable or that it is unfortunate. You have to tell the Lord, 'I thank and praise You that I smoke. I thank and praise You that I cannot quit smoking. Yet Lord, I thank and praise You that You can make me quit smoking, and You can help me to stop smoking.'" He asked doubtfully, "Can God really do it?" I answered, "Indeed, He can." Then we prayed together. First I prayed a few words, and then he followed. He had the faith, and his prayer was in the tone of a typical soldier. He spoke in an honest way, "God, I thank and praise You because I smoke. Lord, I thank and praise You because I cannot quit smoking. Lord, I thank and praise You because You can quit smoking for me." After he prayed and while his tears were still wet, he put on his hat and was ready to leave. I asked him, "Dr. Shi, will you still smoke?" He said, "I, Tsai-lin Shi, cannot quit smoking, but God can quit for me." I knew that he would be all right. In the evening I was a little concerned about him and asked those in the hospital what had become of him. I found out that everything was proceeding smoothly. The next morning I checked on him again, and the answer was the same. Everything was all right with him. That afternoon when I met him, he told me that he was debating with his wife. His wife had complained to him for over ten years about his smoking, but he had never been able to quit. After

he spoke with God, his cigarette smoking was gone within half an hour. He said, "I did not smoke yesterday, and I did not smoke today." When I was about to leave, I asked again, "Do you think that you, Dr. Shi, can quit smoking?" He said no. I asked, "What then are you going to do?" He said, "The Lord will quit for me." At that word, I left in peace.

Brothers and sisters, do not think that you will change. Five years from now, you will still lose your temper. Victory is a matter of Christ living for you. You can declare, "Thank and praise the Lord that I cannot make it, but Christ can." I wish I could tell the whole world about this. I am not afraid of a bad temper. I am not afraid of quick dispositions. I am not afraid of inordinate pride. I am only afraid of those who do not see their own inability and do not see that Christ is able.

Brothers and sisters, it is good that you praise God for your victory. But you must also praise God for your weaknesses. Your weaknesses work all the more to manifest Christ's power. I thank God that Watchman Nee is corrupt beyond hope. I thank Him that Christ's power is once more perfected through me. I tell the Lord that I have no goodness, righteousness, holiness, patience, or calmness in me. Thank and praise God that I do not have any of these things, and that I do not try to have them anymore. "O Lord, from now on, I commit everything to You. From now on, it is Your Son who will overcome for me." If you will do this, you will immediately overcome. You can overcome within a minute, even within a second.

IMPOSSIBLE WITH MAN BUT POSSIBLE WITH GOD

Luke 18 shows us a young man who could not make it, while Luke 19 shows us Zaccheus who made it. "Lord, Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much" (v. 8). He made it right there. Zaccheus did what the young man could not do. Luke 18 shows us that with men it is impossible, while Luke 19 shows us that with God everything is possible. The old man in Luke 19 was able to do what the young man in Luke 18 could not do. In Luke 18, the young man could not do what the Lord told him to do. In Luke 19, the Lord did not say much to the old man, but he believed. The young man did not make it, because he did not believe in God. The old man and his household were the sons of Abraham; they had faith, and salvation came to that house. This was God's work.

Brothers and sisters, we have to thank and praise the Lord. We cannot love. We cannot endure. We cannot be humble. We cannot be meek. But there is not one verse in the Bible, not one word from God, that tells us that we should live a life which we are capable of living or that we should do what we are capable of doing. God always tells us to do what we cannot do and to live a life which we cannot live. Every morning, I wake up to thank and praise God, because it is another day for Him to perform His miracles. In the evening, I thank and praise Him for the miracles He has performed that day. Today God is enabling me to endure what I otherwise could not endure. He is enabling me to love what I otherwise could not love. He is enabling me to do what I otherwise could not do and act the way which I otherwise could not act. Thank and praise Him! Every day we experience the words: "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God"!

CHAPTER SEVEN

BELIEVING

Scripture Reading: Gal. 2:20; Heb. 11:1

IN ORDER TO OVERCOME, ONE MUST BELIEVE

Today we will read only Galatians 2:20 and Hebrews 11:1. During the past few days, we have seen that the overcoming life is simply Christ Himself. The overcoming life is not an improvement or advancement in ourselves, and it is not a self-effort to strive to become like Christ. Victory is Christ living within us; that is, it is Christ overcoming for us. He has died for us on the cross to save us. Today He is living within us to overcome for us. During the past few days, we have seen the conditions for overcoming. The first condition is to surrender, and the second condition is to believe. We believe that the Son of God lives within us, and we believe that He is living out His victory from within us. Yesterday, we saw the meaning of surrendering. Today we will see the meaning of believing. I am afraid that many people have surrendered, but they are not victorious because they still have not believed. Therefore, we must remember that we cannot overcome if we have surrendered but have not believed. To surrender is only the negative side of the matter. We still need to believe; this is the positive side. If we surrender on the negative side and believe on the positive side, we will overcome.

There was a brother from Chefoo who once went to Shanghai. He went home to tell others that he had surrendered, but that he still had not overcome. He felt as terrible as he did before. He even lost his temper in his place of work. I told him that surrendering is not the same as overcoming, because surrendering is merely the negative aspect. Believing is equally important. He took that word, and eventually he overcame. In the last meeting, he praised God and proclaimed that for the first time, he had nothing to boast of and that everything was of God.

Brothers and sisters, please remember that the condition for victory is not merely surrendering. One does not overcome merely by surrendering. After surrendering, one must believe in a definite way. When one surrenders and then believes, he will overcome.

What was Paul's experience? How did he overcome? First, he surrendered. He said, "I am crucified with Christ." He had already experienced that it was "no longer I," but he went on to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God." This means that he believed that Christ lived in him and that He loved him and gave Himself up for him.

Many people have surrendered, but they have not overcome because they have not believed. If they do not believe, nothing will work. Today I will talk about the meaning of faith, but I cannot talk about it in detail. I can only speak about it briefly. I will point out the great relationship between faith and victory.

BELIEVING IN GOD'S FACT

Everything recorded in the Bible has been accomplished by God for us. God has accomplished everything for us. In our January conference of last year, we mentioned three things that God has given us: First, there is the covenant which God has given us. Second, there are the facts which He has accomplished for us. Third, there are the promises He has given us. These three things include

all of God's work for us. We spoke about these three things when we were on the subject of the new covenant. Today I will not say much about them. A promise is something God will do for us; it is something that He will do in the future. A fact is something that God has accomplished in Christ; it is something that God has done already. Today I will talk about God's fact and His promise.

Many people do not know what God's fact is. The Lord Jesus has died for all men on the cross; He has died for the whole world. This is God's fact. But how many people are saved? Only those who believe are saved. Since Christ has died for the whole world, is it inconsequential whether or not a person believes? Is one saved whether or not he believes? Is it the same whether or not one believes, since Christ has died for all and since this has become God's fact? This is the way many Christians think when they say that Christ is living within them. Christ is the Head and we are the Body. The way the Head feels, controls, manages, and takes responsibility should be the same way Christians feel, control, manage, and take responsibility. How many Christians today see that the Lord Jesus is the Head? Is it Christ who is feeling or we who are feeling? Is it Christ who is controlling or we who are controlling? Is it Christ who is managing or we who are managing? Is it Christ taking charge or we who are taking charge? What is our problem? The problem is that we do not have faith.

Some brothers and sisters say that they have faith in Christ being the Head, but they do not have faith in the Head taking up all the responsibilities. Many people cannot believe; they do not know what faith means. The Bible says that the Lord is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5). It does not say that He will be our vine and we will be His branches. It does not matter whether or not we believe, He is always the vine, and we are always the branches. However, those who believe will have the experience of the juice flowing through them, and they will experience fruit in their work. The Lord's life does not flow through those who do not believe; they have to struggle to work and to bear fruit. If we tell them that the Lord is the vine and we are the branches, they may ask why they cannot work or bear fruit. They cannot because they do not have faith. Since the Lord is the vine and we are the branches, they may respond that it does not matter whether or not one believes and that God's fact is always God's fact. Those who say this do not know the meaning of faith.

FAITH BEING THE SUBSTANTIATION OF GOD'S FACT

Hebrews 11:1 speaks of the importance of faith. This is the only verse in the whole Bible that gives the definition of faith. "Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." There are many ways to translate the word "substantiation." It is a difficult word to translate from Greek to English. The word "substantiation" means the capacity to make something real. For example, we have the shape of the lamps, the color of the walls, and the sound of the organ. How can these shapes, colors, and sounds become real to us? The only thing that proves the existence of color is our eyes. Here is a picture in beautiful green, red, and yellow colors, but the beautiful colors can only be substantiated through the eyes. Without the eyes, the colors could not be substantiated no matter how beautiful they are. The sound of the organ is very beautiful, but it can only be substantiated by the ears. A deaf person will not be able to substantiate sound. The eyes cannot substantiate sound, and hands cannot substantiate sound. Only the ears can substantiate sound. Different objects have different shapes: some are cubic, while others are spherical, flat, triangular, or curved. One can only substantiate these shapes by the vision of the eyes or the touch of the hands. Therefore, it is one thing for objects to exist, and it is another thing for the existence of these things to be substantiated. There are millions of objects on the earth, but all of them are dependent upon a certain ability in order to be substantiated. The same is true with faith.

Here is a painting with mountains, water, flowers, grass, and trees. The scenery is beautiful, and if you have eyes, you can appreciate the beauty of the painting and tell others about it. But suppose a person was born blind and has never seen color his whole life. If you tell him about red and that it is attractive, he will ask, "What is red?" You may tell him about green and that it is lovely, but he will ask, "What is green?" You can only say that red is red and green is green. Although the painting exists, he cannot appreciate how wonderful it is. Although the scenery in the picture is wonderful, there is no way he can enjoy this wonder.

We have a sister here who can play the piano very well. Those who have ears and understand music can appreciate the music that she plays. However, those who are deaf or do not understand music cannot testify to the beauty of the music. The same is true of our faith. All of God's facts are real. However, these facts of God can only be substantiated by faith, because faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

A nice painting may have beautiful scenery, but a blind man cannot see it. However, one cannot say that the painting does not exist because he has not seen it. The painting exists as a fact. Whether or not one sees, it is still a painting, and the beautiful colors are still present. The question is whether or not you have received the benefit from the painting. Those with sight will find enjoyment from the painting; they will receive the benefit from it. The Lord has died and shed His blood on the cross for all men. This is a fact. But some have the faith to substantiate this fact of the Lord's death, and they receive the benefit from it. Some do not have the faith. The death of the Lord on the cross is still a fact, but they are unable to experience it.

Brothers and sisters, do you see the importance of faith? We need faith to substantiate a spiritual fact just as we need eyes, ears, and hands to substantiate physical objects. In spiritual matters, we need faith to substantiate the reality of everything. The hand substantiates the shape of objects, and the ear perceives sound, but the hand cannot feel nor can the ear hear colors. Colors can only be substantiated by the eyes. This is also true with spiritual matters. For example, the Lord is the Head and we are the members. This union is a fact, and there is no possibility of any separation. In the same way, the Lord is the vine and we are the branches, and there is no possibility of separation. If we believe this, we will receive the benefit of this fact. Some people confess that the Lord is the vine and we are the branches. But they do not have the juice, the life. They cannot bear fruit because they do not have faith.

What is faith? It is not a mental understanding of a truth. It is the seeing of a fact and the substantiation of it. We have heard that the Lord has died on the cross and shed His blood for our redemption. We may even agree with others that the Lord has died on the cross and shed His blood for our redemption. We have also heard that the Lord is the vine and we are the branches, and we may agree with others that He is the vine and we are the branches. We have heard that the Lord Jesus is our life and living within us, and we may even agree with others that He is our life and living within us. Yet this alone cannot substantiate these facts. Brothers and sisters, we may have put ourselves aside and have already realized that we are powerless and useless. We may have already let go, but these are only the things we should do on the negative side. On the positive side, we should still substantiate Christ. This is a wonderful thing! It only takes a second, and the accomplished facts of Christ will be substantiated in us.

Here is a beautiful painting. How do you know that it is beautiful? You know it because you have seen it. How do you know about all the riches in Christ? You know because you have seen them. Colossians says that we are made full in Christ. How do we know that we are made full in Christ?

We know because we have seen Him. When we look at ourselves, we do not see any fullness. But we are told that we are made full in Christ. Are we made full in Christ yet? The Lord has given us all the fullness and given us grace upon grace. Do we have them yet? It is not a question of whether we have them in our head but whether or not we have such a faith in our heart.

Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." There is no doubt that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. But where are these blessings? Brothers and sisters, the main question hinges on faith; we have to believe that God's Word is true. This is so simple, and there is nothing more to say about it.

What is faith? Let us consider this matter from the Lord's view. A great failure among Christians is that they cannot believe. Believing is substantiating the facts. Once we see something, we substantiate it. Once we believe, we substantiate the facts, and we have it.

There was an Englishman called Mr. Webpeblo whose daughter died one day. When he returned from his daughter's funeral, he considered what the subject of his sermon should be the next day. He thought, "My daughter is dead, and the congregation knows that I am heartbroken. I must give a sermon to comfort them." He chose the text of 2 Corinthians 12:9 as his subject: "My grace is sufficient for you." He divided his sermon into sections and subsections according to the Scripture. Then he knelt down and prayed for God's blessing. But while he was praying, he asked himself, "Is God's grace sufficient for me? If His grace is not sufficient for me, how can I say that it is? I say that God's grace is sufficient, but if I sorrow and grieve over my daughter's death, God's grace is not sufficient for me. I cannot lie." He thought of changing the subject, but there was no time to do it. He decided that he would just pray for God to make His grace sufficient for him. He prayed, "God, make Your grace sufficient for me. O Lord, make Your grace sufficient for me." He prayed for a long time, but nothing availed. He did not know what he should do. At that moment, he lifted up his eyes and saw the same verse on the mantel. It was a verse that his mother had placed there while he was away for the funeral. The verse was printed in three colors. The words My and you were printed in blue; the word sufficient was printed in red. All the other letters were printed in black. Suddenly, God's light dawned on him, and he confessed before the Lord, saying, "God, You said that Your grace is sufficient for me, but I said that Your grace is not sufficient for me. You have said that Your grace is sufficient for me, but I am still asking for Your grace to be sufficient for me." He confessed his sin and thanked and praised the Lord, saying, "Your grace is sufficient for me. There is no need for me to pray for anything any longer." He was filled with joy and thanksgiving. There was no need for him to pray any longer. The next day on the platform, he delivered the best sermon of his life. When someone asked him about the source of his power, he answered that it came after his daughter's funeral. From that day on he was different, because he had learned to believe.

The problem today is that we have heard that the Lord Jesus is the Head, yet we still pray for Him to be our Head. Why would we not rather thank and praise Him, saying, "Lord, You are the Head"? If we would do this, the fact would be substantiated immediately.

A brother once said, "Mr. Nee, you have spoken so much, but I have not received anything." I answered that it was because he was merely listening to my speaking; he should instead go to the Lord and ask Him to speak to him. That evening he prayed to God, saying, "God, make me overcome. Lord, make me victorious. Lord, I have a bad temper; help me to overcome." While he was praying, he recalled the prayer of the leper who prayed to the Lord, saying, "If You are willing, You can cleanse me." He prayed accordingly, "Lord, if You are willing, my temper will go away." At that

point, he realized that if the Lord was willing, there was nothing more to pray about. The Lord has accomplished everything, and He is willing; everything is done.

Brothers and sisters, all that we have to do is believe 2 Corinthians 12:9 or Luke 18:27. As long as we believe the words "I am willing," everything will be all right. Once we have the "I am willing," problems are behind us and tempers are no more. Even if our wives are dying from sickness, as long as the Lord has said, "I am willing," everything will be all right. This is the meaning of believing. Believing is not asking for something; it is not asking for God to do something that He has already promised to do.

Once a brother was speaking on the subject of overcoming. After his message, he invited the brothers and sisters to ask any questions that they might have. He noticed that a young sister was weeping in her seat but would not stand up to ask anything. Another older lady stood up and asked, "For the past few years, I have been praying for victory but have never experienced it. What is wrong?" The brother answered, "Nothing. You have prayed too much. If you change your prayer into praise, everything will be well." After this, another man stood up and said, "I have been seeking victory for eleven years but have not overcome. That lady's question and your answer enlightened me, and now I have it." The brother then walked over to the side of the young sister and asked how she was doing. The girl answered that she also became clear after hearing the question and the answer. This is the meaning of faith.

Brothers and sisters, please remember that letting go is not all. If you do not have faith, you will not substantiate the facts. The color of a painting can be substantiated only by the eyes, the sound of an organ can be substantiated only by the ears, and the texture of an object can be substantiated only by the hands. In the same way, God's Word and His promises can be substantiated only by faith. We do not have to hesitantly pray to God, saying, "Lord, be my victory, be my life, and be my sanctification." Rather, we should say to Him, "God, You are my victory. I thank and praise You because You are my life and You are my sanctification. I thank and praise You!"

Brothers and sisters, we encounter temptations all the time. Many difficulties confront us and harsh words fall on our ears. Should we pray for God to give us the strength to overcome? No, we should say, "Lord, I thank and praise You because You are my victory! Lord, You are overcoming for me. I thank and praise You that You are withstanding everything for me. Thank You that You are my Head and I am Your member. You are the vine and I am a branch. You are supplying me everything." He is already supplying us everything according to His word!

When we were saved, we received one word out of the thousands that the Lord spoke. Some people were saved through John 3:16. Others were saved through John 5:24. Still others were saved through Romans 10:10. As long as we have one word from the Lord, we are saved. The same is true with victory; all we need is just one out of His many words. The brother mentioned earlier overcame through just three words: "I am willing." Some overcome through 2 Corinthians 12:9, while others overcome through Romans 6:14. Still others overcome through 1 Corinthians 1:30.

FAITH NOT BEING HOPE

Now we need to ask what faith is not. Faith is not hope. Those who have hope do not necessarily have faith. When you talk to others about overcoming and ask whether they have overcome, you know that they do not have faith if they answer, "I hope I will overcome." This is like talking to someone about salvation. If he tells you that he hopes to be saved, you know that he does not have

the faith yet. Some people constantly hope that the Lord will save them, and they constantly hope that the Lord will help them overcome. Some people constantly pray and ask the Lord to make them overcome. Some people constantly wait for the Lord to make them overcome. Some people say that they have surrendered and believed, but they are still waiting to see whether it will work. If they want to wait and see whether this works, it will never work, because faith is not hope.

A brother once asked me whether a person who has overcome should try to constantly remember that the Lord is his victory. He said, "I have over twenty workers working in my factory. I have to supervise them, but I easily forget about things. I am the supervisor over many girls. Every day, from morning until 8:00 in the evening, many things happen to them. How can I always remember that the Lord is my victory? If I cannot remember, am I still victorious?" I asked, "When you are in your factory, do you remember that you have two eyes?" He said, "No." I asked, "When you leave the factory, do you have to touch your eyes with your hands to make sure that they are there?" He said, "Of course not." It does not matter whether he remembered his eyes. The only thing that mattered was whether his eyes were truly there. Thank and praise the Lord, the overcoming life is not a matter of us remembering the Lord, but a matter of the Lord remembering us. It would be great hardship on us if we were required to remember the Lord. Thank and praise the Lord that He remembers us!

FAITH NOT BEING FEELING

Some people are not hoping, praying, or waiting, but they are looking for feelings. A sister said that she has surrendered and believed that the Lord is living in her, but that she dare not say that she has overcome. This is because from the day she received the Lord Jesus as her victory, she never had any feeling about it. Brothers and sisters, believing is having absolute faith in something; feeling does not play any part in this. Feeling has nothing to do with what a picture looks like; it only takes the eyes to see. There may be some occasions when feelings are useful. However, feelings are useless in understanding the things of God. The hand can only touch things and sense their temperature; it cannot see a picture. Spiritual things can only be substantiated by faith; they cannot be substantiated by feelings. We overcome because of the Word of God. God speaks, and it is done. This is not a matter of feeling some kind of strength or experiencing some exuberant sensation for a few days. In order to overcome, there only needs to be one word from the Lord.

This morning, a brother mentioned his problem. He had already surrendered and believed, but he dared not say that he had overcome. Satan was still accusing him. Something happened yesterday which seemed to tell him that he had backslidden. He began to doubt whether his victory was real. I said to him, "Suppose I sold the garden in back of my house to you and wrote a contract for it. If someone else comes and says that the plot of land is his, what will you do?" In such a situation, there are two things that he could do. The first thing would be to believe the contract and believe that everything mentioned in the contract was his. The second would be to believe my word and believe that since my words were true, the other man's words must be false. The question was whose word he would choose to believe. If he chose to believe that man's word, he would have to allow the man to remain on the land. But if he chose to believe my words, he should tell the man to leave, and the man would have to leave immediately. God's promise and His Word are trustworthy. If you say that your temper and pride are real, you make God's Word unreliable. If you do not have faith, your temper and pride will become real. But if you have faith, all these things will be driven away.

God has given us a covenant which says that meekness is ours, patience is ours, and love, temperance, and everything in Christ are ours. But when you lose your temper again, and your pride, uncleanness, and failures come back, what should you do? If you believe God's Word, you should say, "God, I thank and praise You because I can be meek, patient, humble, loving, and temperate. I can be all these because Christ is living in me." As long as you grasp hold of God's Word, the things you fear will go away.

UNBELIEF BEING THE GREATEST SIN

The greatest problem among God's children today is that they cannot believe God's Word. It is not that hard to ask them to let go. Since they have let go, it should be an easy thing for them to believe. Brothers and sisters, please come before the presence of the Lord. After you have let go, you should have the faith that you will get through.

A sister had let go completely and committed everything to the Lord. I asked her whether she had overcome, and she answered that she was not sure. I asked her why, and she said that she had not seen the results yet. I said to her bluntly, "You have committed the greatest sin that man can commit, the sin of unbelief. When you do not believe, it means that you are making God a liar. God has said that you are a branch and that if you let go, the Lord's life will spontaneously flow out of you. However, you are saying that God has not delivered you even though you have let go. You are saying that you have fulfilled your part but God has not fulfilled His part." She denied that this was her intention. Then I told her, "You should say to the Lord, 'I thank and praise You because You have given everything to me.'"

Brothers and sisters, please remember that when we believe in the Lord as our Head and our life and believe that we have received everything, everything is indeed ours. Once we believe, all problems are solved. Once we have faith, no obstacle can stop us from victory. Hallelujah! This is salvation. Our believing today is not a work but a substantiation of the facts. We believe that the Lord is the Head, that He lives in us, that He is our life, that He is the vine and we are the branches, and that He is overcoming for us. Once we believe, all the temptations will go away. Once we believe, the Lord will do everything for us. Thank and praise Him that He has done everything!

We have been meeting here for eight or nine days already. I would like to see what is going to happen to all of us. How many of us have let go? How many have not only let go but also believed? First, I would ask those who have let go to raise their hands. Now I would like those who have let go and also believed to raise their hands. There is not much difference between the number of those who raised their hands the first time and the number of those who raised their hands the second time. However, the second time there were a few less hands. Now I will say a little more about the matter of believing.

Brothers and sisters, please remember that God's Word is trustworthy. We are not trusting our own experience. We are not believing our own feelings. We are believing God's Word. God says that the Lord Jesus has not only become our righteousness on the cross, but that Christ has become our sanctification through living within us. Therefore, we can say that Christ is not only our righteousness but also our sanctification. We do not have to feel that Christ is our life, and we do not have to feel that Christ is our sanctification. We believe that He is our life and that He is our sanctification. God's Word is reliable. When God says that Christ is our life, we also say that He is our life. When God says that Christ is our sanctification, we also say that He is our sanctification.

When God says that Christ is our victory, we also say that He is our victory. Whatever God says, we believe.

In Chefoo I asked a sister whether or not she had let go, and she answered, "Yes, because God says that I am crucified with Christ." Next I asked her whether she had overcome, and she dared not say whether she had, because she was not sure. I told her frankly, "Sister, God says that Jesus Christ is your life, but you are saying that Jesus Christ may not be your life. God says that Jesus Christ is your sanctification, but you are saying that Jesus Christ may not be your sanctification. God says that His grace is sufficient for you, but you are saying that His grace may not be sufficient for you. Between you and God, one must be lying. Either God is wrong or you are wrong. Do you dare say that God is a liar? God says that Christ is your life, but you are saying that Christ may not be your life. God says that Christ is your sanctification, but you are saying that Christ may not be your sanctification. Are you not saying that God's Word is untrustworthy?" By then, her expression had changed, and she replied immediately, "I do not mean that. I do believe God's Word." Brothers and sisters, if you are still doubting, and if you still wonder whether Christ is your life and whether He is your sanctification, this is not a small thing. I can tell you bluntly that you are making God a liar!

I once talked briefly to a sister in Chefoo before a meeting. Because the time of the meeting was approaching, I asked her quickly whether she had let go. She told me that she had. I then asked whether she had overcome, and she said that she had not but that she knew what her problem was and that it was not a big problem. I realized that I had to go in a few minutes, and I prayed for God to give me the wisdom to say something to her. I said, "You smiled and said casually that you do not have faith. But in God's sight, this is a great sin. It is a great sin to not believe God's Word. God says that Christ is your life and that He is your sanctification. He says that Christ is your victory and that His grace is sufficient for you. But you cannot believe, and you even think lightly of it and brush it away with a smile. Sister, I must tell you that you have committed a great sin! You have to go to the Lord and say, 'God, I have not believed Your Word; I have sinned against You. Please forgive me, and remove my evil heart of unbelief. Please remove this sin from me.'"

Some do not believe, but they are still smiling. They think that unbelief is not a great thing. Actually, this is a great sin. This sin is more serious than the sin of adultery or murder. We have to say to God, "Forgive me, for I have sinned against You. Lord, remove my evil heart of unbelief." If we call this unbelief a sin, we will get through. Our faith is based on God's Word. How wonderful is 2 Corinthians 12:9, which says, "My grace is sufficient for you"! How wonderful is 1 Corinthians 1:30, which says, "Christ Jesus...became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption"! How wonderful is Colossians 3:4, which says, "Christ [is] our life"! If we grasp hold of God's Word and believe His Word, all will be well. Even if we have only one verse of the Scripture or one word from the Lord, we will have the assurance, and we will overcome.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PROVING OF FAITH

Tonight I would like you to read one verse. First Peter 1:7 says, "So that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Tonight I will speak on the proving of faith or the testing of faith. The Bible shows us that there can be no faith without testing. All faith must be tested. Faith has to be tested for the following reasons.

REASONS FOR FAITH BEING TESTED

In Order for Us to Grow

God tests our faith in order that we may grow. No Christian can grow without first having his faith tested. Every Christian who is growing has his faith tested. I can say without reservation that all Christian faith must be tested. The only way for faith to grow is by testing. The only way that God helps us grow is by testing our faith. We come to God and receive all of His grace by faith. When our faith is tested, we spontaneously grow.

In Order to Satisfy God

God tests our faith not only for our growth but also to satisfy Himself. No one who has believed in the Lord and received God's grace can avoid the testing of faith. The testing of faith proves that we have genuine faith. It is genuine faith that satisfies God. A faith that is approved is a glory to God's name. God's name is glorified in this world through an approved faith. When we pass through tribulations, persecutions, obstacles, and darkness, and we still believe after these tests and still stand fast after these trials, this faith will glorify God's name.

In Order to Shut Up the Mouth of Satan

God tests our faith not only for the purpose of our growth and God's satisfaction. Our approved faith will shut up the mouth of Satan. Satan will not easily concede that we have believed, and he will not allow us to say that we have obtained what we have believed in. He will always come to deceive and bother us. By testing our faith, God will take away any excuse from Satan. When he realizes that we are uncompromising, he will retreat. As long as he can deceive us, he will stop us and not allow us to go in peace. If it is possible, he will take God's blessing away from us. He will not let us go until he has exhausted all means. In order to stop the mouth of Satan, God has to test our faith.

In Order for Us to Help Others

Another reason that God tests our faith is so we can render help to others. An untested faith cannot help others. Others receive our help only when our faith has been tested. If a man has believed, but his faith has not been tested, his faith is not trustworthy. Satan can do nothing about a faith that genuinely has been tested; he cannot overturn such faith. Only this kind of faith will help the church. Brothers and sisters, faith that has been tested is much more precious than gold which perishes though it is proved by fire.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TESTING OF OUR FAITH AND OVERCOMING

Now let us consider the relationship between the testing of our faith and overcoming. God wants to test our faith in order to make sure that our faith is indeed faith. All genuine faith is long-lived. All short-lived faith is not faith at all. Genuine faith is always long-lived. It will believe after three days, a month, a year, ten years, or even fifty years. Genuine faith can withstand one obstacle, five obstacles, or ten obstacles. Genuine faith will believe after it is tested once, five times, or seven times. Any faith that is short-lived and that falls and evaporates with a slight shake is not faith at all. All faith is necessarily long-lived.

In the Bible we see that overcoming is a matter of believing God's Word. God says that His Son is our life, our Head, our victory, our sanctification, and our power. We know that He has borne our burden and is responsible for all of our affairs. We know that He supplies us with endurance and meekness, and we know that He is supplying us within with everything that we need. Thank and praise the Lord! We know, and we believe. But such faith has to pass through the test.

A brother said to me this morning, "I have already let go and already believed. I should have overcome. But as I was riding home on a bicycle after the meeting yesterday, an old man knocked me down outside a department store. Although I did not say anything to him, I was angry within. What happened to me? I have let go, acknowledged that I cannot make it, and believed that Christ is my victory. Why did my anger come back to me? I thought that I would not be angry anymore." Brothers and sisters, there are two reasons for this.

Victory Does Not Mean That We Are Changed

After you have overcome and stopped sinning for a week, two weeks, three weeks, or even four or five weeks, you think that you have become good, that you have changed, and that you have matured. You may begin to appreciate yourself and boast in yourself. Therefore, God will give you a test and make you fail so that you will realize that you have not changed at all. If you can endure anything, it is not because you have changed but because you are exchanged. The Lord has endured in your place. If you think that you are changed, you will surely fail. You have to realize that if there is any endurance in you, it is Christ who is enduring for you. If there is any meekness in you, it is Christ who is being the meek One for you. If there is any holiness in you, it is Christ who is your holiness. No matter how long you have overcome, you are still you; you will always be you, and you will never change. Watchman Nee will always be Watchman Nee. After fifty years, he will still be Watchman Nee. Once grace leaves, the only thing that is left is just Watchman Nee. I thank and praise the Lord that victory is Christ and that it has nothing to do with me. I can still sin; I have not changed at all.

A few missionaries from the China Inland Mission in Chefoo once asked me about the difference between a change and an exchange. I said that without grace Paul, John, and Peter would have been just sinners. Paul, John, and Peter would have been the same as any ordinary men if grace had been taken away from them. If we take grace away from a person, he becomes the same as the robbers and the prostitutes in the streets. Grace means Christ replacing us. This does not mean that I have any change in myself. One hymn has a line which says, "Whene'er my heart is lifted up,/How very near I am to fall" (Hymns, #578). This is indeed true. Brothers and sisters, we have to realize that we are still the same; we have not changed at all.

God's Word or Our Experience Being More Reliable?

It is very easy for us to believe in our own experience. Sometimes we wonder how a person as weak, defeated, and hot-tempered as we are can overcome. When we look at our own experience, we think that God's Word cannot be true. But brothers and sisters, is God's Word more reliable, or is our own experience more reliable?

Once when I was in Chefoo, Brother Witness Lee's wife came to see me and told me that she had already surrendered and fully believed that the Lord was her victory. She had entered the overcoming experience. However, she complained, "My victory is short-lived. After a week, I become defeated again. My two children agitate me all the time, and I cannot be patient with them. The last two or three days, I was defeated again. What happened to me?" I asked her whether Christ had changed, and she said no. I asked her whether God's Word had changed, and she said no. I said, "Since Christ has not changed and since God's Word has not changed, why are you not victorious?" She answered that it was because her experience did not match what she thought it should be. I said, "Suppose your son went out to the street and saw a man who told him, 'You are not your mother's son; you were bought at the herb store for twenty cents.' He would come back and ask, 'Mother, am I your son or was I bought at the herb store for twenty cents? Someone outside said that you bought me.' You would surely say to him, 'My son, you are my son. Do not believe what others say.' Suppose he went out again and met the same man, who said the same thing again and added, 'I was there when your mother bought you.' If your son came home and asked you again, you would say, 'My son, don't you believe my word?' Later, when your son went out again, suppose he met the same man again, who asked, 'Have you checked with your mother? It is true. The day your mother bought you for twenty cents, not only did I see it, but that chauffeur there also saw it, and this and that person saw it.' Perhaps the man could name ten or twenty people as witnesses to prove that your son was bought for twenty cents. On the one hand, your son has your word, and there is no need for proof of your word, but on the other hand, there are the words of the outsiders, the testimony of twenty or fifty people, whose lies seem to be based on solid evidence. Should your son listen to your words which do not need any evidence or to the lies of the outsiders which are full of proof? Suppose your son came back to you and said, 'Mother, these people are showing me considerable evidence that I was bought by you. Was I begotten by you or was I bought by you?' If he said this, you would surely say, 'What a senseless child!' Mrs. Lee, God will also say that you are a senseless child! God says that His Son is your holiness, life, and victory. Whatever God has said counts. But the minute you walk away from Him, you become nervous and say, 'Something is wrong. It is evident that I have not overcome! Although God has said that His Son is my holiness, this cannot be right, because the evidence shows that I do not have any holiness!' When you say this, you are saying the same thing that your son said. You are choosing to believe in Satan's lies, which seem to be full of evidence, rather than declaring God's Word. Suppose others say something to deceive your son, and he smiles and says to them, 'My mother's word counts. You are a liar.' Suppose he smiles and says, 'You are a liar' when they try to deceive him a second time. Suppose he still smiles and says, 'You are liars. My mother's word counts,' even though others have tried ten, twenty, or even fifty times to deceive him. If he does this, he shames the enemy and it is a glory to his mother! If Satan comes and gives you a feeling that you are cold, you should tell him that you are victorious because Christ is your victory. If Satan comes to agitate, you should tell him that you are victorious because Christ is your victory. You should declare that Satan's words are lies and that God's Word alone is truth. This is faith, and this is the faith that is approved. This is the faith that gives glory to God's name. If we say that we believe with our mouth but are driven back in tears as soon as we are tested, where is our faith? Such faith is short-lived. Genuine faith must surely go through the test. If you concede defeat the minute you are tested, you are through."

Brothers and sisters, when the tests come and we proclaim that God's Word is trustworthy, declaring that the Word of Jehovah the Lord of hosts stands, that whatever He has said counts, and that His Word is settled in heaven forever, we will stand. The question now is whose word we will believe.

WHERE FAITH IS, THE MOUNTAIN HAS TO GO

One sister had the same problem as Mrs. Lee. She said that she believed but could not overcome. I told her that we need faith that moves the mountain. A faith that fails at the slightest test is not faith at all. What is a great faith? What is a mountain-moving faith? A strong faith is faith that moves the mountain. A faith that moves the mountain cannot be hindered by any obstacles. Wherever faith is, problems have to flee. This is the faith that moves the mountain. A mountain and faith cannot coexist. Either the mountain has to go, or faith has to go. If the mountain remains, faith has to go. If faith remains, the mountain has to go. Every test is an occasion to move the mountain. The question is not whether there is a test. What is at stake is the fact that when the mountain remains, faith must go, and when faith remains, the mountain must go. The question is whether we will listen to the words of the outsiders or the word of God. Anything that crumbles in the face of a test is not faith.

One brother has apparently made some breakthrough in this matter, but he has not realized yet what victory is. Satan tells him, "See, you think you have overcome, but you are still defeated. You have been cheated. There is no such thing as victory." Brothers and sisters, if you concede that you have been cheated, everything is surely over. God accomplishes everything according to what you believe.

I remember one time when I was sick and lying on my bed upstairs. A brother came and took my temperature and pulse. My temperature was high and my pulse was fast. A few nights prior to his visit I had been unable to sleep; it seemed as if I was at the gate of death. That evening I prayed, and the next afternoon I received a word from the Lord. He had heard my prayer and gave me Romans 8:11, which says, "And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." I thought that I needed a good rest that day, but contrary to my wish, I was exceptionally restless. When the brother took my temperature again, it had gone up and my pulse was even faster. Satan was busy at work. He wasted no time in coming to me to say, "What kind of promise is that? God promised that you would live, but obviously you are not living." Satan's word seemed very plausible. Right then the Lord gave me two verses. The first was Jonah 2:8, which says, "Those who regard empty vanities/Forsake the lovingkindness to them." Jonah uttered this word while he was in the belly of the fish. All outward circumstances and conditions are vanities. The second verse was John 17:17, which says, "Your word is truth." God says that His word is truth and everything else is vanity. If God's word is true, my temperature had to be false, my pulse had to be false, and my insomnia had to be false. Hence, I immediately thanked the Lord, saying, "Romans 8:11 is true, and all these symptoms of sickness are false." This was what I believed, and this was what I declared. By the afternoon, my temperature was gone, and my pulse came down. By the evening, I was able to sleep once more.

THE TRUE FAITH BEING ONE THAT BELIEVES ONLY IN GOD'S WORD

Brothers and sisters, this is the test of faith. What is true faith? True faith is one which believes only in God's Word and not in one's own experience, feeling, or the dark environment. Hallelujah! Only God's Word is true! If the environment and experience match God's Word, we thank and praise Him! If the environment and experience do not match God's Word, it is God's Word that stands. Anything that contradicts God's Word is false. Satan may say, "You say that you have overcome, but look, you are still as corrupt as before. You are still as weak as before. What made you say that you have overcome?" You can say to Satan, "It is true that I am still the same; I can never change. However, God says that Christ is my holiness, my life, and my victory." Satan will say that you are still corrupt, weak, and unclean. But God's Word is true. Satan's words are lies. Only God's Word is true!

In Chefoo I learned a lesson. One day Miss Fischbacher and I were praying for definite gifts from God. I was praying for the gift of faith, while she was praying for the gift of healing. After we prayed for a quarter of an hour, both of us received the gifts. In the evening we went to the meeting, and Sister An told me that another sister living downstairs in the meeting place was going out of her mind. This sister used to have a breakdown once or twice a month. But recently she broke down more frequently. After the meeting it was 10:30 p.m., and I went home. On my way home, I thought about what would happen if the sister had another breakdown right then, being alone downstairs in the meeting place. After I said good-bye to the brothers, God's Word in 1 Peter 1:7 came to me. "The proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire." I said to myself, "So be it. If faith needs to be tested, let it be tested." The next day I invited Miss Fischbacher to come with me to see the sick sister. Of course, I could have gone alone, but Miss Fischbacher had just received the gift of healing, and I had received the gift of faith. Why should we not apply them now? When Miss Fischbacher got my invitation, she was somewhat hesitant. She said she would pray first. After she prayed, she decided to come. When we arrived, we found that the patient had fallen asleep a little earlier. Brother Shi, who was a doctor, said that we should wait until she woke up. He told us that humanly speaking, there was nothing that could be done. Miss Fischbacher had to leave for her boat at 11:30 a.m. We waited there until 10:50 a.m. before someone asked us to go in. I spoke a few words to the sick sister. Her hair was standing on end. This is what people look like when they have gone insane. But thank and praise the Lord! I prayed for a minute or two, and the Lord gave me faith. My faith rose up in me, and I began to praise the Lord! I knew that she was going to be healed. After Miss Fischbacher prayed, she also had faith and began to praise the Lord. Then two brothers and a sister also prayed a few words, but they were not in the flow of the Spirit as much as we were. Then the time came, and I had to take Miss Fischbacher to her boat. By the time I came back from the pier, the sister was crying, laughing, and shouting again. After several minutes, she passed out. The people could not do anything. I knew then that their faith was being tested. The doctor took me aside and said, "Brother, pray for her immediately. I can do nothing as a doctor for her." I told him that there was no need to pray. I laughed and said, "Satan, you can try again. You can try as much as you want." The sister was out of her mind, and I acted like I was out of my mind also. She was shouting inside the house, and I was shouting outside the house. She went on until 3:30 p.m., and I went on until 3:30 p.m. At the end, my faith came. At 4:00 p.m. I had another meeting and had to go. I told Dr. Shi that he should not disturb her or try to do anything; he should just let Satan do all he could. When God says something, it is done. He never plays tricks on us. In the evening Dr. Shi came and told me that the sister was getting well. The next morning he told me that she had become normal. I knew that she would still act up because a few other brothers needed to be tested in their faith as well. The sick sister was well for at most an hour

at a time and really well for only about half an hour at a time. In the afternoon, she acted up again, and Dr. Shi came and asked what he should do. I knelt down to pray, but no word came to me. It seemed as if my faith could not rise up. At that time, Satan immediately came and said, "Try to laugh again. Yesterday you laughed so much. Why not try laughing again today." By then it seemed as if my faith was gone. Satan was at my side, saying, "You could laugh yesterday, but now you are so cold." But thank and praise the Lord! A voice within me said, "Your feeling may have changed. Yesterday you could laugh, today you are cold, but I have not changed." I answered, "Yes, the Lord has not changed," and I began to immediately thank and praise the Lord, saying, "Lord, You have not changed." The day before I believed God's Word. My laughter did not make God more trustworthy, just as my cold feeling and the absence of laughter on this day did not make God any less trustworthy. I only praised the Lord and did not pray any further. In the evening, Dr. Shi told me that the sister was completely recovered from her sickness as far as her physical symptoms were concerned. The next day, her composure came back. Hallelujah! God's Word is trustworthy! This is the proving of faith.

Brothers and sisters, we want to see results immediately after we believe. We want to have the experience immediately after we believe. But brothers and sisters, can we not persist in faith in God for three days or for three months? If we cannot persist in faith in God for three days or for three months, where is our faith? I have said this once, and I will say this again: "He who believes will not hasten away" (Isa. 28:16).

One day the Lord told the disciples to cross over to the other side. Suddenly a storm came, and the waves were beating against the boat. The boat was about to be filled with water. The Lord Jesus was at the stern of the boat, sleeping on a cushion. When the disciples woke Him up, they said, "Teacher, does it not matter to You that we are perishing?" The Lord woke up and rebuked the wind and the waves. After that, what did He say? Mark 4:40 says, "How is it that you do not have faith?" Matthew says, "You of little faith" (8:26). Many desperate prayers are but a sign of unbelief. If there is faith, one can stand fast. The Lord told us to cross to the other side. He did not tell us to go to the bottom of the sea. He has commanded, and it does not matter whether the wind is fierce or the waves are tempestuous. Look and see whether the boat will sink or not. If there is not faith, one will run away when the test comes. But if there is faith, one can still stand fast when the test comes. A small faith will run away at the sight of tests, but a great faith will stand fast in the face of tests. A false faith will fall at the sight of tests, but a genuine faith will stand fast in the face of tests.

STANDING ONLY ON THE SIDE OF FAITH

A person once angrily rebuked me. The more I endured his rebukes, the more he continued. At that time I prayed to the Lord, saying, "God, give me endurance. Give me the strength to endure. Otherwise, my temper will burst." If the same thing happened to me now, I would not be that anxious. On the contrary, I would say to Satan jokingly, "Satan, you can revile me through the mouth of men. Let's see if the Christ within me can be stirred up by your reviling." I do not hate the revilers. On the contrary, I love them. Indeed, if we act this way, Satan will be unable to do anything against us. Brothers and sisters, thank and praise the Lord. Victory is Christ, not us. If it were up to us, we could only endure to a certain extent. If the reviling went slightly beyond that point, we would lose our temper. But if it is Christ, no temptation will be too much for us, and no test will be too hard to bear. When we stand on the side of God's Word and on the side of faith, Satan can do nothing to us. The Lord has commanded that we cross over to the other side. Surely we will cross over to the other side. It is not our word that counts, but God's Word that counts, because God is faithful.

Finally brothers and sisters, I have to ask you a question: Are there one or two recurring sins that have been bothering you? I believe there are. Brothers and sisters, when the indwelling Christ is leading us through the test, who is actually being tested? Every time a test comes to us, it is not we who are tested but God who is tested. When our faith is tested, the Son of God is tested. God's faithfulness is tested; we are not tested. Every test is a test to see what Christ can do. Every test is a test of God's faithfulness. Faith is standing on God's side, on His Word's side, and on the opposite side of our environment. This is overcoming. Satan says that we are unclean, but we say that Christ is our holiness. Satan says that we are proud, but we say that Christ is our humility. Satan says that we have failed, but we say that Christ is our victory. We can answer whatever Satan says by proclaiming that Christ is trustworthy and that His Word is trustworthy. This is faith, and this is the substantiation of God's Word. Hallelujah! Christ is victorious! Hallelujah! God is faithful! Hallelujah! His Word is trustworthy!

Brothers and sisters, please remember that the test of faith will not last long. Immediately after we have experienced the overcoming life, temptation may come more frequently than ever. But after our faith is tested, others will receive the benefit and the help. After our faith is tested, God's heart will be satisfied, and His name will be glorified. Satan's mouth will be stopped, and he will not be able to do anything to us. Hallelujah, God's Word is trustworthy! Thank and praise the Lord! When we stand with God, nothing can stand in our way. When we stand with faith, no mountain is immovable. Faith specializes in moving mountains. As long as it is a mountain, faith can remove it. Hallelujah, God is faithful!

CHAPTER NINE

GROWTH

Scripture Reading: John 17:17

Tonight we will consider another matter before the Lord, but before doing this, we have to review what we have seen. We have seen that our experience has been a story of constant failures. We have seen also that the life that God has ordained is a life that is far higher than our current Christian experience. Third, we have seen that the overcoming life which God has given to us is Christ and that human ways, such as suppression, struggling, prayers, etc., are useless. Fourth, we have seen that there are five characteristics to the overcoming life, the most important of which is that this life is a matter of exchange and not change. Fifth, we have seen the conditions for experiencing this life. The two most basic conditions are (1) surrendering, which is to let go, and (2) believing. When God says that His grace is sufficient for us, it is sufficient for us. When God says that Christ is our life, He is our life. When God says that Christ is our holiness, He is our holiness. Sixth, we have seen what it means to let go. Seventh, we have seen that faith is the substantiation of what God has done. Eighth, we have seen that even though we have believed, our faith needs to be tested. Tonight, we will go on to consider another matter related to the overcoming life—the pathway to growth. After hearing the above points, you will surely ask, "After we have overcome, is our life on the highest plane, and is there no further progress from that point on?" I am going to speak tonight on what a person should do after he has overcome.

WHAT TO DO DAILY AFTER ONE HAS OVERCOME

Overcoming Besetting Sins

Many Christians have indeed overcome, and Christ is indeed their victory. But they do not know how to maintain this life, and they fail again very soon. The most immediate thing that a Christian should look forward to, expect, or hope for after his victory is God's deliverance from particular sins, that is, the sins which have bothered and hindered him continually. No Christian who has entered the overcoming experience should carry any particular sin with him. The Lord has saved us, and He is already our overcoming life. We can say, "Lord, I thank and praise You because Christ's victory has become my victory! Lord, I thank and praise You because Christ's holiness has become my holiness." It is Christ living for us. If a brother was previously bound by his temper, this temper should now go away. A brother might have been a doubting person, and his doubt may have troubled him much in the past. He might have been a talkative person, and his talkativeness may have been his frustration. A person might have been bound by any one of the eight kinds of sins mentioned before and been very bothered by it. Now he can expect God to drive these sins away. Once a person has overcome, he should say to God, "Lord, I look to You to put these sins behind me."

Many other problems related to sin have to be dealt with. For example, you might have offended others or offended the brothers. Now you have to apologize to them. Formerly, you did not have the strength to apologize; now you have the strength to do it. In the past, you might have been bound by something. Now Christ is living in you, and you are free. Hence, immediately after a brother or a sister enters the overcoming experience, he or she has to look to the Lord to remove his or her particular sin, that is, the recurring sin which has been entangling him or her all the time. If such a sin is allowed to remain, not only will others say that such a one has not yet overcome, but he also

will begin to doubt his experience of victory. Before one receives the overcoming life, he has no strength to fight the battle. Now that he has received the overcoming life, he has the strength to fight. He has the faith and the power now, and he can fight the battle.

In Chefoo, a few Western sisters once came to ask me whether one still has to fight the battle after he has overcome. I answered, "The question is whether one fights to overcome or overcomes to fight. You can never fight to overcome, but it is right to overcome to fight. Therefore, the question is whether you go from battle to victory or from victory to battle." Many people struggle and strive to overcome, and the result is always failure. Victory can never be attained by our own striving. Victory comes from Christ and is absolutely something given by God. We have believed that the Lord is our holiness, perfection, and victory. Hence, everything else must now move out. Everything not planted by the Father will be plucked out.

I used an illustration once when I was talking to a brother. I asked: "Suppose you bought a piece of land and the seller made a contract with you. The contract specified the length and breadth of the land. When you went to claim the land, you found a few rascals trying to build a cottage on the land. What should you do? You should drive out the rascals based on the authority of your contract." This should be the same way with us in our battle over sin. We do not have to fight according to our own strength but according to the authority which God has given to us. It is true that the Bible tells us to fight, but it also tells us to fight with faith. It is true that the Bible says we should prevail over the enemy, but it also tells us that we should prevail over him by faith. It is true that the Bible says we should withstand the devil, but it also tells us to withstand him with the shield of faith.

Brothers and sisters, is our peculiar disposition something that comes from the life of Christ? Do our acute suspicion, excessive talkativeness, and tenacious sin come from the life of Christ? We know, of course, that they do not; these things are not from Christ. Since they are not from Christ, we can command them to go away. If we try to withstand them first and then overcome, we will surely be defeated. If we try to fight through to victory with our own strength, we will surely fail. But if we overcome first and then fight, and if we fight from the basis of victory, we will go from victory to victory. Therefore, the crucial issue is whether one fights to victory or fights from victory. Fighting from victory is saying, "Lord, I thank and praise You that You have overcome! Because You have overcome, I can drive all these sins from me." After a Christian has experienced the overcoming life, he should say, "Thank God. Since Christ is my life, these sins should not remain in me anymore. They should go away." Any besetting sin can be removed immediately. This is the real meaning of warfare. The sin that used to continually follow us can now be brushed away at one stroke. This is the meaning of victory.

Acknowledging That One Cannot Make It and Accepting Christ as Everything

Second, our life should always be the same as it was on the first day we experienced the overcoming life. Every morning when we wake up, we should say to the Lord, "God, I am still weak and powerless before You. I have not changed; I am still the same. Nevertheless, I thank You because You are still my life, and You are still my holiness and my victory. I believe that You will live Your life out of me throughout the day. God, I thank You because everything is according to Your grace, and everything has already been accomplished by Your Son." There are, however, a few things that we should pay attention to.

TWO KINDS OF TEMPTATION AND THE WAY TO DEAL WITH THEM

I told you before of the brother who rode home after the meeting on a bicycle and was knocked over on the street. Before he realized it, his temper came out. If there had been both the time and the opportunity for him to consider it, he might have had a chance to put his temper away. But the suddenness of the event did not allow him to think, and his temper burst out unexpectedly. Hence, there are two kinds of temptation that we face in our daily life. One kind does not give us a chance to deal with it; it comes suddenly. The other kind comes gradually; it comes in the way of gradual suggestions. One temptation does not give us time to think about it. The other temptation gives us time to think about it. We think gradual temptation is easy to overcome, while sudden temptation is hard to overcome. But brothers and sisters, after we have entered the experience of the overcoming life, we still have to say two prayers every morning when we rise up from our bed. If we neglect these two prayers, we will surely fail again.

The first prayer is to say to the Lord, "Deliver me from temptations. Do not let them come to me without me having a chance to think about them. Do not allow me to sin without having a chance to consider it." The Lord can deliver us from any temptation which we do not have a chance to think about. This is a very precious prayer, and it has saved many people.

Tonight I do not have the time to read the whole chapter of Romans 5. I can only mention it briefly. Romans 5:12-19 teaches us a few things. This passage tells us that our union with Christ is the same as our union with Adam. Just as we sinned through our union with Adam, we have righteousness through our union with Christ. Brothers and sisters, how many of us need to exercise our strength to lose our temper? There is no need to exercise our strength to lose our temper; our temper is aroused as soon as we are stirred up. We spontaneously lose our temper because we are joined to Adam. We sin without any determination on our part because we are joined to Adam; we do not have to exercise any strength to sin. But the life in Christ that God has promised is the same in principle as our union with Adam. We should tell the Lord, "Just as I was joined to Adam and I sinned without any forethought or determination, I am in Christ today. I can be patient without any forethought or determination on my part. I do not have to fight to become patient. Lord, there is no chance for me to think about the many things that will come upon me today. But I thank and praise You because my union with You is as strong as my union with Adam. When temptation comes to me today, You can express Your meekness, holiness, and victory through me even if the situation is too sudden for me to think about or withstand." If we take this stand before the Lord, we will overcome the first kind of temptation. Every day when we wake up, we should believe that God can deliver us from the temptations which we have no time to think about. Every morning we should believe in the life of Christ, and we will live out His victory spontaneously. Just as we lose our temper without thinking about it, we can dispel our temper without thinking about it as well. This all depends on our faith. As long as we have faith, all of God's facts will become our experience.

The second kind of temptation does not come suddenly; rather, it comes gradually. It lingers and repeatedly entices us. What should we do about this kind of temptation? We should not pay attention to it or fight it. Everything depends on the Lord Jesus. I am still the same as before; I am still weak, and I am still incapable of withstanding temptation. "Lord I cannot make it. Not only can I not make it, but I also will not try to make it. Lord, I cannot be patient, and I will not try to be patient. I could not make it in the past, and I cannot make it now. I thank and praise You that I cannot make it. Hallelujah! I cannot make it! Hallelujah! I have no way to deal with it!" At the same time we should lift up our heads, look to the Lord, and say to Him, "Lord, You can make it! You are

not weak in me. You are strong in me. Lord, I thank and praise You because You are able! Hallelujah! You are able!" Brothers and sisters, if we take this stand, the temptations will go away. When we struggle and fight with temptations, it seems that they refuse to go away. But when we declare that we cannot make it and that God can make it, and when we boast in our weaknesses and glory in God's power, the temptations go away.

THE JUST LIVING BY FAITH

Some brothers have asked whether this means that we will no longer sin after we have experienced victory. My answer is that eventually we will realize everything in our practice. But in the mean time, there is still the possibility of sinning. According to the Bible, what kind of life should we live? The Bible shows us that the life of a Christian is a life of faith. "The righteous shall have life and live by faith." The righteous receive life by faith; this is the initial experience. The righteous also live by faith; this is the ongoing experience.

There are two worlds before us. One is the physical world, and the other is the spiritual world. When we exercise our physical organs, we are living in the physical world. But when we exercise our faith, we are living in the spiritual world. When we exercise our eyes to look at ourselves, we are still sinners; we are still unclean, proud, and no better than any other person in the world. But when we exercise faith to look at ourselves in Christ, we see that our temper and stubbornness are gone. Everything is gone. There are two worlds today, and every day we have to make a choice between them. Man has a mind, an emotion, and a will. Our will is free; therefore, we live in the world that we choose. If we live according to the senses of our physical organs in the physical world, we will substantiate the physical world. If we live by faith in the spiritual world, we will substantiate the spiritual world. In other words, when we exercise our senses, we live in Adam, but when we exercise our faith, we immediately live in Christ. We are always between these two things. When we live by our senses, we live in Adam, and when we live by faith, we live in Christ. When we live in Christ, everything in Christ will be our experience.

The Bible never teaches that sin can be eradicated. But once a believer has entered the overcoming life, according to the principle of God's work and according to His provision and His commandments, such a person should no longer sin. It is possible for us to express Christ every day, and it is possible for us to more than conquer every day. But the minute we live in our feelings and by our feelings, we will immediately fail. Brothers and sisters, we have to live by faith daily; only then can we substantiate everything in Christ.

BEING RECOVERED BY THE BLOOD IMMEDIATELY AFTER FAILURE

What should we do if we fail accidentally? We should come immediately to God and put our sins under His blood. The very next moment, we can look to the Lord and say, "God, I thank and praise You because Your Son is still my life and my holiness. He will live out His overcoming life from within me." We can be recovered within a second. There is no need to wait for five minutes or an hour. God forgives and cleanses us, but we think that we should feel sorry for ourselves a little longer and suffer a little more punishment before we are thoroughly cleansed. This is just asking for trouble. We are living by our feelings and merely prolonging our ties to Adam for another hour or two.

Some may ask, "If a man still fails and needs the cleansing of the blood after he has entered the overcoming experience, is he not the same as those who never have the overcoming experience?" Brothers and sisters, there is a big difference. Before one overcomes, his life is a total failure. Occasionally he may overcome, but he fails habitually and repeatedly. However, after he has overcome, his life becomes a victorious life. If he fails, it is an occasional failure; on the whole, he overcomes continuously. There is a big difference between the two! Hallelujah! The difference is too great! Formerly, it was mostly failure and occasional victory. Now it is mostly victory and occasional failure. Before one overcomes, the failures are repetitious. Those who lose their temper always lose their temper. Those whose thoughts are unclean always have unclean thoughts. Those who are stubborn are always stubborn, those who are narrow-minded are always narrow-minded, and those who are jealous are always jealous. Every time one fails, he fails in the same things, and victory is rare. A person is habitually bound by his temper, pride, jealousy, or lying. After he goes through the overcoming experience, he will only fail occasionally, and when he fails, he will not commit the same sin over and over again. When he sins, it will be different than before.

Before a person overcomes, he will be at a loss as to what to do once he fails. He will not know how to recover his fellowship with God and how to receive God's light once again. He will feel that he is at the bottom of a long flight of stairs and will not know how to climb back up. After he has overcome, he may still fail occasionally, but within a few seconds, he will be recovered. He will immediately confess his sins and be cleansed. He can thank and praise the Lord at once, and Christ will live out His victory from within him once again. This is the great difference between overcoming and not overcoming.

THE PROPER DAILY RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

I would like to bring to your attention 1 John 5:11-12, which says, "And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Have you seen this? How is the overcoming life given to us? It is given to us in the Son. There is no way for us to receive the overcoming life except through the Son. He who has the Son of God has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. When God gives us His Son, He is not giving us just the prescription but the very Doctor Himself. God does not merely give us life; He is giving us this life in His Son. Having the overcoming life is not just a matter of receiving life; it is a matter of receiving the Son of God. Therefore, when our relationship with Christ is improper, problems develop. Once we doubt Christ's faithfulness and His promises, we will have problems within. God does not give us patience, meekness, or humility independently of Christ. He gives us patience, meekness, and humility in His Son. The minute we are not right with His Son, we lose our victory. This is why we need a proper relationship with Christ every day.

Every day we should say, "Lord, You are my Head, and I am Your member. Lord You are still my life, and You are still my holiness." If we turn our eyes to ourselves, we will find none of these things. But if our eyes are turned to Christ, we will have everything. This is faith. We cannot hold on to holiness, victory, patience, or humility apart from Christ. Once we have Christ, we have holiness, victory, patience, and humility. The Chinese have an expression: "As long as the green mountain remains, there is no fear of the shortage of firewood." God is not giving us "firewood"; He is giving us the "mountain." As long as the "mountain" is there, the "firewood" will be there. We believe that God's Son is living within us. The biggest reason for failure in many Christians is that they live by feelings and not by faith.

When we fail, it does not mean that everything we have experienced up to that point is void and invalid. It merely means that something has gone wrong in our believing. We should never think that a person needs to fail after he has overcome. Before we overcome we have to fail; God wants us to fail and fail miserably. But after we overcome, there is no need to fail! Even when we fail, such failures should only be occasional ones. When we are in Adam and we feel cold, callous, and unclean, it means that we are indeed cold, callous, and unclean. But when we are in Christ, we should tell ourselves that we have holiness and victory. Whatever we say we have, we will have.

GROWTH THROUGH SEEING THE TRUTH AND RECEIVING GRACE

Finally, let us consider what growth means. We agree that we should still grow after we overcome. Some are too proud; they think that after they have overcome and are sanctified there is no need to go further. It may be true that we have overcome and have been sanctified, but we have to realize that entering into an experience is the same as passing through a gate. Without passing through a gate, we cannot walk on the way. We can only grow after we have overcome. We should realize that man has a free will; he is rational and he has feelings. When we overcome, we overcome only the sins that we know of; we cannot overcome the sins that we do not know. This is why there is the need of growth.

What is the one sin that you are aware of? Suppose you have a bad temper. If you have truly overcome in Christ, you will have the patience to overcome your temper, and you cannot grow any further as far as patience is concerned. Your patience is the ultimate patience because this patience is from Christ. This patience is the same patience that Christ had when He was living on earth during His thirty-three and a half years. If your patience is not a false patience and if this patience is the patience of Christ, you cannot be any more patient, because you have the patience of Christ.

We can only overcome the sins that we are aware of. There are, however, sins that we are not aware of, and these are not included in our experience of the victory of Christ. Consequently, we need John 17:17, which says, "Sanctify them in the truth." On the one hand, we have 1 Corinthians 1:30, which says, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption." On the other hand, we have John 17:17 which says, "Sanctify them in the truth." Christ sanctifies us, and truth increases the measure of sanctification. Is there a brother that knows the whole Bible from the first day? No, we know it gradually. Truth tells us what is right and what is wrong. For example, two years ago, we might not have known that a certain thing is sin. Now we realize that it is sin. We might not have known two weeks ago that something is a sin, but today we realize that it is sin. Many things which we considered to be good and which we approved of before become sin to us later.

There is a difference between the past and the present because the more truth we know, the more sin we discover, and the more sin we discover, the more we need Christ to be our life. The greater the capacity we have, the more we need Christ. Daily we have to study God's Word carefully so that we will see what is sinful. The more we see our sins, the more we have to tell the Lord, "God, show me in these matters that Christ is my victory and my supply." Brothers and sisters, if we want to grow, the light of the truth is indispensable. The light of the truth will reveal our mistakes and show us our own vulnerability. Once the light of the truth exposes our condition, our capacity will be increased, and the more our capacity is increased, the more we can assimilate.

I like 2 Peter 3:18 very much. It says, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This is one of the few places in the Bible that speaks of growth. We grow in grace. What does growing in grace mean? No one grows into grace; we all grow in grace. We cannot grow into grace; we can only grow in grace.

What is grace? Grace is God doing something for us. For us to grow in grace means that we need God to do more things for us. Suppose God has done five things for me already. But there are still three things which God has to do for me. My need has increased; therefore, I need God to do more for me. Here lies the relationship between truth and grace: Truth exposes our need, while grace supplies our need. Truth shows us where our lack is, while grace fills up that lack. Hallelujah! God has not only truth but also grace! In the Old Testament, men failed repeatedly because they only had the truth; they did not have grace. They had the law, but they did not have the strength to keep the law. We thank and praise the Lord. "For the law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Thank the Lord that He has shown us the truth and supplied us with grace! Hallelujah!

I can say before God, "I am forever a beggar. I am forever a pauper. I have to come to You today, and I will come to You tomorrow and the day after." Thank God that I can ask of Him every day. I can ask of Him on Monday, and I can ask of Him on Tuesday. If we bother God this way and ask of Him in this way, He will say that we have grown in grace. The more we see our failures, the more we will ask of God. We will ask all the more for Him to take responsibility of our case. We will say, "Lord, I am still helpless. I still need You to bear my responsibility." Once we see that we have done something wrong, the first thing to do is say to God, "I confess my sins. (At such times, you must call sin by its proper name. You must call sin a sin.) God, I will not change myself anymore. I have learned one more lesson. I can never change, and I do not intend to change. God, I thank You because this is another chance to boast in my weakness! God, I thank You because You can make it! I thank You because You can remove my weakness." Brothers and sisters, every time we boast in our weakness, the power of Christ will tabernacle over us. Every time we say that we cannot make it, God will show us that He can make it. If we do this time after time, we will grow.

Tonight I will mention a few examples to show you the meaning of growth. There are many sins which we do not realize are sins. But once we know, we should say, "God, I have sinned! I need Christ to live out His life!" I can testify that once a man mistreated me and I said a few rash words to him. I knew that it was wrong to say rash words to others, but I argued that he was more wrong than I and that he had not apologized to me. I was only wrong a little. Should I have apologized to him instead? Yet God wanted me to do this. The person had offended me, but I had forgiven him and was no longer angry with him. Yet I still had to apologize. I thought I was doing quite good already, but I was still short of the standard of Matthew 5, which says that we have to love our enemies. If I could love that person, I would be able to love even a cat or a dog. I had written a letter acknowledging my rash words, but since I could not love him, I decided I would not send the letter. I decided that I would write another one when I could love him. I did not hate him, and I had forgiven him, but I could not love him. Only God could love him. God says that loving is the truth and not loving is sin. I wanted to overcome, and I wanted to fight with faith. I said to the Lord, "If You do not cause me to love him, I cannot love him." When I said that I could not love and that God is the only One who can love, I found myself loving him. On the one hand, the truth tells us that we should love. On the other hand, grace supplies us with the strength to love. Such dealings sometimes take a few seconds and sometimes take a few days.

Miss Fischbacher had a co-worker who always gave her a hard time. The co-worker would always come up with some ideas which made her suffer. If Miss Fischbacher said that there was such-and-such a thing, the co-worker would deny that there was such a thing. If Miss Fischbacher said that there was no such thing, the co-worker would argue that there was such a thing. It seemed as if she was always trying to show others that Miss Fischbacher was dishonest. Miss Fischbacher tried to endure this but could do nothing about her behavior. Every time Miss Fischbacher saw this person, she would either pat her shoulder or shake her hand as an outward sign of love. Outwardly everything seemed to be well, but inwardly it was not well. One day Miss Fischbacher read 1 Peter 1:22, which says, "Love one another from a pure heart fervently." She pondered and thought that it was impossible for her to love this person, much less to love her fervently. She told the Lord, "I cannot overcome in this matter. Lord, I have found that this is sin. You have said that we should love the brothers fervently, but I cannot do it. This certainly is sin." She asked God to remove this sin from her. She did not hate that person, and she had spent time with her, but it was difficult for her to love this person. Every time she saw this person, she tried her best to love her, but it never worked. One day she locked herself in her room and prayed to God, saying, "I should love her, but I cannot love her. This is a sin. I will not let You go today until I can love this person." She prayed for three hours. In the end, the Lord's love filled her up, and she felt that she could even die for this person. She not only loved her but also loved her fervently. Because she loved her fervently, she prayed for her the whole night. The next day after her routine work, she prayed for the person again. She not only had the experience of victory but also the experience of power. This is the meaning of the truth sanctifying us. This is the meaning of growing in grace. The truth enables us to see what sin is, and grace supplies us with the strength to overcome the sin. Once we find out what sin is, we will not let go until we overcome. This is the way we grow in grace day by day.

There were once three British sisters. One was engaged, while the other two had decided to remain single. All three were working for the Lord in inland China. The sister who was engaged was the most unhappy one. Although her fiancé wrote often to comfort her, she was continually depressed. One day while she was feeling lonely in her room, she wept. The other two sisters asked, "Why are you feeling lonely? You have a fiancé who always writes to you! It should be the two of us who feel lonely." After the two said this, they went back to their rooms and suddenly felt lonely as well. They thought about their work in the inland regions and their strange food and uncomfortable dwelling. How lonely this was! Indeed, sin is infectious. While they were feeling sorry for themselves, they recalled the Lord's Word, "And behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20). They also recalled Psalm 16:11 which says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy;/At Your right hand there are pleasures forever." They told the Lord, "Loneliness is a sin. You have said that You will be with us until the consummation of the age; therefore, we say that loneliness is a sin. You have said that in Your presence there is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand there are pleasures forever; therefore, we say that loneliness is a sin." They both knelt down and prayed, "Lord, we acknowledge that loneliness is a sin." From the time that they dealt with their loneliness in such a specific way, their loneliness never came back to them. Hallelujah! Loneliness never came back to them.

Brothers and sisters, we can discover new sins every day, and we can find new failures every day. Yet at the same time, there is the fresh supply of grace. "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (John 1:16). We have received it once, and we are receiving it again and again.

A sister worked in India, and she had many anxieties. One day she read Philippians 4:6, which says, "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." She saw that anxiety was a sin and that failing to give thanks was

also a sin. Brothers and sisters, once we see a sin, we have to confess it before the Lord and also acknowledge that the Lord is living within us. This is the meaning of growth.

Our victory in Christ is absolute in nature; there is no room for improvement. However, the sphere of our overcoming is ever expanding. Each person receives a different degree of light from the Lord. The more light that a man receives, the more he advances, and the less light that a man receives, the less he advances. The more a person knows about sin, the more he receives the supply from God, and the less a person receives light from God, the less he receives the supply from God. Brothers and sisters, we have to know the relationship that truth and grace have with us. I hope that we would all say to God daily, "Lord, I cannot make it, and I do not intend to make it. Lord, I thank and praise You that I cannot make it." Every day we have to pray to God to give us light and grace. We may fail accidentally, but we can be recovered within a second. If we do this day by day, our growth will be beyond anyone's expectation because it will be the work of Christ alone. Hallelujah, this is full salvation! Hallelujah, He is leading us on! Hallelujah, Satan can do nothing about us! Hallelujah, Christ has overcome!

CHAPTER TEN

THE TONE OF VICTORY

Scripture Reading: Psa. 20:5; 2 Chron. 20:1, 3, 12, 15, 17-22, 24, 26-28

During the past few evenings, we have been considering the way for a Christian to overcome. Thank God that many brothers and sisters among us have entered into the experience of the overcoming life. Last night we saw the way for the overcoming life to grow. Today we will consider another subject, the tone of victory. Often a person sings with the right words but the wrong tone. Please remember that the overcoming life also has its tone. It is not enough for the words to be right; the tone must also be right. Today we will consider the meaning of the tone of victory.

Psalm 20:5 says, "May we shout victoriously in Your salvation." The word "salvation" can be translated as "victory" (see margin of ASV), and the words "shout victoriously" can be translated as "rejoice." There is no great difference between salvation and victory; they are merely two aspects of the same thing.

Thank the Lord that many brothers and sisters have passed through the gate of victory. But after one passes through this experience, he still needs to have the right tone of victory. You may not understand what is meant by the right tone. Perhaps I can put it another way: Victory has its benchmarks. How do you know that you have overcome? When do you know that you have overcome? You know that you have overcome by Psalm 20:5: "Shout victoriously in Your salvation."

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VICTORY AND BOASTING IN VICTORY

I wonder whether you know the difference between victory and boasting in victory. What is victory, and what is boasting in victory? Victory is something that Christ has done, and boasting in victory is something that we do. Victory is the work of Christ, while boasting in victory is our work. Victory tells us that the work is done and still prevailing, while boasting in victory is a continuous proclamation after the act of victory. I used to play cricket. It is a strenuous game; the ball is heavy, and the hands hurt after hitting the ball for awhile. One competes for an hour, sweating and striving; he hits the ball through one gate, another gate, and finally through the last gate. This is victory. When a team wins, the other classmates wave their flags and rejoice and shout. This is boasting in victory. The team wins the victory, but the other classmates boast in the victory. Thank God that victory is accomplished by Christ! We did not shed any blood for it. Yet we can boast in His victory.

Please remember that after a Christian has overcome, he should continue to exercise his mouth to boast in victory. A day without a hallelujah is a day without boasting in victory. If we only see rivers of tears daily, there is no boasting in victory. Our tone should be one that rejoices in His salvation, one that shouts victoriously in His victory. When our cricket team won, we brought the victory to our school, and our classmates boasted in this victory. In the same way, our Lord has won the victory and brought this victory to us. Now we can boast continuously in this victory.

We should say, "Hallelujah! Christ is Victor!" All those who cannot say hallelujah may not be defeated, but they certainly do not have the tone of victory. A man from Kiangsi may speak the Peking dialect. The words may be right, but the tone is wrong. Those who cannot say hallelujah

have the wrong tone. We have to not only overcome but also have the right tone. If our tone is wrong, others will doubt whether we have overcome, and we also will doubt whether we have overcome. Peter's tone was that of a Galilean, and even a maid could detect it. When we lack the "Galilean" tone, our voice will betray our victory. Every day we need to have the "Galilean" tone. We should be identified as those who have followed Jesus, who have the "Galilean" tone.

THE BOASTING OF KING JEHOSEPHAT

In the Old Testament, there was a king of Judah by the name of Jehoshaphat. Let us read 2 Chronicles 20 to learn about his tone of victory.

At that time, "the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle" (v. 1). At the time of Jehoshaphat, the kingdom of Judah was very weak and helpless in fighting against its enemies. Jehoshaphat was, of course, afraid when he looked at himself. He could do nothing before, and he could do nothing now. When the enemies came again, what could he do? He could do nothing.

Yet he was a man who feared God. He "set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah" (v. 3). He could do nothing except come to God. He prayed to the Lord, "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (v. 12). He acknowledged his helplessness, and his eyes were set upon the Lord. Brothers and sisters, during the past few days, we have repeated the conditions for surrendering many times. They are: (1) to realize that we cannot make it, and (2) to stop trying to make it. We should also believe in God. This was what Jehoshaphat did. He acknowledged this by saying that he did not have the strength to withstand the enemy and did not know what to do. He could only look to the Lord.

God sent a prophet to him immediately, and said to him, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's" (v. 15). The battle is the Lord's! Victory or failure has nothing to do with us. Temper, pride, doubt, unclean thoughts, greed, and all kinds of sins have nothing to do with us. The battle is not ours, but God's. God has said, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle" (v. 17). God only demands that we stand still. He wants us to put down our hands and leave everything up to Him. We only need to stand still and "see the salvation of the Lord" (v. 17). Brothers and sisters, we are not the ones who are fighting; we are the spectators. Whenever we stop boasting in victory, we fail. We do not have to be afraid before God, because He is the One who will battle for us.

Jehoshaphat did one thing more. He not only stood still and watched the battle, but he also fell down on his face to worship God when he heard the word of the prophet! All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem also fell before the Lord and worshipped Him. Others were joining hands to attack them, but what were they doing on their part? They asked a group of Levites to stand up to praise the Lord. They were "in holy array" (v. 21, ASV), and they went before the army to praise Jehovah. Were they crazy? They were not afraid of rocks and arrows; they were singing praises to God. This is the tone of victory. They had the tone of victory because they knew that Jehovah had given them the victory and that the enemies were already defeated. They knew that they had already won the battle. Some believe that when temptations come, they should struggle and withstand them. But God said, "And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against

Judah; and they were smitten" (v. 22). Whenever songs of praises are sung to the Lord, the enemies are defeated.

What was the result? "And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped" (v. 24). Either God does not give the victory at all, or He gives a victory in which no one escapes. If it were up to us, we might leave five or six persons behind. But God did not leave one. The words "when they began" in verse 22 are very meaningful. As the people were beginning to sing, the Lord set an ambush against the Ammonites, Moabites, and children of Mount Seir. Brothers and sisters, God can only work when we begin to praise. Whenever we begin to praise, God begins to work.

Brothers and sisters, I know that we are faced with many temptations, and I know that we have many trials. There may be physical weaknesses, adverse circumstances, or various difficulties at work. We may say, "What should I do? How can I overcome?" Brothers and sisters, we know that we should overcome, but our tone is wrong. When temptations come, we should say, "Hallelujah!" When trials come, we should say, "Hallelujah!" When we see difficulties come, we should say, "Hallelujah!" Once we shout "Hallelujah," the enemies will be defeated. Whenever we praise, our God will begin to work. Once we begin to sing, He begins to work.

Brothers and sisters, it is not enough to acknowledge that we cannot make it, and it is not enough to believe that God can make it. We have to shout from our heart, "Hallelujah! Thank You God because I am under trials. Thank You God because I cannot make it. Thank You God because the victory is mine." Jehoshaphat continued to sing because he believed that he had overcome. In the eyes of Jehoshaphat, everyone was already a dead corpse. Consequently, he could go on and sing. He was not afraid of the rocks because he considered his enemies as already being dead. When they went up to the watchtower and looked, there were only dead bodies fallen to the earth.

TWO PRAISES AND THANKSGIVINGS

"And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord" (vv. 26-28). There are two sections to our praises and thanksgiving. One section happens before the victory, and the other section happens after the victory. The great mistake that we make today is that we do not have the praise that is uttered before the victory; we hold back this praise and wait to see what happens. Many brothers and sisters have acknowledged that they cannot make it and that they will not try to make it. They have believed in God's facts and believed that Christ is their victory. But they dare not say, "Hallelujah, I have overcome." One brother said that he had to wait and see whether it would work. Another sister said that she had to wait and see whether it would produce the right result. They were saying that they would praise God the next day if they saw some results. But Jehoshaphat had two praises. Every overcomer should have two praises: praises before his eyes see the result and praises after his eyes see the result. This is the tone of victory. As soon as we stop our praise, we are defeated and we lose our victory.

We ask whether or not we have overcome, but I must ask whether or not we have shouted, "Hallelujah." "Hallelujah" is the tone of victory. If the tone is right, the victory is genuine. We can fabricate anything, but we cannot fabricate the tone of victory. Every overcomer has a tone which

continually rejoices and praises. We can tell where a man comes from by his tone. We also can tell if a man has overcome by his tone. The mark of victory is the shout of "hallelujah" and "praise the Lord." When temptation arises, the mark of victory is the ability to say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" No one who looks at himself can praise the Lord. Only those who look to the Lord can praise Him. Once we look at ourselves, we will find that we are unable, and we will not be able to say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord." Once we behold the Lord we can say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord." It does not matter whether temptations have increased. It does not matter whether the Moabites and the Ammonites are more numerous than before. The battle is the Lord's, not ours. The Lord is responsible for everything. Therefore, the tone of victory is in our rejoicing, praising, and thanksgiving to the Lord. We do not have to wait until we have actually failed, been defiled, and sinned before saying that we are defeated. As long as we stop our praise and thanksgiving, we have lost our victory. We do not have to commit any great sin; as long as we do not boast in His victory and as long as we do not thank and praise, we have lost our victory. Brothers and sisters, the overcoming life that God has given sings "hallelujah" every day; it rejoices every day. Once this mark is gone, the victory is lost.

MAINTAINING ONE'S VICTORY IN JOY AND REJOICING

A verse which is very familiar to us is Nehemiah 8:10: "For the joy of the Lord is your strength." The life that God has given us is expressed in joy. Our Lord Jesus lives in an atmosphere of joy, rejoicing, praise, and thanksgiving. This is the lesson I have learned during the past few years. In the past, I knew that I was forgiven and that I had endured, consecrated, and obeyed the Lord. But I felt somewhat bitter, and there were some small complaints. I could not thank and praise the Lord. Whenever we cannot thank and praise Him, we are defeated. Brothers and sisters, our victory is found in our joy. Whenever we throw away our joy and rejoicing, we throw away our victory as well. Whenever we throw away our joy and rejoicing, we become bound. A brother testified that he had never realized as much as in these past few days that joy affords strength. Whenever we are not joyful and rejoicing, we are depressed. We have to maintain our victory in joy and rejoicing. Victory is like a fish which must be kept in water. Victory has to be kept in joy and rejoicing. We should maintain our victory in joy and rejoicing.

REJOICING IN TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

But how can we rejoice? We can rejoice and praise God joyfully over many things. For example, if we have passed the gate of victory and power, we can rejoice and praise God joyfully. But the Bible says that we can rejoice in many of the things that we normally do not rejoice in. We can find out from the Bible the kinds of things we can rejoice in.

Second Corinthians 8:2 says, "That in much proving of affliction the abundance of their joy and the depth of their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." This verse tells us that the Macedonians had the abundance of joy in the midst of much testing and affliction. They did not have one or two drops of joy but the abundance of joy. Brothers and sisters, we have to always rejoice, and we have to have the abundance of joy. Even in the midst of tribulations, we should still rejoice. The life of Christ is a life of victory, and we can boast in His victory. Even when large armies are threatening us and great tribulations are awaiting us, we can still rejoice and praise the Lord. One characteristic of victory is the overflow of praise and thanksgiving in the midst of tribulation.

There is a brother who was a railroad worker. One of his legs was cut off by a passing train in an accident. When he woke up in the hospital after the accident, he was asked whether he could still

thank and praise the Lord. He answered, "I thank and praise Him because only one leg was cut off." Brothers and sisters, even though he encountered tribulation, he was able to thank and praise the Lord. This is the tone of victory. The tone of victory is thanksgiving and praise in the midst of great tribulation.

James 1:2 says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, whenever you fall into various trials." First Peter 1:6 says, "In which time you exult." What is this? Verse 8 says, "Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." In chapter four, verses 12 and 13 say, "Beloved, do not think that the fiery ordeal among you, coming to you for a trial, is strange, as if it were a strange thing happening to you; but inasmuch as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice exultingly." These few passages tell us how we should behave in the days of tribulation. The book of James speaks of "various trials." This includes the trials that one should face as well as trials that one should not face; they come all at once. Enemies come, friends come, unbelievers come, brothers come, and reasonable as well as unreasonable things come. All kinds of trials come, but these things cannot take away our joy. Please remember that the Bible always qualifies joy with such adjectives as great and full. All of God's joys are great and full. First Peter 1:6 says that one greatly rejoices, while the grief is but for "a little while" (RSV). Can there be grief? Yes, there can; in fact, grief is unavoidable. While our eyes are here, tears will always come. As long as our tear ducts are here, tears will always come. But even though there may be tears, there is also rejoicing. Hence, 1 Peter 1:8 speaks of "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." There is no way to describe this joy. Many times, while our tears are still wet, we are already shouting, "Hallelujah." Many times, while tears are still rolling, our mouths are thanking and praising God. Many people have tears that are mingled with their thanksgiving and praises. Miss M.E. Barber wrote a hymn with one line which says, "Let the spirit praise Thee,/Though the heart be riven" (Hymns, #377). While we live on earth today, our heart cannot help but be riven at times. The heart has its feelings, yet the spirit can still praise the Lord. First Peter 4:12 says that we should rejoice not only in the midst of trials, but also in anticipation of the trials. This means that we should welcome the trials and say, "Praise and thank the Lord, the trials are here again."

Some brothers raise their eyebrows as soon as trials come to them. They murmur, "Here they are again!" But Peter told us to thank God joyfully that they are here again. Whenever we praise and thank the Lord, we are above the trials. Nothing can put us above the temptations, circumstances, and difficulties more than joy, thanksgiving and praise. This is the proper tone of victory; it is expressed in an overcomer.

A sister in Chefoo who entered the overcoming experience was under severe trials. Her daughter died within a matter of hours, and her husband was away in a distant place. When the daughter died, the brothers and sisters went over to comfort her. Although her eyes were full of tears, her face was full of joy. She said, "Thank and praise the Lord. Although I do not understand why my child is dead, I am still full of joy." The brothers and sisters tried to comfort her; instead, she comforted them. Such joy cannot be fabricated. Victory is maintained by this kind of tone. One can still praise the Lord joyfully in the midst of trials.

Let me say a word that might not appeal to you: Christians are a pattern to others on earth. God has placed us on earth as a pattern to others. If we weep when others weep and become frustrated when others are frustrated, we will become the same as everyone else. Where then is our victory? We should show the world that in the midst of these matters, we have joy and strength. We may

appear crazy to them, but they will hunger after the Christ who makes us so "crazy." May the Lord be gracious to us so that we will express the victory of Christ in the midst of tribulations.

Matthew 5:11-12 says, "Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens." When others reproach us, we may endure it; when they persecute us, we may not speak back. But enduring and shutting up are not enough. If we only endure and shut up, we are already defeated. The world can endure and shut up as well. The monks can do the same, and so can the scholars of Confucius. We should be different from them. When others reproach us, we should be able to say, "Praise and thank the Lord." We should consider it a joy that others reproach us. When others persecute us, we should thank and praise the Lord and consider this a matter of joy. If our victory is a genuine victory, we should rejoice and exult. If victory merely means suffering reproach, it is just human work. Human work results in suppression, while every work of the Lord results in joy and exultation.

Brothers and sisters, the test is in our tone. The greatest mistake today is that man considers endurance to be the greatest virtue. When others reproach us, can we rejoice greatly? When others reproach us, are we merely looking at the floor and shutting our mouth? There are many people who experience persecution. There are many sisters who are persecuted by their husbands. Many people experience slanders and lies. What do they do? They pray that the Lord would keep them from losing their temper or becoming angry with others. They think that as long as they do not lose their temper and do not blow up, they have overcome. But have they really overcome? It is true that they have the victory, but it is not the victory that the Lord gives. If it is the Lord's victory, they can thank and praise the Lord greatly in the midst of the reproach and persecution. Let me repeat: Whenever we find that we cannot thank and praise the Lord, we are defeated already. The tone of victory is thanksgiving and praise.

There was a man who sat on a tram beside a great enemy of his. This man was a brother, and he prayed to the Lord, saying, "Lord, keep me." While he prayed, he maintained a nice attitude and even conversed with his enemy on subjects like the news and sports. But within him, he was constantly praying that the Lord would cause his enemy to get off the tram before he did and that the Lord would keep him overcoming all the way. Finally, after much struggling, he arrived at his destination and got off the tram. He sighed a long sigh of relief and said, "I have overcome." But what kind of victory is this? This is a cheating victory, a man-made victory, and an empty victory. If it were God's victory, there would have been no need to ask the Lord to keep him or help him endure. He only needed to say, "God, I thank and praise You that You have put me here. Since You have put me here, it does not matter whether You leave me here for a longer time."

Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." In describing joy, the Bible either uses the word great, or full, or always. Always means all the time. Paul was saying, "Have you heard this word? If you have not heard it yet, let me repeat it for you: `Again I will say, rejoice.'" If we did not get it yet, he would repeat it once more—that we should rejoice. The life that God gives is a life of joy. Rejoicing is the daily life of a Christian. There may be tribulation and trial, but there is still rejoicing. The opposite of rejoicing is being anxious. Many people are anxious for their children, their money, or their business. But the Word of the Lord says, "In nothing be anxious" (Phil. 4:6). We think that anxiety is justified, but the Lord says, "In nothing be anxious." This is because we should always rejoice.

If we do not rejoice for a day, we have sinned that day. Once a brother was preaching at a conference on being anxious in nothing. When a sister heard this, she was very angry. She thought, "How can a person not be anxious. If the brothers would be a little more anxious, they could serve us better food." (The brothers were the ones taking care of the food during that conference.) But the Lord could not let her go. She eventually saw that anxiety is a sin, and she overcame.

I can say much more about this subject. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:10, "I am well pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses." Paul rejoiced in weaknesses, insults, necessities, persecutions, and distresses. Brothers and sisters, we do not know what will befall us. We do know, however, that while we are living on this earth, our circumstances will not always go our way. Some are sick; others have family members who are sick. Some have relatives who are dying, and others are facing persecution. What are we going to do? We may say, "Lord, I will endure," but saying that means that we have failed. If we say, "Lord, I thank and praise You," we will be victorious and Christ will be manifested in us. We will provide the Lord a chance to manifest His power, and we will rejoice. This is our daily life on earth. We should rejoice and thank and praise the Lord all the time.

First Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks." We should give thanks in everything. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." These two passages of the Scriptures encompass everything. Whatever we have missed in the other passages are included in these two verses. I thank and praise the Lord. I can say, "Hallelujah." Others may wonder what is happening to us, but we can give thanks in everything and praise the Lord for everything. Brothers and sisters, if we do this, we will prevail over every temptation, and we will withstand every trial. No tribulation or trial will touch us. Those who go this way will find the strength for their temptations. We can thank and praise the Lord for temptations because we have obeyed the Lord.

Some may think that I am against endurance. Endurance is precious, and it is right to endure. However, the kind of endurance we want is not an endurance that comes by gritting our teeth. Colossians 1:11 says, "Unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy." We endure and suffer with joy. This is not an unwilling or bitter endurance. The daily tone of the Christian life is one of endurance and long-suffering with joy. In everything we give thanks, and in everything we offer praise. This is a life in the third heavens.

THE LORD'S VICTORY MORE THAN CONQUERS

Why must the overcoming life be manifested in rejoicing? Why must we rejoice before we can say that we have the overcoming life? Romans 8:37 says, "But in all these things we more than conquer." God gives only one kind of victory, the victory that more than conquers. Any victory that barely makes it is not a victory from the Lord. The victory that the Lord gives is the victory that more than conquers. The victory that barely makes it and barely carries us over the top is not a victory at all. The Lord's victory is always one that more than conquers, and the only way to have the victory that more than conquers is by rejoicing.

Brothers and sisters, our cup is running over. Everything that God gives runs over. Anything that does not run over is not from God. The kind of victory that God gives is, "Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to him who wishes to sue you and take your tunic, yield to him your cloak also; and whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matt. 5:39-41).

The victory that runs over is God's victory. Barely overcoming is a man-made victory; it is the product of human effort.

Brothers and sisters, this is the tone of victory. May God open our eyes to see that any victory that does not more than conquer is just an imitation victory. While we are suppressing and wrestling, we are only imitating victory. If Christ lives in us, we will rejoice in everything, and we will thank and praise the Lord. We will say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord" forever.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONSECRATION

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 6:13, 16; 12:1-2; 6:19, 22

Tonight is the last evening of our conference on "The Overcoming Life." There is one thing that we have to mention tonight. The previous messages would not take us very far if we only stopped at last night's message. However, we could not have addressed tonight's subject earlier, because it would not have been right to do so. However, tonight, we have to speak on the matter of consecration.

The first thing we have to do after we have experienced the overcoming life is to consecrate ourselves. Of course, this should be the first thing that a person does after he is saved. However, many people have never consecrated themselves even though they are saved. Therefore, after they have entered into the experience of the overcoming life, they have to consecrate themselves. There are some who consecrated themselves to the Lord after they were saved. However, they have risen and fallen throughout the years, and they are not as fresh as they once were. Therefore, they also need to consecrate themselves. I dare not say that consecration is the first step or first expression of our overcoming. I can say only that since the Lord died for us and lives for us, the first thing we should do after we overcome is consecrate ourselves.

Some have said that we should consecrate ourselves before we overcome and that we must consecrate before we can overcome. However, Romans 6:13 says, "Neither present your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God." This shows us that consecration comes after experiencing the overcoming life. This is an obvious fact: A person cannot consecrate himself before he experiences death and resurrection. Only those who have died and resurrected can consecrate themselves. During the past few days, we have been speaking of our crucifixion with Christ and of His living within us. We are those who have died with Christ and who are living with Him. Hence, from Romans 6:13, we see that a Christian consecrates himself after he has experienced the overcoming life. If a person has not experienced the overcoming life, he cannot consecrate himself, and even if he did, God would not accept his consecration, because He does not want anything that is related to Adam or death.

If we have not experienced the overcoming life, our consecration is not reliable. Today we may consecrate ourselves and tomorrow we may forget about it. Today we may make a vow before the Lord, telling the Lord that we will do this and do that, but tomorrow we may forget all about it. There was a missionary who attended seven Keswick Conventions. She said that attending the Keswick Convention every year was like winding up the spring inside a watch. The watch would slow down, and she would wind it up again. Every year she went for a "winding up," and every year she found herself slowing down again. This is the way with many Christians. They make big promises before God, but when they go away, everything is forgotten. This is why I say that we cannot consecrate ourselves. We do not have the strength to consecrate ourselves.

If we have not experienced the overcoming life, God will not receive our consecration even if we do consecrate ourselves, because everything we have is from Adam and is dead. We say "thank you" to the unbelievers and refuse to accept their gifts. The same is true with God; He cannot accept our

gifts. Only that which is from the Lord can be consecrated to the Lord. Anything that comes from ourselves cannot be consecrated to the Lord.

We must realize that the first thing we should do after experiencing the overcoming life is consecrate ourselves to the Lord. Now is the time to consecrate ourselves to the Lord. Now there is an opportunity to consecrate ourselves to the Lord. If we do not consecrate ourselves now, we will draw back, and we will fail again in a few days.

THE BASIS AND MOTIVE OF CONSECRATION

Consecration is spoken of not only in Romans 6 but also in Romans 12. Why do we have to consecrate ourselves? Paul exhorted us through the compassions of God. What are God's compassions, and what are God's mercies? Romans 1 through 8 speaks of God's compassions and mercies. Doctrinally speaking, chapter twelve immediately follows chapter eight. God's compassions and mercies are covered in the first eight chapters. Formerly we were sinners, and God's Son came to shed His blood for our sins. Chapters three and four are on the blood; chapter five is on forgiveness, while chapters six through eight are on the cross. On the one hand, the blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins; through the blood we are forgiven. On the other hand, the cross is for the crucifixion of the old man; through the cross we are released. Thank the Lord that He was crucified on the cross to die in our place and He is now also living in our place. Based on these compassions and mercies, we are exhorted to consecrate ourselves to God.

Brothers and sisters, God created us with a purpose, and He also saved us with a purpose. God's intention is that we express the life of His Son and partake of the glory of His Son. In eternity past God had a purpose; He did not want just an only begotten Son, but many sons. Hence, Romans 8:29 says, "Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers." God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Then He bought us and redeemed us so that He could gain us. He gains us in two ways. On God's side, He sent His Son to die for us and to redeem us. As far as our redemption is concerned, we are His slaves. Thank God that He has bought us! We are those who have been purchased by God. God said to Abraham, "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed" (Gen. 17:12). Hallelujah! We have been begotten of God, and we have been bought by God.

We have been bought by God, and we belong to God. Yet He allows us to go free. As far as His sovereign right is concerned and as far as redemption is concerned, we belong to God, but He does not force us to do anything. If we want to serve mammon, He allows us to go, and if we want to serve the world, He does not stop us. If we want to serve our bellies, God does not stop us, and if we want to serve idols, He allows us to do so. God does not make any move; He waits until one day we say, "God, I am Your slave not only because You bought me, but also because I want to be Your slave willingly." Romans 6:16 speaks of a most precious principle of consecration. Please remember that we are not God's slaves merely because of the fact that He purchased us. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey?" On the one hand, we are His slaves because He has purchased us, but on the other hand, we are His slaves because we want to be such voluntarily. Brothers and sisters, as far as the law is concerned, we became His slaves the day that we were redeemed. But as far as our experience is concerned, we become His slaves only after we consecrate ourselves. As far as God's sovereign right is concerned, we became His slaves on the day we were redeemed. But as far as experience is concerned, we

become His slaves the day we willingly tell the Lord, "I consecrate myself to You." "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey?" (v. 16). Therefore, no one can be God's servant without being conscious of it. We have to consecrate ourselves before we can be His slaves. This consecration is a matter of our own voluntary choice. God does not force us, nor does Paul force us. He exhorted us and beseeched us. God will not force us at all. He wants us to willingly consecrate ourselves to Him.

Brothers and sisters, the overcoming life has much to do with salvation. When we were saved, we spontaneously had the desire to consecrate ourselves. The life we received compels us to consecrate ourselves. Every saved person has the feeling that he should live for the Lord, yet he does not have the strength to do so. Many things ensnare and frustrate him from living for the Lord. But thank God that He has given Christ to us so that we can consecrate ourselves to Him. When we were dead in sin, we could not consecrate ourselves to Him. If we continue to live in sin after we are saved, we still cannot consecrate ourselves to Him. But now that Christ has become our life and our holiness, we can willingly consecrate ourselves to God.

Mr. Panton once told about a black slave girl who was about to be auctioned. Two men were bidding for her, and the price was going up. Both of them were evil men, and the slave girl knew that she would suffer no matter whose hand she fell into. She wept and grieved. Suddenly another man showed up and joined the bidding. The first two men could not offer as much as the third one, and the girl was eventually bought by him. Immediately, he called in a blacksmith and broke her chains and declared that she was free, saying, "I did not buy you to be my slave. I bought you to free you." At that word, he walked away. The girl was bewildered. After two minutes she came to her senses, and she ran up to the man and said, "From this day forward until the day I die, I will be your slave." Brothers and sisters, this is the love of the Lord towards us. We are constrained by this love to tell Him, "From this day forward, I will be Your slave." Brothers and sisters, God has bought us, crucified us, and raised us up. Since we have tasted of His compassions and mercies, we should consecrate ourselves to Him.

Romans 6 tells us to consecrate ourselves, that is, our members to God, while Romans 12 tells us to consecrate our bodies to Him. These two consecrations include many things. During the past eleven days, we spoke about letting go and believing, and we pointed out that we will meet God's requirement and live out His life when we do these things. God's requirement is that we consecrate ourselves absolutely to Him. This requirement is an all-inclusive requirement. But we cannot do it by ourselves; we can only do it by the Christ who lives within us. Formerly we could not do it, but we can do it now because of Christ. We have received His mercies; therefore, we can consecrate ourselves.

When a Hebrew man bought a slave, the slave had to serve the master for six years. In the seventh year, the slave could go free. However, if he said that he loved his master and would not go out free, the master would bring him to the judges and the doorpost and bore his ear through with an awl. Then the slave would serve his master forever (Exo. 21:2-6). Brothers and sisters, God has saved us and bought us with the blood. He did not purchase us with corruptible gold but with the precious blood of His Son. Many Christians feel that they have to serve God for their conscience's sake. But when we see the Lord's preciousness, we will voluntarily and willingly consecrate ourselves to Him. When we tell the Lord that we are willing to be His slave, He will take us to the door and the doorpost, and He will bore our ear through with an awl. The doorpost is the place where the blood of the Passover lamb was applied. Today we are being led to bleed there as well; we are being led to the cross as well. We love the Lord and choose to be His slave forever. Because we know that He

loves us, we are willing to serve Him forever. We have no choice but to declare, "Lord, You have loved me and saved me and released me! Lord, I love You and cannot help but serve You forever!"

THINGS TO CONSECRATE

People

The first thing we should consecrate are the people we love. If a man does not love the Lord more than his parents, wife, children, and friends, he is not worthy to be the Lord's disciple. If you have consecrated yourself to the Lord, there should be no one in this world that can occupy your heart and nothing that can capture your heart any longer. God saves you in order to gain you wholly. Many tears pull you back. Many human sentiments bid you to return to them. Many heartbreaks persuade you to turn back. You have to say, "Lord, all my relationships with men are on the altar. My relationship with the whole world is over."

When the wife of a brother was sick, and others asked him to pray for his wife, he said, "God has not told me to pray for her yet!" When another asked whether he would grieve if his wife died, he said, "She has died to me already." Another brother had a good friend, and God wanted him to drop this friend. He could only obey. He told the Lord, "If You want this, I am willing to give it up."

God has given Christ to us as our overcoming life so that we would not only know His will but also obey it. We must never think that the overcoming life only delivers us from sin on the negative side. The real overcoming life enables us to fellowship with God and to obey His will on the positive side. God gives us His overcoming life so that we can meet His goal, not so that He can meet our goal. No Christian can hold on to any person. Tonight if the people we love are not consecrated, we cannot satisfy God. The people have to go. We must say, "Whom do I have in heaven but You?/And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth" (Psa. 73:25). We must say, "I will serve the Lord my God with all my heart, all my mind, and all my soul."

I loved Miss M.E. Barber because she was a person who truly loved the Lord with all her heart, all her mind, and all her soul. After she died, I found the following note in her Bible next to the verse, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37): "Lord, I thank You that there is such a commandment." We often think that it is a grievous thing that God has so many commandments. But we should say, "Lord, I thank You that there is such a commandment."

Even if the Lord has given someone to you, He will not allow you to be attached to him or her. He will not allow you to be attached to your wife, your children, or your friends. Even the Isaac that God promised had to be put on the altar. Many Christians have failed because their hearts are captured by people.

Affairs

We have to consecrate not only people but also affairs. We often make up our mind to do many things and are determined to accomplish them. But we have not sought after God's will in these affairs. A brother was determined to make the top grade on his graduation examination and to rank at the top in his college class. All of his time and energy were spent on his studies. After he entered the overcoming experience, he committed this matter to God. From that time on, he was willing to follow God even if it meant coming in last on his examination.

Brothers and sisters, you may feel justified in putting all your time into your career, but if you do not have an intimate fellowship with the Lord, your career will not profit anything. You cherish some hope for your career and are not willing to let it go. You have some kind of expectation in your job which you are willing to fulfill by any means. If you act in this way, you have to consecrate yourself. You cannot allow one thing to entangle you. There are many brothers and sisters whose pursuit of education becomes their hope; they hope to excel above others. This is a hope mixed with pride. I am not saying that you should drop out of school, but I am saying that you should leave everything behind if the Lord calls you.

There was a brother who was an orphan, who grew up in a poor family. He drew beautiful calligraphy and was also very good at music. In the orphanage, while others were learning woodcraft and masonry, he was able to enter high school. He received awards every term. After he finished two years of college, the school decided to send him to St. John's College in Shanghai for two years and then to America on the condition that he come back after his study abroad to serve his school. Both his mother and uncle wrote letters to congratulate him. Two months before he was scheduled to leave, he was saved, and many of his former hopes were shattered. At the same time, he consecrated himself to the Lord. I asked him what he wanted to do. He said he had made up his mind to go and was ready to sign the agreement. He told me, "You have been my classmate for eight years. Have you not known of my aspirations all along?" When we were about to part, I said, "Today, we are still brothers. But I fear that when you come back from America, you will no longer be my brother." At that word he went to the Lord and prayed, "God, You know my aspirations. I know that You have called me, but I cannot drop my aspirations. However, if it is Your desire, I am willing to go to the villages to preach the gospel." After his prayer, he went to the principal and told him that he had decided not to sign the agreement and would no longer be going. The principal asked whether he was sick, and he answered, "The Lord has called me to preach the gospel for Him." Four days later, his uncle, cousins, and mother came. The mother said in tears, "Since your father died, I have struggled all these years with the hope that you would one day come out ahead of others to support me. Today you have a chance, yet you are throwing it away." The mother kept crying, while the uncle went on to say, "Before you entered this orphanage, I was the one who raised you. I also took care of your mother. Now you owe this to both of us. Your cousins do not even have the money to go to school, and yet you want to throw away this great opportunity." They also came to me and said, "Mr. Nee, you do not need to support your parents, but he will have to support us." Our brother was pressed on both sides. He asked the Lord what he should do. Then he realized that he owed men but little, but that he owed the Lord much more. He promised to support his mother and uncle, but he also told them that he could not satisfy their aspirations and had to obey the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, we all should consecrate our affairs to the Lord. I am not saying that all of us have to give ourselves to be preachers. I am saying that all of us have to consecrate everything to the Lord. What is consecration? What does it mean to offer ourselves up? It is to declare, "Lord, I will do Your will." Many people think that consecration is offering up oneself to be a preacher. No, we consecrate ourselves to do God's will. Many people realize through a genuine consecration that they should be faithful in their business and supply the need of God's work. As a result they give up their preaching work. Many others are motivated by the present needs and the needs in frontier lands to devote themselves to the preaching work. During the past few years, we have been short of co-workers. If God is to work among us, many brothers and sisters will give themselves to serve the Lord full-time in the near future. They will find that they must consecrate all of their affairs to the Lord.

Objects

We have to consecrate not only people and affairs but also all objects. There are people who have to consecrate their jewelry. Others may have houses or clothing they have to consecrate. Some may only have a very small thing to consecrate, but they cannot allow this small thing to become a hindrance to them. Some may be holding back a few gold rings or some pearl ornaments. There is nothing legal about this, but if we want to live a consecrated life, gold ornaments probably have to go, fashionable clothes have to go, and perhaps our money has to go. Many people have been squandering their money and are not pleasing the Lord. Many others have been saving their money and likewise are not pleasing the Lord. Squandering has no place in the eyes of the Lord, just as saving has no place in His eyes. We should not spend our money all at once; we should transfer it to the Lord's account. In the New Testament, nothing is said about tithing a tenth of what we have; the only thing that is spoken of is putting everything in the Lord's hand. The first day we take home our wages, we should tell the Lord, "God, all of this money is Yours. Give me back what I need for my household expenses." It is not a question of using a certain amount and then saving the rest for God. I dare not say that God will or will not take all you have at times. But I would say that if we have truly consecrated everything to God, what is consecrated belongs to God.

Many brothers and sisters have furnishings in their homes, clothes in their closets, or possessions in their hands that are unbecoming of God's children. Once the Lord touches these things, we have to consecrate them. We have a few elderly brothers and sisters with us today. You have to be careful how you write your will. Whatever you write will show the kind of Christian that you are. God has saved us. Since all of our money belongs to God, we should not put the money back into the world. If we plan for our children and allow them to take our money back to the world, we are not doing the right thing. God has separated us and our possessions from the world. We should not allow them to go back to the world. When the Israelites left Egypt, they did not leave one animal in Egypt. The same should be true with us. Of course, we cannot do this, but thank God that everything is possible with Him. Philippians 4:13 says, "I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me." This means that as soon as the Lord energizes us, we can do all things. It is impossible for us to offer up all things, but we can do it by the One who empowers us. Since Christ is our life, we can do it.

Many young brothers and sisters can consecrate what they have when they do not have that much. When they become richer, their offerings become less. If the Lord gains our heart, He should gain our wallet as well. If the heart closes up, it means that the wallet is closed up. If the wallet is not open, the heart can never be opened.

Ourselves

We should consecrate people, affairs, and objects, but the last thing we should consecrate is ourselves. We have to consecrate ourselves to God. We should say, "God, I consecrate myself to You to do Your will." Brothers and sisters, we do not know what lies ahead of us. But we know that God has a will for every one of us. It may not be blessings, and it may not be sufferings. But we have to consecrate ourselves to His will. We should be willing to accept His will, whether it comes with blessing or suffering. Many people are willing to be used by God; they are filled with the Spirit and live the overcoming life continuously because they have consecrated themselves to the Lord.

What kind of consecration is this? It is a consecration in which we present our bodies as a living sacrifice. The Bible never speaks of the consecration of the heart; it only speaks of the consecration of the body. No one who has consecrated himself can leave his body unconsecrated. We have

consecrated our whole being to the Lord. Henceforth, our mouth is not our own. Our ears are not our own, and our eyes, hands, feet, and even bodies are not our own. From now on we are merely the Lord's managers. From now on our feet are the Lord's, and we cannot use them for ourselves any longer. When a young man died, his old father charged the pallbearers to be very careful, because that body had served as the Lord's temple for twenty years. However, we should not wait until we have died for our bodies to be consecrated to the Lord. Today the Holy Spirit is already living in us. First Corinthians 6:19 says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" One hymn says, "Let my hands perform His bidding;/Let my feet run in His ways./...All for Jesus! All for Jesus!/Let my lips speak forth His praise" (Hymns, #444). This is the meaning of consecration. This is what it means to consecrate our body. No one should say that his body is his own. Every single day of our life is for the Lord, and our whole body is for the Lord; we are merely His managers.

Once in another country, someone was passing the offering plate on a Sunday morning. When the plate came to a thirteen-year-old girl, she repeatedly asked that the plate be lowered. When the plate was lowered to the ground, she stepped onto the plate. She had no money, and therefore, she decided to offer herself up.

Today we should not only consecrate people, affairs, and objects to the Lord but also consecrate ourselves to Him. Every Lord's Day when we put the money into the offering box, we should put ourselves into it as well. When we hold ourselves back, God does not want our money. God will not have "ours" unless He first has "us." God must have us first before He will have ours. There are many people who will consecrate themselves to the Lord, and the Lord will not necessarily ask them to be preachers. He may want some to be good businessmen. Every corner in this world needs light, and we cannot choose our own work. We should say to the Lord, "From now on I resolve to do Your will."

THE RESULT OF CONSECRATION

What is the result of consecration? The first result is described in Romans 6, and the second result is described in Romans 12. Many people do not know the difference between the two. Actually, there is a great difference. The consecration in Romans 6 is for one's own benefit; it is to bear the fruit of righteousness. The consecration in Romans 12 is for God's benefit; it is for the accomplishment of God's will. The result of consecration in Romans 6 is deliverance from sin to be a slave of God in order to bear fruit unto sanctification. This is what it means to live out the overcoming life day by day. The result of the consecration in Romans 12 is not just God's pleasure but the proving of God's good, well-pleasing, and perfect will.

Brothers and sisters, it is not enough just to let go, believe, and praise. There is one final matter: We have to put ourselves in the hand of the Lord before He can express His holiness through us. We did not have the strength to consecrate ourselves in the past. But after entering the overcoming experience, we can consecrate ourselves. Please remember that we were not able to put ourselves in God's hand in the past. Now it is no longer a question of being able or not being able; it is a question of being willing or not being willing to put ourselves in His hand. Formerly, it was a question of inability. Now it is a question of unwillingness.

There was a brother in Australia who had consecrated himself fully to the Lord. When he was on a train, a few friends decided to have a card game. Three people were present, and they were short one person, so they invited him to join in. He answered, "Sorry, friends. I do not have my hands with

me. These hands are not mine but Another's. They are merely placed on my body. I dare not use them."

From now on our hands, feet, and mouths belong to the Lord. We dare not use them ourselves. Every time temptations come, we have to say that we do not have our hands with us. This is the consecration of Romans 6. When we consecrate ourselves this way, we will be sanctified and bear the fruit of sanctification. Hence, consecrating ourselves is the first thing we should do after the overcoming experience, and it is also the firstfruit of the overcoming experience.

The consecration in Romans 12 is something for God. It says that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. It also says that such a consecration is holy and well pleasing to Him. Hence, we have to remember that the consecration in chapter twelve has the goal of serving God.

Chapter six is for personal sanctification, while chapter twelve is for the work. Chapter six speaks of consecration, and it also speaks of sanctification and the fruit of sanctification. Chapter twelve also speaks of holiness or being holy. What is sanctification, and what is holiness? Being sanctified or being holy means to be separated unto a certain person for his own use. Formerly we were affected by many objects, people, and affairs. Formerly, we were living for ourselves. Now we are living for God alone.

Once I was coming back home from Hsiao-feng Park. I was about to board a bus but the driver told me to get off. When I looked carefully, I found that it was not an ordinary bus, but a chartered bus. Every Christian should be a "chartered" person. Unfortunately, many Christians are "public" Christians. However, we are not public, but "chartered," fully reserved for God's will and separated. Romans 12 shows us that our jobs, husbands, children, money, and treasures are all for God alone; they are reserved for God's use. When we are for God alone, and when we present ourselves to God alone, we should believe that God has accepted us because this is what God is after. God's goal is not that we would be zealous for a little while. If a man does not consecrate himself to the Lord, He will not be satisfied. Unless a man consecrates himself fully to the Lord, God is not satisfied. God is not satisfied until man anoints the Lord with the ointment. He is not satisfied until we cast all the living that we have into the box (Luke 21:4). Everything has to be offered up to Him.

Brothers and sisters, thank God that we are raised from the dead. We have received mercy from God. This consecration is well pleasing to God, and it is reasonable. Every Christian should consecrate himself; it is wrong to assume that only special Christians should consecrate themselves. His blood has purchased us, and we are His. His love has constrained us, and we live for Him.

Please note the kind of consecration that is spoken of here. We are living stones. Although we consecrate ourselves, we remain living. We are living sacrifices. The sacrifices in the Old Testament were killed by the knife, but we are living sacrifices.

The result of the presenting is in Romans 12:2. "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." This is our ultimate goal today. During the January conference of last year, we saw that God has an eternal purpose, which is accomplished through His Son. God created everything through Him for this purpose. Redemption is for this purpose, the defeat of Satan is for this purpose, and the salvation of sinners is for this purpose. We have to know God's eternal purpose before we can accomplish what God wants us to accomplish. We are not here

merely for the salvation of sinners; we are here for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. Every kind of work must be linked up with God's eternal purpose.

If we do not consecrate ourselves, we will never realize that this will is good. Today many people are afraid of the very words, "God's purpose"; many people feel uneasy about these words. Christians are afraid of hearing about God's will. However, Paul said that after a man has presented his body, he will prove what is God's good, well-pleasing, and perfect will. We can sing about the goodness of God's will! We can say hallelujah because of the goodness of God's will! God's will is good and not malicious. His will is for our profit and without malice. We are too short-sighted. God's will is good. A brother once prayed a very good prayer: "When we asked for bread, we thought that You would give us a stone, and when we asked for fish, we thought that You would give us a serpent. When we asked for eggs, we thought that You would give us a scorpion. But when we asked for stones, You gave us bread!" We often do not understand God's love. We do not understand His will. We do not realize that His thoughts toward us are good and excellent. We may complain about many things when they come upon us, but after a couple of years, we have to praise Him for these things. Why should we not praise Him today instead?

God's will is not only good but also perfect. All of God's will toward those who love Him is profitable. If we know this, we will not reject His will. Presenting our bodies to Him is holy and well-pleasing to Him. Moreover, we will find His will well-pleasing to us and find that His will is good and perfect.

Tonight is the last meeting, and I will ask you to do one final thing, that is, to say to the Lord, "God, I am wholly Yours. From now on, I will not live for myself."

Brothers and sisters, we have seen all of the conditions for overcoming, and they are behind us now. Consecration is the last item in the overcoming life; it is also the first thing that we should do after experiencing the overcoming life. Once we have consecrated ourselves, we should believe that God has accepted our consecration. Once we have consecrated ourselves, we will become a consecrated person. We may feel hot or we may feel cold, but as long as we have truly consecrated ourselves to God in our heart, everything will be all right. I say this in order to help us not live according to our feelings. In Chefoo a brother consecrated himself to the Lord, but he felt that something was wrong between him and the Lord. He thought he had to consecrate himself again. I told him that after a girl is married and finds that she is at odds with her husband one day, she does not remarry her husband again. Even if there is something wrong between the Lord and us, we can only consecrate ourselves once. From that point on, we belong to the Lord, and we can only be for His use.