

**TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON  
AND LIVING HIM IN AND FOR THE CHURCH LIFE**

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

**Experiencing the Central Work of God  
and  
Taking Christ as Our Person in and for the Church Life**

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:16-21; Phil. 2:13; Gal. 2:20; 4:19

- I. In and for the church life, we need to experience the central work of God—Eph. 3:17a; Phil. 2:13:**
- A. God's central work, His unique work, in the universe and throughout all the ages and generations is to work Himself in Christ into His chosen people, making Himself one with them—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17a; 1 Cor. 6:17.
  - B. God desires not mainly to do things for us but to work Himself into our being—Eph. 3:17a.
  - C. God's intention is to have Christ thoroughly worked into our being; however, in our spiritual seeking we may have no concern about this, caring instead only for our intention—Phil. 2:21.
  - D. God's purpose is to work Himself into us, making Himself our inward elements—Eph. 3:11, 16-19:
    - 1. This purpose is the center of the universe, and apart from this purpose the Christian life is meaningless—Rev. 4:11.
    - 2. The principle in God's work is to gain persons and by gaining them to have a way to go on:
      - a. The proper priority is not for us to work for God but for God to work Himself into us—Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13.
      - b. In the church life the importance of the person far exceeds that of the work—2 Tim. 2:20-22:
        - 1) What we are is more important than what we do.
        - 2) We cannot serve God beyond what we are as a person.
    - 3. Spiritual progress consists in allowing God to gain ground within us—Col. 2:19; Eph. 3:17a.
  - E. For the fulfillment of God's eternal economy, God needs to build Himself in Christ into our being, working Himself in Christ into us as our life, our nature, and our constitution, to make us God in life and in nature but not in the God-head—2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Rom. 1:3-4; Eph. 3:17a; John 14:23; Col. 3:10-11:
    - 1. We need God to build up Christ into our intrinsic constitution so that our entire being will be reconstituted with Christ—Eph. 3:17a.
    - 2. Christ builds the church by coming into our spirit and spreading Himself from our spirit into our mind, emotion, and will to occupy our entire soul—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:17a.

- F. We cooperate with God's central work by being poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3) and pure in heart (v. 8), seeking the Lord with a single heart (Psa. 27:4), turning to the Lord (2 Cor. 3:16), caring for the sense of life (Rom. 8:6), being willing to be enlightened (Eph. 1:17-18), and opening our whole being to the Lord to be filled with God as our content (3:16-19).

**II. In and for the church life, we need to take Christ as our person—Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:16-21:**

- A. God's intention in His economy is to work Himself into us not only as our life but also as our person—Gal. 4:19.
- B. Our regenerated spirit is the inner man with the indwelling Christ as its person—Eph. 3:17a:
  - 1. If we would take Christ as our person, we must see that our regenerated spirit is no longer merely an organ for us to contact God but is our person.
  - 2. In our inner man we have Christ not only as our life but also as our person—1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:17a.
  - 3. Our inner man consists of our renewed soul as its organ and our regenerated spirit indwelt by Christ, the person, as its life and person—Rom. 12:2; 8:10; Eph. 4:23; 2 Cor. 4:16.
  - 4. We need to live in our spirit as the inner man by taking Christ as our person—Rom. 8:4; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17a.
- C. As regenerated believers, we have both the "I" (the self), our former person, and Christ, our new person—Gal. 2:20:
  - 1. The "I" is in our soul, but Christ is in our spirit—Rom. 8:10; 2 Tim. 4:22.
  - 2. The "I" is the person of the outer man, the old man, and Christ is the person of the inner man, the new man—2 Cor. 4:16.
  - 3. The "I," the former person, has been crucified, and Christ, the new person, lives in us—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20.
- D. To take Christ as our person requires that we deny the self, our fallen person; we need to deny our soul-life and live by our new person, the indwelling Christ—Matt. 16:24-25; Col. 1:27.
- E. In order to take Christ as our person, we need to deny our purpose, aim, and preference and take His purpose, aim, and preference—2 Cor. 5:14-15.
- F. When we take Christ as our person and live not by ourselves but by Christ as the person, we become one with Him and no longer do anything according to our preference and taste but do everything according to His preference and taste—v. 15.
- G. In order to have the church life, we need to be strengthened into our spirit as the inner man so that Christ, a living person, may make His home in our heart—Eph. 3:16-17a:
  - 1. The inner man with Christ as its person is for our living in the church—2:21-22.
  - 2. We need to take Christ not only as life in our spirit but also as the person in our heart—Col. 3:4; 1:27:
    - a. When Christ makes His home in our heart, He becomes our person—Eph. 3:17a.

- b. The only way for Christ to be our person is for Him to make His home in our heart—v. 17a.
- c. If we take Christ as our person, allowing Him to spread into our heart, the person living in our heart will not be the self but Christ—Gal. 2:20.
- H. If we take Christ as our person, we will live Him out as the proper church life—v. 20:
  - 1. Christ, who is our person, is for the church life—Matt. 16:18.
  - 2. Christ, a living person as our person, is the content of the church life—Gal. 1:1-2, 15-16; 4:19.
  - 3. It is not possible to have the church life when we allow our old man to be our person—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20:
    - a. If we want to live the church life but do not take Christ as our person, we cannot be blended with others.
    - b. Unless we live by Christ as our person, we will remain natural persons, those who are according to their natural constitution, racial culture, national character, or religious background—Col. 1:27; 3:4, 10-11.
  - 4. The proper church life is a life in which we live in the inner man, taking Christ as our person—Eph. 3:17a; 2 Cor. 4:16.
  - 5. We should take Christ as our person and allow Christ to live in us and make His home in our heart so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God in order to be the practical manifestation of the church as the Body of Christ—Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:16-21.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE CENTRAL WORK OF GOD**

**God Working Himself into and out of His Chosen People**

Although we may know in a general way that God is always working on us and in us, we need to see that in this universe God has a central work, a main work, that He is carrying out. In John 5, after the Lord Jesus healed a sick man on the Sabbath, “the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him, because He did these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working” (vv. 16-17). The Lord’s response to the persecuting Jews was an indication that the Triune God is always working. God first created; then He became a man, died on the cross, resurrected from the dead, and ascended to the heavens (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1, 14; Acts 2:23-24, 32, 36). On one hand, we may say that He completed His work (John 19:30), but on the other hand, He is still working upon us, with us, and within us (Phil. 2:13). The Lord’s work on the cross accomplished redemption, but His redemption was for His central work, which He is still carrying out today. The central work of God is to work Himself into His believers and to work Himself out of them so that He and they may be thoroughly mingled together as one and so that He becomes one with them and they become one with Him.

**The Spirit Being the Means for God  
to Work Himself into and out of His Chosen People**

The unique way for God to work Himself into us and out of us is by His being the Spirit. In order for God to carry out His central work, God not only needs to be Spirit (John 4:24), but Christ also had to become a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Second Corinthians 3:6 says,

“The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” The Spirit who gives life is Christ Himself. Thus, verse 17 says, “The Lord is the Spirit.” It is only by being the life-giving Spirit that God can work Himself into His believers as life and work Himself out of them.

### **Our Religious Knowledge Being a Hindrance to the Lord Working Himself into Us**

Everything on God’s side is ready for Him to carry out His central work. However, on our side there is a barrier, a frustration, to God’s central work. First, there is a barrier to His working Himself into us, and then there is a barrier to His working Himself out of us. According to the record in Genesis 1, God accomplished His creating work in only six days, but it took Him much more time to cause us to believe into Him. Furthermore, even though He has been trying to work Himself into us since the day of our regeneration, He is still not finished. A person may have been saved for several decades, yet God may have been able to work Himself into him only a little; he may have a deep conviction that although he has gained Christ to some extent, he is still short of Christ. This is strong proof that there is some resistance to God’s working in us. It shows that God does not have a free way to work Himself into us; we have never given Him a free way into our being.

According to 2 Corinthians 3, a major frustration to God’s working Himself into us is the killing letter of the Scriptures (v. 6). In a previous chapter we pointed out four items from 1 Corinthians—Christ being the life-giving Spirit, our being joined to the Lord to be one spirit with Him, our drinking the Spirit, and our calling on the name of the Lord. Although all these items have been in the Bible for centuries, we did not see them in the past because we were covered by religious concepts. All the religious teachings that we have received and our old Bible knowledge have become a veil that covers our heart (v. 15). Our religious concepts based on an improper understanding of the Bible are a great hindrance to the Lord’s working Himself into us. If we had no knowledge of the Bible, it might be easier for the Lord to work within us. In Matthew 2 the Lord had a way to help the heathen magi, who did not have knowledge of the Scriptures, to find Christ so that they could worship Him, yet the religious Jews and their leaders, who had the knowledge of the Scriptures, were hindered from coming to Christ (vv. 1-12).

In John 5:39-40 the Lord Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me. Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” This indicates that searching the Scriptures may be separated from coming to the Lord so that we may have life. We may contact the Scriptures yet not contact the Lord. Only the Lord can give life.

We need to be washed from all our old, partial, and killing knowledge of the Bible. When we pray-read the Word, we need to call on the name of the Lord. As we do this, our heart will turn to the Lord, the veils will be taken away, the killing letter will be put aside, and the Spirit will give us life (2 Cor. 3:16-17, 6). When the veils are taken away, we will be able to behold and reflect like a mirror the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face and will be transformed into the Lord’s image from one degree of glory to another degree of glory (v. 18). Such a transformation is from the Lord Spirit, indicating that we are being transformed as we are being filled with Him. If by the Lord’s mercy we are able to rid ourselves of our old knowledge and return to the pure word of the Bible to pray-read it in the way of life, the Lord will have a free way to work Himself into us.

### **The Self Being a Frustration to the Lord Working Himself out of Us**

After the Lord has wrought Himself into us, He still needs to work Himself out of us.

Second Corinthians 4:7 says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us." When Christ is worked into us, He becomes the priceless treasure in our earthen vessel so that He may be expressed through us. However, instead of allowing Christ as the treasure to be expressed through us, many of us have become a confining and limiting box, a prison, to the Lord.

In a sense, some of us have cheated the Lord. We welcomed Him into our being, but then we shut the door and locked it as soon as He entered. On the one hand, the treasure is in the vessel, but on the other hand, it cannot be expressed through the vessel because the vessel is closed. The problem of the vessel being closed is due to the self. The hindrance to Christ's working Himself into us is the veil of our religious concepts, which issue from our partial and dead knowledge of the Bible; the frustration to His working Himself out of us is the self.

Practically, the "face" is the representative of the self. Our face is our outer man, our natural man with its status and attainments. In this sense, whenever we are unwilling to "lose our face," our self is active. When we keep our face, we preserve the self, but losing our face is the best way to lose the self. The veil of our religious concepts keeps God from working Himself into us, but the self, as represented by the face, prevents the indwelling Christ from working Himself out of us. Although Christ is in us as the treasure with surpassingly great power, if our vessel is not broken, He will have no way to be expressed through our vessel, and thus He will become powerless. Our need today is to be broken so that Christ may be expressed through us.

The Lord is working to find an opening in our being, and sooner or later He will break us so that He may be expressed through us. No matter how strong we are in the self, Christ will arrange the circumstances so that He gains an opening to be expressed through us. After a brother who does not like to call on the name of the Lord has a car accident, he may begin to call on the name of the Lord. After the accident, he may no longer care for his face. This may give the Lord the opportunity and the way to work Himself out of this brother. There is nothing wrong with calling on the Lord, yet many do not call on the Lord because they do not want to lose their face. When we call on the name of the Lord, we not only receive Christ but also lose our face and thus lose the self.

There are two main obstacles to God's central work: the religious veils, which keep Christ from flowing into us, and our self, which confines Christ and prevents Him from being released and expressed. The veils need to be removed, and our self needs to be broken and consumed so that our inner man may be renewed, strengthened, and released for the expression of Christ. Second Corinthians 4:16 says, "Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." If we genuinely love the Lord, sooner or later He will come in to deal with our self so that we will be willing to release our spirit. When we release our spirit, the Lord as the Spirit in our spirit will spontaneously be released. We need to forget about our status and all our attainments and simply love the Lord. Our status, attainments, and natural man constitute our outer man, which needs to be consumed. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1970, vol. 2, pp. 337-340*)

**TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON  
IN ORDER TO HAVE CHRIST AS THE CONTENT OF THE CHURCH LIFE**

**Christ Being Our Person—  
the One Who Is Making His Home in Our Heart**

In Paul's second prayer in Ephesians 3, our regenerated spirit is not only an organ but also our inner man, a person. Christ within us is not only our life but also our person. Hence, Galatians 2:20 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 of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” This verse does not say that the life of Christ is in us but rather that Christ, the person, lives in us. We need to see that when we received the Lord, we received not only His life and His nature but also His person. Our inner man consists of our renewed soul as its organ and our regenerated spirit indwelt by Christ, the person, as its life and person. We need to be strengthened into this inner man so that Christ may make His home in our heart.

Paul’s two prayers show that for the church, we need the power transmitted to us by the transcending Christ, and we need Christ to make His home in our heart. First, we need to exercise our spirit in order to see the fourfold power that is being transmitted to the church. This is the beginning of our seeing and entrance into the church life. After entering into the church life, we need the second prayer so that we may realize that our spirit is not merely an organ but our inner man into whom we need to be strengthened so that Christ may settle down in us. Christ as our person is the content of the church life.

Through Paul’s first prayer we enter into the church life and live by the power transmitted to the church, and through his second prayer we have Christ as our person. We live not only by Christ’s life and power but also by His person. Such a living makes us the Body, the new man, in which there is no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free man, but Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11). In the new man Christ is everyone and everything. Practically, this means that Christ is our person, attitude, virtues, and every aspect of our living. In the church Christ must be everything. Our natural heritage and history must go, and only Christ must remain.

### **Taking Christ as Our Person**

That Christ is all and in all should not be a doctrine to us. Instead, in reality and practice Christ must be not only our power and life but also our person. Christ must be the One who makes His home in our heart to be our real person. Such a Christ is the content of the church life. The content of the church life is not any kind of practice. The unique content of the church life is Christ. To have Christ as the content of the church life, we need to take Christ as our person in our daily walk. It is not merely a matter of meeting with Christ as our center; it is a matter of Christ making His home in our heart so that He becomes our person.

For us to take Christ as our person means that we become one with Christ and that we no longer do anything according to our preference or taste but do everything according to His preference and taste. That is, we live not by ourselves as the person but by Christ as the person. This thought is seen in Ephesians 5:22, which says, “Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord.” For a wife to be subject to her own husband means that she takes her husband as her person. Christ is our Husband, and we are His wife. Therefore, we need to be subject to Him by taking Him as our person. I can assure the married sisters that if they receive the grace to take their husband as their person, there will be no problems in their marriage. The reason why there are many problems in married life is that there are two persons. Whenever there is only one person, all the problems are gone.

Many times, instead of taking Christ as our person, we give excuses, such as, “Lord, You know that I have to do this, because it is normal for people of my background to do so.” This is to put the Lord aside and to live according to our person, preference, and natural constitution. God does not like to see us live by our own person. Rather, He desires that we live by the person of His Son, Christ. Thus, we should pray, “Lord Jesus, cause me to love You to such an extent that I do not desire to live by taking myself as the person. Cause me to take

You as my person.” Then when we desire to go shopping and the Lord does not want to go, we will not go. This is the practical way to take Christ as our person. The genuine meaning of Christ making His home in our heart is that we take Christ as our person in all things.

When we take Christ as our person, He makes His home in our heart, and when we experience Him in this way, He becomes the content of our church life. The Christ whom we gain when we take Him as our person becomes the reality and the truthfulness with which we worship God in the church meetings. Hence, whenever we gather to meet, Christ is gathered there, because for us to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21a). (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1970, vol. 2, pp. 475-477*)

#### **TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON**

Our regenerated human spirit is not only an organ to know God’s surpassingly great power but also the inner man with the indwelling Christ as its person. We need to live in our spirit as the inner man by taking Christ as our person. We should be strengthened into our inner man so that Christ may make His home in our heart, and we should take Christ not only as our life and power but also as our person.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” According to this verse, we as regenerated believers have both the “I,” our former person, and Christ Himself, our new person. Our former person has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6), and Christ is living in us as our new person. Hence, we need to take Christ as our person. Our former person, our self, was in our soul, but our new person, Christ, is in our spirit. Therefore, we need to deny our self, our old person, and take Christ as our new person. In order to take Christ as our person, we must put our self aside.

Many Christians who desire to live a holy life pray for their sinful life to be exchanged for the holy life of Christ. However, they fail to realize that real holiness is Christ Himself, a person. Instead of seeking to exchange their poor life for the better life of Christ, they should take Christ as their person. If they live by Christ as their person, they will experience Him as their holiness, power, ability, and everything.

Taking the life of Christ as our model is different from taking Christ as our person. The latter requires that we surrender ourselves to Him, whereas the former does not. It is possible to pattern ourselves after the life of Christ while still living by our old person. However, in order to take Christ as our person, we must forsake our old person and surrender ourselves to Him.

In order to enter into the church, we need to have a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see the power that God caused to operate in Christ. Moreover, in order to live in the church we need to be strengthened into our spirit as the inner man so that Christ, a living person, may make His home in our heart. The spirit of wisdom and revelation as the seeing organ is for our entering into the church, and the inner man with Christ as its person is for our living in the church. Day by day we need to live in the inner man by taking Christ as our person. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1970, vol. 2, pp. 496-497*)