

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

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

The Heart and Spirit of a Leading One

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 36:26-27; Matt. 5:3, 8; Eph. 3:16-17, 20-21;
Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10

I. God's promise to His chosen ones was that He would give them a new heart and a new spirit and that He would put His Spirit within them—Ezek. 36:26-27:

- A. We all need a new start to maintain the newness of our heart and our spirit—2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 7:6; cf. Prov. 4:23; 1 Pet. 3:4.
- B. Our heart is our loving organ, and our spirit is our receiving organ; while we are in a fallen or backslidden state, our heart toward the Lord is stony and hard, and our spirit is deadened—Eph. 2:1; 4:18.
- C. When the Lord saves us or revives us, He renews our heart, making our stony heart a heart of flesh, a heart that is soft and loving toward Him; furthermore, He enlivens and renews our spirit with His divine life—cf. 2 Cor. 3:3; Col. 2:13.
- D. As a result, we love the Lord and desire Him with our renewed heart, and we can contact Him, receive Him, and contain Him by exercising our renewed spirit.

II. The New Testament begins by speaking of our heart and our spirit—Matt. 3:2; John 3:6:

- A. John the Baptist first preached the gospel in the New Testament by declaring, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near”—Matt. 3:2:
 - 1. According to the Greek, to repent is to have a change in our mind or a turn in our thinking; because the mind is the main part of the heart, to repent is a matter of the heart.
 - 2. A thoroughly repentant heart will become a new heart; because our God is a God of life and is all-powerful, He gives us a new heart by transforming our heart—2 Cor. 3:16, 18.
- B. A softened heart is a transformed heart, a new heart; we believers need to repent again and again; every time we repent, our heart will be more transformed and renewed; in Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord repeatedly calls the churches to repent—2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19.

III. As a leading one, a person must have an enlarged heart:

- A. A leading one must be large in heart—Psa. 119:32:
 - 1. We must be genuine ministers of the new covenant, having an enlarged heart with the intimate concern of the ministering life, which is a fruitful life—2 Cor. 7:2-3:
 - a. With an enlarged heart the apostles were able to embrace all believers regardless of their condition, and with an opened mouth they were able

- to speak to all believers frankly concerning the real situation into which they had been misled—6:11.
- b. This kind of openness and enlargement is needed to reconcile, to bring back, the misled or distracted believers to God.
2. Solomon was competent to oversee God's people because he had wisdom and a large heart, which are two aspects of one thing:
 - a. Though he only asked for the wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in among God's people (1 Kings 3:5-9; 2 Chron. 1:10), God gave him "largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore" (1 Kings 4:29).
 - b. The seashore encloses the sea, God having "set the sand as a boundary for the sea" (Jer. 5:22); this shows that Solomon's heart was larger than the sea.
- B. There are difficulties in many local churches today because the elders do not have a large heart; pride, an expression of foolishness, comes from having a narrow heart:
1. Pride is an attribute of our fallen nature by birth.
 2. Even with Paul, the Lord was wary of his exceeding exaltation of himself, so He let him have a thorn in his flesh from Satan—2 Cor. 12:7-9.
 3. Hence, the apostle Paul taught that a new convert should not be an overseer of the church, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment prepared for the devil—1 Tim. 3:6.
 4. Always remember that humility saves you from all kinds of destruction and invites God's grace—James 4:6.
 5. Pride makes you a top fool.
 6. Rivalry in the Lord's work is not only a sign of ambition but also a sign of pride.
 7. Caring for your prestige and neglecting others' dignity are a sign of subtle pride.
 8. Referring to your capacity, success, perfection, and virtue is a careless form of pride.
 9. Thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think is another form of pride and annuls the proper and organic order in the Body life—Rom. 12:3.
 10. Christ in His humanity humbling Himself to wash His disciples' feet gives us a good model of how to humble ourselves to escape from pride—John 13:3-5.
 11. Arguing about who is greater is an ugly form of pride—Mark 9:34.
 12. Wanting to be great and not to be a servant and wanting to be the first and not to be a slave are also signs of pride—Matt. 20:26-27.
 13. Lording it over the members of your church under your shepherding is a strong sign of your pride—1 Pet. 5:3.
 14. The apostle Paul presented us with a good model—1 Tim. 1:16:
 - a. He preached Christ as the Lord and himself as the believers' slave for the Lord's sake—2 Cor. 4:5.
 - b. He testified that whoever was weak, he also was weak, and that to the weak he became weak that he might gain the weak—11:29; 1 Cor. 9:22.

- 15. To restore a brother, overtaken in some offense, with meekness (a gentle expression of humility) protects us from being tempted also—Gal. 6:1.
- 16. Self-boasting, self-exaltation, self-glorification, and lusting after vainglory are all ugly and base expressions of pride—5:26.
- C. In order to enlarge their heart, the leading ones in different localities should go to visit other places; if circumstances allow, it would be even better to travel overseas; the more we participate in the Lord's move, the more we see—Ezek. 1:15-21.
- D. The ability to forgive others when they have offended you is a matter of largeness of heart; if we have an argument with a brother, it is mostly because of the narrowness of our heart—Matt. 6:14-15.

IV. The Lord Jesus followed John the Baptist by teaching that we need to be born of the Spirit in our spirit—John 3:6:

- A. Our spirit is born again when God as the Spirit enters into it to regenerate us with the divine life; to be regenerated is to have the divine, eternal life (in addition to the human, natural life) as the new source and new element of a new person.
- B. We need to repent in order to have a new heart, and we need to believe into the Lord Jesus so that our spirit will be reborn to become a new spirit.
- C. We need a loving heart and a powerful spirit—Mark 12:30; 2 Tim. 1:7.
- D. A leading one must be a spiritual man with an exercised spirit; he must be dominated, governed, directed, led, and controlled by his spirit; a strong spirit is the main requirement for the leadership among God's people—1 Tim. 4:7; 1 Cor. 2:15; 14:32; John 4:24; 2 Cor. 2:13; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- E. We can maintain the newness of our spirit by serving in newness of spirit (Rom. 7:6; 1:9) and by exercising our spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13); faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17), not in our mind; doubts are in our mind.

V. We need to be pure in heart (Matt. 5:8) and poor in spirit (v. 3):

- A. We need a pure heart in order to see God, and we need a spirit that is emptied in order to receive the kingdom of the heavens.
- B. To be pure in heart is to be single in our goal and aim; our goal should be God alone; even in our service and function in the church life, we should not have an intention to gain anything but God Himself.
- C. If we come to a meeting with a sense that we are inwardly rich and have no need, this will close the door to God (Rev. 3:16-17, 20); we need to pray, "O Lord, thank You for always being with me, yet I am still short of You; I want to be emptied in my spirit so that You can have more room in me; O Lord, I open to You and ask You to gain more ground within my spirit."

VI. We need to be strengthened into our regenerated spirit so that Christ may make His home in our hearts—Eph. 3:16-17:

- A. When a saved one is strengthened into his spirit and possessed by Christ in his heart, deep within he has a longing for the church life and an inner consciousness concerning what the proper church life is.

- B. To know the church is not outward but absolutely inward; that the highways to Zion are in our heart means that we need to take the way of the church internally, not merely externally—Psa. 84:5.
- C. When we are strengthened through the Spirit into our spirit and when Christ makes His home in our heart, God is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think concerning the church life; if all the saints pray daily for this, the glorious church life will spread and be prevailing throughout the United States and the whole world—Eph. 3:20-21.

VII. We need to be in our spirit in order to see the visions in the book of Revelation:

- A. This book is composed of four major visions: the churches (chs. 1—3), the destiny of the world (chs. 4—16), Babylon the Great (chs. 17—20), and the New Jerusalem (chs. 21—22); John was in his spirit when he saw these four visions (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10); we too need to be in our spirit to see the visions in this book.
- B. If we pray for thirty days that the Lord would strengthen us into our spirit and take over our heart, we will have a clear view and will be assured concerning the whole situation of the universe, including the church, the world, Babylon the Great, and the New Jerusalem.

VIII. The Lord’s recovery depends upon our renewed, purified heart and our renewed, strengthened spirit; when our heart is fully possessed by Christ and our spirit is thoroughly saturated with the Spirit, God will have a way, and the recovery will be prevailing.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

NEEDING A PROPER HEART AND SPIRIT FOR THE CHURCH

Needing a New Heart and a New Spirit

Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, “I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you.” This was God’s promise to the children of Israel, His called ones. They were distracted, but God called them back with a promise that He would give them a new heart and a new spirit. As God-created men they already had a heart and spirit, but because they were distracted, their heart and spirit became old. However, God would not give them up and came in to promise them a new start by giving them a new heart and a new spirit. We also need this new start today.

Needing a Repentant Heart and a Regenerated Spirit

The New Testament begins by speaking of our heart and our spirit. John the Baptist first preached the gospel in the New Testament by declaring, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near” (Matt. 3:2). According to the Greek, to repent is to have a change in our mind or a turn in our thinking. The mind is the main part of the heart. Therefore, to repent is a matter of the heart. Our experience confirms this. The preaching of the gospel in the New Testament began with the heart.

A thoroughly repentant heart will become a new heart. Although God promised to give us a new heart, He does not take out our old heart and put in a new one like a surgeon performing a transplant. Because He is a God of life and is all-powerful, He gives us a new heart by

transforming our heart. When we repent, something marvelous happens in our heart. We may feel that it is our doing when we say, “O God, I am utterly sinful. I am sorry. I repent before You. Please forgive me.” On one hand, this is our doing, but on the other hand, while we are repenting, the wonderful God gets into us and transforms our heart. We may not have any consciousness that God is doing this marvelous work, but soon after we repent to Him, we discover that our heart is changed. It was previously hardened, but after we repent, we find that it has been softened.

When I was a teenager, I was quite stubborn. I was as hard as a stone. No one could change me or subdue me, but one day I repented. While I was walking on the street after hearing a gospel message, I spoke to the heavens, saying, “God, I made a great mistake to not want You before. Now I want You. I love You. I repent for the past.” When I arrived home, I discovered that my heart had changed, for it was softened. My mother also noticed this change and marveled to see it. To be softened in our heart is a sign that we have truly repented. A softened heart is a transformed heart, a new heart.

Repentance is not something that only unbelievers need. We believers need to repent again and again. We may need to repent for not loving the Lord enough. Every time we repent, our heart will be more transformed and renewed. Repenting is like washing our hands—once is not enough. We need to repent all the time. In Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord repeatedly calls the churches to repent (2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19). We need to repent, because repentance is the best dose to heal our heart and the best way to regulate our heart. Repenting renews our heart.

After John the Baptist began to preach the gospel by calling men to repent in their heart, the Lord Jesus followed by teaching that we need to be born of the Spirit in our spirit (John 3:6). To repent in our heart is only the first step. Following repentance in our heart, we need to be reborn in our spirit. A proper, balanced man has a good heart and a proper spirit. A good heart is a repenting, renewed, softened heart, and a proper spirit is a spirit that is born again. Our spirit is born again when God as the Spirit enters into it to regenerate us with the divine life. When we repent, God comes in to touch our heart; when we believe in the Lord, God enters into our spirit to beget us with His life. It is marvelous to have our heart renewed to become a new heart, and it is wonderful to have our spirit reborn to become a new spirit.

As human beings, we have a heart and a spirit. We have a heart so that we can exist, and we have a spirit because we are for God. The heart is adequate for us to exist because it includes our mind, which allows us to know and understand. However, we exist not for ourselves but for God. Therefore, we need a spirit. Every human being has these two organs—a heart and a spirit—but we need our heart and spirit to be made new. Even after being saved, we often have the feeling that we are wrong with ourselves. This means that we have a problem with our heart. When our heart is not right, we are wrong with ourselves. We also sometimes realize that we are not right with God. This means that we have a problem with God in our spirit.

A proper heart and a proper spirit are a new heart and a new spirit. We need to repent in order to have a new heart, and we need to believe into the Lord Jesus so that our spirit will be reborn to become a new spirit. God does not take away our old heart and replace it with a new one but transforms our old heart into a new one. In the same principle, He does not take away our old spirit and replace it with a new one. Instead, when we believe into the Lord, God as the Spirit comes into our spirit to beget our spirit by bringing His life element into our spirit. In this way, our old spirit becomes a new spirit. As believers, we have a new heart and a new spirit; this makes us proper persons.

Needing to Be Poor in Spirit and Pure in Heart

When the Lord was teaching His disciples on the mount, He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8), and, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens” (v. 3). To be poor in spirit does not mean to have a poor spirit but to not be filled with things other than God. We need a pure heart in order to see God, and we need a spirit that is emptied in order to receive the kingdom of the heavens. We need to be emptied in our spirit so that our spirit will have more capacity for God to come in.

As believers, we have been renewed in our heart and regenerated in our spirit, but we still need to purify our heart and be poor in spirit. To be pure in heart is to be single in our goal and aim. Our goal should be God alone. If we are aiming at anything other than God, our heart is not pure but complicated. We need to be simplified in our heart by seeking after nothing but God. Even in our service and function in the church life, we should not have an intention to gain anything other than God Himself. If we are simplified to care only for God, our heart will be pure in whatever we do. For our Christian walk, we need to be pure in our heart, not having any goal besides God.

We also need to be poor in spirit. If we come to a meeting with a sense that we are inwardly rich and have no need, this will close the door to God. To be poor in spirit, we need to pray, “O Lord, thank You for always being with me, yet I am still short of You. I want to be emptied in my spirit so that You can have more room in me. O Lord, I open to You and ask You to gain more ground within my spirit.” Recently, after I gave a message, a young man came to challenge me with many questions. I sensed that the answers to his questions meant nothing to him because he was not humble but full in his spirit. After repenting in our heart and being regenerated in our spirit, we still need to be pure in heart and poor in spirit.

Needing a Loving Heart and a Powerful Spirit

Mark 12:30 says, “You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart.” Our heart needs to be a loving heart—loving not the world but God. Second Timothy 1:7 says, “God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.” Our spirit should be powerful, loving, and sober.

Needing to Be Strengthened into Our Regenerated Spirit, That Christ May Make His Home in Our Heart

Ephesians 3:16-17 says, “That He would grant you...to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts.” Our inner man is our regenerated spirit, where God has installed Himself. We need to be strengthened into this spirit, and our heart needs to be occupied by Christ. These points should not be mere doctrine to us. Instead, we need to check with ourselves concerning whether we are being strengthened into our spirit and whether we are allowing the Lord to take over our heart. We need to be strengthened with power through the Spirit into our spirit, and our heart needs to be possessed by the Lord so that He can make His home in it.

Having a Proper Heart and Spirit Enabling Us to Seek after, Discern, and Enter into the Proper Church Life

If we are being strengthened by the Spirit into our inner man and are being possessed by Christ as He makes His home in our heart, we will spontaneously enter into the proper church life. Most Christians today are not clear concerning the church. They wonder which church is right. If we remain in our natural life, we cannot be clear about the church. As soon as believers are helped to be right in their heart and spirit, they begin to seek after the church,

and it becomes easy for them to discern what the proper church life is. When a saved one is strengthened into his spirit and possessed by Christ in his heart, deep within he has a longing for the church life and an inner consciousness concerning what the proper church life is. To know the church is not outward but absolutely inward.

We cannot discern the church in an outward way; instead, we must taste it in an inward way. When I was a boy, I was invited to a special feast. Because I did not come from a sophisticated background, when I was at the table, I mistakenly used the salt instead of the sugar, because they looked the same to me. I wondered why others at the table were laughing, until I tasted my food. Although I had good eyesight, I could not discern between the salt and the sugar by looking at them. However, when I put them into my mouth, it was easy to discern. If Christians have a renewed and pure heart and a renewed spirit strengthened by the Holy Spirit, they will quickly be able to discern the proper church life when they taste it.

To taste spiritually requires not merely our mind but our heart and spirit. When a new believer visits a Christian group, he may not be able to discern much by his limited knowledge. However, if he has a proper being with a renewed heart possessed by Christ and a renewed spirit strengthened by the Spirit, he will quickly be able to know by his inward taste whether or not it is a proper church. We need our spirit with our heart to discern the church.

Many of us did not have much knowledge about the church when we first came into a meeting of a local church in the Lord's recovery. According to our outward perception, the meeting may have seemed quite strange. However, we sensed deep within that this is the Lord's recovery of the proper church life. Perhaps we could not explain this inward sense, and our mind may have stubbornly resisted, but the sense was real and persistent. We discern the church life when we taste it by the sense in our renewed heart and spirit.

Having a Proper Heart and Spirit Enabling God to Accomplish His Purpose among Us and to Have Glory in the Church

In Ephesians 3, after verses 16 and 17 speak of being strengthened into the inner man and Christ making His home in our heart, verses 20 through 21 say, "To Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, to Him be the glory in the church." Thus, according to the context, being strengthened into our spirit and Christ making His home in our heart are for the church. When we are strengthened through the Spirit into our spirit and when Christ makes His home in our heart, God is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think concerning the church life.

Ephesians is a book concerning the church. Therefore, being strengthened into the inner man and Christ making His home in our heart are for the church. We praise the Lord that His recovery has come to the United States and that we have been brought into this recovery. However, we need to allow God to have a way among us by being strengthened into our spirit and allowing Christ to take full possession of our heart. If all the saints pray daily for this, within a few years the glorious church life will spread and be prevailing throughout the United States.

We need to realize that the Lord's recovery is not an ordinary Christian work; it altogether depends on our heart and spirit. Electricity is powerful, but in order for it to operate, wires are needed to transmit it. Similarly, God is powerful; He is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, but He needs our renewed heart possessed by Christ and our renewed, regenerated, and strengthened spirit in order to have a way.

From the time I was saved at the age of nineteen, the Lord has been dealing with me to

renew, purify, and make His home in my heart and to renew and strengthen my spirit. The more I have cooperated with the Lord in these matters, the more I have seen His recovery. If all the young people in the churches in the United States are fully taken over by the Lord, soon the whole country will be God's. The young people in the church life in the Lord's recovery should not consider themselves as ordinary Christians who only attend meetings to listen to messages and who try to do good. Instead, they need to pray, "Lord, we have been recovered by You. Recover us more. Recover our heart and our spirit to the uttermost. Lord, answer the apostle Paul's prayer that You would strengthen us with power into our spirit so that You can make Your home in our heart. We want to be fully possessed by You." If all the young brothers and sisters do this, the Lord will be able to accomplish a great deal within the coming years. The young brothers and sisters have an unprecedented opportunity to hear all the truths of the Lord's recovery at a young age. The Word is open. When our heart is taken over by the Lord and our spirit is strengthened by Him, He will have the way to accomplish His purpose.

There is much talk among Christians about the local churches today, both positive and negative. We have attracted this kind of attention because this is the Lord's recovery, and this shakes Satan's power of darkness. Some religious ones spread evil rumors about us because religion is being shaken also. The Lord's move in His recovery is powerful. The young people in the churches need to be commissioned with the Lord's recovery. The way to accept this commission is to pray, "Lord, I present myself to You. Thank You for renewing my heart and spirit. I need You to go on to purify and take over my heart and strengthen me into my spirit. I open to You. Take all the ground in my heart." If the young brothers and sisters pray in this way day by day, God will be able to accomplish His purpose among us super-abundantly above all that we ask or think, and there will be the glory to Him in the church.

Needing to Be in Our Spirit in Order to See the Visions in Revelation

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, is composed of four major visions: the churches (chs. 1—3), the destiny of the world (chs. 4—16), Babylon the Great (chs. 17—20), and the New Jerusalem (chs. 21—22). The apostle John was in spirit when he saw each of these visions. In 1:10-12 John says, "I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches... And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands." Being in spirit is the way to see the churches.

When John saw the second major vision, concerning the destiny of the world, he was also in spirit and saw God's throne in heaven (4:2). Whatever is happening on earth is under the sovereignty of the divine throne in the heavens. Seeing this was a great encouragement and comfort to the suffering apostle. In his spirit he saw that the Roman Empire, which was persecuting the church, was only a small part of the world, which is under the throne of God and will receive judgment from it.

Next John was carried away in spirit into a wilderness to see the third major vision—Babylon, which is the apostate church (17:3). He saw it clearly. Ultimately, he was carried away in spirit onto a great and high mountain to see the New Jerusalem, the fourth and final major vision (21:10).

Our inner eyes will be opened if for a period of thirty days we daily pray, "Lord, strengthen me into my spirit and make Your home in my heart." We will see clearly the four major things going on in the universe: the churches, the world, Babylon the Great, and the New Jerusalem. The world will be judged by God, and Babylon the Great will fall, but the churches will become

the New Jerusalem, which will remain forever. Young people today know much about science, but many have never heard of God's economy. Even many Christians do not know what God's economy is. If we pray for thirty days that the Lord would strengthen us into our spirit and take over our heart, we will see God's economy. We will have a clear view and will be assured concerning the whole situation of the universe, including the church, the world, Babylon the Great, and the New Jerusalem.

The Continuation and Spread of the Lord's Recovery Depending on the Young People Having a Proper Heart and Spirit

My burden is not Bible exposition but the Lord's recovery. The young people need to pick up this burden. It is their turn to care for the Lord's recovery. The ministry in the Lord's recovery is not ordinary Christian teaching, for it imparts into the listeners the living seed of the Lord's recovery. I have the full assurance that many young ones will give their lives for the Lord's recovery.

The Lord's recovery depends upon our renewed, purified heart and our renewed, strengthened spirit. When our heart is fully possessed by Christ and our spirit is thoroughly saturated with the Spirit, God will have a way, and the recovery will be prevailing. Although we are not great men, the recovery is prevailing wherever it goes, and nothing can quench it. The Lord is calling us to purify our heart, allow Him to possess our heart, and be saturated with the Spirit in our spirit. As long as we are this kind of people, nothing will stop us. We will be like grains of wheat, which are given the opportunity to multiply when they are oppressed by being buried in the earth. The more the opposers do to oppress us, the more we will grow and multiply.

I believe that the Lord is moving in us. He is moving in our heart and our spirit, purifying and possessing our heart and strengthening and saturating our spirit. Eventually, we will be fully one with Him in our heart and spirit. Then we will see that by His life He is able to accomplish His purpose in the church life superabundantly above all that we ask or think. We need to see the need and be willing to receive the commission for the Lord's recovery. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1975-1976, vol. 2, pp. 337-345*)