

Christ is All and in All

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Twin City Christian Assembly

2024 Summer Retreat

This transcription records messages given by brother Phillip Jong at the 2024 Summer Retreat of TCCA in Camp Lebanon, Minnesota.

Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible - NASB 1995.

The transcription has not been reviewed by the speaker.
The subheadings are added by the editor for ease of reading.

Table of Contents

Session 1 Christ is Our Sufficiency	1
1.1 Our sufficiency comes from having a true knowledge of Christ	2
1.2 True knowledge of Christ comes from the backdrop of darkness	3
1.2.1 Backdrop of darkness is the wilderness	4
1.2.2 Wilderness reveals our insufficiency and God’s sufficiency	4
1.2.3 No better opportunity to be His testimony	5
1.3 The Holy Spirit leads us into sufficiency of Christ	6
1.4 Union with Christ is our sufficiency	7
1.5 Follow the Holy Spirit in our daily lives	9
1.6 Each difficulty is an opportunity	11
1.7 Hear the voice of the Holy Spirit	11
Session 2 Christ is Our Bread of Life	15
2.1 The Three Statements	16
2.2 First statement: My food is to do the will of the Father	18
2.3 Second statement: I am the bread of life	20
2.3.1 On Him the Father God has set His seal	21
2.4 Third statement: He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him.	22
Session 3 Christ is Our Peace	27
3.1 True peace needs a backdrop	28
3.2 The Three Storms	29
3.2.1 Sin	30
3.2.2 Self life	30
3.2.3 The Law	30
3.3 How to face these three storms	31
3.3.1 Return to Christ in the storm of our sins	31
3.3.2 Christ is our scorched ground	33
3.3.3 Lay down our yoke and take His yoke in the storm of our self life	34
3.3.4 Give Christ the preeminence in the storm of the law	36

Session 4 Christ is Our All **39**

- 4.1 The Bridge between Ephesians and Colossians 41
- 4.2 First Secret: It is not I, but Christ 43
 - 4.2.1 One Example of Apostle Paul 44
- 4.3 Second Secret: Be of the Same Mind 45
 - 4.3.1 The New Jerusalem Has One Single Golden Street 46
 - 4.3.2 Only the Crucified Life Can Have Unity 46
 - 4.3.3 Have the Same Mind of Jesus Christ 47
- 4.4 Third Secret: Set Christ as the Goal 49
- 4.5 Is Christ our all? 50

Session 1

Christ is Our Sufficiency

We thank the Lord for giving us more time together in this way. When we have time, we have opportunity. When we have opportunity, we need to seize this opportunity to grab hold of something that can change us. Just imagine if God could not change Jacob's life, the entire history of Israel would not be the same. Therefore, it is very crucial for God's people to know Him in order to be changed. So we ask the Lord to hear our cry to know Him, then no one that knows Jesus will stay the same. We come to this retreat to be changed. No one should leave this retreat unchanged. So our topic for this first session is Christ is our sufficiency. We need to read some scriptures.

Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 — For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:4-5 ASV — And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God;

Paul was saying that it is not enough for him; he needs the Lord to do the things that he was doing.

2 Peter 1:3 — Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Luke 3:21-22 — Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

1 John 2:27 — As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need

for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Prayer:

Father, we thank You for giving us this time, and we know You have a reason for us to be here. We pray that reason, that purpose will be accomplished. You have heard our cry, we want to know You and know You more, so listen to our prayer this morning. Allow us to know You in a fresh way, and the knowledge of You will change our lives. We commit this time to Your hands and commit Your weak servant into Your hands. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 5, it is a very interesting verse because apostle Paul acknowledged to all of us that it is not sufficient in himself. If we want to find one person in history who could be sufficient in himself, he would be apostle Paul. But Paul said it is not sufficient in himself, and his sufficiency comes from God. Brothers and sisters, how marvelous this statement is! As great as Paul was, he declared it is not sufficient in himself. It is not only just Paul, David was the same way. David was not sufficient in himself. You are my God; apart from you, I have no good thing. That is what David said himself. Mrs. Barber, in the hymn we just sang, she wrote beautifully. You are enough, however long the day or however dark the night. To Mrs. Barber, the Lord is not only enough, He is more than enough. When we find our sufficiency in God, then we can say the Lord is sufficient however long the day or however dark the night. It is so precious for anyone who can say this word. In the darkness, but it is enough, however long the day, however dark the night. Brothers and sisters, where do we find our sufficiency today? How can we declare that Christ is enough in all circumstances? I think we all need to know because we all will encounter some darkness sooner or later in life. How can we declare that the Lord is sufficient for me? What is the secret?

1.1 Our sufficiency comes from having a true knowledge of Christ

Apostle Peter opened up this secret in 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 3, His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness. Now the secret is through the true knowledge of Him. Apostle Peter was saying that our sufficiency comes from having a true knowledge of Him. Brothers and sisters, the purpose in our life is to know Jesus more. Every experience in our life, every encounter we have with God is intended to deepen our knowledge of Christ. The true knowledge of Christ brings the sufficiency of Christ to us; the true knowledge of Christ impacts every aspect of our lives; the depth of our knowledge of Christ determines the significance and impact of everything we do in life. It is impossible to serve God without personally knowing Him. We cannot lead others to know something we do not know ourselves; we cannot guide anyone to a deep understanding of Christ beyond our own experience, so our ultimate goal in life is to obtain a true knowledge

of Christ. That is why the apostle Paul considered all things to be loss so that he might gain Christ. The true knowledge of Christ brings sufficiency to us.

Brothers and sisters, we may not have a lot of time on this earth and our Lord is infinite and limitless. Even if we were to live for a long time like Methuselah, we would never fully grasp the entirety of who Jesus Christ is. With this in mind, a natural question arises: How can we get to the same place like Mrs. Barber? How can we declare one day like her? You are enough, however long the day or however dark the night. This morning we will explore this question in two parts. The first one, how can we obtain a true knowledge of Christ? Secondly, how can we experience Christ's sufficiency in our daily lives?

1.2 True knowledge of Christ comes from the backdrop of darkness

We start with the first part: how can we obtain a true knowledge of Christ? Once upon a time I visited a museum, this museum has a very famous exhibition and it is for those precious stones. As I approached the room that contained the precious stones, I was quite excited. From afar, I noticed something very special, the room was actually dark, it was not what I would expect. As I stepped into the room, I realized why the room is so dark. There were cabinets used to store the precious stones. In the cabinets, there were very tiny hidden light sources, and the light sources only directed the lights to the stones. These were tiny little light sources, but these tiny little light sources reflected out of the precious stone. Therefore, the precious stone was so brilliant, but the backdrop was so dark. Now I understand why they keep the whole room in the dark, because you can only see the brilliancy of the precious stone in the backdrop of darkness. At that moment, I truly understood this English word, "brilliant".

Brothers and sisters, often it is in the darkest skies that we see the brightest stars; our Lord Jesus is the brightest star. If we want to have true knowledge of the brightest morning star, we must behold the star in the darkest sky. Therefore, if we truly want to grasp the fullness and sufficiency of Christ, we must behold the Lord against the backdrop of darkness; if we encounter darkness in our lives, we need to realize this is an opportunity for us to see the brightest morning star.

I remember years ago when I was still in college, that was a long time ago. One summer I joined a mission trip to southern Taiwan in a very very deep mountain. We were there to serve both adults and the children; we served the children during the day, then we served adults in the early morning. Because adults needed to work, therefore our meeting was at 6 a.m. in the morning; so we had to get up at 5, and we needed to leave our cabin at 5:30. I thought I needed a flashlight, because in the mountains there was no street light. So on the first morning at 5:30, I stepped out of the cabin. I thought I needed my flashlight, but I did not need a flashlight at all. I could see everything, and it was almost as clear as daytime. To my surprise, the sky was full of stars, never seen before and never seen after. The stars were so bright and I could see every stone on

the ground; I was so surprised by how many stars were in the sky. Only when I saw the stars in the sky like that, the promise that God made to Abraham made sense to me. I have no problem understanding the amount of sand on the seashore, but I never fully understood the stars in the sky because I have never seen that many stars before.

Brothers and sisters, the backdrop of darkness is necessity. Without the backdrop of darkness, we cannot see the brightness of the star in its full glory. We step out of this room, you lift your head up and look at the sky, you cannot see the stars, but the stars are actually there, just as many as you can possibly think, but we do not have a dark backdrop.

1.2.1 Backdrop of darkness is the wilderness

So what is that dark backdrop? If we need that dark backdrop to see Christ, what is that dark backdrop? Actually, it is quite important in the Bible; important enough, the Bible uses four books to describe this: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Why does the Bible use four books to describe the history we have trouble reading? How many of us intend to read through the Bible once a year, then we start in Genesis chapter 1? How many of us can go through the Leviticus? If you get through the Leviticus, can you go through the Numbers? Why did God put those four books in the Old Testament? Because these four books describe the backdrop of darkness. The backdrop of darkness is the wilderness. To know Christ and experience His all-sufficiency, we must be willing to enter into the wilderness.

The wilderness is not optional. Throughout history, the wilderness has proven to be a transformative place. Individuals have come to know Christ and His all-sufficiency. It is in the wilderness where heavenly truths are best illuminated. Moses spent forty years in the wilderness of Midian. It is during this time that he developed an intimate knowledge of God. Similarly, during the darkest moment in Paul's life, he had a most profound revelation of Christ. It was remarkable to see Paul's clear vision of Christ. Even within the confines of a Roman prison, the epistles that Paul wrote in the prison shine like the brightest morning star and reveal the revelation of Christ. Throughout history, God's people have often been led into the wilderness to deepen their knowledge of Christ.

1.2.2 Wilderness reveals our insufficiency and God's sufficiency

Why is it necessary? Is there any other way? The wilderness journey is necessary because it helps us to recognize our own insufficiency. We have a challenge; the challenge is we think we are sufficient. Moses thought he was sufficient when he was in Egypt; Israelites thought they were sufficient when they were in Egypt. Only when they were led to wilderness, they realized they were not sufficient. The apostle Paul often expressed joy in moments of weakness. Paul says,

2 Corinthians 12:10b — for when I am weak, then I am strong.

He recognized that it was precisely in his moment of weakness that he experienced the strength of the Lord; his sorrow led to joy in Christ; his poverty led to abundance in Christ. Paul saw these trials as the darkness before dawn. He embraced his own weakness and relied on God's strength to overcome his challenges. These transformative experiences often occur in the wilderness. In such a place, we are stripped of our self-reliance; we are compelled to depend solely on God. Brothers and sisters, have you ever been to a place where you can only rely on God? There is nothing else. Then you know you are in the wilderness. God intentionally removes our reliance on our own ability. This desire is to make Christ everything to us, and this is actually the reason God called His people out of Egypt. Go into the wilderness to get to know Him, understand His sufficiency. Brothers and sisters, only when we recognize our own insufficiency, we can begin to experience His sufficiency.

Let us see how the Lord led Israel to see His sufficiency. After escaping slavery in Egypt, the Israelites led by Moses started journeying through the wilderness. Very quickly, they found their insufficiency. They ran out of food. It is impossible for them to handle the situation on their own, because it was not Egypt. They know how to find food in Egypt, but they do not know how to find food in the wilderness. In Egypt, they can rely on themselves; but in the wilderness, they can only rely on the Lord. They realized their own weakness by complaining to Moses, so the absence of the food created a backdrop of darkness. From this backdrop of darkness, they saw the brightest star. God sent manna, the heavenly food which symbolized Christ. For forty years, every morning God provided the food for them from heaven; for forty years, they can see God's sufficiency every single day.

Brothers and sisters, we need to see our own insufficiency before we can see God's sufficiency. Later, they arrived at a place called Rephidim. There was no water and they became thirsty and complained to Moses. Unable to solve the water problem, just as they could not solve the food problem. Again, the absence of water created another dark backdrop and they could not do anything about it. They may be very skillful, but they could not find water in the wilderness. God told Moses to strike a rock with his staff, and water would come out to quench people's thirst. The rock Moses struck symbolized Christ; manna was Christ; the water from the rock, the rock was Christ. So this darkness allowed them to see Christ. Through these experiences in the wilderness, Moses and Israel gained a profound understanding that Christ is their sufficiency. Not only did they realize they are not sufficient in themselves, but they discovered something precious: God is sufficient.

1.2.3 No better opportunity to be His testimony

In 2023, there was a summer conference in San Antonio. You know the children are most excited about the conference; they usually want to eat their dinners quickly and then they just gather outside and play. We have

a little boy who was playing outside with friends, and all of a sudden, he fell backward and his back head hit the ground. There was blood all over, a lot of blood on the ground, so 911 was called and an ambulance came and the boy was sent to emergency. That was such a scene during the time of the conference, it certainly was a backdrop of darkness. We thank the Lord that in a few hours, the boy came back and he stayed in the conference until the end. When he was in the emergency, they tried to clean everything up and they found that the wound was actually very tiny, two stitches, so it was a very tiny wound. I do not understand why there was so much blood on the ground. I think that created such a darkness in our hearts.

At the time, we were so grateful that the boy was okay, but something very unique happened afterwards. When we came back, there was a gospel friend who saw this thing happen from end to end, then he asked to be baptized. Then we said, why do you want to be baptized? The conference was not a gospel camp and there was no gospel message being preached, there was no gospel group in the summer conference. Why would you decide to be baptized? He said because I saw the boy, I saw his parents, and I saw this family in this darkness. What I saw I could not believe, I could not believe there are Christians like that, the way they react, the way they live their lives through this darkness. To a gospel friend, it was impossible. Therefore, he concluded, this is true, whatever they said to me before is true. This Jesus is true. Out of this backdrop of darkness, someone has seen the life of Christ. Without this backdrop of darkness, this gospel friend could not see the life of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, have you ever considered this possibility? Now you have the darkness, you encounter challenges in your life, have you ever considered now this is the opportunity for the life of Christ to shine? If you never react this way, maybe something needs to be changed in your life; maybe we need to face the challenges in our life in a completely different way; maybe we should learn from apostle Paul. Because of his weakness, when he is weak, he is strong. It is not a problem we confess our weakness because we are weak. There is nothing unique about our weakness, we are all weak. In our weakness, we can see that He can become our strength and that is testimony. So when you have a difficulty in your life, you need to grab this opportunity to be His testimony. There is no better opportunity to be God's testimony when we are in difficulty.

1.3 The Holy Spirit leads us into sufficiency of Christ

Brothers and sisters, let us come to the second part, how do we experience this in our daily lives? We need to learn from Israelites. There is a reason God put their history in the Bible because it is worthy to learn from them. I think we all understand this, when they traveled from Egypt to the Promised Land, and in between is the wilderness. There is about thirty-eight to forty years of journey in the wilderness. In the wilderness, there is no established road. How in the world can they travel forty years without roads? Without the road, without

the freeway, how can you and I come to this camp Lebanon? They also did not have compass; if you do not have roads, you do not have a compass, how can you travel from Egypt all the way to Canaan? Today is the same way. We live in the wilderness; this world is wilderness; there are no established roads. How can you and I travel all the way to the Promised Land? The Lord provides the pillar of cloud, and pillar of fire. The presence of the cloud was essential for their travel, and the presence of the cloud represents the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the cloud leading them through the wilderness.

Therefore, today, it is the Holy Spirit that leads us through this wilderness. We may ask, what is the purpose of the work of the Holy Spirit? Then we need to think about the purpose of the cloud. The purpose of the pillar of cloud and fire was to lead the Israelites into Canaan. The Israelites found their sufficiency in the land of Canaan. They could not find their sufficiency in Egypt, nor can they find their sufficiency in the wilderness; they can only find their sufficiency in the land of Canaan. Today is the same way. We cannot find our sufficiency in this world. No matter how hard we try, we will never find our sufficiency. We are not able to find our sufficiency in the wilderness. We can only find our sufficiency in Christ, our land of Canaan, our Promised Land. It is the Holy Spirit that leads us into Christ.

1.4 Union with Christ is our sufficiency

Our Lord Jesus lives an example life for us. He sets an example for all of us how to live. When He came to this earth, He was baptized. When He was praying, the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. From that moment onward, His entire life was directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In all His actions, Jesus followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. He never acted on His own. Can you believe this, the Son of the living God never acted on His own?

John 5:17 — My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.

This indicates that all His works were the result of the Father working in Him. If the Father was not working in Him, Jesus did not work. He said, I do the works that the Father has given me. Therefore, He only performed the works that the Father intended for Him; if the Father did not intend for Him to do a work, He did not do it. He even said,

John 12:49 — For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.

Thinking of this, we are all marveled by the word of the Lord from His mouth. But can you imagine He did

not speak any of these words on His own? It is the Father who asked Him to speak. So you see, through the Holy Spirit, there is a remarkable union between the Son of God and the Father God. It is this union, this union with God the Father, is the ultimate source of Jesus' sufficiency. Brothers and sisters, it is the same for us. The union, our union with Christ, is our ultimate source of sufficiency. Just as the Lord Jesus lives His life according to the Holy Spirit, we should do the same. Today we have access to the same Holy Spirit that anoints Jesus Christ; the same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus also anoints us. When we understand these truths, we will rejoice in living a life that is governed by the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit we are brought into a union with Christ.

This truth was beautifully illustrated in the story of Ruth. Ruth did not find her sufficiency in Moab. Although she had a husband, she never found sufficiency in Moab, then she decided to follow Naomi back to Bethlehem. When they returned to Bethlehem, their hands were empty. Ruth's sufficiency did not come from the leftover grains she gleaned from the field of Boaz. Even she was grateful that she could glean the leftover grains from the field of Boaz, but the leftover grain was not her sufficiency.

Brothers and sisters, are we satisfied by leftover grains? We come to the meeting to glean some leftover grains; we come to the retreat hoping to glean some leftover grains. Maybe Ruth was just as happy as having some leftover grains, but Naomi was not satisfied, the Holy Spirit is not satisfied. The Holy Spirit will never satisfy unless we were brought into a union with Christ. Ruth's sufficiency did not come from the six measures of barley that Boaz gave to her. It is such a grace that Boaz can do this grace. Ruth may be very grateful, but Naomi was not satisfied. The six measures of barley was not Ruth's sufficiency. Are we looking for six measures of barley? Naomi was not satisfied, the Holy Spirit will never satisfy. Therefore, Naomi guided Ruth step by step into a union with Boaz.

Ultimately, Ruth's sufficiency came from her union with Boaz. What a beautiful story! Let us illustrate this truth. Our sufficiency will only come from our union with Christ; this union with Christ was led by the Holy Spirit. Boaz represents Christ and Naomi represents the Holy Spirit. This story is such a good example how a person can travel from Moab all the way to Bethlehem, and from Bethlehem to the house of Boaz. Union with Boaz brings her sufficiency. This is the reality of a normal christian life, every normal christian should live like Ruth. Every step of the way was led by the Holy Spirit.

We thank the Lord for the leftover grains, but we move forward; we thank the Lord for the six measures of barley, but we move forward because the Holy Spirit moves forward. He will guide us step by step until one day we are in a union with Boaz, until one day we are in a union with Christ. The only union with Christ is our ultimate source of sufficiency. Brothers and sisters, this is a normal christian life. This is not reserved for a specific individual, a few persons; this is for you and me; this is for every child of God. Every child of God needs to enter into the land of Canaan. This is a necessity to enter into the Promised Land because only in the Promised Land, the Israelites will find their sufficiency.

1.5 Follow the Holy Spirit in our daily lives

How do we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives? When Christ was nailed on the cross, when He died on the cross, the temple veil, a mass weighted curtain was torn apart from top to bottom. It symbolized the barrier between the heaven and the earth was removed. It allowed for a direct and unobstructed interaction between God and man. So when Jesus died on the cross, the heaven was opened. This open heaven remains open forever because His sacrifice made us holy once and for all; this atonement is everlasting; heaven to be open forever. So today, the issue is not whether the heaven is open or not. I love to hear some brothers pray, Lord, open the heaven. I think it is still a good prayer because the open heaven needs to be a reality in us. That equivalent of asking the Lord, open heaven for me. But in fact, the heaven remains open forever. Today, it is not that we need the Lord to open the heaven again; today, the issue is how do we live our lives under this open heaven? How do you and I live in the truth that the heaven is open? How can we let this dove, the Holy Spirit, rest in us? That is the issue today. Heaven is open; the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, but can the Holy Spirit find a resting place in you and in me? We need to prepare our heart for a landing space for the Holy Spirit.

How can we prepare for that? How can we prepare our heart so the dove can land in our heart? We thank apostle John, he said in the first John, chapter 2 verse 27, such a precious verse.

1 John 2:27 — As for you, the anointing which you receive from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and it is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

This verse holds the key to live a normal christian life and this verse is how we live under the open heaven. We are often anxious and unsure about what to do and what to say; we seek guidance from others. However, this verse reminds us that we have no need for anyone to teach us; the anointing of the Holy Spirit abides in us; it will teach us about all things. Jesus even said,

Matthew 10:19 — do not worry about how and what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

When we surrender to the Lord, placing our confidence in Him, trusting that Christ is our wisdom and strength, we become united with Christ. If we truly unite with Christ, then it is not us who speak, it is the spirit of the Father who speaks in us.

A couple of weeks ago, in a Friday night bible study, we had a sister who was quite excited. Then she said, I heard the voice of the Holy Spirit. Then we heard her story. One morning when her daughter needed to

go to swimming practice, her daughter dropped a word asking her mother to find her contact lenses for her. Because she needed to go, she begged her mother to try to find the contact lenses. So as a mother would do, she started trying to find her contact lenses. All of a sudden, there was a voice in her heart, “You will not find the contact lenses, I want your daughter to find her contact lenses herself.” That was very strange, but it was just so clear. As a good mother, she could not resist, and kept finding. Spent an hour, found nothing, so she had to stop. Then after the swimming lesson, the girl came back. The girl rushed to her room trying to look for contact lenses before changing the swimming clothes. Again, spent an hour, did not find anything. Finally, she went to the bathroom, and needed to change. Then all of a sudden, she screamed in the bathroom. She said, mom, I found my contact lenses. It was stuck on her body. For such a long time in the swimming pool, the contact lenses were stuck on her body. For all the time she was in the swimming pool, until she was changing the clothes, she realized that the contact lenses were stuck on her body.

Now the mother realized this was exactly what the Holy Spirit was telling, “You will not find the contact lenses, I want your daughter to find the contact lenses herself.” Then the mother shared this story with her daughter. What a life lesson! What a precious lesson! On such a small thing, losing a contact lens is quite common, right? I do not know one person who wears a contact lens without losing it before. But have you seen the star while you lose your contact lenses? Brothers and sisters, the anointing of the Holy Spirit is true, it is not a lie, we have to pay attention to it.

I have a very similar experience. One day I was informed by others that there was a brother who was doing certain things. I was quite disturbed in my spirit, I thought he should not do that. I almost picked up the phone right away, but I had a little practice so I did not do that. I thought I was going to talk to this brother the next day and I was quite determined. I already gave you a little mercy as I did not call you tonight, but tomorrow, we will have a conversation. But thank the Lord, God raised the circumstances that I could not have any opportunity to talk to him for maybe the next ten days. During this time of waiting, I realized what the Lord was doing. The Lord did not want me to approach the brother; instead, He wanted this brother to come approach me. I got it, I knew why I was stopped, so I determined I would continue to wait until this brother approached me. If he did not approach me, I would not approach him. This was not easy, brothers and sisters. I did not know how long I had to wait, what if he never approached me? But I was very clear this was what the Holy Spirit guided me. One day, he approached me and this set everything correctly. It was a potential trouble; even if I approached him, he might feel that I caught him. It was not ideal, so I had to wait. The Lord is faithful and the Lord is evidently working in multiple places and multiple hearts. Then he finally approached me and we could set everything correctly.

1.6 Each difficulty is an opportunity

Brothers and sisters, this is how we live our lives under the open heaven. It is hard to seek guidance in those things. Our sister cannot call someone and say, what should I do? No, I could not either. Because I did not even know if I had advice from someone that was trustworthy, but the Holy Spirit is always right. If He moves me this way, He will move the brother the other way and these things will come together. I have to just follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and trust the Lord will lead him as well. I can do nothing to move him, so I can only submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit and have a full faith that the Lord will accomplish His work.

Brothers and sisters, I think you get the picture. It is a small thing in life, it is not a big thing in life. Of course, the bigger thing also is an opportunity, but it is not necessary to be a big thing. I should say, the bigger thing is a bigger opportunity, but the small thing is also very useful to us. How many opportunities have we missed in the past? How many times do we ignore when we lose the contact lenses? How many opportunities in life can we learn to obey the Holy Spirit? How many times in the service, in the body of Christ do we miss this opportunity? You say, how do I know if I have opportunities? Whenever you have a difficulty, you have an opportunity. We have plenty of difficulties in services, right? I do not know any places where there are no difficulties. If you tell me there are certain places with no difficulties, please let me know, I need to visit it. I do not think there is any place on earth that has no difficulties. But we have to realize, we have to change our mindset that the difficulties are opportunities the Holy Spirit arranges for us, for our benefits. We should grab hold of opportunities.

1.7 Hear the voice of the Holy Spirit

Brothers and sisters, we need to learn how to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit from the day we were baptized. The Spirit has a unique language. If you want to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, of course you need to know the language of the Holy Spirit. What is the language of the Holy Spirit? When Jesus was baptized, during which the spirit of God descended like a dove and came to rest on Him. Can the dove rest in my heart? This is something we have to consider carefully. Can the dove settle in my heart? The settling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts gives us the peace of Christ. The peace of Christ is the language of the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, this is the language of the Holy Spirit. When you start considering this matter of following the leading of the Holy Spirit, you need to ask yourself, do I have the peace of Christ? Can the dove rest in my heart? If the dove rests in my heart, then I know I have peace of Christ and I can move forward. This is why apostle Paul encouraged all of us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.

The peace of Christ is like a referee. When you are in a sports game, you listen to the referee. When we follow

the Holy Spirit, we need to listen to the peace of Christ. This verse not only holds true for our personal lives, it is very useful for our corporate lives. When we have some issues corporately, it is an opportunity to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and trust our brother will do the same. Pray for our brother to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. When both you and your brother follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, then you meet in the middle, then you learn how the Holy Spirit works in your corporate life. Brothers and sisters, every difficulty, every challenge is an opportunity. We need to seize this opportunity to follow the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire. If we follow the Holy Spirit faithfully, then He will lead us into the union with Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the most effective way to know Christ is to let go of worldly influences. We must leave Egypt, then we enter into the wilderness and rely on God's provisions; in the wilderness, we realize our insufficiency, then we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit toward the union with Christ. The union with Christ is the ultimate source of our sufficiency. David was the person who experienced this personally. Therefore he urged to seek one thing from the Lord, which is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives to behold His beauty, and to meditate in His presence. This exhortation aims to inspire us to seek a deeper and more intimate knowledge of Christ.

How did David develop such an intimate knowledge of Christ? Because he spent ten years in the wilderness seeking refuge from king Saul. In the wilderness, David developed a deeper understanding of the Lord's characters. He rose such a beautiful sound to reflect the brilliance of the Lord he saw in the wilderness. Can you imagine if we take those ten years away from David, how many psalms do we need to remove? You can try to study how many psalms we would not have if David did not spend ten years in the wilderness. What a loss for us if David did not spend ten years in the wilderness! Not just us, generations of generations of God's people, we all benefit by the psalms that David wrote through the experience of his life in the wilderness. The wilderness experience is worthwhile, it is worthwhile for the generations to come.

Brothers and sisters, we are closer and closer to the Lord's second coming. The best way to prepare for the Lord's coming is to be like the wise virgins who carry extra oil in jars. If we faithfully follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we add a little oil into our jars. This is how we prepare for His second coming. If we continue to live our life this way, carrying our jars and adding a little oil along the way, it does not have to be a big thing, it could be just a daily thing in our lives. But thank the Lord if you have a big difficulty because you can fill your jar right away, or maybe you need a bigger jar.

Brothers and sisters, look at difficulties in a different way. The life is very short, whether you have a small difficulty or a large difficulty, it does not really matter in the end. What matters is what you gain out of those difficulties. How much oil have we added to the jar during those difficulties? Those experiences will last forever. It is quite important to know that, so we will look at life's difficulties in a completely different way. Brothers and sisters, we need to be changed. The way we look at difficulties in life needs to be changed;

we cannot be the sparrows that always complain, we need to be changed. We need to embrace the work of the Holy Spirit, we need to embrace our wilderness experience. We hope that one day we can say, “You are enough, however long the day, or however dark the night. ”

Prayer:

Father, we thank You this morning we all gather before You, as we consider Your words, we are so grateful for Your words. We pray that this word will shine upon our hearts, so we will have a different perspective for those difficulties in our lives. We pray that each of us will face our challenges in a different way. May we look at our difficulties as our opportunities. May we seize the opportunity to learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, so that we can see that bright star over the backdrop of darkness. Lord, we know we live in a very dark time. Let us not lose our hearts and consider that this is a great opportunity for us to see You. Continue to keep this cry in our heart. We need the Lord Jesus and Lord Jesus needs us too. We thank You for this time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Session 2

Christ is Our Bread of Life

There are so many times in the New Testament that we find this phrase: “in Christ”, but there is another phrase that is equally important: Christ in us. These two concepts are the two sides of the same coin. We need to be in Christ, but Christ also needs to be in us. This morning when we discussed finding sufficiency in Christ, we focused more on being “in Christ”. When we are led by the Holy Spirit through the wilderness into the land of Canaan, we are led to be in Christ. When we are in Christ, we find our sufficiency. When we are in Christ, we find our home in Christ. This afternoon, we want to look at the other side of the coin, Christ needs to be in us.

You may ask, when I first believed in Jesus, wasn't Christ already in me? Yes, Jesus lives in us. But that life is the life of a child. We are not discussing the life of a child; it is the life of a son when Christ is formed in us. As described in Galatians chapter 4 verse 19, Christ is formed in us. If Christ is in us this way, if we are the sons of God, then we will find His sufficiency. So therefore, the focus is a little different. We need to let Christ find home in us. Oftentimes, we experience finding Christ as our home. But has Christ found us as His home? These are quite different concepts. It is much easier to experience Christ as my home. But has Christ found ourselves, found you, found me as His home?

Scriptures:

John 4:31-34 — Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”

John 6:27-29 — “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.” Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

John 6: 33-35 — For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

John 6:53-56 — So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

Notice that in the very end, we see both sides of the coin. “...abides in me, and I in him.”

Prayer:

Father, we thank You this afternoon, we can still come back to Your word. We are so grateful for this wonderful opportunity to come before You. We are like those five thousand, watching our Lord Jesus taking up this bread. Then in our heart, we said, give us this bread. Then we saw You break the bread and become our sufficiency. Do this work in us, today. Commit our brother and myself into Your hands, use this weak vessel for Your glory. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, what is the most difficult teaching of Lord Jesus in the four Gospels in your mind? I think we all have read the four Gospels. You may have your opinions on which one is most difficult. The verses we just read is considered the most difficult teaching by Lord Jesus. Because even the disciples, after hearing this message, said to the Lord: Who can accept this teaching? Why was this teaching difficult? Because this is a teaching for the son, this is not for the child. Do you know that a believer can accept the Lord Jesus for ten years and still be a child? It is possible to be a twenty-year-old child of the Lord. It is even possible to have a thirty-year-old child. Brothers and sisters, this afternoon, we can make a decision in our hearts. I don’t want to be a child any longer. I want to be His son. If you want to be His son, then you have to know what the Lord is saying in this difficult teaching, because this is the teaching for the son.

2.1 The Three Statements

There are two stories in the book of John. From these two stories, we will focus on three statements. And from these three statements, we will look at together how to become a son.

My food is to do the will of the Father

The first statement was found in chapter four. This is a well-known story of the Samaritan woman. One day, Jesus and His disciples were traveling through Samaria on their way to Galilee. Tired and thirsty from the journey, Jesus stopped at a well, known as Jacob's well, located near the city of Sychar. It was about the sixth hour. And the disciples went into the city to buy food, leaving Jesus by the well. As Jesus sat by the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus talked with the woman and dramatically changed her life. The woman testified to the people of Sychar that Jesus was the Messiah, and they came out to see Jesus and believed in Him. When the disciples returned to Jesus, they encouraged Him to eat something. But Jesus told them that He had food to eat that they knew nothing about. His response puzzled the disciples, and they wondered if someone had brought Him food while they were away. Jesus clarified,

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

This is the work of a son, not a child. The satisfaction of our Lord Jesus is to do the will of His Father. The food is a metaphor for His satisfaction. My satisfaction is to do the will of the Father. If you can say this with all your heart, then you have the life of a son. That is the first statement we want to focus on this afternoon.

I am the bread of life

Now we look at chapter 6 for two other statements. After feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, Jesus withdrew to a mountain to avoid being made a king. The crowd, amazed by the miracles, realized that Jesus and His disciples had gone to Capernaum. So they took boats to Capernaum to find Him. They found Jesus on the other side of the lake. Jesus knew they were not seeking Him for spiritual reasons, but because they ate the bread and were filled. They thought they had found their sufficiency in loaves and fish. Jesus told them, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." Jesus was saying that the loaves and fish will perish. We need food that endures to eternal life. But the crowd did not understand. They wanted Jesus to be like Moses, who gave their ancestor manna from heaven to eat. But Jesus corrected them, saying the manna was given by God. He also affirmed that the true bread from heaven gives life to the world. And the crowd said to him, "Lord, always give us this bread". This time Jesus said to them,

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst.

He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood

This is the second statement we want to focus on this afternoon. And Jesus further explained, I am the living bread that came down from heaven, and whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, how can this Man give us His flesh to eat? And Jesus said to them,

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourself. He who eats My flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

So this is the third statement we focus on this afternoon. These words puzzled the Jews at the time. It was difficult for them to grasp the meaning. However, these statements have a secret in them. How can we find our sufficiency in Christ as His son? So this afternoon, we will look at these three statements.

First statement, “My food is to do the will of the Father.” This is the statement of a son, only a son will find his satisfaction by doing the will of his father. But where does the life of the son come from? We don’t have this life naturally, no one has this life naturally. Is there anyone that naturally wants to do the will of the Father? Is there anyone who naturally will be satisfied by doing the will of the Father? Where does this life come from? From the second statement, “I am the bread of life.” The bread of life is a metaphor, not physical food. It is eternal life, but it is the life of a son. If you have the life of a son, you have a different relationship with the Father. Then you will not hunger, never thirst. How do we get this life? It comes to the third statement, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.” Not only we abide in Him, not only we are in the land of Canaan, we live there. We are not like swallows who come in and go out, we abide in Him. But not only we abide in Him, He also abides in us. He finds His home in us. Brothers and sisters, the ultimate source of sufficiency is we abide in Him and He in us. Christ is all and in all. This is what a son looks like.

2.2 First statement: My food is to do the will of the Father

So we focus on these three statements, one at a time. “My food is to do the will of the Father.” Jesus is saying that His satisfaction comes from doing the will of His Father, His satisfaction comes from completing His Father’s work. What is the will of the Father for Christ Jesus? Jesus said it Himself,

John 10:10 — The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life,

and have it abundantly.

This is Father's will for his son, to come to this world to give eternal life and give it abundantly. This was exactly what happened at the Jacob's well. The Samaritan woman came to Jacob's well thirsty, not only physically but spiritually. She never found her sufficiency in life. She thought she could find her sufficiency in her marriages, but she never found it, even after having five previous husbands. She was currently living with a man who was not her husband. He came to the well at the sixth hour. In Jewish time, the sixth hour would have been our noon time. Most women would come early in the morning or late in the evening. However, we see this Samaritan woman come to draw water at noon time. Perhaps she was ashamed of herself, she had lost hope of finding her sufficiency in life. Jesus initiated a conversation with her. She was very surprised at Jesus' request, because Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Jesus said,

John 4:10 — "If you knew the gift of God, and who He is that asked you for a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

This phrase, "gift of God", appeared only one time in the Gospels of the Bible. However, the Greek word, "dorea", appeared in the book of Acts four other times. Each time it refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit. The "gift of God" that Jesus speaks of in John 4:10 is the living water of eternal life, which flows to us through the Holy Spirit. That is why it is called the gift of God. The water from Jacob's well can only quench her thirst temporarily, but when she drinks the living water that Jesus gives, she will never thirst and the water will become in her a well of water springing up to eternal life. This is what Jesus did that day. Giving the living water of eternal life to the Samaritan woman, which was God's will for Jesus. Therefore, He was completely satisfied, because He had carried out His father's will. God's will for us today is to help those in need to discover the life found in Christ. When we fulfill our mission as a channel of life to others, we realize that it brings more satisfaction than anything else. If you have ever helped someone to find their way to Christ, you understand the profound sense of satisfaction. Sharing the divine life with those in need fills our heart with joy that surpasses any earthly pleasures. Brothers and sisters, this is for those sons. Only the sons of God will find their satisfactions by doing the will of the Father.

Last summer, we went to Singapore for a conference. I was there about a day or two before the conference started. On Saturday, I attended some fellowship among the saints in the morning. I saw a brother had his left eye covered. Afterwards, I asked him, what happened to your left eye? Then he said he injured his eye while he was back in China. He was helped by the doctor there, but after returning to Singapore, the doctor in Singapore gave him very sad news. The care he had received was not done properly and his eyesight was in danger. The doctor said, "I am going to do a little treatment and wait for some time to see whether that will help. If it is not helping, then you will lose your eyesight permanently." The time to return to the doctor was right in the middle of the conference, so he could not go to the conference. Therefore we were praying

for him earnestly. While we were still in conference, we received very sad news. The treatment did not help, and he will lose his eyesight permanently. This is such bad news. I felt heavy in my heart, but there was very little that we could do at that time.

After the conference, my wife and I spent a week in Indonesia. While we were in Indonesia, I thought about this brother. I realized on my way home, we need to pass through Singapore one more time. I started calling brothers to see whether there would be an opportunity for us to see him the night before, maybe we can pray together a little bit. Therefore we arranged it that way, so we gathered together in his house the night before we departed. Perhaps 8 to 10 brothers and sisters who usually gather with him came. We just gathered around in his living room and we started praying. You will not believe that was the darkest time, because we were filled with joy. Can I explain where the joy came from? The situation is there and none of us can change, but we were there as brothers and sisters. We were there together as a body, we were there to pray for our brother. Everyone was so joyful. I had a much better time that evening than a whole week in Indonesia.

Brothers and sisters, when you share life with one another, it truly satisfies us. If you have not experienced this, you need to make up your mind. I need to be a son. My food should be doing the will of the Father, my purpose in life is to share the life of Christ. It will bring you more joy than anything else in the world. Brothers and sisters, what satisfies us today? Are we satisfied by doing the will of the Father? Have we ever experienced a true joy and satisfaction that comes from only doing God's will? This is the example set for us by Christ. How a son lives his life, not for earthly food, but doing the will of the Father.

2.3 Second statement: I am the bread of life

Brothers and sisters, we know that we do not have this kind of life in us, but it is okay. There is a second statement. Jesus knew we do not have that life in us. Therefore, He said, "I am the bread of life". We do not have this life, but He is the bread of life. "He who comes to me will not hunger, he who believes in me will never thirst." It is okay we do not have this life, but we have a hope that Jesus is the bread of life. For the crowd who came to Capernaum, the bread of life was the loaves and the fish, but they had a complete misunderstanding of the purpose of the Messiah. They did not realize the Messiah primarily came for spiritual reasons. The bread of life is not physical food but eternal life, it is the life of His son. Jesus came to the world to give this life to us. "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will not hunger." When we receive this bread of life, we have a father and son relationship. It is no longer child and father, it is father and son. This relationship will satisfy us.

We can see this illustrated in the story of the prodigal son. The prodigal son thought the bread of life was his father's estate. He asked his father for his share, so the father divided his estate and gave the share to the prodigal son. Then he gathered all he had, and set off to a distant country. He lost his relationship with his

father. When he lost his relationship with his father, he ultimately lost everything. Brothers and sisters, we are His sons. We need to maintain this father and son relationship. When the prodigal son returned to his father, restored the relationship with his father, he regained everything in his father's house. So the relationship with his father is his sufficiency. The true sufficiency cannot be found in material things, true sufficiency comes from our relationship with the father. It is the bread of life that restores our relationship with the father. The crowd did not understand this. So they said, Lord, always give us this bread. How could the Lord Jesus give us this life? The bread of life represents life itself.

2.3.1 On Him the Father God has set His seal

But how could Jesus give this life to us? The crowd did not understand, even the disciples could not understand. The Holy Spirit had placed a unique phrase at the end of verse 27, in this phrase, we can see how the Lord Jesus could give us this life.

For on Him, the Father God has set His seal.

When we read this verse, many of us did not pay attention to this part. What does it mean "For on Him, the Father God has set His seal", why has anything to do with a seal? It has everything to do with the seal. This whole thing happened during the Passover. The main focus of a Passover is the Passover lamb, and the Passover lamb must be unblemished. Every lamb had to be brought to the priest to be examined by the priest. Once the lamb passed the examination, the priest put the temple seal upon the lamb. Only those lambs with the temple seal could be used as a Passover lamb. When Jesus said, "For on Him, the Father God has set His seal", He was saying that He was the Passover lamb approved by God the Father. He became the Passover lamb, which is the bread of life for us. If Jesus did not become the Passover lamb, there is no way we can receive the bread of life.

If you read John 19:14, you will know that Jesus died on the day of Preparation, the day before the Passover. If you read Mark 15:25 and 15:34, you realize that our Lord Jesus died on the cross at 3 p.m. that afternoon, the time when the Passover lamb was traditionally slaughtered. Our Lord Jesus indeed became the Passover lamb, which is the bread of life. So when we believe in Jesus, we partake of the Passover lamb that takes away our sins and restores our relationship with God the Father. Our restored relationship with God is our true sufficiency. We need this life, we need to partake of the Passover lamb to receive this eternal life. This life will grow into the life of a son. One day we can say that our satisfaction is to do the will of the Father.

But there is something unique about the seal. Are we aware that when we believe in Jesus Christ, we receive a seal upon us as well?

Ephesians 1:13 — Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.

When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we too are sealed with the Spirit of promise. Those who are sealed belong to God, we are God's possession. The Father's seal assures us that we are accepted in Christ as perfect, just as Christ is perfect. This perfection is not our own, but the perfection of Christ Himself. What a wonderful bread of life, making us perfect in Christ, this is incomprehensible. Sinners such as we can receive the bread of life, have the seal of the Holy Spirit of promises, God the Father looks at us as perfect as His Son, what a wonderful gift of God! Brothers and sisters, today, if we are like prodigal sons, if any one of us is like the prodigal son, the relationship between you and the Father is broken, today is your chance, you still can return to the Father, just like the prodigal son. Restore that relationship, then you will find your sufficiency again.

2.4 Third statement: He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him.

But this life needs to grow into a son. A child will not be satisfied by doing the will of his father. How can we grow from a child to a son? The third statement, He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him. This is not addressed to those who just believed in Jesus Christ. This is for those who already received the Lord Jesus Christ. This is for those who want to become His son. This is how we can turn a child into a son. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him. This needs to be our daily experience, this is not a Sunday ritual, this is our life, our daily practice. We have to eat His flesh and drink His blood on a daily basis, so we can abide in Him and He in us.

The life in us is the life of a Son

What happens when He lives in us? This life in us is the life of a Son. When you have the life of a Son in you, you are compelled to do the will of the Father. We found the 12-year-old Jesus at the temple, because He has the life of a son in Him. He could not help Himself, He must be in the temple, He must care for His Father's business, because the life of a son is in Him. This is what is said here, if we eat His flesh and drink His blood, not as a ritual, but in reality, then He abides in us, we abide in Him. When this life is in us, you have to do the will of your Father, therefore, you will find sufficiency in Christ, this is how we become a son.

How do we practice this in daily life? When we have this life in us, this life has a desire to do the Father's will, therefore we need to be aware of that. The life in us is the life of a son, He wants to do the will of the Father. But we also have our own will in us, this will of ours is not the same as the will of the Father. Therefore, sometimes we know what the Father wants us to do, but we have our own will, so what will we do when our

will and Father's will are not the same? This is the time we have to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Then we set aside our own will, we honor God's will. This should happen every time our will is different from the Father's will. If you do this, you are eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Every time when your will is different from God's will, you are willing to eat His flesh and drink His blood, you will confirm His life. You declare Your will is more important than my will. I am going to set aside my own will, I am going to honor Your will. This is eating His flesh, drinking His blood. By doing this, we are abiding Him, He in us.

The life of a Son must do the will of the Father

In our daily life, when we take actions and make choices, it is very important to ensure they are aligned with God's will. Since His life is in us, we will know actually whether they are aligned. If they don't align, we must submit to God's will. We need to set aside the actions and choices that are not aligned with God's will. By doing so, we abide in Christ, dying with Him on the cross. By abiding in Christ, we rise with Him as well, fully aligned with God's will. Brothers and sisters, this is how we eat His flesh and drink His blood. When we partake the bread together on Sunday, we shall also reflect on our life, does our life live like that? If not, then we can still repent before the Lord. This is how we abide in Him and Him in us.

At the end of April, I visited an assembly. We had a very joyful time because I had not seen the Saints there for quite a while. After the message, we had a love feast. I stayed there and enjoyed the love feast with brothers. Later, two brothers stayed a little bit longer to continue the fellowship. We covered many different topics, and enjoyed each other's company. All of a sudden, one of the brothers asked me a question, it was completely unanticipated. I didn't have time to give it much thought, so I gave him an answer. It is not a wrong answer, but it is not a perfect answer. Every statement can only be interpreted with the right context. He asked me how I spend my time. I gave him an answer, but I did not explain to him the context, and the background for that answer. We quickly moved on to other topics, and didn't have time to come back to this. It didn't cause anything uncomfortable in my heart at that time.

As I drove back from the city to Houston, it took about three hours. It was getting more uncomfortable each mile as I drove. I felt wrong to give that answer without proper context, because it can easily be wrongly interpreted. It was not my intention, but the outcome could be misleading. When I got home, I felt awful, this is not the answer I should have given. But I thought, this is a small thing, the brother may have already forgotten about it. Why am I bothered by this? Therefore, I said maybe I just slept over the night, thinking maybe this will just completely go away. I may not even remember tomorrow, so I went to sleep. Unfortunately, the first thing the next morning, I was bothered by this. I had an excuse, I said, I only knew the email contact of one of them, I do not know the other, how can I inform them? But it didn't work in my heart, the life in me did not allow that. If it is not completely right, you have to correct that. Therefore, I had to send an email to another brother to ask for this brother's email address. Once I got the address, I wrote the email to both of

them to apologize that I gave them a statement without proper context. Then I completely detailed the context behind the statement. Then I sent that off, and I was at peace, it felt right. I could not continue to live without handling this.

Very quickly, I received a reply from both brothers. They were very appreciative of my replies, they thanked me for being so open with them. One of the brothers actually told me another thing. To my surprise, he said that almost 40 years ago, he had a conversation with sister Wei, later he received a letter from sister Wei. At that time, there was no email, Sister Wei had to write a letter, explaining that there was something she said that was not completely correct. This brother said that I was doing exactly the same thing, only they are 40 some years apart. You see the life within us is very similar in quality. I had never heard that story before. I never knew this happened, but we share something very similar, because this is the life of Christ. The life of a son must do the will of the Father. Not to clarify is not the will of the Father, we cannot do that. This is how we eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is not fun when you try to eat His flesh and drink His blood, it actually took me half a day to do it.

Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing experience that occurs multiple times per day. That is why Paul said I die daily. How can he die daily? He surrendered to Christ daily. Through partaking of His flesh and blood, we abide in Him and He in us. Hearing this, His disciples said, this is a hard teaching, who can accept it? Brothers and sisters, I don't know whether you have the same feeling or not. Do you have the same feeling as the disciple who said this is hard teaching, who can accept it? Jesus even asked the twelve disciples, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Brothers and sisters, do you want to go away, do you? Peter said, "Lord, to whom should we go? You have words of eternal life".

Brothers and sisters, may we take the stand of Peter, maybe this is hard, but we say like Peter, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. Who can accept this teaching? They asked Jesus, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent". Those who come before God must believe who He is. We must believe that He is the "I AM". When God told Moses to tell Israelites, "I AM WHO I AM". "I AM" conveys His sovereignty over all things and His eternal nature. He is all self-sufficient, self-sustaining God. He is "who is and who was and who is to come". We come to Him, we must believe that He is. He is the eternal "I AM", who transcends time and remains the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. His eternal nature serves as a firm foundation for us to trust in His promises. This is how we partake of the bread and the cup. We abide in Him and He in us.

These are the three statements of Jesus, He laid this pathway for a child to become a son. The first statement tells us what the life of a son looks like. The life of a son finds greater satisfaction in doing God's will than anything else. If we do not know God's will for us, we will never experience complete satisfaction on this earth. Therefore, Apostle Paul encouraged all of us,

not to conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that you may test and prove what God's will is.

God indeed has a good, pleasing and perfect will for us, God's will for us is to receive eternal life. We are also sharing this life with others. When we fulfill God's will for us, we will discover a satisfaction that surpasses anything the world offers. Jesus is the bread of life from heaven. Are we still seeking earthly satisfaction today? Do we recognize our sufficiency comes from our relationship with Christ? Are we willing to turn to Christ for our sufficiency? If we come to Christ, we will receive the living water just like the Samaritan woman. The Holy Spirit who brings the living water of eternal life to us is a seal upon us. When God sees this seal, He accepts us as perfect just as He accepts the Lord Jesus as perfect. What a wonderful gift of God! We can accept this gift of God even this afternoon, we don't need to wait any longer, just like the prodigal son of God, we don't need to wait any longer, let's come back to the Father, restore our relationship. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. We must believe that Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb, His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink. If we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we abide in Him and He in us. If our actions and choices do not align with God's will, we should lay them down. This is how we partake the bread of life, this is how the Lord abides in us, we abide in Him. With this life, we can do the will of the Father, we want to do the will of the Father, our satisfaction comes from doing the will of the Father.

Now we have the sufficiency from the other side. Not only are we in Christ, but now Christ is in us. Not only do we have the life of a child, we have the life of a son. There is nothing that pleases the Father more than His Son. What is the reasonable response to the Passover lamb? How can we repay the price He paid for us? By being His son, by taking this way to become His son, there is nothing that pleases the Father more than seeing His Son.

Prayer:

Father, we are so grateful. You brought us to the bank of Jordan, where Your Son was in the Jordan. The Heaven opened, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, the Father declared this is My Son, in whom I am well pleased. Father, I pray this afternoon to give all of us this desire to be Your son. We are not satisfied to be Your child only. You paid the price to gain a son, as we look at the Passover lamb, we look at the price You paid, You stir our hearts, so we have this determination. You stir our hearts. We want to be Your Son. We want this relationship to be restored. We want a Father-Son relationship because nothing pleases You more than Your Son. We thank You that Christ will bring many sons into the glory. We pray that every one of us here will be part of that. We will go in with Christ as Your son. Lord, have mercy on all of us. We can't do this on our own, we need to surrender to You, we need to ask, give us this bread, we want to eat Your flesh or drink Your blood, abide in You and You in us. Make this a reality in our lives. We are not satisfied by just

ritual. Every time we partake of Your flesh, every time we drink Your blood, may we come before You and say, Lord, we want to be Your son. We want to set aside our own will, we want to do the will of the Father. Have mercy on us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Session 3

Christ is Our Peace

We have been covering finding sufficiency in Christ in the first two sessions. In the first session, we focused on abiding in Christ. If we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into Christ step by step, then we will find our sufficiency in Christ. Then in the second session, we covered a different aspect: Christ abides in us. How can Christ abide in us? Christ said He is the bread of life. How can this life abide in us? We eat His flesh and drink His blood, and this life abides in us. This life is the crucified life of Christ. So when we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we are taking in His crucified life and this crucified life in us will transform us from a child to a son. Every time we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we have to know what is the meaning of that. Are we allowing this crucified life to operate in our life? Are we willing to surrender our will, allow this crucified life to do the will of the Father? Then we will find our sufficiency.

This morning we will move on. What is the ultimate testimony of sufficiency? If someone is sufficient, what is his testimony? This testimony is peace. We can find this in the life of our Lord Jesus. His entire life is characterized by inner peace and real rest of heart because He is sufficient, because God is His sufficiency. Thus, the focus of this morning, Christ is our peace. Let's read a few portions of the scriptures.

Scripture Reading:

John 14:27 — Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

There are nine spiritual fruits of the Holy Spirit, but Jesus only mentioned one of them, peace, why? Are the eight other fruits not that important? Before Jesus departed from the earth, He only mentioned peace. I think the reason is that when we are attacked by the enemy, the first thing he wants to attack is to take away our peace. Therefore, in this time, Jesus said I leave my peace with you.

John 16:33 — These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

Matthew 11:28-30 — Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

John 8:32 — and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Prayer:

Father, we are so grateful this morning that we have another opportunity to gather before You. We are so thankful that You are the answer to all of our questions, and there is One who is sufficient. Therefore, we invite You to come into our life. We want to partake this crucified life. This life will become our inner peace. Father, we are so grateful that You know our need in this time of tribulation. Therefore, You leave Your peace to us. May we all experience the peace of Christ, the true peace, so we will know this truth, and the truth will set us free. Again we commit this time into Your hands, only You can satisfy us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

3.1 True peace needs a backdrop

I would like to start with a story of peace. I heard this story very early during my life. I think it is a well-known story, so many of you have heard this as well. But I think it is a very good illustration to set the scene for this burden. There once lived a very wealthy person who was willing to pay a small fortune to find paintings that describe true peace. One day, as he was walking through, looking at most recent submissions, two paintings captured his attention. One was a painting of a beautiful lake surrounded by large green mountains, the water seemed as still as glass, and the clouds moved across the sky. Next to this painting was another one that portrayed a completely different scene. It was still a lake surrounded by mountains, but in this picture, strong winds whipped the lake into a tempest and dark clouds loomed over the rocky mountain landscape. It is almost like a downpour is about to begin.

Everyone was shocked that the wealthy person picked the second painting. They do not understand, if you want peace, why do you pick a painting that is so chaotic? The rich person pointed out a detail that almost everyone overlooked. If you look very closely in the second painting, around the lake, there is a little waterfall. By the waterfall there is a cleft in the rock, and in the cleft of the rock was a nest where a mother bird sat upon tiny blue eggs. I think the second painting presents the meaning of a true peace. A true peace requires a backdrop, and the backdrop is often very chaotic. That is the true peace that the mother bird and the tiny blue eggs display, and this is the kind of peace Jesus was talking about.

John 16:33 — These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

This chaotic background is tribulation, and only in tribulation you can experience true peace. Without tribulation, we do not understand what true peace is. To experience true peace requires a specific context, and the storm depicted in the second painting provides the context for us to see true peace.

If you look at the life of our Lord Jesus, we can witness true peace because He lived in the context of chaos. Now, despite facing numerous challenges, Jesus' life on earth was undoubtedly marked by peace. The demands placed on Him were great and there was much to be done, but Jesus was never overwhelmed or distressed. He went through it all with a sense of peace and heart at rest. It is worth noting that the scriptures never depict Jesus in a hurry or running. If you look through the scriptures and find in any place Jesus is running, let me know. I have not found any places that Jesus is rushing. He has that inner peace regardless of what happens outside. He was never pressed for time. Even His dear friend Lazarus was about to die, He was at peace, and He can still wait for a couple of days. What a peace in Christ! His entire life reflects a state of inner peace and enduring grace.

Why was that? How can He behave like that? Often He was in storms, but the storm was not in Him. We are quite the opposite. When the storm comes around us, the storm comes into our heart very rapidly, then we lose peace. Jesus is not the same; no matter how much the storm was around Him, the storm could never get into Him. Therefore, His inner peace would never be disturbed.

I think we all knew the story of the stormy sea of Galilee, right? The storm never robbed Him of his peace. While the boat was filled with water, He was asleep. Did Jesus know that the boat is filled with water? Of course He knew, but He slept. The storm entered the hearts of the disciples, the fear took hold of their emotions, and the fear became a very heavy burden in their heart causing them to lose their peace and cry out. Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? (Mark 4:38) But Jesus was in a completely different state, He was asleep on a cushion in the stern of the boat amidst the raging storm. This is just like the second painting. This is true peace. This is what we need. This is the answer to all of our questions. If we have this true peace, it does not matter what happens around us. The storm almost overtook the boat, but it never disturbed the peace in Jesus. This is the kind of peace He is giving to us. What a precious gift. Do you want this peace? You have this peace, you have the answer to all questions.

3.2 The Three Storms

Brothers and sisters, this is the precious gift left to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we need to consider how we can obtain this true peace. How can we prevent the storm from getting into our heart? Of course each

one of us will face different storms, so this morning we cannot cover every one of the possible storms we will face. But we categorize all the storms we are facing in our life into three categories, no matter what storm you are facing, it is one of these. So if we can learn to deal with these three storms, we can deal with all the storms in our life. These categories are very broad, they cover many different actual storms.

3.2.1 Sin

The first storm is our sins. The quickest way to lose our peace is sins. I am pretty sure all of us have experienced it already. There is no quicker way to lose your true peace than by sin. David wrote, For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me. (Psalms 38:4) For a believer, for the children of God, nothing takes away our peace quicker than our sins. David said, the burden of our sin can overwhelm us. Therefore, to experience the peace of Christ, we must find rest amidst the storms of our sins.

3.2.2 Self life

The second storm is our self life. This is a very broad category. Many storms in our life are actually caused by our self life. Our self life exists before we receive Christ. When we recognize Jesus as our new Master, when we accept the Lord as our Lord, our self life still exists. Consequently, conflicts frequently arise between these two masters. Sometimes we may not recognize this way, but there is a conflict within us. The desire of our old master often clashes with the desire of our new Master. Jesus even says, No one can serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24) So the ongoing conflict between the two masters creates a constant battle within us, leading to a lack of peace and rest in our life. Although the storm comes in many different shapes and forms, if you look at the deep aspect of it, it is because of the conflict between the old master and new master.

3.2.3 The Law

The third kind of storm, this may be a surprise to you, is the law. You may think that the law is in the Old Testament and we live in the New Testament, we are liberated from the law already. I just read Galatians, we are liberated. Paul already addresses this issue to the letter of Galatians: the Lord liberates with the power of the cross, releasing us from the burden of the law; we can serve in the newness of spirit. This is all true. But after being saved, there are moments when the burden of the law can still trouble us. It appears in different forms; it does not appear in the same way as it appears in the Old Testament time. It appears to us as traditions; it appears to us as religions; it appears to us as hypocrisy.

So what is hypocrisy? Hypocrisy is our external practices, our external form, not consistent with our inner being. In Old Testament time, the external is the law; but today, we can replace that external form to whatever

the form that we use. We can replace the law with the teaching that we hold dear to, even the teaching of the way of the cross. If you hold on to the teaching of the way of the cross, but you do not have the reality; you do not have the crucified life in you, but you love to talk about the way of the cross; you feel proud of it because you know the way of the cross, but you do not live a crucified life, that is called hypocrisy. That kind of person is a hypocrite, then you are in the storm of the law. Brothers and sisters, we are very much in the storm of the law today. Any practice that we feel strongly about, if we do not know the spiritual meaning of it, if we do not live in its reality, that can be a tradition, it can be a religion; even worse, it could be hypocrisy. No hypocrite will find true rest, no hypocrite will ever experience true peace. That is what we are going to cover this morning.

3.3 How to face these three storms

How do we face these three common storms in our life? First, we need to return to Christ in the storms of our sins. The reason we are in sin is because we are not in Christ. Therefore, we must return to Christ in the storm of our sins. Second, we surrender to Christ in the storms of self life. Third, lastly, we give Christ the preeminence in the storm of the law.

3.3.1 Return to Christ in the storm of our sins

Our Lord Jesus was never distressed by the matter of personal sin. His peace was never disturbed by sin within because there was no sin in Him. We often find that Jesus was pressed to take the wrong course, but He never yielded to the temptation. Oftentimes, He faced the temptation to spare Himself from suffering. This is the strongest temptation, to spare yourself from suffering. This temptation came from His very close friend Peter, and Peter said, God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You. (Matthew 16:22) This was the temptation from outside, but this never disturbed Jesus' peace. Because He is unwaveringly loyal to His Father, He frustrated the temptation, then preserved His inner peace.

Unlike the Lord Jesus Christ, we are disturbed by our sins daily. It is very crucial to recognize the need to address our sins. We often believe that we have already dealt with our sins when we accept the Lord Jesus Christ, which is true, all our sins are indeed put away in Christ. Jesus Christ has delivered us once and for all from sins. As in Romans chapter 8 verse 1,

therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, we need to memorize this one in our heart. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. What a remarkable truth! We need to hold on to these verses. However, the

question arises, is this our daily experience? Do we live a life that has this peace now? Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Are we still disturbed by our sins? Why is it so? If we have this verse, why are we still disturbed by our sins? We have to read the scripture very carefully. We read that verse twice and I want to point out, have you paid attention to the last two words? It is the last two words in the English translation. Alright, I will read it one more time, let us focus on the last two words. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. You are still disturbed by your sins, because you are not in Christ. If you return to Christ, if you are in Christ, then this verse, this scripture becomes your salvation again. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Repentance is the highway to return to Christ

How can I return to it? Now you know that you have to be in Christ, but you are disturbed by sins. How do I return to Christ? It is very simple, repentance. Repentance is a highway to Christ. The Lord already laid out this highway, go straight into Christ, and this highway is called repentance. We need to have a highway called “repentance highway” to remind all of us that there is a highway. I do not have peace now because of my sins, I need to be in Christ, there is a highway to Christ and that highway is called repentance.

Brothers and sisters, how often do you drive on this freeway to Christ? We need to drive on this freeway almost daily. This is a normal Christian life. You cannot just get on this freeway on the day you were saved. It is great that day when you drive on this freeway, you enter into Christ, your sins are forgiven, but that is not enough. We need to learn to find this freeway every day in our life because we are disturbed by our sins daily. Therefore, whenever we are disturbed, we are reminded to return to Christ, then we need to get on this freeway and this freeway will take us right back into Christ. Brothers and sisters, we need to practice this. This sounds so basic but this will take us out of our hypocrisy. If we do not deal with our sins, but we continue to maintain our outward forms, and have not driven on this freeway for a long time, your inner being and your outward testimony become separated and you will not have true peace. You will never have true peace.

The only way you can return to experience true peace is to drive on this freeway, ride the way of repentance back to Christ. The more often you drive on this freeway, your inner being and your outward appearance are very closer together, then you have that true peace. Then you will not allow your sin to disturb you because you can return to Christ very soon. You know where this freeway is, then you return to it often, then you will experience that peace.

Word of the Lord is the entrance of the highway

How do I know where the entrance is? Sometimes we know we want to return to Christ, but sometimes we do not know how to get on the freeway. The abiding word of the Lord is the lamp to our feet and light to our

path. The word of the Lord will lead us to the entrance of the freeway. If you continue to honor the word of the Lord, the word of the Lord will lead you to that entrance. Therefore, we have to have the word of the Lord operating in our life on a daily basis. We cannot only have the word of the Lord operating in us on Sunday or Friday or Saturday. We have to return to the word on a daily basis, then we have the lamp to our feet, we have the light to our path, then we know how to find the entrance. Brothers and sisters, if we have the way to find the entrance, then we have the freeway, then we will return to Christ.

This is not only applicable to those who have just been saved, this is actually getting more important when we are saved for a long time. There is no immunity to this. You cannot say, I have been saved for a long time, now I am immune to my personal sins. No, it is not so. God allows us to return to Him no matter how long you have been saved, this is as important to you as to anybody. So brothers and sisters, we need to return to basics. If we do not address our sins, then we preach the way of the cross and we preach the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but there is no reality in us addressing our own personal sins, then we will not have that true peace. Brothers and sisters, return to Christ is so important in our daily life. Multiple times. The moment you are disturbed by your sins, get on the freeway, return to Christ, then you return back to the Romans chapter 8 verse 1. Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Only after you travel this freeway, the Romans chapter 8 verse 1 are meaningful to you, then the scripture will dispel all the unrest from you.

3.3.2 Christ is our scorched ground

I once heard this story, and I like it very much. In a pastoral setting, there are shepherds and flock. One day the shepherds found themselves engulfed in a massive wildfire and then filled by a very strong wind. You know if there is a wildfire under the strong wind in the pastures, it is very dangerous. The line of fire advanced very rapidly and incinerated anything and everything in its path, so it posed a great threat to the shepherds and the flock. There was one shepherd, he quickly reacted to this. He set a control fire himself. Before the line of fire was closed, he set up a fire himself to burn off a piece of ground, large enough for all the shepherds and all the flock. Therefore, there was a ground that had been burned. He gathered all the shepherds and all the flock and stayed in the burned ground, so when the line of fire came through, it spared all the shepherds and all the flock. They passed through them without hurting them because they stayed on the scorched ground. A ground that has been burned once cannot be burned a second time. You can never burn something that has been burned before. There is nothing on the burned ground that is consumable by fire anymore. All the shepherds and all the flock staying on the scorched ground were safe.

Our Lord Jesus is the scorched ground. He has been crucified on the cross. He is like the burned ground, He cannot be burned again. So if we are in Him, if we stand on that burned ground, we cannot be burned. We are safe. There is no condemnation for those who are staying on the burned ground. Brothers and sisters, this is how we deal with the storm of our sin. This is so fundamental, but it is so important. This is the foundation

of our spiritual life. If we do not deal with this, you cannot build anything on top. You can try to build many, many things, but you will not be successful, so we have to deal with the storms of our sin on a daily basis.

3.3.3 Lay down our yoke and take His yoke in the storm of our self life

Second, we have to surrender to Christ in the storm of our self life. Our Lord Jesus submitted to His Father completely and there is no discord between His will and that of His Father. All the temptations He went through were to steer Him away from His Father. Even in suffering, it was according to the will of God and not due to any conflict with His Father. Suffering can leave marks on Him, but it never distracts Him. In His life, there is no inward controversy with the Father. Much of the lack of peace for us is we do not have inner unity. Our old self is fighting the new self all the time, so we find ourselves torn in two directions. We know what the Lord wants us to do, but we want to do something different. How can you have peace like that? That inner conflict exists in us constantly. Therefore, we have to find a way to have this inner unity.

Jesus invites us to take His yoke upon us. What does this mean? If you look at the word, the “yoke” has a meaning of “to join”. Imagine this picture of a wooden frame, and join a pair of oxen at their necks, allowing them to plow together. Oftentimes, a younger and less experienced ox is paired with a more seasoned one for guidance. This illustrates the Lord’s invitation to yoke with Him. The Lord is asking you and I to yoke with Him, so we can walk alongside Him sharing the burden. It is sharing the burden that makes the yoke easy and light. Brothers and sisters, this is the meaning of that invitation. How can we resolve this inner conflict? If we yoke with the Lord Jesus Himself, the yoke is upon Jesus and upon us at the same time. He is taking the majority of the load; therefore, the yoke becomes easy and light.

Set aside your heavy yoke

But there is a problem, we have a yoke of ourselves. You may not know, but every one of us has a yoke. The yoke of our self life is heavy and a heavy burden. I think much of the burden of life comes from the yoke of our self life. That is why Jesus said, Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28) Before we can yoke with Him, Jesus asks us to come to Him, to bring our heavy burden to Him. We are all burdened by this yoke of our self life, so before we can yoke with the Lord, we have to remove the yoke of our self life. I think much of the difficulty today we experience in services is having two yokes. We have this supposedly light and easy yoke, but at the same time, we still have the yoke of our self life.

This complicates our life because you have two yokes, and it also puzzles you. Is not the yoke of Christ light and easy? See, now I am wearing this light and easy yoke, but why do I feel heavy? Because if you look closely at that light and easy yoke, underneath there is a heavy yoke of self life. We all have this heavy yoke,

but then we put on the light and easy yoke. Then we start serving together, and find out this is not light and easy. Don't you have the feeling that it is really not light and easy? Do you know the difficulty in services in a corporate way? Sometimes we do not feel light and easy, because every one of us has two yokes. We love to talk about our light and easy yoke, but we never remove our heavy yoke of our self life. This will not make things easy and it only makes things more complicated. It is actually sometimes more complicated than just one heavy yoke. If you just have the yoke of your self life, at least you are consistent. You are very consistent. You do not need to pretend anything. I am heavy. I have this heavy yoke. What can you do with me? That is me. I wear this heavy yoke. But now you put on this light and easy yoke, it is supposed to be light and easy. I need to pretend it is light and easy, but I know it is not because underneath it, I have this heavy yoke. That is why Jesus said: come to Me, you heavy-laden. To set aside your heavy yoke, then yoke with Him, then it is light and easy.

But sometimes we put on this light and easy yoke, then we secretly take the yoke back. You put on that heavy yoke again, that is okay, we listen to the word, Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden. (Matthew 11:28) Set aside that heavy yoke again, it is not a one time event, it is not one day you set aside your heavy yoke of your self life, then that is all. We love our heavy yoke, do you know? We enjoy our heavy yoke, so without knowing, we put on our heavy yoke again, then we need to be reminded by the Lord to set aside our heavy yoke.

Brothers and sisters, again, this is very basic. This is the practice that no one else can actually see, but they can only witness that you do not have peace. They do not know what is going on with you, but that you do not have peace; when you do not have peace, you do not have joy; when you do not have peace, you do not have any of those fruits of the Holy Spirit. The problem is the heavy yoke. So before we yoke with the light and easy yoke, let us be reminded to set aside our heavy yoke, so we can experience true peace. You do not need to tell people, look at me, it is light and easy, people can see you have peace. Everyone can see our Lord Jesus has peace because there is no inner conflict. There is only one yoke, the yoke the Lord put on Himself.

Remove my yoke, not others' yoke

Brothers and sisters, remember, we only want to have one yoke. Before we come together, before we engage ourselves with brothers and sisters, let us consider, Lord, remove my heavy yoke. The problem is me. Everyone should view the issue this way, the problem is me. It is my heavy yoke, so my responsibility is to remove my heavy yoke. My responsibility is not to remove my brother's heavy yoke. It is impossible, you will create a war. If I want to remove his heavy yoke, I have to go to war with him, and you can never win that way. You can remove your own heavy yoke. Maybe when a brother sees your peace, then he will remove his heavy yoke. When we all remove our heavy yoke, then we enjoy true peace. Always look at ourselves, do not look at others, because it is useless. We can only remove our own yoke.

3.3.4 Give Christ the preeminence in the storm of the law

Let us move on to the third category. How do we deal with the storm of the law? How do we deal with the law? The law given to Jewish people has lots of dos and don'ts, making life very tough for them, even tougher as what is written in James 2, verse 10. It is stated that whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles at just one point, is guilty of breaking all of it. It surprises us, right? So there is no 99%, if you fulfill 99% out of 100% of the law, you still break the whole law. Who wants to go to this school? It is a terrible system, if I break one, I might as well break 99. If I break one, I break all. But this is the word, you break one, you break all. Then the religious leaders, Pharisees and scribes, they actually add a lot of interpretations. Who can have peace living in that system? You break one, you break all.

But we look at our Lord Jesus, He lives in perfect rest regarding the law, and He is never in bondage of its regulations. Therefore we need to ask why. Do you know the purpose of the law? They say, wow, there are so many. I can tell you the purpose of this law and the purpose of that law, but do they have collective purposes? Do you know there is a collective purpose of all the law? All the laws add together and there is actually one purpose. What is that purpose? It is to secure God's preeminence in the heart of His people. For example, there are a lot of laws against idolatry. Idolatry takes the preeminence away from God. Although we know we cannot worship idols, do you know why? Because God is preeminent. He does not allow anything to take His preeminence from Him; therefore, there is a law against that. Look at all the laws, it is this way. They are against those things that would take Christ's preeminence from Him. Like covetousness, when you covet something, you take God's preeminence away from you because you want something else more than you want the Lord; so there is a law against that because you take God's preeminence.

All the laws are this way, because there are so many different ways that God's preeminence can be taken away. So how to be liberated from that? Is to give Christ preeminence in your heart. In Jesus, God's preeminence was already secured. Therefore, He fulfilled the spirit of the law, so there is a spirit of the law. The spirit is to secure God's preeminence. Therefore Jesus summarized all the law into love your God with all your heart. (Matthew 22:37) When you love God with all your heart, God has preeminence in your heart, then you fulfill the spirit of the law, then you are not bound by the regulations anymore. For Jesus, every day is a Sabbath day because every single day God is preeminent in His life. Therefore, every day is Sabbath day and He is no longer bound by the regulations concerning Sabbath.

Today, there is a very simple way for us to be liberated: give God preeminence; love God with all your heart. Then you fulfill the spirit of the law and you are not bound by all the regulations, then you have true peace. Therefore Jesus said, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. (John 8:32) This is the spirit of the law. If we have the spirit, we obey the spirit of the law, and the truth will set us free, then we will have peace. Pharisees were known for criticizing Jesus for not honoring Sabbath. They focused on the literal interpretation of the law, they did not know the spirit of the law, they did not give God preeminence. They

followed the law outwardly, but failed to give God preeminence. Jesus called them hypocrites.

Do not be a hypocrite

Brothers and sisters, it is as easy today for us to be hypocrites, just as easy as Pharisees. Maybe you wrongly think that that is for Pharisees, that is for scribes, we are free from that and we will not be considered that. But today it is just as easy for us to be hypocrites. If we do not give Christ preeminence in our life, then we do not have the spirit; we do not follow the spirit of the law, then we become a hypocrite. You can do all the things outwardly, whatever thing is right, then we do it. We follow the brothers and sisters; whatever they do, we do, and we feel good by doing it, but we do not give Christ preeminence in our heart. While we are doing those things together with others and we do not give Christ preeminence, then we are a hypocrite. Literally we are the same as Pharisees.

Not in tradition but in reality

If we do not know the spirit of it, anything that we do today can be a tradition. Originally when brothers have seen the light and they do things a certain way, they knew the reality of it and they practiced that way, they knew exactly the spiritual meaning of it, they believed in the reality of it as well. Then they pass it on to us, we do the same thing as they do. Outwardly it is not different, maybe we are even better, we have more equipment, we can do it better, we can do it more conveniently, we can even do it remotely, but that is not important. Do we have the same reality as those who started this? Do we know the meaning of it? If we do not, it is only a tradition, nothing more than a tradition. It is no better than any other tradition. Maybe you think that our tradition is better than somebody else's tradition. Tradition is tradition, no matter how good the tradition is, it is still a tradition.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want to live in tradition. Therefore we have to know the spiritual meaning of everything we do. Not only do we know the spiritual meaning, we have to live in the reality of that meaning. What do we start with? You start by giving Christ preeminence. When Christ is preeminent in our heart, everything gets right. That is how those forefathers started, they started by giving Christ preeminence, then the Lord revealed to them a way, a form. Not only do they know why they do that, they have the preeminence of Christ in them, so to them it is not tradition. But now, we are far away in time from them, many of them are no longer with us. Can we continue to live in the reality of it? That is something we have to be careful of before the Lord. That is how we need to encourage one another.

What is our focus? Are we focused on external practices or are we focused on giving God preeminence? Christ must have the first place in everything. We have to have this reality in everything we do in our personal life, in our corporate life. Regardless of what things we are discussing, we have to give Christ preeminence. Give

Christ the first place in everything. If we have this reality, if Christ is preeminent in our hearts, we will never fall into tradition. We will never be in tradition and we always are those who are fresh in the Lord. That is why Jesus said, love God with all your heart. (Matthew 22:37) This is what we need to hold on to. This should be our reality. This is the way we can live in true peace.

Brothers and sisters, we do live in an age of storms. But Jesus said, Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14:27) This peace is not like the peace of the world, it stems from His union with His father. Brothers and sisters, it is a great gift of God to leave us His peace, but we need to be diligent; we need to deal with our sins; we need to return to Christ in the storms of our sins; we need to remember that, Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. (Romans 8:1) This needs to be inscribed in our heart. Whenever we are disturbed by our sins, we remember to get on the freeway of repentance, return to Christ multiple times each day, so we become a person with reality. We are consistent between inner being and outward appearance. We are so burdened by our own heavy yoke knowingly or unknowingly. Sometimes we have this heavy yoke without even our own knowledge, but Jesus said, come to me the heavy laden, remove that heavy yoke. Oftentimes we need to do that, then yoke with Him, then it is light and easy. Everyone can see it is light and easy, because you have peace. We need to give Christ preeminence. We do not want to be hypocrites. The most difficult person for the Lord is a hypocrite. Jesus addressed them severely because the hypocrites sometimes believe that by maintaining an outward form, they are justified and they will be saved. Therefore they will not return to Christ and Christ has to use severe language against them. So brothers and sisters, we ask the Lord to save us from hypocrisy. We have to give Christ preeminence. This is the secret. If Christ is preeminent in your heart, there is no way you can be a hypocrite, you are a true son of God. May the Lord allow us to see how we can have this peace of Christ.

Prayer:

Father, we are so grateful that You know our weakness. You know each of us. You know every one of us and our own weaknesses, and You know our burden in life. Then You ask us to come to You to bring our burden to You. Then You say You leave Your peace to us. What a wonderful gift! May this morning all of us will come to You, and we will confess our weakness. We are those who are often disturbed by our own sins, we are often disturbed by our own heavy yoke, and we do not give You preeminence in our life. Therefore we do not enjoy the peace of Christ. May You save us from this. We do not want to live like that. We want to return to Christ, we want to enjoy the life without condemnation, we want to bear the light and easy yoke, and we want to serve You in peace. We do not want to be hypocrites. We give you the preeminence today. We love God with all our hearts. May You grant us that peace, so together we can declare that You are the Prince of Peace. We thank You for this time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Session 4

Christ is Our All

He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood

We thank the Lord for leading us to this final message. Out of the three sessions, which one do you think is the most difficult? Does anyone think the first one is the most difficult? Or the second one? Or the third one? Do you have an opinion? Based on the questions asked afterwards, I think the second message is the most difficult one. Which part in the second message do you think is the most difficult? Again, based on the questions asked, I think the most difficult one is the final point in the second message. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.” (John 6:56) It’s exactly after these words that many disciples of Jesus turned away from Him. Not only is it difficult now for us, it was difficult then for the disciples.

So we have to really understand what this means: eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Jesus said Himself, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourself. In other words, we must eat His flesh and drink His blood to receive the life from Him. This is about a crucified life. The flesh and blood represent the cross, and this life came out of the cross. Therefore, when we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we receive a crucified life. When this crucified life lives in us, and we live out this life, we will do the will of the Father. We cannot help but do the will of the Father. Then we will find our sufficiency.

Brothers and sisters, this is not one point out of many points. This is the essence of Christ being all and in all. Unless we live a crucified life, it is impossible to enter into the reality of Christ being all and in all. That is why it is so difficult. It is so easy to enjoy the life of a baby. It is still very enjoyable to enjoy the life of a child. But when we hear this message addressed to the sons, then it becomes very difficult. But we need to hear this. And we need to eat His flesh and drink His blood to receive this crucified life. Only the crucified life will turn a child into a son.

Brothers and sisters, we are going to break the bread tomorrow. And we break the bread every Sunday. When we break the bread, we need to understand that we receive a crucified life. We cannot just receive this life

without any response. We cannot receive a crucified life, but do not live out a crucified life. Therefore, every time we break the bread; we drink the cup; we need to realize this is what we are doing. And we need to live out this life. And when we live out this life, it is impossible to not do the will of the Father. That is why we are encouraged to remember Him all the time. Therefore, we need to turn; we need to be transformed into His sons. This is just to cover the questions that were asked.

I think that this final session, we are not going to cover additional points. What we want to do in the last session, is to look at an example of a crucified life. We want to look at all the things we have already shared. How this is practical in someone's life. How a person can live a crucified life. So we can apply what we see in our own life. Let's turn to Colossians chapter 3 verse 9 to 11. This is where we find our topics. You may wonder why we didn't read this verse until the last session. Because we need to prepare. Unless we go through three messages, we are not ready to read this one. We will not know what is Christ is all. Now we understand, if Christ is all, we must live out a crucified life.

Scriptures:

Colossians 3:9-11 — Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him — a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

You see, we have to lay aside the old self. As we eat His flesh, drink His blood, we receive this crucified life. In this crucified life, there is no old self. The old self was nailed on the cross. Unless we lay aside the old self, we cannot live out this crucified life. Only when you live in this crucified life will there be no distinctions.

It is so difficult to remove distinctions, the distinction of the barrier wall in Jerusalem. Only by the cross, only through the cross, that barrier wall will be removed. That is why we remember our Lord Jesus. Because His Word on the cross removed all the barriers. Therefore, we need to put aside the old self, to live out that crucified life. And we want to look at the life of Apostle Paul this afternoon. I want to look at how this person, how this individual, has the flesh and blood just like us, and how he lived a crucified life.

Philippians 1:20-21 — according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 2:1-2 — Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Philippians 2:5 — Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

Philippians 3:12-14 — Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Job 23:10 — “But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Prayer:

Father, we thank you this afternoon. We thank you for being so merciful to us. We pray that this afternoon, we will turn our eyes upon Jesus. We pray that the Holy Spirit will quicken our spirit, that all of us will turn our eyes toward Jesus. Not only do we turn our eyes toward Jesus, we look full in His wonderful face. May we open our hearts, without any hindrance. We look to Your full face. We pray that the things of this earth will strangely grow dim in the light of Your glory and grace. As we turn upon Yourself, we are willing to lay aside our self. We are willing to eat Your flesh and drink Your blood and receive this crucified life and live out this crucified life, so You will find many sons in this room. May we have this desire to become Your son. May we respond to Your calling as Your son. Do not let us go until we respond to Your call. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

4.1 The Bridge between Ephesians and Colossians

Apostle Paul wrote two letters that were considered twin letters. It's like Minneapolis and St. Paul. These two letters are the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians. Both letters were written about the same time. And both letters were written, of course, by the same person; in the same place, in a Roman prison; and were delivered by the same messenger, Tychicus. So there are a lot of similarities between these letters, but the contents are quite different. In Ephesians, we see the glorious calling of the church as the body of Christ. In Colossians, we see the glory of Christ as the head of the church. In Him, the church finds its completeness. Ephesians emphasizes the purpose of the church. Colossians explores its relationship with Christ.

The position between Ephesians and Colossians is this wonderful book of Philippians. Many scholars want to put Ephesians and Colossians together because they are so similar. One emphasized the goal, the other emphasized the relationship. But why do they put a book like Philippians in between? Philippians acts as the bridge between Ephesians and Colossians. Philippians emphasizes the importance of daily living, guiding the church from its spiritual standing described in Ephesians to its living relationship with Christ described in Colossians. Philippians urges us to consider how we live our lives to enter into the reality of Christ is all and in all. So in Philippians, we see it is full of living examples. Colossians set the goal. Philippians provides

the practical guidance on how to achieve it.

Let's see how Apostle Paul set the goal in Colossians. The goal is simple. Christ is all and in all. Apostle Paul set the goal very high. Christ is all and in all. But he also mentioned that to do this, we have to put on our new self and lay aside the old self. And we have to receive this crucified life. Then we can remove all distinctions. We can remove all distinctions based on nationality: Greek and Jew; distinction based on religious practices: circumcised and uncircumcised; distinction based on cultural background: Barbarian and Scythian; distinction based on social status: slave and freeman. If we live out this crucified life, all these are examples of living out a crucified life. A crucified person couldn't tell between Greek and Jew. An uncrucified person will never be able to remove that distinction. A crucified person couldn't care less whether someone is free or slave, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian or Scythian, because the old self is no longer there. All those distinctions exist only in the old self. It is not in the new self. So when you live out this crucified life, there is no distinction. Then Christ is all and in all.

Brothers and sisters, can you see this link? How the crucified life links to Christ being all and in all. When we are crucified, Christ is our all. He fills our heart with His presence and love. When we think about the New Testament, this sister Mary, Christ is all to her. So she gave her whole attention to Jesus. To her, a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard is not much. Even if it is worth 30 pieces of silver, it is not much. But for Judas, he objected to Mary's act of devotion. He questioned why the perfume had not been sold for 30 pieces of silver for the poor. For Judas, Christ is not all. Christ was merely a part of his life. Then this is the essence of the old self. In the end, Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus for exactly 30 pieces of silver. Therefore, we need to lay aside the old self. We need to receive this crucified life. In this life, we see no distinction. Christ is all and in all.

This was the burden when Paul wrote the letter to Philippians. In writing the letter to Philippians, Paul took a very humble approach. He called himself the servant of Jesus Christ. He did not use the word apostle. And he said, brother, I count not myself to have obtained, neither am I already perfect. He conveys a sense of humility and continuous pursuit for spiritual growth. He invites us to join him to press toward the goal, and recognize that none of us have fully reached it.

Brothers and sisters, the depth and richness of this letter are far beyond what we have achieved. I am not qualified to lecture you on this book. Let's encourage one another to grasp the truth it contains. In Paul's view, expressed in the book of Philippians, there are three secrets to live the reality of Christ being all.

4.2 First Secret: It is not I, but Christ

The first one is recorded in chapter one: it is not I, but Christ. That is the secret, the essence of a crucified life. If we have not been crucified with Christ, it is I plus Christ. Maybe there is more of I, a little bit of Christ. Do you know a hymn¹ like that? In the first verse, he said, it is all about I, not much about Christ. And in the second verse, there is more of Christ, but still a lot of I. Then, when we get to verse four, it is all about Christ, it is not about I.

This is a person who lives out the crucified life. It really is not about I. Do you agree that it is really not about I? If it is really not about I, then why am I angry? If you are angry, then it is about you. If it is not about I, then why am I so offended? No one can offend me because it is not about I. This is not something you hang on the wall. You can put this on the wall, and you are sitting behind being offended. You say, it is not about I, but you are so angry about it. Brothers and sisters, that means your life has not been crucified. A crucified person will not be angry. It is not about I anymore, it is about Christ.

I know that we have not attained this. Even Paul said, he has not reached it. Therefore, we have not attained this, but this is our goal. This is where we are going. This is what we want to press toward. This is why we eat His flesh and drink His blood every week. We want to have more of a crucified life. So we can have less I and more Christ. We are moving closer to the goal. When we see the Lord one day, we will be there all about Christ. We can say, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” It is very hard to say these words. It is very difficult for us to pretend to be in this state. But this is our goal. We do not need to pretend that we are here. But we need to press toward the goal. That is what Paul encouraged us. Paul did not anticipate we would arrive at this position right away. He wanted us to join him. He pressed on until he died. Therefore, we need to press on. This is our goal. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

So, for Apostle Paul, life is no longer about himself. He is the most free person in the world. Do you want to be free? If it is no longer about yourself, you will be the freest person in the world. It is no longer Paul who lives, but Christ lives in him. Christ is his very life, the very reason he lives and exists. In Philippians chapter 1, if you have time later, you can read chapter 1 and count how many times the word Christ appears. Eighteen times. In a short chapter 1, the word Christ appears 18 times. It is Christ everywhere, in every direction. It is all about Christ. If Apostle Paul is here, and you ask Apostle Paul what life means to him. I don't know Apostle Paul, but I know his answer. He will say, it is all about Christ. If you ask him what he is working for, or what his hope is; it is about Christ. If you ask him if he has anything else, anything else at all in this world that matters to him. He will say, nothing else for me, my life is all about Christ. This is a person who lives a crucified life. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

So now you understand why I say this book is beyond our reach. If today, this afternoon, I ask you, face

¹Hymnary 260: Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow

to face, the same questions, exactly the question we asked Apostle Paul. What are your answers? What are your answers to those questions? That shows how far we have to go. So how can Apostle Paul not live for himself? I think we all have some experience by now. And we have heard the message about the cross. How can a person actually live out a life like Paul? And he said himself, I have been crucified with Christ. He shows us the secret. It is the way of the cross. The way of the cross is not about I anymore, but about Christ. This is his secret. It is just that he lived it out. I think we all knew the secret. I don't think there is anyone in this room who does not know this secret. Knowing the secret is one thing, but living out the secret is quite another. Because it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me. This is not just a teaching. No, it is not so difficult to write those kinds of teachings. But Paul had to live it out.

4.2.1 One Example of Apostle Paul

Let's consider just one example of how Paul lived out this life. One night, he had a vision. A man from Macedonia pleaded for his help: come over to Macedonia and help us. And taking this as a vision from the Lord, Paul and Silas set out to preach the gospel there. They were very excited, arrived in Philippi, and looked around for this man from Macedonia. But they never encountered this man from Macedonia. Instead, they encountered a slave girl possessed by an evil spirit. And this led to their unjust beating, and imprisonment in the inner prison, where their feet were fastened in stocks. How would you react? If you were Paul or Silas. You saw the vision and you obeyed the vision. You go to Macedonia. You didn't see the person in the vision. Then you see this slave girl. You try to help her. But you end up in prison, and your feet were fastened by stocks.

Brothers and sisters, how would you react to that? What would you do that night in the prison? Put yourself in their situation. If you are not crucified, you would feel very sorry for yourself. But fortunately, we found two crucified persons in this prison cell. Because it is not about us. It is not about I. It is not about Paul and Silas. It is all about Christ. So they don't feel sorry for themselves. They sang songs. They praised God. This is an example of a crucified person. Only a crucified person can react in this way. It is not possible for an uncrucified person to react this way. They are more than a conqueror. That evening, they were not just a conqueror, they were more than a conqueror. They conquered their disappointment. They conquered their afflictions. They conquered their adversity. When Christ lives in them, they live out this crucified life. They let go of all their personal interests. Their life is no longer about themselves. It is all about Christ.

Do you know what will happen if you live a life like that? If you live a crucified life, then the Holy Spirit will find a highway in your life. The Holy Spirit uplifts your spirit. He enables you to sing and praise. Brothers and sisters, this is the pattern in the Bible. The cross opened the way for the Holy Spirit to work. Here we found two persons who allow the cross to work in their life, and opened the way for the Holy Spirit to move powerfully. In this difficult trial, Paul found himself firmly anchored in the conviction: for me to live is Christ.

By standing on the cross, he opened the way for the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit shook the entire prison. All the doors and all the chains were opened, leading to the conversion of the jailer and his household. And this event opened the door for the gospel to be preached all over Philippi. Resulting in the formation of a remarkable assembly, the church in Philippi, and we have today this wonderful letter of Philippians.

Many scholars say that Philippians is a book about joy. How can you put crucified life and joy together? But it is. The greatest joy was experienced by the crucified life. Indeed, joy permeates throughout this letter. The key to joy is being fully occupied by Christ. This is the joy one day we all are going to enjoy, because one day it will be all about Christ. We better get used to it. Brothers and sisters, if you are not used to Christ is all, then you will not be happy in heaven. In eternity, Christ is all. We better prepare for that.

The secret is that Paul no longer lives for himself. In Paul's life, there is something very unique. It is his complete lack of self-interest. He has no personal agenda. Brothers and sisters, often, we have a personal agenda. Even on the surface, it is something very strong, very righteous. But inside we still have some personal agenda. But the cross has eliminated any personal interest from Paul. He mentioned that there are different motivations behind the preaching of gospel in chapter one. Some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, hoping to cause trouble for Paul. And others preach gospel out of goodwill and love. There are two different kinds of people. How would you react if you were Paul? Someone preached the gospel to cause you problems.

And Paul said, it is okay, as long as Christ is being proclaimed, regardless of the motivation people had. He has no personal interest. It is all about Christ. It is not about Paul anymore, whether you preach the gospel trying to hurt me. Since it is not about I, it is about Christ. As long as Christ is preached, I rejoice. So this is how a crucified person lives. It is not I, it is Christ. When we eat His flesh and drink His blood, this is the goal we want to get to. We want to have more of Christ and less of us. We want to press toward this goal. We may not be there in one day, but we need to gradually move toward that goal. As we break the bread, as we take the cup, we need to remind ourselves, this is what we are doing. We are receiving this crucified life so that we can set aside the old self. We can put on the new self. We can remove all the distinctions. Christ is all.

4.3 Second Secret: Be of the Same Mind

The second secret is in chapter 2. In Philippians chapter 2, Paul urged the Philippians to have the same mind, to have the same love, and to be in one accord. In chapter 2, we see the humble mindset of the Lord Jesus leading to His exaltation by God. If we embrace the mindset of Christ, the church is unified and prepared as a bride. We see in Revelation, the church is adorned with this unity, It is the unity of the church that results in Christ is all and in all. The purpose, the work of the cross is to achieve unity. It is to remove all the barriers. Then there is unity in the body of Christ. And this unity leads to Christ is all and in all.

4.3.1 The New Jerusalem Has One Single Golden Street

When you read about the New Jerusalem, what attracts you? What characteristics of the New Jerusalem interests you? Is it the size of the city? Is it the wall? Is it the foundation? Is it the gold and precious stones? Or the gates of pearl? Or the river of life? I think there are many, many very interesting characteristics. But there is one thing that is very unique. I think our brother mentioned it already on the first night. It is in Revelation 21, verse 21, the latter half: “And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.”

The New Jerusalem in the Bible, in Revelation, has one single golden street. It is hard to imagine. It is very difficult to imagine a city with one street. But I think there is a very significant spiritual meaning. Because Jesus said, I am the way. I am the way. There is one exclusive way. Jesus is that way. And in the New Jerusalem is one single golden street. Brothers and sisters, we need to know that the construction of the New Jerusalem is not until that later time, construction of the New Jerusalem is underway today. Right after Jesus ascended when the Holy Spirit descended upon those disciples, the construction of the New Jerusalem started.

Today, when we read the book written by Apostle Paul, we can witness that unfolding of the city of Jerusalem, including the single golden street. This golden street is being built today. It is God’s way of refining and preparing His people. We have to realize this. And you and I need to be part of this. It is not later. It is now. It is today. The Lord is building a single golden street. Do you know what the enemy hates the most? What the enemy hates the most is the single golden street. Because if there is unity, that means there are people living crucified lives. And that is very, very scary for the devil. The fear of the devil is the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Therefore, he cannot stand the unity among His people. Because where there is unity, there will be people there practicing crucified life.

4.3.2 Only the Crucified Life Can Have Unity

Only the crucified life can have unity among them. That is why when you read the Corinthians, you find four streets. God intended for one street. In the Church of Corinth, there were four streets. There is a street of Paul; a street of Apollo; a street of Peter; another street of Christ. Then you might think the street of Christ might be the best, right? In reality, it was likely the worst. Because they used Christ’s name to promote division. Throughout history, such division has fractured the unity of God’s people.

To overcome this division, we must focus solely on Christ. We must pay attention to our own life. We must live out this crucified life, so that we will have this unity among God’s people. We should not condemn those who have different external forms than us. We may not choose to join their organizations, but our convictions should not affect our love for our fellow believers. Our love for God’s children should reflect God’s love for them. We must recognize God’s children wherever they are and maintain unity on the single

golden street. Satan seeks to disrupt this unity and sow divisions among God's people. We must stand firm in our commitment to walk alongside our fellow believers as children of God.

I'm not saying we should compromise in any way. We should never compromise, just as Paul never compromised. He would not compromise in the face of Peter. So we will not compromise on our principles. But we need to maintain our love for all of God's children. Because there is one single golden street. It is actually very easy to say, well, you are different. It is very hard to not compromise the love of every God's child. This takes a crucified life. And Paul has this life. He never compromised. But he loved God's children.

Most of us are aware of the importance of unity, I think. But we also need to know the cost. The price Jesus paid for this unity. Do you realize how important this unity is? How important was it to Paul? There were two sisters in Philippi arguing with one another. Paul wrote it into the book of Philippians. How would you feel if one of their two sisters had some arguments? Apostle Paul wrote it into Philippians. What if you are Euodia? Or you are Syntyche? Or you have some problem with each other? You did not know Paul wrote your story into the book. We are reading it thousands of years later. Why did Paul do that? It is for us to know how important unity is in the church. I don't think Paul wants to shame these two sisters. But this is so important for all of us in the future generation to see. So Paul wrote them into the book of Philippians. We don't know what the arguments were, but it means that there were differences between them.

4.3.3 Have the Same Mind of Jesus Christ

Brothers and sisters, oftentimes we have arguments that are not about right or wrong, but that are about our differences. We are different people. We're very different. If we do not serve together, we will not know. You see that brothers and sisters are lovely. But when you serve together, then you realize how different you are. It is no longer lovely. But how do we serve together? Our way is corporate. We cannot compromise on that. It must be corporate. How do we deal with differences? Paul has the secret here: have the same mind of Jesus Christ. Be of the same mind as Christ Jesus. If Euodia has the same mind of Christ Jesus, she will set aside her own mind. If she has the same mind of Christ Jesus, she emerges as a pure gold. In the same way, if Syntyche could do the same, she also emerges as another pure gold. When they have the same mind of Christ Jesus, they have unity. They become pure gold. They become the material for the construction of the single golden street. This is why their story was written in the letter to the Philippians.

So when you and I have arguments with our brothers or sisters, we need to come back to this story. We need to take the suggestion and encouragement from Paul. Have the same mind as Christ Jesus. I will set aside my way. I may suffer. But like Job said, I will emerge. I will emerge as gold. Our brother will do the same. He will suffer too. But through suffering, he will emerge as a gold. Therefore, we have two pieces of gold. The Holy Spirit can use it to build the single golden street. This is how the Holy Spirit works in our body life.

So, having differences is not a problem. Without these differences, how can we emerge as gold? These differences are trying to refine us. Trying to purify us. Trying to test us. Once we have been tested, we emerge as pure gold. Then the Holy Spirit will have material to build the single golden street. Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid of differences. Differences are the tool of the Holy Spirit, He uses that tool to work in our life. To refine us, to purify us, to test us. So we can emerge as a pure gold like Job. Let us take a different look at our differences. Let us embrace our differences. Let us learn how to have the same mind of Christ Jesus.

I do not know if we have architects here. Maybe he is one. You know, in architecture there is something called an arch. You know, in the arch, right in the middle, at the top, there is a wedge-shaped stone. That stone is called the keystone. What is the purpose of the keystone? That keystone is the last stone to be put in place. When the keystone is placed, the entire structure is stabilized. It can sustain wind movement and pressures. All because there is a keystone. The keystone of the body of Christ is unity. That is how important this thing is. The single golden street is made of gold. Do you know how to tell if a gold is pure? When the goldsmith can see his face reflected in the gold, then the gold is pure. That is what this golden single street looks like. It is like glass. It is transparent. It is pure. Because they have been tested.

When you are willing to suffer, we become the material for the building of the single golden street. Brothers and sisters, we need to be willing to suffer. Unity comes at a cost. Unity is not without cause. The unity will not drop just all of a sudden. It takes those sons. Only the sons willing to suffer for unity. Children will be difficult. Take the course of my life to realize it is really not about I. Even though we have different differences, we have different opinions. But it is not about I. Therefore, I can lay aside myself, have the same mind of Christ. I hope that I can emerge as something usable for the Holy Spirit to build the single golden street. But it takes a crucified life.

But we thank the Lord. We receive this life when we eat His flesh and drink His blood, that life can be ours. Any time we need it. Any time I am in disagreement with my brother. Every time there is a danger that we lose unity. It is my opportunity to eat His flesh and drink His blood. And we receive that crucified life. Have the mindset of Christ, then we have that unity, and we have more of the pure gold. There will be a single golden street in the body of Christ. There needs to be only one street. There needs to be one fellowship. No one should be excluded. No matter how difficult it is. Sometimes it is so easy to just exclude this one brother. You know, one brother causes 99% of problems. It is always the case, 20% of people will cause 80% of problems. It is true everywhere. But we cannot exclude our brothers. Because they are God's children. God put us together, whether I like it or not. Because it is not about me. It is not about I. It is about Christ. I need to be crucified, if I cannot handle this. Therefore, each time we have a disagreement, it is our opportunity to receive the crucified life. To be tested, to be refined, to be purified, emerge as the pure gold. So the Holy Spirit will have additional materials. We need more of sons today. The Holy Spirit is building this single golden street, but not enough people are willing to suffer. Not enough people are willing to suffer for unity.

Therefore God is still looking for those individuals who are willing to suffer. Brothers and sisters, this takes love too. We need to show forbearance to one another in love. Paul says in Colossians chapter 3 verse 14:

Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

I love this phrase: love is the perfect bond of unity. How do I receive this love? By eating his flesh and drinking his blood. He abides in us. We abide in Him. The love of Christ will fill our heart. And we can suffer for the unity.

4.4 Third Secret: Set Christ as the Goal

The third secret: to set Christ as his goal. For Paul, it is very clear. He knows his goal. For this goal he sacrificed everything. Before he was converted, Paul's goal was his ethnic identity, religious achievements, zeal for Judaism, and righteousness based on the law. Those were Paul's goals. But after knowing the Lord, he radically changed his goal. Very few people would change his life goal as dramatically as Paul. He considered everything he once valued as loss. Compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ. He even regarded all his previous gain as rubbish. He desired believers to adopt this mindset. Making Christ the primary goal in their life. Brothers and sisters, Paul was a person whose goal was so clear, no one can distract him. He encouraged us to be the same.

Brothers and sisters, when you read chapter three of Philippians, I think this is worth reading over and over again, and try to catch the spirit of Paul; catch that determination in his heart; and to see the behavior and manifestation of this crucified person. How he has sacrificed everything to achieve the goal. He said,

I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

In his life, there is one thing. This one thing speaks of his goal. He is not the only person like that. Mary in the New Testament has only one thing. David in the Old Testament has only one thing². And this is a crucified person. They have been purified. So that there is one thing left in their lives. Christ is all and in all.

²Hymnary 286: There is one thing

4.5 Is Christ our all?

Let's ponder a fundamental question. Is Christ our all? God desires for us to be His sons. God desires for us to have this crucified life. He wants us to be like Him. We can share His purpose. God never intends for us to leave the retreat unchanged and unaffected. So we need to be real before the Lord and ask the Lord, what change do I need to make? Even Paul is being changed every day. Even Peter is being changed, even at his old age. How difficult it is for Peter to change his mind on Gentiles! He is an old person, and his idea about Gentiles is so deep. But we thank the Lord, Peter can be changed. If Peter is not changed, you and I will be in difficulty now. The gospel may not be available to us. Brothers and sisters, can you be changed? Even the greatest apostle at the time can be changed. Even Peter can be humbled by apostle Paul, and he was not angry at Paul. It was because he lived a crucified life. He knew it was not about Peter, it is all about Christ.

Brothers and sisters, is there anything that you need to be changed? Is your life focused on Christ or focused on yourself? Is it something that you want to move forward? Are you willing to press on toward the goal? You want to have more of Christ and less of yourself. Are you willing to have the same mindset of Christ, especially when there is a disagreement in the body of Christ? If there is a disagreement in your family life, are you willing to suffer and to have the mindset of Jesus Christ? Are you willing to set Christ as your goal? We are not there. By any measure we are not there, but we want to press on. We want to press on together with Paul. Paul is right there in the end. He is cheering us up. He wants us to move forward. Can you sense his heart? He wants all of us to press on forward towards this goal: Christ is all and in all. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, we are so grateful for this time. We are so grateful for your wonderful work in these people. We thank you for your work on Apostle Paul, giving us such a good example of someone with flesh and blood who can live a crucified life. We pray this afternoon to give us this desire to join him. To answer his call, press on toward the goal, forgetting what lies behind, reaching forward to what is ahead. Father, we thank you for still giving us time today. We still have opportunities. We still have the opportunity to receive more of this crucified life. May we make the most of our opportunity. We seize the opportunity when we are different. We seize the opportunity when we face darkness. We seize the opportunity when we encounter challenges in our life. It is our opportunity for us to know Christ. To see the brightest morning star. To see our goal in life. Lord, help us to put this in our life. These are not just the teachings. These are the practices. This is the way of our life. This is the normal Christian life. So that we can have this unity among God's people. You can find gold amongst us. You can build a single golden street. When the street is completed, the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven. We look for that day. We commit all brothers and sisters in your hand. Every single one is the nugget of pure gold, willing to suffer for the sake of church unity. We thank you for this time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.