

# **THE SPIRITUAL MAN: Vol III**

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**SECTION EIGHT**

**THE ANALYSIS OF THE SOUL**

**THE MIND**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**THE MIND A BATTLEFIELD**

The mind of man is man's thinking organ. Through the mind, we know, think, imagine, recollect, and understand. The intellectual power, rationality, wisdom, and intelligence of man all belong to the mind. Broadly speaking, our mind is everything related to our brain. Mind is the psychological term, while brain is the physiological term. The mind in psychology is the brain in physiology. The mind occupies a big part in man's life because the mind directs man's conduct the most.

**BEFORE REGENERATION**

According to the Bible, man's mind is a battlefield. This is something unique. In the mind Satan and the evil spirits battle with the truth and also battle with the believer. We may use an example. The will and the spirit are like a fortress which evil spirits try to attack and capture. Man's mind is the field on which the battle takes place and from which the fortress is stormed and taken. The apostle said, "For though we walk in flesh, we do not war according to flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, as we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The apostle first told us about a war, then he told us where this war is and what it is for. This war is completely related to the mind of man. The apostle likened the "reasonings" to the "enemy's stronghold." He considered the mind as a stronghold guarded by the enemy that must be "overthrown." He also considered that within this stronghold there are many "rebellious thoughts." The apostle had to overthrow the mind of man and imprison and "take captive" the "rebellious thoughts" in man's mind, so these thoughts would be brought completely unto the "obedience of Christ." From these verses we can see that the mind of man is a battlefield because this is where evil spirits war with God.

The Bible tells us that "the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them" (2 Cor. 4:4). This agrees with the previously cited Scripture because this is how Satan guards and blinds the mind of man. Perhaps a man considers himself to be very intelligent, able to use various arguments to oppose the gospel. Some think that others do not believe because they do not yet understand. Actually, the eyes of men's minds have been covered up by Satan. Since men's minds are guarded by Satan, their "thoughts were hardened" (3:14). They were "doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). They are "enemies in [the] mind" (Col. 1:21) because "the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7).

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After reading these verses and seeing how the authority of darkness is especially related to man's mind, we can see that the mind is the part of man which is most easily attacked by Satan. The authority of darkness cannot directly do anything to man's will, emotion, and body unless it has gained quite considerable ground in him already. The same is not true with the mind. It appears that the mind is the enemy's property already; he does not need any special permission or invitation from man before he can freely work in the mind. The apostle likens the mind to the enemy's "stronghold," as if to tell us how deeply rooted and firm the relationship between Satan with his evil spirits and the mind of man is. Therefore, Satan and his evil spirits can make man's mind their stronghold and keep man a prisoner through his mind. They put man under their authority by utilizing his mind. They also utilize the imprisoned mind to transmit poison to others, and cause them to rise up in rebellion against God. We cannot say with certainty how much of the philosophy, logic, knowledge, investigation, research, and science in the world today comes from the power and influence of darkness. But one thing is certain: reasonings that lift themselves up against the knowledge of God are the strongholds of the enemy.

The proximity of the mind to the authority of darkness is nothing strange. Mankind's first sin was the pursuit of "the knowledge of good and evil." That knowledge was from Satan. Hence, the knowledge (mind) of mankind is peculiarly compatible with Satan. After reading the Bible carefully and observing the experience of the saints, one can see that all the fellowship between man and Satan with his evil spirits is in the mind. One only needs to consider the temptations from the devil. All temptations from the devil to man occur in the mind. While it is true that the devil often uses the flesh to arouse man's consent, he always entices man by turning temptations into some kind of thoughts. We cannot separate temptations from the mind. All temptations are given to us through the thoughts. Since our thoughts have such an "open-door policy" with the authority of darkness, we should know how to guard our thoughts.

Before a man is born again, his thoughts prevent him from knowing God. Therefore, God's great power is needed to overthrow the reasonings of man. At the time a man is saved, one thing happens or should happen—repentance. Repentance in the original text means nothing other than "a change of mind." Because man is at enmity with God in the mind, God wants man's mind to have a change before He can give life to man. When man does not believe, his moral nature is in darkness. At the time he is saved, his mind is changed. God wants man first to have a change of mind before he receives a new heart because the mind is so united with the devil (Acts 11:18).

### **AFTER BELIEVING**

After a believer repents, his mind is not completely delivered from Satan's workings. As Satan previously worked through the mind, he still works now through the mind. The apostle said to the believers in Corinth, "But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). The apostle knew how the god of this world had blinded the minds of the unbelievers and, in the same way, how he was deluding the minds of those who already had believed. The apostle knew that even though the believers were already saved, their minds were not yet renewed. Therefore, it remains the most critical battlefield—the mind receives more attacks from the authority of darkness than any other organ of man's entire being. We must realize that evil spirits of Satan pay special attention to our minds and that they always attack us in our minds. "As the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness." Satan did not attack Eve's heart first, he attacked her mind first. In the same manner, evil spirits want to attack our mind first, not our heart, with the purpose of corrupting us from a faith in simplicity. They know that

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our mind is the weakest spot. Before we believed, the mind was their stronghold; even now there are still many places that are not yet overthrown. They start where they can be most successful. Eve's heart was sinless, but she accepted the thought suggested by Satan in her mind. She was enchanted by the power of his subtlety to the point that her mind lost its rationality, thereby becoming trapped. Therefore, it is useless for a believer to boast that he is upright in his motive. His mind must be trained to withstand evil spirits. Otherwise, they will have a way to tempt and to deceive his mind, and will cause his will to lose its power of decision.

Following 2 Corinthians 11:3, the apostle tells us where this danger comes from. Some will preach "another Jesus," causing them to "receive a different spirit" and accept "a different gospel" (v. 4). This means that the danger to the believers is to have erroneous teachings instilled into their minds which will lead them away from the pure gospel of Christ. This is what the "serpent" wants to do today. Satan will pretend to be an angel of light so that in their minds, believers will worship "another Jesus" who is not the Lord, receive "a different spirit" which is not the Holy Spirit, and through the believers spread "a different gospel" which is not the gospel of God's grace. The apostle told us that all this is done by Satan in the mind of the believers. One by one, Satan turns these "teachings" into thoughts and instills them into the mind of the believers. It is a very pitiful thing today that few believers are able to know these matters. How many believers know that Satan gives "good" thoughts to man?

We should know that a believer can receive a new life, a new heart, but not a new mind. Many believers have a new heart, but their head is old. The heart is full of love, but the head (the mind) does not have any discernment. Many are pure in their motive, but not so clear in the thoughts in their head. The mind is full of all kinds of mixture and very lacking in crucial, spiritual discernment. Many believers truly have a tender regard in their hearts for all of God's children, yet their minds are full of ideals, opinions, and goals. Many of God's best and most faithful children are very narrow and prejudiced in their thoughts. They have made up their minds about the truth. They only want their kind of truth and completely reject anything else which does not agree with their prejudices. All this happens because their heads are not as big as their hearts. There are also many of God's children whose minds can never come up with anything. Although they have heard many truths, they can never remember them; neither can they put them into practice or spread them to others. They have heard plenty, but there is no strength to express what they have heard. Though they have been receiving truths for years, they cannot meet the smallest needs of others. This kind of people may even boast that they are full of the Holy Spirit! This happens because their minds have not been completely renewed.

Man's head does more damage to him than his heart! If believers could differentiate between the renewing of the heart and the renewing of the head, they would not be misled to trust in man. Believers must know that a man can have the most intimate fellowship with God, and at the same time, the mind can unintentionally receive the suggestions of Satan, bringing his conduct, speech, and judgment into error. Other than the clear teaching of the Bible, no one person's word is entirely dependable. We should not live by the words of any one person just because we are close to him or admire and honor him. We must realize that even though a person's words and deeds are very holy, his thoughts are not necessarily entirely spiritual. Our attention should not be on his words and deeds, but on his mind, his head. If we believe what a worker says to be God's truth based on the words and conduct of the worker, we are making his words and conduct the standard for the truth, and not the Bible. Throughout history, many propagators of heresies were holy believers! Even though their heart—life—was renewed, their head—mind—was the same as before. Therefore, they behaved in such a way. We admit that life is more important than knowledge—many times more important—but after we have been edified in life,

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we should not neglect the pursuit of knowledge, that is, the knowledge that proceeds from the renewed mind. Believers must realize that both their heart and mind must be renewed.

If the mind is not renewed, a believer's life will not be balanced; it will be almost impossible to do any work. Most teachings today emphasize a believer's spiritual life (the heart)—how one should love, be patient, humble, etc. These are surely very important, and nothing can substitute for these things. However, we should not think that these are sufficient to make up all the needs. They are important, but they do not include everything. It is equally important for a believer's mind to be renewed and enlarged and increase in strength so that it becomes strong. Otherwise, we will have an imbalanced life. Many people think that a spiritual believer should be one without any perception. It seems that the more foolish one is, the better. Besides being a little better than others in his living, he has no other usefulness, and he cannot be entrusted with anything. Of course, we do not want worldly intelligence and knowledge. But the goal of God's salvation is not that we would continue to use the same mind that was defiled by sin. God wants our mind to be renewed in the same way that our spirit is renewed. God wants our mind to be restored to the perfect condition that existed at the time of His creation so that we will not only glorify God in our living, but also with our mind. Countless numbers of God's children have become narrow, obstinate, hard, and even defiled through the negligence of their minds. The result is that they have come short of God's glory. Believers must know that in order for their lives to be full, their minds must be renewed. God's kingdom is lacking in workers because the minds of many believers are incapable of bearing anything. Believers forget that after they are saved, they should still pursue the full renewing of their mind. This results in their work being hindered. This is why the Bible emphatically tells the believers, "Be transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2).

### **A MIND UNDER THE ATTACK OF EVIL SPIRITS**

If we examine all the experiences in the minds of the believers, we will realize that the minds of the believers are not just narrow; they also have many other sicknesses. For example, the mind is affected by thoughts and imaginations that cannot be controlled, filthy pictures, wandering and chaotic recollections, sudden loss of memory, prejudices that come from nowhere, lack of concentration, thoughts that are stagnant and obstructed as if the mind is chained, or fanatical thoughts that turn uncontrollably. Believers always feel that they have no strength to control their minds or direct them according to the will. Moreover, they often find themselves prone to forget about all kinds of things, great and small. They find themselves unknowingly committing many "indiscreet" mistakes, without ever bothering to learn the reason for committing them. As far as their body is concerned, they do not seem to have any illness. Yet they do not clearly know why their minds have these symptoms of sickness. Many believers' minds today are like this, but they do not know the cause.

If a believer realizes that his mind is affected in the way mentioned above, he only needs to consider a few things to know where these ailments come from. He only needs to ask himself a few questions: Who controls his mind? Does he control it? If he does, why is he unable to control it now? Is it God who controls it? According to the principle of the Bible, God does not control man's mind for him. (We will speak in detail concerning this. For now, we will only mention it in brief.) If neither he nor God controls it, who does? It has to be the authority of darkness who usurps the mind and brings forth these kinds of symptoms. Therefore, when a believer sees that he cannot control his own mind, he should know that this is the enemy's work. One point should always be remembered: man has a free will. God's goal is for man to rule himself. Man has the authority to rule over all of his own faculties. Hence, the mind should come under the rule of the will. A believer should ask himself if he has such a mind,

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and if his thoughts are his own. If they are not his own, they must be the work of evil spirits who work within man's mind. The will does not want to think, and the mind desires to obey the will. In spite of this, the mind finds itself continually thinking. This means that the thoughts in the mind are no longer his own thoughts, but the work of another "person" who is utilizing his thoughts against his will. If a believer does not choose to think, the thoughts that are in his mind are no longer his; they belong to evil spirits.

If a believer wants to differentiate which thoughts are his own and which are evil spirits, he should pay attention to how his "thoughts" come about. If his mind is initially quiet, steady, unperturbed, and working according to its disposed position, and suddenly, an idea or a thought comes like lightning that is totally unrelated to his work or his disposed position or is totally out of order, then the flashing thought is the work of evil spirits. Their intention is to inject their thoughts into the mind of the believer, fooling him into thinking that they are his own thoughts. As a rule, the thoughts that evil spirits inject into man's mind are always something that he does not have and something that is contrary to his usual train of thought. They are totally "new" and are sudden ideas that the person has never thought of before. After a believer has such a thought, he should first ask if he is thinking this way. Is it really him thinking? Does he want to think this way? Or is the "thought" itself being stirred up in the mind? Is it something he does not want and has never thought of before? A believer should find out if he is thinking the thoughts. If he has not originated the thought and is, in fact, against such a thought, even though the thought somehow finds its way into his mind, he can conclude that the thought has come from evil spirits. All the thoughts that his will never endorses, and all the thoughts that are actually against his will, are thoughts that are not from man himself, but are from outside.

Many times the believer's mind is full of thoughts, and he finds himself unable to stop these thoughts. His mind (head) is like a thinking machine, which has been "turned on" by an external force, thinking continually and uncontrollably. Even though a believer shakes his head incessantly and tries to reject such thoughts, he is not able to do so. The tide of thoughts comes like a rolling wave and refuses to stop day and night. Most believers do not know the reason for this. Little do they realize that this is the work of evil spirits. A believer should know what is "a thought." A thought is his mind grasping a matter. But in an unstoppable train of thought, it is no longer the mind grasping a matter, but a matter grasping the mind! Originally it was the mind thinking about things. Now the mind is not thinking about things, but things are compelling the mind. Many times a believer wants to drop a matter, but an external force seems to remind him in his mind all the time. It does not allow him to forget and forces him to keep on thinking. This is the work of evil spirits.

In short, a believer should investigate all abnormal phenomena. Unless they are due to natural illnesses, all abnormal phenomena are from evil spirits. God does not interfere with the functions of man's natural faculties. God never interjects His thoughts suddenly into man's thoughts, and He never cuts off the work of man's mind suddenly or robs him of anything. All sudden stoppages of thoughts that feel like the brain has become void, sudden appearances of incoherent thoughts in the mind, sudden lapses of memory in the middle of thoughts that feel like a snap of electric wire, or a continual inability to exercise the mind or memory are the result of the works of evil spirits. Because evil spirits have occupied the faculty of the mind, they can seize it at times and stop its functions, or they can relax it at other times and make it active again. A believer should realize that natural causes can produce only natural illnesses. Sudden thoughts and sudden forgetfulness are beyond the control of our will and beyond the course of natural events. For this reason, they must be from some supernatural source. If a believer examines all the phenomena of his mind this way, he will not be ignorant of the reasons for his

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symptoms.

The book of Ephesians tells us that evil spirits operate "in the sons of disobedience" (2:2). This is a very important matter. Evil spirits work not only outside of man but also inside of man. If we want someone to work, at most we use words and expressions and other body movements. But evil spirits can do more than these. They are able to work not only from the outside, as from one man to another man, but they are able to operate within man. This means that they are able to penetrate into man's mind and work within him, causing man to obey them. Man cannot penetrate into the mind of another man and stealthily suggest many things in private to him, nor can man cause another man to be confused about the source of these suggestions. But evil spirits can do these things. They have ways that are unavailable to man in his normal communication with one another. First they work in man's mind and then reach man's emotion because the mind and the emotion are closely connected. They also begin from the mind and work their way into man's will because the mind and the will are also closely connected.

The way they move is by stealthily and secretly putting their favorite thoughts into man's mind in order to accomplish their goal. Or they may prevent man from thinking anything that they do not want him to think about. The Bible clearly teaches that the authority of darkness can give thoughts to man as well as steal thoughts away from man. John 13:2 says, "The devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, that he should betray Him." This speaks of the way Satan puts his thoughts into man's mind. Luke 8:12 says, "Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart." This speaks of how Satan takes away the word which man should remember so that man forgets everything. These two verses tell us of the two kinds of work that evil spirits perform in man's mind. By these verses, we can identify the works of the evil spirits. Their works are always to add or subtract something from the mind of man.

### **THE REASON FOR THE EVIL SPIRITS' ATTACK**

Why are the believers' minds so attacked by evil spirits? One answer is that the believers themselves afford evil spirits (also called demons) an opportunity to attack in their minds. We should realize that it is possible for the believers' minds to suffer the demons' attacks. This is proven by the experiences of many believers. The place the demons most often attack is the mind because the mind and evil spirits have a special rapport. The attacks of evil spirits on the believers' minds produce the aforementioned phenomena. Parts or the whole of man's mind have already isolated themselves from man's sovereign rule and fallen into the hands of evil spirits. As a result, evil spirits are able to think and stop as they wish and ignore the believers' own will. Although the mind still resides in the body, its sovereignty belongs to someone else. Even though the believers may oppose it, nothing will avail. In whatever aspect the believers give place to evil spirits, that aspect will not thereafter obey man's own will. Instead, it will obey another will. When the believers give any ground in their minds to evil spirits, they have lost their sovereignty over their own minds. To put it in another way, if the mind of a believer has lost its sovereignty and is no longer able to rule over itself, the mind is already occupied by evil spirits. If evil spirits have not attacked the believer's mind, his will should be able to rule over everything; he can think when he wants to think and stop when he wants to stop. He will not encounter any difficulty.

The minds of the believers are attacked by evil spirits because the believers have given place to evil spirits in their minds. Believers are prone to give more place in the mind to evil spirits because the mind is related to evil spirits in such a special way. These places become leverage in the believers'

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minds upon which evil spirits freely work. We should remember that man's mind is of man; if evil spirits do not have man's consent, they cannot use his mind. If man does not volunteer—intentionally or unintentionally—to hand over the mind to evil spirits, they cannot infringe on man's freedom. This does not mean that evil spirits will never tempt us in the mind (such will not happen in this life). But it means that when we exercise our will to oppose them, they will immediately stop. The problem today is that even though many believers exercise their own will to resist, temptations still do not stop. This should not happen; it is a proof of the work of evil spirits because it is done in disregard of man's will.

After a believer has indeed yielded to evil spirits, his mind will inevitably be filled with the works of evil spirits. Evil spirits will work on him according to the ground he has given them. Since he has given ground to evil spirits in his mind, they can do whatever they want in his mind. The most important principle in the work of evil spirits is that one has to give ground for them to work. They can only work when they have the ground. Without the ground, they have no way to work. The amount of their work is determined by the amount of ground they receive. Whenever believers give ground in their minds to evil spirits, the evil spirits will work in the believers' minds. There are six kinds of ground that believers can give to evil spirits. Let us consider each one of them briefly.

### A. The Unrenewed Mind

The flesh is always the place where evil spirits work. If the mind is not renewed, even if a person is regenerated in his spirit, evil spirits will still have a chance to work. Even though the minds of many believers were turned for a moment at the time of their repentance, it does not mean that their eyes, which have been blinded by Satan, were completely enlightened. Perhaps many areas are still "veiled." Because these dark places were the working ground for evil spirits in past days, the fact that they are diminished today does not mean that they are altogether annihilated. Evil spirits still occupy these areas, from which they also direct their operations. It is very common to see evil spirits occupying the minds of men through sin. This happens before they are saved or even after they are saved. Even though some changes have taken place, the old ground has not been uncovered or removed. Therefore, evil spirits still occupy them as their base of operations.

Evil spirits are very careful in covering up their works. If a believer is fleshly, they will generate many thoughts through his mind which are similar to his character and condition. They will make him believe that these are his own thoughts and that they are natural. If such a person is seeking for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they will counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit and give him many supernatural revelations, convincing him that these are from God. Because evil spirits know that this kind of unrenewed mind is the best ground for their work, they obstruct the believer in many ways, causing him to become ignorant and not pursue the renewing of his mind. This is the most frequent ground given to evil spirits. But if there is only this kind of ground given, without the passivity spoken of below, the mind and memory will still not be weakened too severely.

### B. Improper Thoughts

All sins arise when one gives ground to evil spirits. When a believer pays attention to sin in his mind, it means he has loaned his mind to the evil spirits because all sins come from evil spirits. If a believer yields to sin in his mind, he cannot refuse the evil spirits behind the sin. However long sinful thoughts reside in the heart, the evil spirits will work within him. All filthy, haughty, unkind, unrighteous, and similar thoughts give ground to evil spirits. Believers who yield in their minds and do not refuse these

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kinds of thought will find these kinds of thought coming back more easily the next time. It also becomes harder to ward them off because evil spirits have already occupied a place in their minds.

In addition to sin, there are many other improper thoughts that can become a base of operation for evil spirits. Evil spirits often inject a thought into the believers. If they receive it, the thought becomes a ground for the evil spirits to work on. Every unconfirmed idea, every vain thought, every notion that comes from nowhere, a sentence one hears in passing, a line in a book one reads accidentally, as well as all the fancies in human life give ground to evil spirits. They enable the evil spirits to work in the future—perhaps after several years. They also cause the believers to be full of prejudice, rebel against God's truth, and believe in many heresies.

### **C. Misunderstanding God's Truth**

Believers seldom realize that any time they accept the lies from evil spirits, they give place to evil spirits. If we misconstrue the efforts of evil spirits in us, in our environment, and in our work by considering them to be natural, obvious, spontaneous, or caused by ourselves, we have given ground to evil spirits and allowed them to continue their works in these matters. We have accepted the lies from evil spirits, and they are able to work through the lies that we have accepted. Because we have chosen to believe that these thoughts are not from evil spirits, choosing instead to believe that these things are caused by good reasons that originate from ourselves, subconsciously we have allowed these things to remain in us. Though this allowance is the result of our being deceived, it has nevertheless given sufficient ground to evil spirits to continue their work.

On the other hand, many believers misunderstand God's truth and are not clear about what it means to die with the Lord, to consecrate themselves to the Lord, to wait on the Holy Spirit, and to know God's move and other truths. As a result, prejudice develops in their heart, and they begin to have ideas about what spiritual teachings should be like. Evil spirits will seize this opportunity and give the believers what they misunderstand and what they think they know. In this way, evil spirits go along with the believers' misunderstanding and work accordingly. The believers think that these proceed from God. Actually, evil spirits have counterfeited God's work through their misunderstanding.

### **D. Receiving Suggestions**

Evil spirits very frequently inject their thoughts into the believer's mind. They especially love to "prophesy" to the believer about his circumstances and future. They tell the believer what he will become and what he will encounter in the future. If a believer does not know that these are from evil spirits and accepts them or does not reject them, allowing them to remain in the mind, evil spirits will work in the environment at the right time and cause the believer to encounter the thing which was prophesied. In his ignorance, the believer may consider that he himself has long known about this. Actually, evil spirits have disguised their ideas into some kind of prophecy and injected them into the mind of the believer with the intention of testing the believer's will to see if he will accept or refuse it. If the believer's will does not oppose it or if it agrees with it, evil spirits will gain ground and work on the believer as much as they will. All of the words of fortune-tellers and palm readers are fulfilled according to this principle.

Sometimes evil spirits give similar prophecies concerning a believer's body. They tell him that he is weak or sick. If the believer accepts his thought, he will really become sick and weakened. When the

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believer is in his sickness, he only knows that he is sick. Those with scientific knowledge may say that it is psychological, but those with spiritual insight know that this is caused by the believer accepting the suggestion of evil spirits; he has given ground to them, and they are working according to the ground given to them. Countless cases of so-called natural illness and so-called psychological activity are the work of evil spirits who work through the ground given to them by man. If a believer does not resist all the thoughts that come from evil spirits, they will work according to the thoughts they have given to the believer because they have been afforded the ground.

### **E. Being Empty in the Mind**

God created a mind for man; it was not meant to fall into disuse. From the beginning God wanted man to hear the word and understand it (Matt. 13:23). From the beginning God wanted man to use his mind to receive His word. This word would then reach from the mind to his love, his will, and his spirit. Therefore, an active mind is a barrier to the work of evil spirits. Consequently, the biggest goal of evil spirits is to make a believer's mind sink into a state of emptiness. To be empty means to have nothing inside and to be a vacuum. Evil spirits will do this either by deceptions or force; they will cause the believer's mind to become emptiness. Evil spirits know that when the believer's mind is empty, he will not be able to think and will lose his reason and sense and will indiscriminately accept the "teachings" of evil spirits. He will not care what the nature or the outcome of these teachings are.

Believers should exercise their own minds. However, the exercise of the mind is not expedient for evil spirits. As a result, evil spirits try their best to cause the believers' minds to become empty. When the believers' minds are functioning normally, the believers will discern all senseless, extraordinary revelations and all kinds of injected thoughts; they will know the source of these thoughts. Emptiness of the mind gives ground to evil spirits. All revelations and thoughts received while the mind is empty are from evil spirits. If a believer does not use his mind for a moment, he will see evil spirits zealously coming to his aid!

### **F. Passivity in the Mind**

Generally speaking, there is not much difference between emptiness of the mind and passivity of the mind. But strictly speaking, being empty in the mind is not using the mind, while being passive in the mind is waiting for external forces to come and use the mind. Passivity is one step further than emptiness. To be passive is to not move on our own and allow external forces to come and move us. To be passive in the mind is to stop thinking on our own and allow outside forces to think in our own mind. To be passive is to become a machine.

Passivity in the mind offers the best working ground for evil spirits. There is no other ground that evil spirits like more. If a believer does not use his own mind and expects outside forces to come upon him, supernatural evil spirits will have an opportunity to take possession of his will and body. Just as a foolish mind can easily be cheated because of its ignorance, a passive mind can easily be attacked because of its lack of consciousness. It cannot respond if it acts as though it has no brain. If a believer allows his mind to stop thinking, reasoning, and deciding, and if he does not compare his own experience and walk with that revealed in the Bible, he is inviting Satan's deceptions to come into his mind.

In trying to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, many believers consider that henceforth they do not need to weigh, consider, or decide whether any seemingly God-given thoughts are according to the

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light of the Bible. They think that the meaning of being led by the Holy Spirit is like being dead, and that they should only listen to the thoughts and impulses that come from the mind. In particular, they believe that the thoughts that come after praying are from God. As a result, while they pray and after they pray, they allow their minds to sink into passivity. They stop their own thoughts and every other activity of the mind, in hope of receiving "God's thoughts." They believe that this kind of thought is from God, and they become hardened, obstinate, and unreasonable persons doing many hardened, obstinate, and unreasonable things. Little do they realize that (1) praying does not cause thoughts to become God's thoughts; (2) waiting for godly thoughts, before and after they pray, only invites evil spirits to counterfeit God; and (3) God's guidance is in the intuition and not in the mind. Many believers do not understand that God does not want man to be passive, but to co-labor with Him in an active way. They expend considerable effort to train themselves to become men with passive minds—to become persons who do not know how to think by themselves—and they expect to receive God's thoughts this way. Little do they realize that when they do not use their minds, God does not use their minds either, and He does not give them His thoughts, because His principle is that man would use his own will to control his own faculties and co-labor with Him. When men do not use their mind, evil spirits take the opportunity to come in and control. God does not want men to become machines in order to receive His revelation. Only evil spirits want men to behave this way. Hence all passivity affords convenience for evil spirits. Evil spirits utilize the ignorance and passivity of the believers to work in their minds.

### PASSIVITY

Any ground given by the believers to evil spirits induces the work of evil spirits. Of all these grounds, the most important one is passivity because passivity expresses the attitude of the will, and the will represents the whole person. Passivity can cause evil spirits to work freely. Of course, such work is always camouflaged on the outside so that believers do not realize that evil spirits are working. Believers sink into passivity through their ignorance. When they misunderstand the place of the mind in the spiritual life, by either considering it more important or less important, they allow their own minds to sink into passivity. Then they follow the thoughts of the passive mind. Hence, it is indispensable to clearly see the way of God's leading.

Passivity of the mind is caused by misunderstanding the meaning of consecration to God and obeying the Holy Spirit. Many believers think that their thoughts are hindrances to their spiritual lives. Little do they know that the real hindrance is when their head stops working or when it works in disarray. They do not realize that the proper functioning of the head is profitable and necessary because only by functioning in this way will one be able to co-labor with God. We have said emphatically before that the right way to follow God's leading is to depend on the intuition and not on the mind. This is very crucial, and we should not forget it. A believer should follow the revelation in the intuition and not the thoughts in the mind. Those who walk according to the mind are walking according to the flesh. This leads to the wrong way. However, this does not mean that the mind is useless in secondary things. If we regard the mind as an organ for direct fellowship with God and for receiving revelation, we are greatly wrong. But this does not mean that the mind should not fulfill its part of the work or help the intuition. The intuition is the organ that knows God's will. But we still need the mind to examine and see if our feeling proceeds from the intuition or if it is a counterfeit of our own emotions. We have to know if the inner feeling is God's will and according to the Bible. We know with our intuition, but we confirm with our mind. How easily we are prone to make mistakes! If we do not have the assistance of the mind, it is hard for us to decide what is of God.

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The proper track of guidance requires the mind. The guidance of the intuition on many occasions is contrary to reason, and we should not use our mind to argue against our intuition; rather, we should use our mind to study if something is of God. It is a very quick thing for the intuition to know God's will, but we need time to consider and ponder with our mind and see if what we know is of the intuition and the Holy Spirit. If it comes from God, while we are considering and pondering it, the intuition will give us a more definite feeling and cause us to have a deeper faith to believe that it is from God. This kind of work—and only this kind of examining—by the mind is profitable and proper. If this exercise is from fleshly thoughts and feelings, repeated examination will only cause the conscience to protest. Therefore, a rational investigation for the purpose of understanding whether or not something is from God is not an impediment, but an opportunity for the intuition to prove itself. If a matter is truly from the intuition, it will not be afraid of any investigation by the reason in the mind. On the contrary, many of the leadings that fear investigation probably originate from the self! The mind should not take the lead, but the mind is definitely needed in examining every kind of leading to see if it is from God.

This kind of teaching is scriptural because the Bible says, "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is,"..."proving what is well pleasing to the Lord" (Eph. 5:17, 10). The function of the mind cannot be buried. God does not negate the faculty of man's soul; rather, He renews and uses it. God wants believers to know what they are doing when they obey Him; He does not want to have senseless and blind obedience. God does not want believers to be muddle-headed about what they are doing. He does not want them to hear or feel something, presume that they are clear about God's will, and then act accordingly. Neither does God want to directly manipulate any believer just to make him ignorantly obey in darkness. God wants the believer to understand His will and consciously exercise himself to obey. A lazy person does not want to bear any responsibility for himself; he just wants to passively allow God to use him or his members. But God wants man to actively seek His will and exercise his own will and himself to obey Him. God wants man's intuition to agree with his consciousness.

However, believers do not realize that this is the right track of God's leading. They allow themselves to sink into passivity, hoping that God will put His will into their minds. They may receive some supernatural leading and may follow blindly without examining with their minds whether this leading is from God. They may mindlessly exercise their members and, without a clear understanding of God's will, hope that God would somehow use their members without their conscious effort. The result of this behavior is demon-possession. The condition for demon-possession is passivity in man. (We will speak of this in detail elsewhere.) When man does not use his own mind, God will not use his mind either, because doing so would contradict the principle of God's work. The result is that evil spirits will seize the opportunity to take over the believer's mind. Countless numbers of believers do not know that there are evil spirits in the world and that these evil spirits are doing their utmost to deceive God's children. If believers fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work, they will work. Moreover, they are everywhere scouting and looking for an opportunity to come in to take over the believers. Therefore, it is a very foolish thing to allow the mind to sink into passivity.

There is another matter that we should know about: the condition for evil spirits to work. We have already spoken briefly about passivity. However, we must go on to investigate it one step further. In this world there are some people who are very interested in fellowship with evil spirits. No ordinary man would want to be possessed by demons, but these people are willing to be possessed by demons. These are the necromancers, planchettes, mediums, and typtologists [ones who "bring down" spirits]. If we consider carefully the reason for their being demon-possessed, we can understand the principle of

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all demon-possession because all demon-possession follows the same principle. These people tell us that in order to be possessed by a demon, which they call a god, their will must be completely void of resistance. This means that they must be willing to accept anything that comes to their bodies. However, in order for their will to be passive, their mind must be empty and completely functionless, for only emptiness of the mind produces passivity of the will. These two things are the basic conditions for being possessed by the demons. This is why a typtologist has to shake his head and dishevel his hair, and continue doing this for a long time until he becomes completely numbed in his head. Only then can he be possessed by a so-called god, and only then can the evil spirit operate. When the head is this empty, the will naturally loses all its functions. When this state is reached, little by little, the mouth no longer moves according to the person's own will, and the whole body begins to shiver. Soon after, the "god" comes to his body. With those who communicate with demons, the methods by which they become possessed may be different in outward respects. However, upon examining the principle, we can find that the methods are all done through the mind becoming empty and the will becoming passive. One thing is certain: if you ask these people, they will surely tell you that when demons come, their mind cannot think (of course, if the will could become passive without the mind becoming empty, the mind would still think), and their will cannot function. Moreover, they must attain to a state of emptiness in the mind and passivity in the will before the demons will come. Otherwise, they will not come.

The so-called modern-day hypnotism, which disguises itself under the name of science, and religious and transcendental meditation, etc., which enable people to possess the power of telepathy and hear things from different directions, as well as healing and transformation, are actually founded upon these two principles. Although in name they are for the good of mankind, the methods of "concentration," "mental focus," "yoga," "meditation," etc., all require the mind to first become quiet and the will to become passive. Soon after, supernatural spirits will come and show these ones many wonderful things. For now, we will not ask if the ones who perform these things know that they are inviting evil spirits. All we know is that by doing these things, they are fulfilling the condition for evil spirits to possess them. As such, they cannot avoid the consequence. In the end, they may wake up to the fact that they have received evil spirits.

We cannot cover these matters in detail. We merely want believers to understand that in order for evil spirits to work on man, it is necessary that man's mind and will be completely empty and passive. Evil spirits rejoice exceedingly at all who fulfill this condition and immediately go to work. When a "heathen" fulfills this condition, evil spirits will possess him; when a believer fulfills this condition, evil spirits will also come into him without any reservation.

We need to realize that many believers are ignorant of the conditions whereby evil spirits work and the fact that once a person fulfills these conditions, evil spirits will work in an unrestricted way. Therefore, many have unconsciously become mediums for demons and have even become possessed by demons! Believers often try in the meetings to wait for the visitation of the Holy Spirit. They gather until midnight and are filled with all sorts of soulish activities. Their minds become numb, and their hearts are swayed beyond their control. Suddenly, they will begin to experience strange things, such as speaking in tongues, seeing visions, feeling joyful, etc. They feel that the Holy Spirit has indeed come. But we should realize that with such an emptiness of mind and passivity of will, the only ones that will work are evil spirits; the Holy Spirit will not work. I will mention one obvious example: in meetings, their favorite prayer is to pray with one word, such as "glory," or "hallelujah." They chant repeatedly with their mouths single words. If we say the same word a few dozen times, we know what will

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happen: we will be muttering the same word in our mouth, but our mind will no longer know the meaning. This is the emptiness of the mind. However, one can no longer control himself; he must continue with this chanting. This is the passivity of the will. Finally, some external force will take over his throat and turn his jaws to utter things which are incomprehensible to him. At this point, an ignorant believer will think that he has experienced the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" because he has received the evidence of baptism—speaking in tongues. Little does he realize that he has merely fulfilled the condition for evil spirits to work; he has emptied his mind and allowed his will to become passive and has been taken over by demons!

Today believers think that as long as what they have received makes them more "happy," "spiritual," "zealous," or "holy," it must all come from the Holy Spirit. They do not realize that this is the deception of evil spirits, who will resort to any means to gain the believers. Once the evil spirits detect that the believers have displayed signs of the typtologists, they do not let the chance pass and immediately come into these believers. They do not want to scare the believers away. Hence, they do everything to gain the believers' trust. They counterfeit the Lord Jesus, His loveliness, glory, and beauty, causing the believers to worship, love, and consecrate themselves to such a "Jesus." What in fact happens is that the believers are worshipping, loving, and consecrating to evil spirits. When evil spirits have gained the full faith and trust of the believers, which can take variable lengths of time (in many cases, many years), they will put into the believers things that are more obviously of evil spirits. But by then, because of the believers' pride, laziness, and foolishness, most will not want to examine the kind of spirit they have received.

One thing is certain (if only the believers can remember this one thing): there is a basic difference between the work of evil spirits and the work of the Holy Spirit. Only when a man fulfills the condition for the working of the Holy Spirit will the Holy Spirit work. Similarly, only when man fulfills the condition for the working of evil spirits will the evil spirits work. Even if a man is pursuing the Holy Spirit outwardly, as long as he fulfills the condition for evil spirits to work, the Holy Spirit will not work. Evil spirits will seize the opportunity to work. Therefore, an ordinary believer need not be concerned if he cannot distinguish between something from God and something that counterfeits God; he only needs to examine the conditions under which he received these things initially. If he initially fulfilled the conditions for the working of the Holy Spirit, what he has received must be from God. If he initially fulfilled the conditions for the working of evil spirits, even though he was outwardly pursuing the Holy Spirit, what he has received must be from the evil spirits. We are not rejecting supernatural things. But we need to distinguish what is from God and what is from Satan.

What are the basic differences between the conditions for the Holy Spirit to work and the conditions for evil spirits to work? (1) All supernatural revelations, visions, wonders, etc. that require the complete cessation of the mind's function or that are received when the believer's mind stops functioning are not from God. (2) Visions that come from the Holy Spirit are always given to believers when their minds are completely active. Moreover, every faculty of the believers' minds must be enlivened to receive a vision from the Holy Spirit. When evil spirits work, it is entirely the opposite. (3) Everything that comes from God agrees with God's nature and the Bible.

Let us not care for the outward form, whether it plainly identifies itself as being from demons, disguises itself as being from a divine source, or comes in different kinds of outward designations. We only need to ask what is the principle behind the works. We should realize that all supernatural revelations that are of the authority of darkness require the suspension of the function of the mind. But if something is from God, both the capacities and faculties of the mind can still be active and not suffer

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any hindrance. The vision seen by the Israelites at Mount Sinai in the Old Testament and the vision seen by Peter at Joppa in the New Testament, both confirm that those who see visions are entirely capable of using their own minds.

There is a basic difference between the revelations and visions given by God as recorded in the Bible and the so-called revelations and visions believers receive today. In studying each case of God's supernatural revelation as recorded in the New Testament, we see that everyone who received a revelation had a functioning mind; they were all able to control themselves and could use any member of their body. But the so-called supernatural revelations today all require that the recipient's mind be passive, some totally, some partially. In addition, the recipient is either partially or totally unable to use his own members. This is the basic difference between something being from God and something being from the demons. For example, the tongue-speaking as recorded in the Bible shows that all the speakers were able to control themselves and were all fully conscious. For example, Peter on the day of Pentecost could still hear the people's mockery and reply. He could still prove that those with him were not drunk but were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The tongue-speakers in the church in Corinth could count and know that the number was "two or three" (1 Cor. 14:29); they could exercise self-discipline to speak "one by one" (v. 31), and if there were no interpreter, they could even "be silent" and not speak (v. 28). They all were conscious and could exercise self-control. This is because "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (v. 32). Is this the case with tongue-speakers today? Is it not true that they have completely lost control of themselves and are completely ignorant of what they are doing? Is it not true that the spirits of the prophets are not subject to the prophets, and instead that the prophets are subject to the spirits? Here we can see the basic distinction between what is from God and what is from demons.

All that we have said above concerns the difference between supernatural things given by the Holy Spirit and supernatural things given by evil spirits. Now we want to briefly see the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of evil spirits with respect to natural things. Let us consider the example of hearing the voice of God. The first thing we need to remember is that the Holy Spirit always intends that we understand things clearly (Eph. 1:17-18). The Holy Spirit never regards man as a machine. He has no intention for man to follow Him senselessly, not even in the matter of doing good. Moreover, He expresses His will from man's spirit—the deepest part of his being. God's leading is never (1) confused, (2) blurred, (3) stupefying, or (4) forceful. Whatever comes from evil spirits has the following characteristics: (1) It enters from the outside, mostly from the mind; it never issues from the deepest part of one's being. It is never an intuitive revelation, but a thought that comes like lightning. (2) It is always compelling, impulsive, and forceful, demanding immediate action. It does not allow time for one to think, consider, or examine. (3) It causes the believer's mind to become numb and confounded, and makes him unable to think. Everything that comes from evil spirits, whether supernatural or natural, always causes the believer to lose the proper use of the mind. But whatever comes from the Holy Spirit is not this way.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE CONDITION OF A PASSIVE MIND**

It is very pitiful that believers do not know the fundamental difference between the work of evil spirits

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and the work of the Holy Spirit. Without realizing it, they have allowed evil spirits to come in and occupy their minds. Now we want to briefly see a mind that is under the attack of evil spirits.

### ABRUPT THOUGHTS

When a believer's mind falls into passivity, many thoughts will be injected into him from outside. There will be unclean thoughts, blasphemous thoughts, and confused thoughts. They will come wave after wave through the brain. Although a person may make up his mind to reject them, he finds that he cannot stop the thoughts, nor can he change the direction and subject of his thoughts. The mind seems to be like a machine; once the switch is turned on, the machine cannot easily be stopped. The believer may use his will to oppose them, but still find that he cannot rid himself of the thoughts he does not want. Thoughts that come contrary to the believer's will are from evil spirits.

Sometimes a sudden flash of thought comes into a believer's mind and causes him to understand, know, or invent some special thing. It may suggest that he do this or that. This sudden thought seems to come from the believer himself, but on examining it, he will find that it does not originate from himself. Hence, this is also a work of evil spirits in a passive mind. A believer should reject sudden thoughts that suggest certain actions. These are not coming from the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, if the believer acts according to these thoughts, he will see how senseless the result will be.

We know that in this last age, evil spirits are doing a considerable work of teaching (1 Tim. 4:1). The believers should be on the alert so that evil spirits do not give them these teachings in their passive mind. Many believers think that they themselves are studying the Word, that they themselves are receiving much new light, and that they themselves are understanding many things that men of former times did not understand. But these believers should be careful because in many cases it is not they who are thinking, but evil spirits who suddenly have given them these thoughts. Evil spirits may cunningly wedge into the believers' thoughts one thought of their own. Since many believers are ignorant of the fact that their mind can take in the teaching of evil spirits, they read and meditate in their study and receive a great deal of sudden enlightenment when they are by themselves. They consider that they have invented something new in the divine teachings and write down these sudden thoughts or publish them, thinking that these are the result of their research. When others read about them or listen to them, they marvel at their superior intelligence. Actually, we do not know how many teachings have their source in the bottomless pit. Many heresies, "spiritual teachings," and interpretations of the Bible, which divide the church of Christ into pieces, come from men who suddenly understand certain doctrines in their studies. We should not merely consider how excellent the enlightenment we have received is. Instead we should ask, "From where do I get such enlightenment?" (1) Is it revealed by the Holy Spirit through the intuition? (2) Is it from my own mind? (3) Or are evil spirits giving these thoughts to me?

When a believer's mind is passive, evil spirits are most likely to inject all kinds of nonsensical thoughts into him. They will tell him, "You are God's special vessel..your work will shake the whole world..your spiritual life is much higher and deeper than others..you should go another way..soon God will open a wide preaching door for you..you should come out to live by faith..your spiritual usefulness is really limitless." Thus, the believer is disarmed of all his weapons of watchfulness, and he lives by these thoughts all the day long, dreaming at every moment about how great, wonderful, and capable he is. Because he does not use the reasoning and the mind, he does not know how these thoughts damage the spiritual life and how ridiculous they are. He sets his mind on himself continuously and fantasizes what

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his future will be.

Among those who preach the Lord's Word, some are frequently controlled by sudden thoughts. Many preachers preach the "sudden revelations" that have passed through their minds. When they speak, they either do so in obedience to those sudden thoughts, or they follow the "revelation" which has been in their minds for a long time. They consider these to be from God, and they receive them passively. Little do they know that God does not give revelations suddenly, nor does He give revelations to the mind. Although sometimes such words can be very meaningful, they are nevertheless from evil spirits. Sometimes when a believer preaches, many verses suddenly pour into his mind. His mind does not initiate it, but the verses keep coming. The audience is touched. However, when the meeting is over, the audience wakes up as if from a dream and finds that they have not received any practical help in life. Such an outpouring of the Scriptures sometimes happens in one's private time also. But this also is a work of evil spirits.

Since the believer has reserved some ground in his mind for evil spirits, they can give him any thoughts they wish. Very frequently, among believers who work together, evil spirits implant, without any ground, a suspicion or a barrier between them, making them separate from one another. Evil spirits make the believer think, without any reason, that this man is this way, and that man is that way. He thinks that this man treats him probably this way, and that man treats him probably that way. Therefore, the evil spirits divide the believers. Actually these thoughts are groundless. If the believer knows to resist them and check the source of these thoughts, there will not be so many divisions. But the believer still thinks that it is his own thinking and does not know that evil spirits are also able to put thoughts into his mind.

### **PICTURES**

Evil spirits are not only able to inject thoughts into the believer's mind, but they can also form different kinds of pictures in his mind. Some of these pictures are very clean and good, which the believer likes. But some are very filthy and sinful and are abhorred by the believer's conscience. Whether it is something good or bad, something the believer likes or abhors, he has no power to stop these pictures from coming into his own mind. Past experiences, future predictions, and many other things are always lingering before his eyes in spite of the opposition of his will. The believer's imagination has fallen into passivity; he can no longer control his own imagination and has yielded to evil spirits who are now using his imagination at will. A believer should realize that everything that is not produced by his own mind is given to him by supernatural spirits.

### **DREAMS**

Some dreams are natural, but some are supernatural. Some belong to God, and some belong to the devil. Except for the dreams that are caused by man's own physiology or mind, the rest are supernatural. If a believer's mind is open to evil spirits, many of his dreams at night are probably the "pictures" he obtained during the day in disguise. Evil spirits make him see the pictures during the day and dream about them at night. If a believer wants to check if his dream is from evil spirits, he only needs to ask, "Has my mind been passive during the day?" If so, the dream which he receives is not trustworthy. Dreams from God always make people normal, peaceful, stable, reasonable, and sensible. But dreams that come from evil spirits are all strange, vain, false, foolish, and cause people to become elated, stupefied, confused, and irrational.

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The evil spirits can give a believer many strange dreams, some of which are very good, because his mind is passive. If a believer's mind has fallen into passivity, all of his dreams will not be from God, neither will they be natural; instead, they will be from evil spirits. At night the mind is naturally not as active as during the day, and it becomes more passive. Then evil spirits will seize the opportunity to accomplish their goal. These kinds of dreams at night make the believer dizzy and dampen his spirit when he wakes up in the morning. Sleep does not seem to increase his vigor, because while he is sleeping, evil spirits are affecting his whole being through the passive mind. All who frequently suffer from dreams at night have evil spirits working in their mind. If a believer single-mindedly rejects the evil spirits' work both during the day and night, he will soon be free.

### INSOMNIA

Insomnia is a very common disease among today's believers. It is the most obvious evidence of evil spirits' work in the mind. When many believers lay on the bed at night, many thoughts pour into their mind. They are continuously thinking about their work in the day, recalling their past experiences, or reviewing many unrelated things through their mind. It appears as if they are "thinking" about thousands of things and considering what they should do, how they should do it, and what is the best strategy. It appears as if they are considering in advance the things that have to be done the next day, what they should plan, what kind of circumstances they will encounter, and how they should deal with different problems. These thoughts come repeatedly. Although the believer knows that the bed is the place for sleep, and that it is not a desk where one does his thinking, the mind keeps on turning. Although the believer knows how important sleep is to his work the next day, and that he desperately needs to sleep and does not want to think, he cannot do as he pleases for reasons unknown to him. His mind continues to vigorously work and hinder his sleep. Perhaps the believer has tasted the bitterness of insomnia for many days. Perhaps he has completely rested from every kind of work and does not want to use his mind anymore. However, when night comes, even though he is very tired, the mind will not rest, as if it is a "thinking machine" which is very active and refuses to stop. His own will has absolutely no power over his own thoughts; he can only let it stop by itself. The believer cannot stop his thoughts. Before his mind can rest and he can go to sleep, he can only wait for a certain kind of power within himself to stop him from thinking. Sleep should refresh people. But after a person continuously has this kind of experience for several nights, he will regard sleeping, bed, and the night as something dreadful. Nevertheless, he cannot afford not to sleep. Every morning when he rises up, it seems as if he has just come back from a horrible world. The head is confused, the will is paralyzed, and all of his strength seems to have disappeared.

At such times, the believer always considers his body the cause of these phenomena. He may think that he is mentally disturbed or that he has overworked his mind. Actually: (1) These reasons are hypothetical most of the time and not real. (2) Even if reasons do exist, the believer should be cured once he rests or is remedied by some natural methods. Yet commonly-used natural methods often turn out to be ineffective. (3) These reasons are the signboards that evil spirits use to disguise their work in secret. When thoughts are racing in the believer's mind at night, he should ask himself, "Where do these thoughts come from? Are they my thoughts? I do not want these thoughts, and I have no intention to have these thoughts. How then can I say that they are my thoughts? If they are not my thoughts, who is giving me so many confused, defiled, and depressing thoughts? Who else is there, other than evil spirits?"

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## **FORGETFULNESS**

Because of the attack of evil spirits, many believers lose their original power of memory and often have the phenomenon of forgetfulness. Words just spoken are forgotten in an instant, work just done is forgotten in an hour, things just put down are forgotten before the day is over, and things just promised are forgotten in a moment. The believer acts like a man without a mind; nothing seems to be retained in his mind. He may think that this happens because his memory is worse than someone else's memory. Little does he realize that this is due to the disturbance of evil spirits in his mind. In such a condition, the believer finds himself jotting down all kinds of "memos," and becomes a slave to his notebooks. He must depend on these things as his "reminders"; otherwise, he will encounter difficulties all the time. We are not saying that a believer's mind should remember all kinds of things. We admit that many things are forgotten through the passing of years, and even current events can be forgotten because the impression produced in the mind is not deep. We are not saying that believers should remember everything. However, other than the above-mentioned matters, there are many things which have not transpired long ago, which the believers have paid attention to. Given the short period of time and the circumstances, a believer should remember these things. Yet there is often not even a shadow of memory; he cannot recall anything. This is not natural; rather, it must be the attack of evil spirits. For example, it is not natural to forget what we have most recently paid attention to. Some forgetfulness is natural; some is not natural. Behind all the unnatural forgetfulness, there are the attacks of evil spirits. Evil spirits are very capable at taking hold of certain of our nerves at critical hours and making us forget what we should have remembered. Countless numbers of believers have suffered considerable hardships as a result of the attacks of evil spirits in this area. Many works are damaged because of this. Many embarrassments result from this. Therefore, the trust that others have in this type of person decreases, and his usefulness also decreases. Yet he still does not realize that these memory lapses are caused by the work of evil spirits in his mind.

At other times, a believer's memory seems to be very good and does not seem to suffer from any sickness. But strangely, there are certain sudden lapses in his memory! At many critical junctures, when the mind should be working very well, it suddenly becomes muddled and cannot remember anything. As a result, matters fall into a hopeless situation. This sudden lapse in the function of the mind may seem strange to the believer. He may think that he is momentarily failing in his mental power and that this will last only for a little while; he does not realize that this is a phenomenon of the attack of evil spirits on the mind.

## **LACK OF CONCENTRATION**

Many times evil spirits also take away the power of concentration in the believers' minds. The power of concentration is different from believer to believer. But according to the experience of believers, a variation in the power of concentration mainly comes as a result of the evil spirits' distraction. Many believers seem unable to concentrate their thoughts. Some are a little better. If they try to concentrate on one thing for a few minutes, they find their thoughts flying all over the place instead. This is especially true when one is praying, reading the Scriptures, or listening to a message. Many believers feel that their mind is always wandering. Although they have made up their mind to concentrate, it cannot be done in actuality. Although they exercise the will to control these racing thoughts, and although it may produce some effect for a while, nothing seems to last for long. Sometimes they find themselves completely out of control within themselves. All these are the works of evil spirits. But

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these works occur because the believers' minds have already reserved ground for them. It is unfortunate that believers waste away their mental power in this way. The result is that nothing is accomplished all day long. Just as it is a damage to waste physical energy, it is a damage to waste mental energy. Many believers today have wasted much time and not secured any results because their minds are under the attack of evil spirits and unable to concentrate.

Because evil spirits attack the mind in such a way, believers often experience a kind of "absentmindedness." Initially the mind is sharp. Suddenly, there is an emptiness, and one finds his thoughts flying away to nowhere. He does not know what he is doing or what book he is reading. He may think that his mind is on something else. However, the point to realize is that these kinds of thoughts are not initiated by one's own will. Countless numbers of believers have the experience of a sudden loss of hearing of what others are saying during the meetings and also at normal times. It is evil spirits which are causing them to not hear the words which are profitable to them. At such moments, evil spirits either cause their minds to stop functioning or force them to think about something else.

After a believer's mind has been attacked by evil spirits, it is very difficult for him to listen to others. Sometimes, he seems to miss a few sentences or a few words. Before he can understand what the other party is saying, he must wrinkle his forehead in order to try to hear the words. Often he does not understand the very obvious meaning of the other party, or he misunderstands the teachings given to him by the other party. All these are caused by the disturbance of evil spirits in his mind, who put many prejudices into him or interpret the meaning of the words for him. The believer hears men and demons speaking at the same time. Therefore, he either hears nothing or he misunderstands. Many believers become disinclined or unable to hear others speak because evil spirits work this way. Before others finish their words, they want to cut in with something. This happens because evil spirits have given them many thoughts, forcing them to listen to them and speak what they have put into them. At such times, a believer hears two voices at the same time, one from the outside and one from the inside. He hears suggestions from evil spirits within, and he hears men's words without. Since the voices within are closer than the voices without, the believer's ears will seem to be blocked from hearing the voices without. What is ordinarily known as "absentmindedness," is in fact just the heart being occupied by evil spirits. How many times do believers think that they have become "absent-minded," when in fact their hearts have just been captured by evil spirits. If believers do not rid themselves of the work of evil spirits in their minds, it will be impossible for them to concentrate their minds on anything.

Because of evil spirits' disturbance in the minds of the believers, they shake their heads, as if to shake out the undesirable things. If they say something, they have to say it loudly in order to let their own minds hear what they are saying and to leave an impression. If they think, they also have to loudly speak what they are thinking. Otherwise, their muddled minds do not understand. If they read, they also have to loudly read. Otherwise, they do not understand what they read. All these are the result of the disturbance of evil spirits in the mind. They cannot concentrate their thoughts, and they have to do these things before their minds can receive a little impression or know anything.

### **INACTIVITY**

Evil spirits also work to make believers lose their ability to think. Because of the exceptional length of time that their minds have been subject to the attack by evil spirits and because of the extent of ground the evil spirits occupy, many believers become unable to think. When this happens, their minds have almost completely sunk into the evil spirits' hands, and they cannot make decisions anymore. At this

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point, believers can no longer think. Although they want to think, they do not have the power to initiate any thoughts in their own minds. There is a tide of thoughts rolling in their minds already. They have no strength to stop these thoughts and then put their own thoughts in afterwards. It seems that the tide is too strong, and they do not have a chance to put in their own thoughts. Although at times they may find a space in their minds for what they want to think, they feel that it is very difficult to sustain such thoughts. It seems that too many voices are inside already; the agenda is already full, and their thoughts are involuntarily pushed out. We know that if a man wants to think, he has to exercise his memory, his imagination, and his reasoning. When a believer has lost his sovereignty over these things, he has no way to think about anything anymore. He cannot be creative. He cannot deduce. He cannot recall. He cannot compare. He cannot decide or understand. In short, he cannot think.

After the believer's mind has received the attack from evil spirits in this area, he will feel that his mind is imprisoned, as if he can think of nothing. It seems as if something is missing, and a kind of dizzy feeling looms over him, making it impossible for him to produce anything from within. Once the believer's mental ability is bound, he will spontaneously have an exaggerated view of everything. In the eyes of such a one, a pile of dirt will seem like a huge mountain. Everything seems difficult to accomplish, more so than ascending to heaven. He especially dreads those things that require him to use his mind. Nor does he like to converse with others, because this is very difficult. For him to go steadily and diligently forward with his work day by day is like asking him to sacrifice his life. It seems that within him, there is an unseen chain which no one understands. He feels very uncomfortable within to be enslaved this way, and many times there is the thought of resistance. However, he is unable to escape because his mind has been bound by evil spirits so that he is no longer able to think.

Thus, the believer has no alternative but to appear to be dreaming all day long. Time is wasted; he passes his days in the absence of any thought, imagination, reasoning, understanding, or even the mind itself. After the mind has suffered such an attack, the will is spontaneously affected because the mind is the light of the will. In this way, the believer passively allows his environment to toss him about, and he cannot choose anything himself. Alternately, he may be filled with all kinds of dissatisfaction, having no peace and being unable to fight against this bondage to gain the victory. It seems as if there is an invisible barrier to everything. There are many things which he should do, but as soon as he tries, a kind of impulsive feeling swells up in his mind and prevents him from going on. Nothing that he does seems possible; it seems as if his life is filled with difficulty and nothing can satisfy him.

This inactivity in the believer is different from ordinary inactivity. If a believer's mind is merely "inactive," it can still become active when it wants to. However, if it cannot become "active," it means that it cannot act even when it wants to. He cannot think! It is as if something is over his head and pressing him down. This is a symptom of the severe working of evil spirits.

Many believers who are often worried and anxious have this illness. If we check into their environment and position, we can see that their environment and position are quite good, and they should be joyful and happy. Yet they are full of worries and unhappy thoughts. If you ask for a reason, they cannot give you one good reason. Yet if you ask them to get rid of these thoughts, they cannot do it. Even they themselves cannot explain why they are this way. It seems as if they have fallen into a mud pit and are unable to pull themselves out. It seems that they are already accustomed to worrying and have no more strength to pull themselves out of their situation. This is the work of evil spirits. If it is a natural kind of worry, there must be a cause and a sufficient reason for it. Every worry which does not have a cause or a sufficient reason is from evil spirits. The believer has sunk into this state because he received at one

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time the thoughts from evil spirits, and he is no longer able to free himself from them. His mind has fallen into a very deep passivity and can no longer act. He always feels that he is chained and full of heavy burdens. It seems that he even cannot see the sun and does not know the truth; it even seems that he cannot exercise his own reasoning. The evil spirits lock up their captive and put him in a stupefied state all day long. They like to see people suffer. Everyone that falls into their hands is treated this way.

### **INSTABILITY**

After the believer's mind is controlled by evil spirits, his thoughts become entirely undependable because he is responsible for very few of his own thoughts. Most of the thoughts are generated by evil spirits in his mind. It is very easy at such a moment for evil spirits to give the believer one kind of thought at one time and give him a completely opposite kind of thought at another time. Because the believer follows these kinds of thoughts, he becomes a vacillating person. People who work with him or who are together with him consider these instant changes as a characteristic of his unstable character. Actually, it is evil spirits who are changing the thoughts in his mind and altering his judgments. We often see a believer saying, "I can," at one moment, and "I cannot," at another moment. In the morning he says, "I want it," but in the afternoon, he changes and says, "I do not want it." This happens because evil spirits will inject the thought of "I can" into the believer's mind at one moment. Then the believer will think that he can really do it. At the next moment, however, evil spirits will inject the thought of "I cannot" into his mind. Then he will begin to think that he cannot do it, and he will change what he said at the beginning. In many conversations, when the tone suddenly changes, we can detect the work of evil spirits in the minds of men. The believer himself may hate such a vacillating life, but he is not his own person and has no way to stabilize himself. At the same time, if he does not act according to the injected thought, evil spirits will imitate the voice of his conscience and accuse him of not acting according to God's leading. Since he wants to avoid this kind of accusation, he has no choice but to fluctuate back and forth before men. Many fluctuating works have this source as their origin. When a believer listens to the suggestions of evil spirits in his mind, he ends up with many sudden works; when evil spirits change the subject, the believer's work changes with it. Evil spirits always make people think at the wrong time. They will wake up the believer in the middle of the night and tell him what he should do. If the believer does not do it, they will accuse him. Or they will tell the believer to change his way in the middle of the night and cause the believer to make very important decisions at a time when the mind is most confused. If we investigate the source of these matters, we will see that many sudden changes in events are the result of the work of evil spirits in the minds of men.

### **TALKATIVENESS**

Believers who have evil spirits working in their minds sometimes do not like to talk with people because they have no strength to listen to people. The tides of thought in their minds are like rising winds and surging clouds that cannot be stopped by the words of others. However, they can at the same time be very talkative. Since their minds are filled with "thoughts," their mouths cannot help being filled with words. A mind that cannot listen to others, which only wants others to listen to it, is very often a sick mind. Many believers seem to be talkative and gossipy by nature. Actually, they are probably just a machine of evil spirits. Many believers seem to be a kind of "talking machine" of evil spirits!

When many believers are chatting, joking, and slandering behind the backs of others, it seems as if they

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cannot control their own tongues. They are very clear in their hearts that they do not know what they are talking about. Even when they know what they are talking about, they often do not know how to stop or restrict their unprofitable words. It is as if an idea comes into their minds, and it cannot wait for even the slightest consideration before it comes out as words in their mouths. The tides of thoughts roll in and cause believers to speak many things involuntarily. Their tongues are no longer under the control of the mind and will. Many words that the mind has not thought through and that the will has not decided to say, nevertheless, are spoken. Sometimes words that are completely contrary to a person's motive and will are uttered. Only when such a person is reminded of his actions does he wonder why he spoke those words. This all occurs because the mind is passive. Evil spirits can utilize man's tongue through the passive mind. In the beginning, evil spirits just mix their thoughts with man's mind. Later, they mix themselves in with man's words also. When that happens, his mind will no longer be able to understand the thoughts of others or remember anything.

A believer should insure that his words have passed through his own mind first. All the words that have not passed through the thinking process are from evil spirits.

### **STUBBORNNESS**

After a believer's mind has fallen into passivity and been occupied by evil spirits, he will never listen to the explanation or evidence of others in any matter in which he has already made a decision. If others try to explain something more to him, he will think that they are invading his freedom. Furthermore, in his view, the one who is telling him something is very foolish and can never understand what he understands. His thoughts may be extremely wrong, but he thinks that he has reasons that cannot be explained. Since his mind has become completely passive, he does not know how to use his own reasoning to deduce, differentiate, or judge anymore. Instead, he indiscriminately takes in every thought that evil spirits inject into him, and considers them to be the most perfect thoughts. He may also hear supernatural voices and consider them to be the will of God. In his view, these voices are speaking laws to him, and no one can make him use his reasoning to check the source of these voices. If he has received any thoughts, voices, or teachings, he will think that he can never be mistaken and is absolutely secure. He will not want to test, check, consider, or reason again. He will become absolutely closed and defensive, and he will not want to know about anything else. Neither his own reason and conscience nor the explanations and theories of others can change him at all. Once he believes that God is leading him, it is as if his brain becomes sealed by a tight seal and cannot be changed again. Since he does not use his own reasoning, he is subject to any deception by evil spirits and is completely ignorant of it himself. Those with only a little understanding will know his danger, yet he himself will be quite content. People who have been worked on by evil spirits to this extent are very difficult to recover.

### **THE PHENOMENON OF THE EYES**

The passivity of the mind and the attack of evil spirits can very easily be detected from the eyes, because no part of man's being expresses his mind more than his eyes. If the mind is passive, a believer can be reading a book with his eyes, but nothing enters his mind, and nothing is retained in his memory. When he talks with people, his eyes wander around in all directions, jump up and down, or change direction abruptly. Sometimes this can be very rude. It seems that he is not able to look directly into the faces of others. However, at other times, he fixes his gaze on the faces of others as if some unknown power is keeping his eyes from moving away.

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This kind of staring can be very dangerous at times, because this is the way evil spirits lead a believer into the state of a spirit medium. In many meetings, the believers stare at the speaker's face for a long time, and are unable to hear what he is speaking; instead, they allow evil spirits to give them many thoughts or visions.

Regarding the use of our own eyes, we should note whether the turning of our eyes follows the consciousness of our mind, or whether they look at things without following the instruction of our will. When the mind is passive, our eyes are very easily dimmed; they see strange things which they were never asked to see. At the same time, they have no strength to concentrate upon what they want to see.

### **CONCLUSION**

In summary, even though the attacks of evil spirits upon the minds of the believers are a many and varied phenomena, the principle of stopping a person from having control of himself is the same. Originally in God's ordination, all the faculties of man (the mind being one of them) were completely under man's control. But because a believer will unconsciously give ground to evil spirits, they are able to occupy his mind, and they are able to operate independently and without interference from his will. Therefore, when he discovers any act in his mind that is independent from his will, he should realize that he is being attacked by evil spirits.

Whoever cannot be active when he should be active and quiet when he should be quiet; whoever is out of control and filled with thoughts and confusion; whoever labors without any result; whoever cannot work in the daytime and dreams at night, whoever is restless, hysterical, and hesitant; whoever cannot be watchful, focused, and discerning; whoever cannot remember things; and whoever is inexplicably fearful, frustrated, and perplexed is suffering from the work of evil spirits and from things that are unknown to man.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE**

When the mind of a believer has fallen into the condition mentioned in the preceding chapter, he should seek the way of deliverance. In the preceding chapter we could only briefly discuss the general phenomena and could not point out everyone's condition. Since the extent of each one's passivity is different, the extent of the attack by the evil spirits is different; therefore, the extent of the mind's torment is also different. But when a believer sees that his own mind has any of the conditions mentioned in the preceding chapter, he should be on the alert. It could be that he has given ground to the evil spirits and is being attacked by them. If this is the case, he should seek the way of deliverance.

After reading the lesson in the preceding chapter, most believers will wonder why they did not pay any attention to the torture in their mind. Is it not strange that a believer never knows the condition his mind has fallen into? He always seems to have considerable knowledge about other things, but concerning his own mind, he seems to know nothing. Although he has suffered much torment, he still has not paid much attention to it. He must wait for others to remind him before realizing his own condition. Why has he not thought of this before? Does this not tell us that evil spirits and our minds have a special relationship with each other, and that the knowledge in our minds seem to be shallower than anything else? Everyone who has suffered from evil spirits should answer this question.

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### **THE CRAFTINESS OF THE EVIL SPIRITS**

When the believer's eyes are opened to see his own condition, he naturally wants to seek the way of deliverance. But the lying, evil spirits will not be so gentle as to allow their prisoners to go free. They will try their best to hinder the believer from gaining deliverance. Their method is to use many lies as excuses.

Evil spirits will tell the believer, "Your sudden and good thought is of God...these sudden revelations are the result of being spiritual...your bad memory is caused by something in your physical body...your sudden forgetfulness is natural...oversensitivity is a matter of disposition...a weak memory is hereditary...insomnia is an illness...you are tired...your inability to think is the result of overwork...you cannot stop thinking at night because you have used your mind too much during the day...unclean thoughts come from the sins that you have committed...your inability to listen to others is because of differences in the environment...the blame is altogether on others." There are innumerable excuses that evil spirits purposely devise other than just these. If the believer does not know that he is truly being attacked, that he has truly deviated from the normal condition, evil spirits will use these and similar excuses to cover up the ground that they have gained. Little does he know that the real reason is his passivity; his mind has become blank and occupied by evil spirits. These sicknesses are the result of evil spirits' working. Of course, we must also admit that behind these excuses, there are also natural causes mixed in with them. But the experiences of many believers tell us that evil spirits are most subtle. They can work alongside natural causes and make the believers think that their activities are only related to natural causes, coming from things like the disposition, the physical body, the environment, etc.; therefore, the believers forget that evil spirits have blended themselves into these causes. Evil spirits love to cover up their work with a little natural cause. One thing, however, is certain: if the cause is natural, the original condition of the man should be restored when the natural cause is eliminated. If there is a supernatural cause mixed in with it (due to evil spirits), the man will not be restored even when the natural cause is eliminated. All the cases, involving a person who is not restored when the natural causes are eliminated, are due to a mixture with supernatural causes. For example, when you have insomnia, the evil spirits may give you an excuse, saying, "You have worked too hard; you have overexerted your mind. This is why you have this illness." If you believe their word, you will stop working and rest for a while, trying not to use your mind at all. But while you are sleeping, you will still have thousands of thoughts going through your mind. This tells you that your illness is not solely related to natural causes because after you have eliminated the natural causes, your symptoms are still not cured. Therefore, there must be some supernatural causes mixed in with it. If you do not try to deal with the supernatural causes, no cure will be effective no matter how much you eliminate the natural causes.

Therefore, the most important thing for the believer to do now is examine where these excuses come from. Evil spirits are well able to make man think that their works are caused by something natural. They often make the believer think that he himself has some faults. In this way, their works are covered up and left undiscovered; therefore, they are not eliminated. Whenever the believer's mind has some excusing thoughts, he must examine all the reasonings. The believer must trace the source and examine the cause of the present condition of his mind. Otherwise, if he misinterprets—mistaking the supernatural for the natural—evil spirits will gain much more ground. All the opinions that he has toward his own condition must be confirmed. Otherwise, before he can regain his former ground, new ground will have already been given to evil spirits. If there are times when he cannot think, he must ask

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why. If there are times when he is full of thoughts, he also must ask why.

What must be guarded against the most is the evil spirits' utilizing a believer to work for them in order to protect their work in him! This is possible because some believers have been worked on by evil spirits for quite some time. A believer often helps the evil spirits to cover up the reason for his being attacked; he does not let the reason manifest itself or prove that it is the work of evil spirits! In this way, he becomes an accomplice of evil spirits and helps preserve their ground—even when he himself knows that he is being troubled.

At such times evil spirits will cause the believer's flesh to join them in their work. (Indeed, the flesh is always the co-worker of the devil!) They will cause the believer to think that he can prevent his mind from being occupied by the devil. The believer does this to save face or as a result of some other reasons. A reluctance to examine and a complacency and refusal to relinquish one's "spiritual" experience is a big obstacle to deliverance. The believer may say, "I do not need deliverance; therefore, I do not want to be delivered. Through Christ, I am already victorious; He has already overcome Satan; therefore, now I can ignore Satan. Let God deal with him. I will just pay attention to Christ. I do not want to know anything about Satan! We just preach the gospel; there is no need to be bothered about Satan!" There are other similar words which this kind of person will say. Perhaps, he will even speak to the one who told him this truth, saying, "If that is the case, resist for me and pray for me." This kind of word may not be an insincere request, but even if it is sincere, he is trying to ease himself and let others do the work of deliverance for him. He should know that he dislikes hearing about the devil and his work because the devil's work is already in his mind. He is afraid that once discovered, he will need to make an effort to deal with it. Is it really true that he already knows everything about the devil and that he no longer needs to know it? The gospel not only saves men and delivers them from sin, it also delivers them from Satan. When we preach the gospel, why should we not mention the devil? Is this not the same as those who have committed certain sins, and who are afraid when others mention the same sin? Such a person has been occupied by the devil and is afraid when others mention the devil. To an ordinary person, this kind of discussion is meaningless. But to the one whose mind is occupied by the devil, there are ample reasons for being afraid. Actually, when a believer says these words, in the depth of his heart, he is afraid that his real condition will be exposed. If he is truly occupied by the devil, he will not know what to do; therefore, he says these kinds of words. He wants to conceal himself in order to console himself.

When the believer is enlightened and begins to seek freedom, evil spirits will pour out many accusations in his mind. They will say that he is wrong in this and in that. There will be all kinds of condemnation, blame, and accusation. These will cause the believers to be too occupied to go onward to regain the ground given to them. They know that the believer has already been enlightened and that there is no way to deceive him again. Hence, they will continue to accuse him, saying, "You are wrong; you are wrong." At such times the believer will seem to sink into a kind of pit of sin and have no way to rise up again. However, if the believer recognizes these as the devil's lies and wholeheartedly resists them, he will overcome.

Experience has taught us one thing. When the believer understands the reality of the situation, knows that he has lost the sovereignty in his mind, and wants to rise up to regain this sovereignty, evil spirits will engage in a final struggle within and cause the believer to suffer torment several times more than before. At this moment, evil spirits will again resort to their habitual lies. They will tell the believer that he can no longer be free, that he has already fallen too deep into passivity, that God is no longer willing to grant mercy, that it is best if he does not resist, allowing the situation to remain as it is, and that there

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will never be a day when he will be delivered. However, he does not need to fight and cause himself to suffer in vain. The believer must know that he does not live by the grace of evil spirits! Even if it means death, he should still gain his freedom. There is no person who is so passive that he cannot obtain deliverance. God is always for him, and he can be freed.

When the believer understands the reality of the situation, when he knows that his own mind has never been completely free from the bondage of the powers of darkness, and when he knows that he should fight against evil spirits to break down all their strongholds, he will see that the weapons for this warfare must be spiritual. Anything of the flesh will be of no avail. He will see that repeated resolutions are not enough and that methods of training the mind or memory will not enable him to gain freedom. Since his mind has been chained by supernatural powers, weapons of the flesh cannot drive them out or destroy them. Very often, a believer realizes the degree to which the powers of darkness have occupied his mind only when he wholeheartedly wants to understand the spiritual truth—not the opinions in his mind regarding the truth—and is prepared to fight against the evil spirits to regain the lost ground. At this time, they will rise up to guard the ground that they have already gained; the believer will also see how muddled, passive, and slow his own mind is, and how completely beyond his own control it is. He will also see that evil spirits have utilized many means through his mind to torment him and prevent him from acting to regain the ground. He will see that his mind is truly the stronghold of the enemy and that he has never fully had control over it. At this moment he will also see the methods that the enemy used to prevent him from understanding the truth that his mind wanted to know because he was able to remember unimportant things, but not able to understand or remember the truth. He may sense a kind of resistance in his mind against the truth to which he has previously consented.

Now is the time to begin to fight for the freedom of the mind. Is the believer willing to be the stronghold of Satan permanently? Who should solve this problem? Should it be God? It should not be God; it should be man. The believer must choose and see whether he wants to fully consecrate to God or allow his mind to become the leasing ground of Satan. Will the powers of darkness be allowed to utilize his mind? Will all kinds of thoughts coming out of the pit be allowed to pour out from this part of a saved person? Will they be allowed to fill his mind with the fire of hell? Will they be allowed to utilize his mind to spread their teachings? Will they be allowed to utilize his mind to slander God? Will they be allowed to control his mind, gaining access to freely go in and out? Will they be allowed to oppose God's truth through his mind? Will they be allowed to torment him through his mind? The believer must make the choice himself! The question is whether or not the believer is willing to be a puppet of evil spirits permanently. The believer himself must choose; otherwise, there is no way to be delivered. This does not mean that the believer has some confidence. It is a question of whether or not the believer is truly opposing the evil spirits' attacks.

### **REGAINING THE GROUND**

We have previously mentioned that evil spirits are able to work in the mind of the believer because he has given them the ground. We have also mentioned what this ground is. We can briefly divide it into six items. If we sum up these six items, they can be classified into three main groups: (1) the unrenewed mind, (2) accepting (or believing in) the lies of evil spirits, and (3) a state of passivity. The believer must carefully examine what kind of ground he has given to evil spirits and what has led him to his present condition. Is it the unrenewed mind? Is it that he has believed in the lies of evil spirits? Is it a passive mind? Or is it a combination of all three of these? According to the experience of the believer, many have given this kind of ground to the evil spirits. If he realizes in which aspect or

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aspects he has given ground to the evil spirits, he should regain the ground that he has given to them. Regaining the ground is the only way to obtain deliverance. Because the believer reserved ground for evil spirits, he fell into his present position; therefore, once the ground is removed, the believer will gain freedom. The unrenewed mind must be renewed. The lies that were accepted from the evil spirits must be uncovered and refused. Passivity must be changed into self-governing activity. Now we want to see the regaining of these three kinds of ground separately.

### **The Renewing of the Mind**

God not only wants the minds of His children to be transformed at the time of their repentance, but to be renewed completely like a transparent crystal. There is such a command in the Bible because the believer has not yet been completely freed from the fleshly mind that evil spirits can work through. At first, a believer just has a narrow mind, which is unable to tolerate others; or he may have a foolish mind, which is unable to understand profound doctrines; or he may have an ignorant mind, which is unable to bear important work. But later, he may degenerate into deeper sins "because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). After many believers have learned the teaching in Romans 6, they often think that they are completely freed from the fleshly mind. Little do they know that the effectiveness of the cross must be applied in detail to every part of man. After reckoning "yourselves to be dead to sin" (v. 11), believers should "not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (v. 12). Likewise after the mind has been transformed, they should "take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). The mind must be renewed completely because, no matter how little remains of the fleshly mind, it is still enmity against God.

If we want to have our mind renewed, we must come to the cross, for it is here that we can have the renewal. This is clearly explained in Ephesians 4. In verses 17 through 18 the apostle speaks of the darkness of man's fleshly mind. In verses 22 through 23 he speaks of the way of renewing: "That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind." We know that our old man has been crucified with the Lord (Rom. 6:6), but these verses advise that we should "put off" in order for our mind to be renewed. By this we can see that the renewing of the mind is through the cross. Believers should know that our old mind is a part of the old man, which God wants us to "put off" completely. The salvation which God has carried out on the cross does not just give us a new life. He also wants to renew all the functions of our soul. The salvation within the depth of our whole being must be "worked out" gradually (Phil. 2:12). What is lacking today is that believers do not know that their minds need to be saved (Eph. 6:17). They think that salvation is a general and ambiguous matter. They do not realize that God wants to save our whole being in order that all of our faculties may be renewed and become perfectly suitable for His use. Our mind is one of our faculties. God wants the believer to believe that the cross has crucified his old man. He should acknowledge God's judgment on his old man in a definite way and exercise his will to reject—to put off—the conduct of his old man, which includes his old way of thinking. He should be willing to come to the cross and forsake his old mind, his old way of thinking, and his old reasoning; he should be willing to trust in God for a new one. Brothers, all of these should be put off in a definite way. The renewing of the mind is God's work; but the putting off (the rejecting) and the denying (the forsaking) of the old mind is your work. If you take care of your part, God will fulfill His part. After you have put off in a definite way, you should believe that God will do the renewing for you in a definite way, even though you may not yet know the way to be renewed.

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Today a countless number of believers carry their old way of thinking with them wherever they go. Although they are saved and have obtained the new life, they have not changed any in their former reasoning, their way of thinking, and their prejudice. They merely put on a Christian coating! They still apply their former mind, reasoning, way of thinking, and prejudice to examine, receive, or preach spiritual truths. It is no wonder that they fall into many mistakes and cause many disputes in the church. Just as God hates man to do His work with his own strength, He also hates man to think His truth with his own mind. The unrenewed mind is spiritually dead; whatever issues from it is also dead. Although many believers boast of the profoundness of their biblical knowledge and the excellence of their theological doctrines, they are just dead to those who have eyes.

After the believer is aware of the oldness of his mind and is willing to concentrate on "putting off" through the cross, he should daily refuse all the thoughts that are of the flesh through practice. Otherwise it will be impossible to be renewed. Even though God wants to renew the mind of the believer, the believer may continue daily to think according to the flesh. When this happens, God's work cannot be successful.

The believer should patiently and resolutely examine his own thoughts one by one in the light of God. All that are not of God and contradictory to God's truth should be "squeezed out" from the mind and abandoned completely. Even the exercise of his unrenewed mind to understand God's truth must be rejected completely. The apostle tells us that the unrenewed mind is full of "reasonings" and all kinds of imaginations that rise up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5). These reasonings and imaginations hinder man from truly gaining the knowledge of God. The believer must break through them. "Every thought" must be brought "unto the obedience of Christ." The believer cannot be satisfied until every thought of his mind has come unto the obedience of Christ. The apostle said "every thought." Therefore, the believer cannot let one thought be loose. He should examine his thought and find out whether it is: (1) from his former position, (2) from the ground which he has relinquished, (3) from new ground given to evil spirits, or (4) whether it is a proper thought. He should examine why his mind is so confused and why he has prejudicial thoughts, rebellious thoughts, and angry thoughts. For example, why do I reject certain truths without ever examining them? Why do I oppose certain persons, based only on hearsay? Do I have sufficient reasons? Is there any intention to hate within my natural mind? Every thought must be examined in order that every thought issuing from the old creation would be discovered and eliminated. Naturally, this is a heavy burden to those who are accustomed to living foolishly because their thoughts are controlled by the power of darkness, and they are wild. But warfare is warfare, and it can never be carried out by a simple method. If we do not fight, we cannot break through these thoughts one by one, because the mind is the stronghold of evil spirits. The enemy is real. This has been proven by warfare. Because there is a warfare, there must be an enemy. Since the enemy is before us, how can we be negligent?

### Rejecting the Lies

When a believer carries out an examination in the light of God, he will see that in the past he accepted countless lies from evil spirits. Consequently, he fell into the present position. (1) Sometimes he misunderstood God's truth by believing in the lies of evil spirits which resulted in a wrong attitude and behavior. This attitude and behavior gave rise to the work of evil spirits. For example, he may have misunderstood God's relationship with man and may have thought that God should directly impart His thought into him. Therefore he passively waited and accepted what he believed to be a thought from God. In so doing, he allowed the evil spirit to counterfeit and impart into him similar thoughts. (2)

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Sometimes he believed the words which the evil spirits directly spoke to him about his physical health and other matters related to him; consequently, his body and these matters responded according to what the evil spirits told him. For example, evil spirits may speak in the mind of the believer that a certain thing will surely happen to him. His will does not resist and, in some cases, even accepts it fully. Consequently, at the time designated by the evil spirits, that certain thing actually happens to him.

If a believer examines his situation, he will see that many of the worries, weaknesses, illnesses, and various undesirable situations that have occurred in his life were caused by accepting the lies of the evil spirits, either directly or indirectly. The result is his present condition. All kinds of related things happen to a believer according to what he has doubted and feared, because he has either directly believed in the lies of the evil spirits or because of what he has done as a result of believing in their words. If he wants to obtain deliverance, he must understand what is God's light and what is God's truth. In the past, he gave them the ground through believing in their lies. Now he can regain the ground and obtain freedom through rejecting their lies. Only truth can eliminate lies, just as only light can dispel darkness. Therefore the believer must pursue after all the truth that is related to himself, God, and the evil spirits. He should pay the price to seek the truth. He should pray definitely and ask God to give him the light so that he would know his true condition (the truth), his past experience, how he was deceived, and what kind of sufferings he experienced because of this deception. He should examine where the sufferings have come from, which he is presently undergoing, mentally, physically and environmentally. He should understand the cause of every suffering that comes upon him. Is the suffering related to him believing in certain words from evil spirits, or is it related to wrong behavior that results from their lies? He should examine the suffering by tracing its origin peacefully, prayerfully, and with expectation.

Evil spirits hate light and truth the most because this takes away the basis of their work. However, in order for a sentence of truth to enter into the mind of the believer, it must pass through warfare. Evil spirits do not want the believer to find out that they have done many things. Neither do they want the believer to know which one of his present conditions is caused by which lies he has believed in. The principle of their work is always "that the illumination...might not shine on them" (2 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, the believer must be very careful that he understands the truth in all things. The meaning of truth is the actual condition. Although the believer himself cannot cast out evil spirits, he can set his will on the side of truth and cause evil spirits to lose the ground of their work. He can declare, at least, that he wants the truth, wants to understand the truth, and wants to obey the truth. His prayer and choice should be the rejecting of all the lies of evil spirits, no matter whether the form of these lies is a thought, an imagination, or a doctrine. By doing this, he will make way for the Holy Spirit to lead his darkened mind into the bright truth of God. Experientially, the believer will see that sometimes it takes several months (or longer) before he is able to understand one lie of evil spirits. He should first reject all the ground of the evil spirits in his will and then carefully overthrow their lies one by one. He should no longer believe what he once believed before and should gradually claim back his ground. He should no longer believe in what the evil spirits say. They will then lose their power.

### **KNOWING THE NORMAL CONDITION**

If a believer falls into all kinds of miserable conditions because of being passive and believing in the lies of evil spirits, he needs to know his own "normal condition." Aside from the ground of the unrenewed mind, these two kinds of ground that are given to evil spirits will cause the believer to

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steadily deteriorate in every aspect. His reasoning, memory, physical strength, and everything else will degenerate. Once the believer realizes his own danger, he can rise up to pursue deliverance. But what does it mean to be delivered? It means that he should be "restored to the original condition." However, if the believer wants to be recovered back to the original condition, he should know what the "original" condition is. The believer should know that there is a normalcy, an original condition from where he fell when he was deceived by evil spirits. He should know what his normal condition is. He has fallen from his normal condition into today's position. If he has not fallen, he does not need to seek recovery. A believer should pay attention to whether his condition today is different than before, and whether his condition is much worse than before. He should not want to continue with his present condition; rather, he should want to be recovered to his former condition. He must ask, "How much worse is my present condition compared with my past? How was I before? What should I now do in order to return to my former condition?"

This former condition is his normal condition. The place from which he has fallen is his normal condition. If he does not understand his "point of origin," or his normal condition, he should ask himself these few questions: "Have my thoughts always been this confused from the time I was born? Has there been a time when I was not this way? Has my memory been this bad from the time I was born? Has there been a time when I could remember very well? Have I always been unable to sleep? Has there been a time when I could sleep? Have I always had many pictures going through my eyes like movies? Has there been a time when I was clearer? Have I always been this weak? Has there been a time when I was stronger? Have I always been unable to control myself? Has there been a time when I was better?" After asking these and similar questions, the believer will know if he has lost his normal condition and if he has been passive or attacked. He will also know what his normal condition is.

To understand his own normal condition, the believer must first acknowledge and believe that he has a normal condition. Although he has fallen today, he surely had a standard that he experienced before he fell. This is his "point of origin." Now he should pursue toward this point and seek for a recovery. The meaning of a normal condition is nothing other than a person's proper condition. If the believer finds it hard to establish what his proper condition is, he should recall the period of time in his life when his spirit, or soul, or body was "at its best." He should recall the time when his spirit was the strongest, the period of time when his memory and thoughts were the strongest and clearest, and the year when his body was the healthiest. After he finds out the best period of his life, he should take the conditions of that period as his normal condition. This is the bottom line. He should at least reach this standard. If he is living a life below this standard, he should not be contented. He should realize that if there has been a time that he reached that state, there is no reason that he cannot reach the same condition at this time, not to mention the fact that the condition at his peak time in the past may still not be the highest level that he can attain. Therefore, he must insist on his normal condition and not be willing to go down.

When a believer compares his present condition to his former condition, he will know whether he is already "far off." A person whose mind has been attacked needs to see how his memory and thoughts are "far off." The person whose body has been attacked needs to see how his own strength is "far off." Once the believer knows that he has fallen from his normal condition, he should exercise his will to reject and resist until he returns to his normal condition. But the evil spirits will surely not sit back to watch this kind of "overthrowing." They will say to the believer, "You are already old, and you cannot expect your mind to be as strong as when you were young. Human faculties generally deteriorate and become weaker as time goes by." If you are young, they will say, "You were born weak. This is why you cannot enjoy the blessing of a strong mind continuously like others do." They may tell the believer,

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"You have been overworked. This is why you have fallen into this state." They may even be a little more bold and say, "This is what you actually are. Others may be better than you are, but this is because there is a difference of gifts." In this way, evil spirits try to make the believer think that the reasons for his weakness are natural, obvious, and necessary and that there is nothing to be surprised about. If the believer is not deceived and not passive, but is absolutely free, there may be some ground for belief in these words (but not for certain); they still need to be tested. If the believer is deceived or passive, then excuses that blame everything on natural causes are absolutely untrustworthy. Since the believer is saved and once obtained a better condition—spiritually, mentally, and physically—he should not allow the authority of darkness to bind him in a much lower position. These are all the lies of evil spirits, and the believer should completely reject them.

We must pay attention to one thing: there is an absolute difference between our mind being weakened by natural illness and being weakened by giving ground to evil spirits. If the weakness is because of natural illness, it surely will cause some damage to man's nervous system. But if it is caused by the work of evil spirits, it does not change the nature of an organ; rather, it merely causes the organ to function abnormally. The human mind is not damaged; rather, it becomes passive and temporarily cannot function. When evil spirits are cast out, the mind will be recovered to its former condition. The mentality of many lunatics is first inflicted with natural illness; later evil spirits utilize these illnesses to cause further disturbances. If there are no evil spirits working behind them, mental illnesses alone are not that difficult to treat.

### **Overthrowing Passivity**

After the believer realizes his own normal condition, his most important job is to fight to return to his normal condition. He knows that he has a "point of origin" and wants to be recovered. But he should know that evil spirits will guard the ground that they have gained in the same way that worldly kings guard their territories. He cannot expect evil spirits to willingly return the ground that they have gained. Unless evil spirits have no other choice, they are unwilling to give up. Therefore, the believer should realize that it requires effort to regain the lost ground, even though it is very easy to surrender it. One thing, however, deserves our attention. Just as our country has laws, and the judgment of its laws is the highest authority that every citizen should abide by, God's universe also has laws, and the judgment of its laws is the highest authority that every evil spirit must abide by. Therefore, we should understand the laws in the spiritual realm and walk accordingly. Then the evil spirits will have no choice but to surrender their ground.

The most important law in the spiritual realm is that everything related to man must have the consent of man's will before it can be carried out. When the believer ignorantly accepts the deception of evil spirits, he allows them to work on him. In order for the believer to regain the ground, he must exercise his will to overturn the initial permission and insist that he belongs to himself, and that the evil spirits have no right to utilize any part of him. In this kind of warfare, evil spirits cannot go against the law; they must retreat. When the believer's will is passive, his mind also is passive. Consequently, his mind becomes occupied by evil spirits. At this point he should declare that his mind is his own in accordance with God's law. He should choose to use his own mind and no longer allow external forces to instigate, impart revelation to, utilize, and press his mind. If the believer continually regains the passive ground and uses his own mind, his mind will be gradually delivered to its original normal condition. (Details concerning regaining the ground and the warfare will be specified in the following section.)

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In this warfare, the believer must exercise his own mind. He must try his best to do his work. He must take the initiative every time and not depend on others in everything. If possible, he should make his own decisions in everything and not passively wait on others and the environment. He should not look back on the past or worry about the future; he should live only for the present moment. He should go on step by step with prayer and watchfulness. He must use his own mind—what he is doing, what he is speaking, and what he is. He should give up the crutch and not use worldly things and methods to substitute for the capacity of his mind. He should use his mind to think, weigh, remember, and understand.

Because the believer's mind has been passive for a long time, it takes time to fight back to the position of freedom. Before he is free, many of the thoughts in his mind are not his own; they belong to the evil spirits in his mind. Therefore, during this period, every thought must be examined one by one. Otherwise, before the old ground is regained completely, new ground will be given unknowingly and ignorantly to the evil spirits. At this moment, all the accusations and praises that the believer receives are not necessarily caused by the believer's wrongdoing or good works. Mostly they are words from the evil spirits. Hence, when his mind is full of discouraging thoughts, he should not think that he is truly hopeless. If his mind is full of uplifted thoughts, he should not think that he is really doing well.

Furthermore, the believer should repeatedly confront the lies of evil spirits. Whatever thoughts the evil spirits have suggested in his mind, the believer must answer specifically with words in the Scripture. Evil spirits will cause him to doubt, so he must reply with verses on faith. Evil spirits will cause him to be discouraged, so he must reply with verses on hope. Evil spirits will cause him to fear, so he must reply with verses on peace. If he does not know what verses to use, he can ask God to show him. Alternatively, if he recognizes that these are assuredly from evil spirits, he can tell them, "These are your lies. I do not want them." This way of applying the sword of the Holy Spirit is the way of victory.

In this warfare, the believer must not forget the position of the cross. He must stand on Romans 6:11 and believe that he is already dead to sin and made alive unto God in Christ Jesus. He is a dead man and has put off the old creation. Now evil spirits can no longer do anything on him, because the place where they can work is hung on the cross. Every time he wants to reject the evil spirits and exercise his mind, he must depend completely on the accomplishment of the cross. He must realize that his death with the Lord is a fact. Therefore, he should hold fast to this fact before the evil spirits. He is already dead, and the evil spirits have no authority over dead persons. Pharaoh could no longer harm the Israelites who were on the other side of the Red Sea. Resting upon the Lord's death will give the believer the greatest benefit.

## **FREEDOM AND RENEWING**

After the believer has regained the ground step by step in this way, a result will gradually be manifested. In the beginning, it seems that the more he regains, the more dangerous the situation becomes. However, after the believer insists on regaining all the ground, he will see evil spirits gradually losing their power, and that they are no longer able to do anything. When the ground is gradually regained, all the symptoms will gradually decrease. The believer will see that his own mind, memory, imagination and reasons gradually are able to act on their own and be used. Evil spirits can no longer attack as before. At this time, however, there is a danger that before all the ground is regained and before a full recovery is seen, he will become contented and satisfied and then stop fighting. This kind of tolerance will enable evil spirits to make a comeback in the future. The believer must continue

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to claim back his sovereignty until he is truly and completely freed. When he stands on the foundation of the cross and exercises his own mind, rejecting the evil spirits' arrogance and old concepts, he will soon experience full deliverance. He will see that he has become once again the master of all his thoughts.

Now let us sum up the stages from being passive to being freed:

- (1) The mind of the believer is originally normal.
- (2) The believer falls into passivity by trying to let God use his mind.
- (3) The believer believes that because of stage two, he now has a new mind.
- (4) Actually the believer is attacked by evil spirits and falls below the normal condition.
- (5) The believer's mind becomes weak and powerless.
- (6) The believer fights to regain the ground that he gave up in stage two.
- (7) The believer's mind seems to be worse and more confused than before.
- (8) Actually the believer is gradually being freed.
- (9) The believer insists on his own sovereignty and regains the position that was passive.
- (10) The passivity is overthrown, and the believer is recovered to his original condition.
- (11) The believer holds fast to his will and is maintained in a normal condition; in addition,
- (12) His mind is being fully renewed, and he is able to do in his work what he could not do before.

We should know that the renewed mind is deeper than the liberated mind. To regain the ground lost to passivity and the ground given to the lies will merely restore the believer to his original condition. However, renewing not only restores one to his original condition, but brings him to a place that is higher than the "point of origin." The renewed mind is a state that the believer's mind has never reached before in his lifetime; it is the highest point which God has designated for him and the highest point possible. God not only wants the believer's mind to be completely severed from the authority of darkness, in order for the believer to be completely autonomous, He also wants to renew his mind. Then the mind and the Holy Spirit will be fully one—full of light, wisdom, and intelligence. Then his imagination and reason will be cleansed and submissive, completely obedient to God's will (Col. 1:9). We should not be satisfied with small gains.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE LAW OF THE MIND**

When a believer's mind has reached the point of being renewed, he will marvel at the capability of his

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mind. He is now severed from dull and insignificant activities. The believer's concentration is more intensified, his understanding sharper, his memory stronger, his reasoning more precise, his eyesight farther, his work speedier, and his thoughts broader. He can more easily understand the thoughts of others. He is less bound by his own little experiences, and he is more aware of the unlimitedness of spiritual knowledge and the need to have an open mind to accept it. All the biases, prejudices, and opinions about the works of God are purged completely. This kind of mind can do the work that one usually cannot do and is able to bear two to three times more responsibility than what one can usually bear. Today, the believer's mind is not useful because it has not reached the stage of renewal. However, this does not mean that once his mind is renewed, there is no possibility of his being clamped down by the old mind anymore. If a believer does not continuously resist old concepts, he will unconsciously think according to his old way. Just as a believer ought to walk according to the spirit daily and reject the behavior of the flesh, he should think according to the renewed mind daily and reject the old way of thinking. Watchfulness is necessary. Otherwise, a believer will go back to his former position. In spiritual matters, regression is something very real. Even after a believer's mind has been renewed, if he is not watchful, the possibility of believing in the evil spirits' lies and passively giving place to them still remains. If a believer desires to keep his mind in a renewed condition and have his mind renewed day after day, he has no alternative but to know the law of the mind. As the spirit has its law (which we have seen before), the mind also has its law. Now we will mention a few things. If a believer practices these things, he will be victorious all the time.

### **THE MIND WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE SPIRIT**

If we analyze the process of the walk of a spiritual believer, it may be divided into the following steps: the Holy Spirit reveals and makes known the will of God to the spirit of a believer; the believer realizes the meaning of this revelation through his mind and then exercises the power of his spirit through the will to move his body to execute this matter. In the believer's living, nothing has a closer relationship with the spirit than the mind because the mind is the faculty that knows the things in the mental and material realm, and the spirit is the faculty that knows the things in the spiritual realm. A believer knows all the things of himself through the mind, but it is through his spirit that he knows the things of God. Because both the spirit and the mind are the faculties of "knowledge," their relationship is closer than anything else. In our life of walking according to the spirit, the mind is the best assistant of the spirit. If we want to walk completely according to the spirit, we must know how these two assist each other.

The Bible tells us clearly about the work of mutual assistance and reliance that exists between the mind and the spirit. In walking after the spirit, the cooperation between the spirit and the mind is a very important matter. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know" (Eph. 1:17-18). These two verses reveal the full relationship between the spirit and the mind. As we have mentioned before, "a spirit of wisdom and revelation" means that God has revealed and made known Himself and His will to us in our spirit. Now we have to pay attention to how the revelation received through the intuition of the spirit goes along with our mind.

"The eyes of your heart" are the faculty of our reasoning, the faculty of understanding, which is our mind. In this section of the Scripture, the word "know" or "knowledge" has been mentioned twice. These two "knowings" have different meanings. The first knowing is the knowing in the intuition. The

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second knowing is the knowing or realization of the mind. The spirit of revelation is the deepest part of our being. God reveals Himself in our spirit in order that we may have the full knowledge of Him through the intuition. But this knowledge is just in the intuition. It is only in our inner man; our outer man still does not know it. It is essential for the inner man to convey what it knows to the outer man. Otherwise, the outer man will not know what the inner man is asking for and will not take the same action. How is this conveying done? The Scripture tells us that our spirit needs to enlighten our mind, so that our mind can understand the notion of our spirit and our outer man can also have the knowledge. Our outer man apprehends things through the mind. This is why the spirit's knowledge through the intuition must be conveyed to the mind. The mind in turns tells the whole body and causes it to walk according to the spirit.

We receive the will of God in our intuition first, then our mind enables us to know that it is God's will. The Holy Spirit impresses our spirit and gives us a spiritual sense. Then we apply our mind to study and understand this sense. In order to comprehend fully the will of God, there must be a co-working of the spirit and the mind. The spirit causes our inner man to have the knowledge, while the mind causes our outer man to understand. This cooperation of the spirit with the mind causes the believers to fully know the will of God, and it happens in an instant. It may takes us a long time to describe it in words. But in actuality, the two things are like the right and left hand. As soon as an assignment comes, the spirit knows it in the twinkling of an eye and causes the mind to understand. Hence, all revelations come from the Holy Spirit and reach man's spirit (not his mind). Man's spirit knows or receives God's revelation through his intuition, but he studies the meaning of the intuition of the spirit through the mind and then understands it.

We should not allow our mind to be the primary faculty of receiving God's revelation, but we also should not prevent our mind from being the secondary faculty to understand His revelation. A fleshly believer has not learned to walk according to the spirit and, therefore, must use the thoughts within his mind to be the rule for his walk. A spiritual believer should walk according to the spirit; but he should not negate the mind with its understanding of the intentions of the spirit. In genuine guidance, the spirit and the mind are in one accord. There is no such thing as the reasoning in the mind going against the leading in the spirit. The leading of the spirit may be opposite of the so-called rationale of the ordinary mind. When a believer, who has the leading in the spirit, understands God's will through the co-working of his mind and spirit, his rationale will agree that the leading in the spirit is absolutely right. Of course, we are talking about believers whose minds have been renewed. But before the spirit of a believer has reached the highest position, the mind is usually against the leading of the spirit.

In Ephesians 1:17-18 we see how the spirit assists the mind. The spirit first receives the revelation from the Holy Spirit and then enlightens the mind. Since the mind of a spiritual man does not live by the natural life, it has to live by the enlightening of the spirit; otherwise, it will fall into darkness. The renewed mind requires the light of the spirit for its guidance. Therefore, when the spirit of a believer is blocked by evil spirits, he will sense that the path of his thoughts are darkened. His thoughts will be confused, his mind will be disorganized, and his whole being will be unable to concentrate. The mental power of a believer comes from the spirit, and when the spirit is locked up, power will not reach the mind, and the mind will seem to lose its direction. Therefore, if we want to keep our spirit and mind properly related, we have to be watchful and not allow our spirit to be surrounded by evil spirits, in order that our mind can function normally.

The believer's mind is the outlet of the Holy Spirit. We know that the Holy Spirit is living in the spirit

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of man. But have we ever thought about how the Holy Spirit expresses Himself? The Holy Spirit is not satisfied with believers just sensing or believing that He is in their spirit. His goal is to express Himself through man so that others may gain Him. In addition, the Spirit also has hundreds and thousands of things that need to be done through man. It is not sufficient just to have the Holy Spirit living in our spirit. He must be expressed through the spirit. The mind expresses the spirit of man. If the mind is blocked, the spirit cannot be opened, and the Holy Spirit will not be able to flow from our spirit to others. We need the mind to "interpret" the notions of our intuition so that the Holy Spirit can express His intention through us. If our mind is narrow and foolish, the Holy Spirit will not be able to fellowship with the believer according to His intention. We have to be careful not to lock up the Holy Spirit in our spirit.

### **MINDING THE SPIRIT AND THE SPIRITUAL MIND**

The more spiritual a believer is, the more he knows about the importance of walking according to the spirit and the danger of walking according to the flesh. But what does walking according to the spirit really mean? Romans 8 provides an answer; it is to simply mind the Spirit and have a spiritual mind. "For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace" (vv. 5-6). To have the mind searching the things of the Spirit and the spirit governing the mind is the meaning of walking according to the spirit. A man who walks "according to the spirit" is just one who minds "the things of the Spirit" and whose mind is "set on the spirit." If we desire to walk according to the spirit, there is no other way except to mind and search the things of the Spirit through the mind that is under the spirit's control. This means that our mind has to be renewed first to become a spiritual mind—a mind governed by the spirit. Through a renewed mind, one can pay attention to all the things of the Spirit—the activities of the Spirit. In this way, we can walk according to the spirit.

We also can see from these verses how the mind relates to the spirit. "For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit." The human mind can mind either the things of the flesh or the things of the Spirit. Our mind (soul) is standing between the spirit and the flesh (here we refer to it as the body). Whatever the mind is minding, that is what we will walk after. If the mind is minding the flesh, we will walk according to the flesh; if the mind is minding the Spirit, we will walk according to the spirit. Therefore, we do not need to ask if we are walking according to the spirit; we only need to ask if we are minding the Spirit, paying attention to the Spirit, and searching the activities of the Spirit. There is no such a thing as "minding" the things of the flesh, while "walking" according to the spirit. Whatever your mind is minding must be what you are walking after. This is unchangeable. In our daily life, what is our mind thinking about, paying attention to, and setting itself on? What are we paying attention and submitting to? Are we minding the spirit or the flesh? Minding the things of the Spirit will cause us to become spiritual men; minding the things of the flesh will cause us to become fleshly men. If our mind is not under the governing of the spirit, it is under the governing of the flesh. If it is not being governed by what is heavenly, it is being governed by what is earthly. If it is not being governed by what is from above, it is being governed by what is from below. The result of walking according to the spirit is to live in life and peace. If a believer is minding and walking according to the flesh, he will live in "death." Whatever he does or says will be of no spiritual value but will be altogether of death, because all that he has, in the eyes of God, comes from the flesh, which has no spiritual life. A believer may have life yet at the same time be living in "death."

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Why is minding the things of the Spirit so important in a life of walking according to the spirit? It is important because this is the biggest prerequisite for us to receive the leading in the spirit. Many believers wish that God would make arrangements for them and lead them (through circumstances), but they do not mind their spirit or pay any attention to the activities of their spirit. Many times the indwelling Holy Spirit has already guided us in our spirit, but we are unable to be clear about His guidance because our mind is so dull and foolish. Many times the Holy Spirit has revealed something to our spirit, but the sensation of the spirit is neglected because our mind is not paying attention to the activities of the spirit, or perhaps it is minding thousands of other things. At other times our spirit is not wrong, but our mind is wrong, and we still are not able to walk according to the spirit. The notion that the spirit expresses through the intuition is fine, quiet, and tender. If we are not constantly minding the things of the spirit, how can we know the intention of the spirit and walk after it? Our mind should be as a watchman; it should always be minding, comprehending, and understanding the intention of the spirit so that our outer man may be fully submissive.

All the guidance of God comes by the revelation of His will through the tender feelings. He never uses overwhelming, drowning, or other feelings to overpower us or force us to submit to Him. He always gives us the opportunity to choose. All behavior of the believers that seems to be coerced is not from God. Only the evil spirits work in this manner. Therefore, we should not just look for the guidance of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit will not work if we have not fulfilled the conditions for the Holy Spirit to work. Before the Holy Spirit will guide us, our spirit and mind must work actively together with the Holy Spirit. We should not struggle vainly to walk according to the spirit. As long as we apply our spirit to work together with the Holy Spirit and apply our mind to pay attention to all the activities within the spirit, we will be walking according to the spirit.

### **THE OPENING OF THE MIND**

Besides revealing the truth directly to us, God often (in fact most of the time) conveys the truth to us through His other children. This kind of truth is first accepted by our mind, and then it reaches our spirit. We use our mind to contact the speaking and writing of others. If we did not have a mind, it would be impossible for the truth to reach our life. Therefore, an opened mind is very crucial to our spiritual life. If our mind is fully occupied with opinions, whether they are about the truth or about the person who preaches the truth, there will be no way for the truth to enter into our mind or life. If believers have determined beforehand what kind of teaching they are going to read or listen to, it is no wonder that they do not get much help.

Believers have to know the process through which the truth is translated into life before they see the importance of an opened mind. The truth is first realized in our mind, then it enters into our spirit and touches our spirit. Finally, it is manifested in our living. A closed mind hinders the truth from reaching the spirit. A closed mind means a mind occupied with opinions. Whatever disagrees with its thoughts is opposed and criticized. Its opinion becomes the standard for all truth. Anything that does not agree with its concept is not regarded as the truth. This kind of mind gives no chance for many of God's truths to come in. As a result, the believers cannot help but suffer loss in the matter of life. Experienced believers can all testify to the importance of an opened mind with regard to the revelation of the truth. Many times we do not have understanding because we do not have an opened mind, not because the truth is not preached to us. Sometimes God has to wait for many years before He can cause us to remove all the hindrances and receive His truth. An opened mind in conjunction with an opened spirit is very helpful for believers to grow in the truth.

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Even though the truth may seem foggy in the mind at times, as long as it remains open, the believer will see the preciousness of the truth when the light of the spirit comes. Many times a believer receives a truth which seems meaningless. But after a while, the light of the spirit comes in, and the believer seems to understand everything, and sees the intrinsic content of the truth. Outwardly he may not be able to put it in words, yet inwardly, there is an unspeakable understanding. An opened mind opens the way for the truth to enter in. Yet without the enlightening of the spirit, it will remain useless.

### **THE RULING OF THE MIND**

Every part of a believer's being needs to be kept under control. The same is true with the mind. This should not be ignored even after the mind has been renewed. We must never allow our mind to be as free as it wishes. Otherwise, evil spirits will come and take it over again. We need to realize that our thoughts are the seeds of our conduct. If we are not careful in our thoughts, it will not be long before we fall into sin. After the seed of a thought has been planted, we do not know when it will grow, but sooner or later it will grow. If we carefully trace all the intentional or unintentional transgressions we have committed, we will always find that they were the fruit of previous thoughts. If we let a sinful thought remain in our head without getting rid of it, some time later, even years later, it will become a sinful act. For example, if we have a bad thought about a brother and do not remove it immediately, it will bear fruit, even though we know that it is wrong and have asked God for forgiveness! All improper thoughts will certainly produce improper conduct. Therefore, believers can ill-afford not to deal thoroughly with all their thoughts. If a person cannot keep his thoughts under control, he will find out that he is not able to control anything. This is why Peter said, "Girding up the loins of your mind" (1 Pet. 1:13). This means that we need to control our thoughts and not let them run wild.

God's purpose is to bring "every thought unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Therefore, believers should consider every one of their thoughts under the light of God. We should not allow any thought to run away from our jurisdiction or escape our attention. Every kind of thought has to go through our own examination and be under our own control.

While we are controlling our thoughts, we should make certain that no improper thoughts remain. All improper thoughts should be driven out.

A believer should not let his mind become lazy. This means that he has to apply his thoughts to everything. He should be a spiritual person with a full consciousness, not allowing his thoughts to remain stagnant or become loose. If he does, evil spirits will seize the opportunity for their work. His mind should not be lazy and without any work. It should always be active. Even after he receives a revelation in his spirit, he still should exercise his thought (mind). Do not think that after he has a revelation in his spirit he can act accordingly. He must apply his mind to examine and consider what he is about to do and find out if there is still any self-intention, anything not according to God, and anything that proceeds from the flesh. Is his behavior fully according to the spirit and fully according to God's timing, or is there still something from the self? This kind of consideration will help the spirit to further brighten the revelation in the intuition. If it is not God's revelation, it will be exposed. A mind centered on the self will prevent us from realizing God's will. It is very helpful to disregard our thoughts that are centered on the self. God does not want us to follow blindly. He wants us to apprehend His will clearly. Anything which is not thoroughly apprehended is not reliable.

When the mind is working, believers should be careful not to let it work alone. This means that it

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should not work apart from the ruling of the spirit. When the mind does not hold its own opinion, it helps the believers know the will of God more clearly. But when it becomes independent, it expresses the fallen flesh. For example, many Bible studies are simply pursuits of men's own minds according to their own thoughts and by their own strength. Many people just understand the truth in their mind! This kind of independent action of the mind is very dangerous because this kind of knowledge will just provide more information to one's mind for his thinking and more of a basis for his boasting; however, it will have no effect at all on his life. Believers should do their best to reject all truths that have only been comprehended with their mind. This kind of comprehension will give Satan ground to work. Believers have to awaken to the fact that any knowledge, secured by the mind alone, provides a way for the devil to work. This kind of craving has to be restrained.

The mind should work; it should also rest. If believers allow their mind to work without rest, it will become sick just as their physical body would. Believers must restrain the work of the mind and not allow it to become overactive and beyond control. Elijah's failure under the juniper tree was because his mind had been overworked (1 Kings 19:4).

Believers should keep the mind always in the peace of God. "You will keep the steadfast of mind/In perfect peace / Because he trusts in You" (Isa. 26:3). A restless mind is a mind that is frequently disturbed. This kind of mind will hurt both the spiritual life and the spiritual work. It will lead believers into a countless number of wrong pathways. A restless mind cannot work according to its normal condition. This is why the apostle Paul taught the believers not to allow any anxious thoughts to remain in them (Phil. 4:6). Once such a thought comes in, it should be turned over to God. Then the peace of God will keep their hearts and thoughts (v. 7). The apostle also exhorted the believers to let their mind do some work and not stay idle. He said, "Finally, brothers, what things are true, what things are dignified, what things are righteous, what things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things" (v. 8).

The mind should not be dominated by the emotional life. We should work by faith, understanding its principle, and be quiet and restful in God. This is what "sobermindedness" means (2 Tim. 1:7). Believers should no longer depend on "voices," "visions," or "lights" as the base of their guidance. Rather, they should simply follow the intuition in the spirit. They should not seek after a feeling in the emotion or use any outward stimulation, encouragement, or promise to keep them working; they should only depend on God's principle of right or wrong to determine everything.

The mind also should be kept in humility. Haughty thoughts are very prone to bring believers into error. All thoughts of self-justification, self-boasting, and self-satisfaction cause the mind to think improperly. Many are not lacking in knowledge; however, they are deceived by themselves and become confused because their mind is too haughty, and they care too much for themselves. Therefore, whosoever truly desires to serve the Lord must have "all humility of mind" (Acts 20:19, KJV). Believers should discard all of their self-deceiving thoughts and realize the position that God has arranged for them in the Body of Christ.

### **A MIND FILLED WITH THE WORD OF GOD**

God said, "I will impart My laws into their mind" (Heb. 8:10). We need to read the Scripture more and memorize the Scripture more so that we do not have to search the Bible in times of urgent need. If we read the Scripture, God will fill our every thought with His law. When we need light for our walk, we

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will remember a word in the Scripture immediately. Many believers do not like to read the Bible with their mind; they just like to flip through the Bible arbitrarily after praying and take whatever they find as being from God. They do not realize that this is very unreliable. If our mind is filled with the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will enlighten our mind in an instant through the intuition and cause us to recall an appropriate verse which will show us what to do. We do not need any man to tell us not to steal because we know that this is in the Word of God. This word is already in our mind. If we can be one with the Bible in this way in other matters, we will know God's will in all things.

### **A CALL FOR A PURIFIED MIND**

Believers should continually ask God to purify their mind and keep it fresh. We should ask God to wash out all our bad thoughts and vain imaginations toward God so that what we believe will be fully in accordance with the eternal will of God. We should ask God not only to make us think about Him, but also to make us think about Him in the right way. We should ask God not to let any thought issue from our evil nature. If there is any such thought, we should ask that God's light shine upon it and terminate it immediately. We should ask God to keep us from coming up with any special doctrines according to our old concepts, which would divide the church of God. We also should ask God to keep us from accepting, through the mind, any special teachings that would separate us from the other children of God. We should ask God to cause us to have the same mind as others, waiting patiently in any matter that we have not arrived at a oneness of mind with others. We should ask God to keep us from using the new life to sustain a wrong thought or teachings that proceed from such thoughts. We should ask God to help us die not only to our evil nature, but also to our evil thoughts. We should ask God not to allow our thoughts to be the cause of division in the Body of Christ. We should ask God to keep us from being deceived again. We should ask God to cause all of His children to live by Him so that they will no longer be scattered, damaging one another and wandering about, and so that they will all have the same mind as well as the same life.

## **SECTION NINE**

### **THE ANALYSIS OF THE SOUL**

#### **THE WILL**

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **THE BELIEVER'S WILL**

Man's will is the organ with which man makes decisions. Our willingness or unwillingness, our wanting or not wanting, and our deciding or not deciding are all the functions of our will. The will of

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man is his "rudder." As a ship turns according to the rudder, a man moves according to his will.

Man's will can be said to be his true self, the man himself, because the will represents the man. All the actions of the will are actually the actions of this "man." When we say, "I am willing," we actually mean that our will is willing. When we say, "I want this" or "I decided to do this," it means our will wants it, or that our will decided it. The function of the will is to express the intention of our whole being. The emotion is only what we feel, the mind is only what we think, but the will is what we want. Hence, the will is the most important part of our whole being. Man's will is deeper than his emotion and mind. Therefore, when a believer pursues after the spiritual life, he has to pay attention to the will.

Many are misled to think that "religion" (using this word for the time being) is only a matter of the emotion, and that its only purpose is to make man's emotion comfortable and happy. There are others who think that "religion" should fit in with reason (mind), and that it should not be too slanted toward the emotion. Only a rational religion is believable to them. Little do they know that the real "religion" is neither for the emotion or the mind, but for man to obtain life in the spirit and to bring man's will into subjection to the will of God. If all our experiences do not bring us to the point where we willingly receive all the will of God, they are but very shallow. If the spiritual life of the believers does not find much expression in the will, what good does it do? In such a case, the will, which represents the self, remains the same.

The true way of salvation is to save a man's will. Whatever is not deep enough to save a man's will is vanity. All the wonderful feelings and clear thoughts are only external. A man can obtain happiness, comfort, and peace by believing in God. He can also understand the mysteries of God and have high, wonderful knowledge. Yet he still does not have the deepest union with God. Apart from the union of the will with God, there is no other union in this world. Therefore, after a believer has obtained life, in addition to his intuition, he should pay attention to his will.

### **FREE WILL**

In speaking about man and man's will, we should always keep in mind that, as human beings, we have a free will. This means that man is self-governed; man has an independent will. Whatever is not approved by him cannot be forced upon him, and whatever he opposes cannot be pressed upon him. Having a free will means that man has his own opinion. Man is not a machine to be maneuvered by others. All the actions of a man are controlled by himself. Within man there is a will. This will controls the things within and without. Man is not like a machine to be controlled by any power from outside. Within man there are governing principles that decide man's conduct for him.

This was the condition at the time of God's creation of man. God created a man, not a machine. God told him, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). In these verses we can only see God's command with persuasion and prohibition, but without compulsion. If Adam would have been willing to obey and not eat, it would have been Adam who so willed. When Adam became disobedient and ate, there was no way for God to stop him. This is free will. God put the responsibility of eating or not eating on man and allowed man to choose according to his free will. God did not create an Adam who could not sin, who could not disobey, or who could not steal. This would have made man a machine. God could advise, prohibit, and command, but the responsibility to obey was upon man. Because of His love, God cannot help but command in advance.

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But because of His righteousness, God will not force man to do anything that he is not willing to do. If man wants to obey God, it must be man himself who is willing; God will not force him. God may use many ways to make man willing, but unless man consents, God will not do anything to force him.

This is a very important principle. As we will see later, God's work never goes against this principle, even though the work of evil spirits' does. Therefore, we can differentiate what is of God and what is not.

### **THE FALL AND SALVATION**

Man fell. This fall did great damage to man's free will. In the universe, on that day, it can be said that there were two great opposing wills. On the one hand, there was the holy, good will of God; on the other hand, there was the filthy, rebellious will of Satan. Between these two wills, there was the autonomous, independent, free will of man. When man listened to the word of the devil and disobeyed God, it seemed that he was answering God's will with an eternal "no" and answering the devil's will with an eternal "yes." Man's will became the slave of the devil after the fall because he exercised his own will to choose the devil's will. All of his activities became subject to the will of the devil. As long as man does not overthrow this initial surrender, his will is bound by the devil.

In man's fall, his position and condition became totally of the flesh. This flesh is corrupt to the uttermost. Hence, man's will, like his other faculties, is controlled by the flesh. In this dark situation, nothing that issues from man's will can please God. Even if man wants to seek after God, his activities remain in the realm of the flesh; they have no spiritual value. When he is in this condition, he can serve God in many ways according to his own ideas, but all these are merely "self-imposed" means of worshipping (Col. 2:23), and they are unacceptable to God.

Unless man receives God's new life and serves God in this new life, his activities are of the flesh no matter how he serves. Even if he has the intention to work for God and suffer for God, it is altogether vain. If man is not saved, his will may aspire for the high things; it may be toward good and toward God, but it is still useless because in God's eyes it is not a matter of how the fallen will wants to work for Him, but a matter of how He wants man to work for Him. Man may initiate and prepare many good works; he may think that this is serving God, but if the works are not initiated and carried out by God, man is just worshipping his own will!

The same is true in the matter of salvation. While man is in his flesh, even if he wants to be saved and have eternal life, this will cannot please God. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God..who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13). Even if man wants to be saved, he cannot make himself saved. The idea of wanting to be saved must come from God. Believers think that there is nothing better than a man who is trying to be saved, seek the way of life, and be a good disciple of Christ. But God tells us that in the matter of regeneration and in everything relating to God, man's will is useless.

There are many of God's children who do not understand why in John 1, God says that man's will is useless, while in Revelation He says, "Let him who wills take the water of life freely" (22:17). It seems in the latter case that man's own will is wholly responsible for his salvation. Furthermore, in John 5 the Lord Jesus spoke of the reason why the Jews were not saved. It was because "you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (v. 40). Here again man's will is responsible for man's perdition. Is the Bible contradictory on this matter? What is the purpose of such different speakings? If we

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understand the meaning of these verses, we will understand what God requires of us in our Christian life.

God's will is "not intending [willing] that any perish but that all advance to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9) because He "desires [wills] all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, this matter does not involve God making a decision as to who will be saved and who will perish; that question is settled. Now the question is what kind of attitude do sinners hold toward God's will. If a man is naturally religious or not worldly, or if he tries to be a Christian through his tradition, environment, or family, he will see that he is as far from God's life as all the other sinners. If he resolves, determines, and chooses to be a Christian on the basis of some sudden excitement or thrilling inspiration, his efforts are still useless. The main question is how does man treat God's will. God loves man, but is man willing to be loved? Christ wants man to come to Him, but is man willing to come? The Holy Spirit wants to give man life, but does man want to have life and live? Man's will is useful in the will of God. But the question remains, how will man's will treat God's will?

Have we seen the difference here? If a man initiates the pursuit of salvation, he will still perish. Many religionists of this world belong to this category. If, upon hearing the gospel, man is willing to receive what God wants to give him, he will be saved. One way is for man to consider himself as the source of initiation; the other is to place himself in a receiving position. One is for man to initiate; the other is for God to initiate and for man to accept His will. Therefore, these two do not contradict each other. Rather, they teach us a very important lesson. John 1 speaks of man being willing. John 5 and Revelation 22 speak of man accepting God's will. Hence, we see such expressions as "not willing" (John 5:40) and "wills" (Rev. 22:17). It is not a question of purpose, but a question of where the purpose comes from.

God instructs us that, even in such a great and wonderful thing as salvation, if it issues from the self, it will still not please God and will be rejected. If we want to advance in our spiritual life, we must understand all the principles God used to deal with us at the time we were saved because these original principles point out to us the principles we should live by in our spiritual life in the future. One of the greatest principles is that the intention of our flesh does not have any value before God. Whatever comes out of ourselves, that is, out of our old creation, is not acceptable to God. Even if we are pursuing after something as wonderful and important as salvation, it will still be rejected by God. We should remember at all times that God does not care for the differences between good things, bad things, big things, and small things; God only asks where these things come from and whether or not they are initiated and carried out by Himself. We were not saved because we wanted to be saved, but because God wanted it to be so. Hence, in our entire life we should see that all activities, even the most wonderful ones, are completely useless unless the work is done by God through us. If we do not learn the principles for our living from the very first step of salvation, we will have endless failures afterwards.

As far as man's condition goes, while he was a sinner, his will was rebellious toward God. Therefore, in addition to giving man a new life (which we have covered before), God has to bring man back to Himself. Just as man's will is the essence of man himself, God's will is God Himself, the true life of God. Therefore, saying that God wants to bring man back to Himself is the same as saying that God wants to bring man's will back to His own will. This is what the believer should endeavor to do his entire life. Even at the first step of salvation, God is working in this direction. Therefore, when God, through the Holy Spirit, causes a man to be convicted of sin, He causes him to realize that he has

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nothing to say. Even if God condemns him and sends him to hell, there is nothing he can say. When God reveals to man, through the gospel, His will on the cross of the Lord Jesus, He makes man say willingly and wholeheartedly, "I am willing to accept God's salvation." The initial step of man's salvation is the salvation of his will. A sinner's believing and receiving are nothing other than being one who "wills [to] take the water of life," resulting in salvation. A sinner's objection and resistance are nothing other than being one who is "not willing to come to [Him] that [he] may have life," resulting in perdition. The battle between man's salvation and perdition is fought in man's will. Man's fall in the beginning was due to the rebellion of his will against God's will. Consequently, man's salvation is just the submission of his will to God's will again.

Although a man's will is not totally in union with God after he is saved, his fallen will was somewhat uplifted when he rejected Satan, self, and the world at the time he received the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, his will is renewed through believing in the Lord's word and through receiving God's Spirit. After man is regenerated, he receives a new spirit, a new heart, and a new life. Therefore, the will now has a new master and is controlled and directed by this master. If the will submits, it becomes a part of this new life; if it opposes, it becomes a strong enemy to this new life.

The renewed will is more important than any other part of man (the soul). Thoughts can be wrong, feelings can be wrong, but the will should never be wrong. Whatever else is wrong is not as severe as the will being wrong, because the will is man's self as well as the faculty that motivates the whole man. Once it becomes wrong, God's purpose will be frustrated immediately.

### **SUBDUING THE WILL**

What then is salvation? Salvation is nothing other than God saving man out of himself and into God. Salvation has the aspects of termination and union. It terminates the self and unites God and man. Any way of salvation that does not have the goal of saving man from himself and into union with God is not genuine. If a method of salvation cannot save man from himself and into union with God, it is only empty words. Real spiritual life is the severing from that which is of the animal and entering into that which is divine. Everything that belongs to the creature must go; the creatures should only enjoy all that the Creator is in the Creator Himself. The creature must become nothing before real salvation can be manifested. Genuine greatness does not depend on how much we have; it depends on how much we lose. Genuine life can only be seen in the losing of one's self. If the natural disposition, life, and activities of the creature are not totally done away with, there will be no place for God's life to be manifested. Our "self" is often the enemy of God's life. If we do not lose the intentions and experiences that are for ourselves, our spiritual life will suffer great loss.

What is the self? This is one of the most difficult questions to answer. Although we cannot answer the question one hundred percent accurately, it may be more or less accurate to say that the "self" is the "self-will." The essence of man's self is just his will because the will reveals how the man actually is, what he actually wants, and what he is willing to do. Except for the work done in man by the grace of God, all that man has, whether he is a sinner or a saint, is completely opposed to God. The disposition of created man is always natural, and it is never of the same kind as God's life.

Salvation is nothing other than saving man out of his fleshly, natural, created, animal, and selfish will. We should pay attention to this point. In addition to God giving us a new life, the return of our will to God is the greatest work of salvation. God gives us new life for the purpose of turning our will back to Him. The gospel is to lead us to a union with God in our will. Otherwise, the gospel has not achieved

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its mission. God does not intend to save just our emotion or our mind; He intends to save our will because once the will is saved, the rest will be included. To a certain extent, man may unite with God in the mind. He may also share the same emotion with God in many things. But the most important and the most complete union with God rests in the union of man's will with God's will. This union of the will includes all the other union of man and God. If the mind or the emotion is united with God, but the will is not, this union is still short. Since our whole being moves according to our will, our will is clearly the most powerful part of our being. Noble as the spirit may be, it too submits to the governing of the will. (We will see this in a moment.) The spirit is not sufficient to represent the whole being, because the spirit is the part where man has fellowship with God. The body is not sufficient to represent the whole being either, as it is the part where man contacts the world. But the will stands for the attitude, opinion, and condition of man's true self; therefore, it has the power and sufficiency to represent the whole being. If the will is not joined completely to God, other unions are shallow and empty. If the will that governs our entire being is in complete union with God, our entire being will be totally submissive under God's hand.

There are two unions between God and man; one is the union in life, the other is the union in the will. The union with God in life is through receiving of the very life of God at the time of our regeneration. Just as God lives by the Holy Spirit, we also should live by the Holy Spirit from now on. This is the union in life. This means that God and we have only one life. This is inward. However, the will expresses this one life. This is why there is still the need for the union of the will outwardly. The union of our will with God means that God and we have only one will. These two unions are mutually related and dependent. At this moment we are only speaking about the union of the will because the other is beyond our present scope. The union of the new life is spontaneous because the new life is the life of God. However, the union of the will is more difficult because the will belongs to us.

As we mentioned before, God wants us to do away with the soul-life, not the function of the soul. Hence, after we are united to God in life, God wants to renew our soul (mind, emotion, and will) to bring our soul into oneness with our new life, as well as into oneness with His will. Since our will is the most important part, after regeneration, God daily is seeking the union of our will with His will. If our will is not fully one with God, it means that salvation is not fully accomplished, because man himself is still not in harmony with God. God not only wants us to have His life, but also for ourselves to be in union with Him. The will absolutely belongs to us. If there is no union in the will, we ourselves are not yet united with God.

If we study the Bible carefully, we will see that among all our sins, there is one common principle -- rebellion. Adam brought us to perdition through this sin, while Christ brought us to salvation through obedience. We were originally sons of rebellion; now God wants us to be the children of obedience. Rebellion is just following after our will, while submission is following after God's will. The whole purpose of God's salvation is to have us forsake our will and be in union with His will. Today believers often make a big mistake in this matter. They think that spiritual life is happiness in the feeling and knowledge in the mind. They endeavor to pursue after all kinds of feelings and biblical knowledge, thinking that these are the best. In the meantime, they do many wonderful, great, and important works according to their feelings and thoughts, thinking that these must be well-pleasing to God. Little do they know that God's demands are not related to how man feels or what he thinks; He wants man's will to be united with Him. He desires to see a believer wholeheartedly seeking after what He wants and willingly obeying all that He says. Unless he unconditionally submits to God and willingly accepts the complete will of God, his so-called spiritual life is superficial, no matter how holy and happy it makes

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him feel or what he receives. All visions, strange dreams, voices, prophecies, zeal, works, activities, and labors are outward. If a believer does not resolve in his will to go all the way to finish God's course, whatever he does is useless.

If our will is in union with God, we immediately stop the activities that issue from the self. This means that there is no longer any independent action. We are dead toward ourselves, but alive toward God. This does not mean that we can act for God according to our own impulses or methods. It means that we move according to the moving of God and are severed from all the activities of the self. In other words, this kind of union is a change of who is the center, a change of who is the initiating one. In the past all of our works were centered upon the self, and all of our activities were initiated by the self. Now everything is unto God. God does not question the nature of the matters that we have initiated; He only asks who initiated it. Anything that is not delivered from the self, regardless of how good it is, is ignored by God.

### **THE HAND OF GOD**

Although God's children are saved, they have not fully obeyed God's will. As a result, God has to use many ways to lead the believers into full submission. God moves the believers with His Spirit and stirs them up with His love so that they will submit to His will and not love, pursue, or do anything outside of Himself. It is a pity when God's moving and stirring do not produce the desired results in the believers. Then God has to stretch forth His hand to bring the believers to the place where He wants them to be. His hand is primarily manifested in circumstances. God applies His hand heavily upon the believers to crush, break, and bind them so that their will can no longer be hardened before Him.

As long as the believer is not deeply united with the Lord, God is not satisfied. The purpose of God's salvation is to have the saved ones in complete union with His will. In order for God to bring us to this point, He has to use the environment; He causes us to encounter many frustrations. He causes us to be heartbroken, distressed, and afflicted. He causes many practical crosses to come upon us. Through these things, He causes us to bow our head in submission. Our will is very strong, and unless it is hit by God in many ways, it will not submit to Him. If we are willing to come under the mighty hand of God and accept His discipline, the will which occupies our life will experience a cutting work again and again and will be delivered to death again and again. If we resist God, heavier afflictions will come upon us and subdue us.

God wants to strip us of everything. After believers are truly regenerated, they all have one thought --to do God's will. Some openly make this kind of promise, and some hold this intent in secret. God will prove whether such a promise (or intent) is true or not. He causes the believers to pass through a stripping that they do not like. He causes them to lose material things, health, fame, position, and usefulness. He eventually causes them to lose the happiness and zeal in their feeling, as well as His presence and sympathy. He will bring the believers to the point where everything other than God's will is expendable to them. He wants them to realize that as long as something is according to His will, they should receive it, even though they may suffer physically or in their feelings. If God delights in afflicting them, stripping them of everything, taking away their "spiritual usefulness," or causing them to become dry, dark, and lonely, they should accept it willingly. God wants the believers to realize that He saved them, not for the purpose that they would enjoy anything, but for His will. Therefore, whether there is gain or loss, happiness or dryness, the feeling of God's presence or forsaking, believers should always be mindful of God's will. If it is God's will to forsake us, can we take pleasure in being

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forsaken? When a sinner first believes in the Lord, his goal is heaven. This is all right. After being taught in God, he will come to realize that it is for the will of God that he believed in God. Even if the result of believing in God is to go to hell, he would still believe. After the believer has been thoroughly taught, he will no longer be mindful of his own gain or loss. If he can glorify God by going to hell, he is willing to do so. This is, of course, only an example. But believers must see that their believing in the Lord, while living on earth, is not for themselves, but for the will of God. Their greatest happiness, greatest privilege, and greatest glory are to forsake their own corrupted, natural, and fleshly will and unite with the will of God to fulfill God's heart's desire. The creature's gain and loss, glory and shame, bitterness and happiness, are not worthy to be considered. If the Most High One can be satisfied, whatever the lowly one may become is of no concern. This is the unique way for a believer to lose himself in God!

### **A TWO-STEP ENDEAVOR**

There is a two-step endeavor in the union of the will with God. One step is for God to subdue the activities of our will; the other step is for God to subdue the life of our will. Often our will is subdued by God only in certain particular matters. In these matters we think that we have completely submitted to God. However, there is still a secret tendency for our will to become active once given the chance. God not only wants our will to be restricted by Him in the aspect of its activities, He also wants the tendency of our will to be completely broken, smashed, and destroyed as if its very nature is changed. Strictly speaking, a submissive will and a harmonious will are different. Submission is only in the aspect of activities, but harmony is in the aspect of life, nature, and tendency. A servant, who fulfills all the orders of his master, merely has a submissive will. The will of a son who is intimately sympathetic towards his parents' heart is harmonious with his father's will because he not only does what he should do, but he also delights in doing it. A submissive will merely stops its own activities, but a harmonious will is one with God and is of the same heart as God. A will that is in complete harmony with God is one in which one's whole heart is placed in the will of God. Only those who are in harmony with God can truly comprehend God's heart. If a believer has not reached the point where his will and God's will are in complete harmony, he has not yet experienced the highest point of the spiritual life. Submission to God is good, but when grace has completely overcome the natural disposition, the believer will be in complete harmony with God. Indeed, the union of the will is the highest point of the believer's experience of life.

Many people think that they already have totally lost their will. Little do they know that they are actually far from it. In all the temptations and trials, they only see the submissive will, not the harmonious will. The submissive will is the will without resistance, not the will without the self. Who does not want to gain something for himself, to reserve something for himself? Who does not want to have gold, silver, honor, freedom, happiness, convenience, high position and a little of whatever? A person may think that his heart does not care for these things. But while he still has them, he does not realize how tightly he is bound by them. Only when he is about to lose them will he realize how much he is unwilling to part with them. Sometimes a submissive will is quite compatible with the will of God. But at other times, a person feels that in the life of his own will he is struggling severely against God's will. If not for the work of God's grace, it would be hard to overcome.

Hence, a submissive will is still not perfect. Although the will has been broken and no longer has the strength to resist God, it has not reached the point of being one with God. We admit that reaching the

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point of not being able to resist is already a great mercy of God. Generally speaking, a submissive will is already dead. Strictly speaking, however, it still has a thread of unbroken life within it. There is still a kind of hidden inclination within, affectionately desiring the former way. Hence, it seems that we are quick, happy, and diligent to fulfill God's will in some matters more than in others. In both cases we are fulfilling God's will, but there is a difference in the degree of personal preference. If the self-life is indeed put to death completely, the believer will see that he holds the same attitude in all matters concerning the fulfillment of God's will. The difference in slowness, fastness, bitterness, happiness, as well as the difference in the effort we apply, indicates that our will is not yet in harmony with God.

The two conditions of the will may be illustrated by the examples of Lot's wife, the Israelites' coming out of Egypt, and the prophet Balaam. In the experience of Lot's wife coming out of Sodom, the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and Balaam's blessing of the Israelites, they were all carrying out God's will. They were all subdued by God and not acting according to their own will. Yet the inclination within them was not one with God. Therefore, the results were all failures. Even when the direction of our steps is right, our heart is often privately not in harmony with God. As a result, we become fallen.

### **THE WAY TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL**

God will never be submissive to us. He is not happy with anything but His will and our submission to Him. Things that are fairer, better, greater, and more important cannot replace God's will. What God will fulfill is His own will. If He does not fulfill His own will, it is hard to expect us to fulfill it. In God's eyes, all the best things are corrupted as long as they contain the element of man's self. Many things are wonderful and profitable if they are done according to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. But if they are done by man himself, their value before God is completely different. Hence, it is not a matter of man's tendency or a matter of the nature of things; it is a matter of what God's will is. This is the first point to remember.

Now we need to ask how man's will can be in harmony with God's will. How can man be delivered from having the self-will as his center to having God's will as his center? The key to the whole matter is the soul-life. The degree to which we are severed from the control of the soul-life is the degree of the union between God and us because nothing hinders our union with God besides the soul-life. We seek after God's will to the extent that we lose our soul-life and to the extent that our will takes God as its center. This is because the new life is naturally inclined toward God and is suppressed only by the soul-life. The way to achieve the goal is to deliver the soul-life to death.

Without God, man perishes. Without God, everything is vain. Everything that is outside of God is of the flesh (the self). Therefore, outside of God, whatever is done by one's own effort and according to one's own thought is condemned. A believer must deny all of his own strength and desires. He must not care for himself in anything and not do anything with his self. He must completely trust God in everything and go forward step by step according to God's ways, waiting upon God's time, and according to God's requirement. He must be willing to accept the strength, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and work that is from God as his own. He must confess that God is the source of everything he has. Only in this way is harmony possible.

This is truly a "narrow way," but it is not a difficult way. It is narrow because each step is regulated by God's will. This way has only one principle, which is to not reserve any ground for the self. As such, it is a narrow way. A little deviation from God's will takes us away from this way. However, this is not a

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difficult way. When the soul-life is consumed, habits, hobbies, desires, and cravings are broken one by one, and nothing opposes God anymore. Consequently, one does not feel that it is a difficult way. Unfortunately, many believers have not even entered the door or walked on this way. There are also some who do not have patience and who leave this way before reaching the point of sweetness. But whether the period of hardship is long or short, one thing is certain: only this way is the way of life. This is the way of God. Therefore, it is true and sure. Whoever wants to have abundant life has no choice but to walk in this way.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **PASSIVITY AND THE DANGER OF PASSIVITY**

Today Christians lack two kinds of knowledge. Because of this lack, they fall into endless misery that they cannot recover from. These two kinds of knowledge are: (1) the condition for evil spirits to work, and (2) the principle of spiritual life. Because of ignorance, Satan and his evil spirits are given the greatest advantage, and the church of God experiences the greatest suffering. "My people are destroyed / Because of a lack of that knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). This is truly a word written for today's believers. Much of what man regards as knowledge is merely his ideas. Hence, they are of no use. Apart from this knowledge, godly knowledge is indispensable to the believers. The absence of godly knowledge will result in grave damage. It is sad that in a time of widespread ignorance as today, believers still do not humble themselves before God and seek after the truth that God would reveal. They are still proud and boastful of their familiarity with the Scriptures and the abundance of their experiences. On the one hand, they fall into danger and do not know how to turn back; they fall into a hopeless situation and have no idea of the need for deliverance. On the other hand, they boast of the richness of their knowledge. How pitiful this is!

### **DEMON-POSSESSION**

In the four Gospels there are many accounts of demon-possession. There are still many cases of demon-possession among the "heathen" today. If we tell a believer that Christians can be possessed by demons (or evil spirits), he will be greatly surprised. An ordinary believer in China thinks that only heathens have the possibility of being possessed by demons and that it is not possible for Christians to have the same experience. There is also a misunderstanding that once a person is possessed by demons, he is like a lunatic. But the Bible tells us that demons not only caused people to fall suddenly into water and fire (Matt. 17:15); they also caused a woman to be bent double (Luke 13:11) while she was still very gentle and quiet.

Believers realize that there is a possibility for them to be seduced, tempted, attacked, or deceived, but they do not realize that there is also a possibility for believers to be attached to—to be possessed—by demons. When they first believed, they received many wrong teachings; now they think that as long as a Christian has Christ, he will not be possessed by demons. They say this because they think that a Christian would never lose his mind like some heathen. However, this teaching is not found in the Bible. Neither is it confirmed by the experience of the saints. God's children are very unclear that evil spirits can change their appearance and attach themselves to the believers' bodies. Today there is an unexpectedly great number of believers who are possessed by demons. The unalterable fact is that

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many believers are possessed by demons.

What exactly does it mean to be possessed by demons? After a believer understands the meaning, he will realize that it is possible for Christians to be possessed by demons. "Being demon-possessed," or simply "being possessed," means that evil spirits have attached (cleaved) themselves to the whole or part of man's body. Evil spirits attach themselves to the ground they have gained. As long as they have a footing, no matter how small it may be, they can keep on working until they gain the entire being. Common believers think that demon-possession must be as severe as the cases recorded in the Gospels. They do not know that those were all extreme cases. Furthermore, according to the Gospels, the degree of suffering was not the same in those who were possessed by demons; their suffering was quite different from each other. The two cases we spoke of earlier were entirely different from each other.

Saints—those who are entirely consecrated—can be possessed by evil spirits in the same way that others can because they often unconsciously fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work; therefore, they give ground for evil spirits to attach themselves to them. Today many believers are possessed by demons, though the degree of possession may be different. However, they do not realize that they are possessed. They consider their strange and unusual experiences as "natural" and as either from their "self" or from sin. They explain their experiences in this way because these experiences do not outwardly look like they are from evil spirits.

There is a law in everything that God has created. This means that every activity follows a definite pattern. There is also a pattern in the work of evil spirits. For every cause, there is an effect. If any man fulfills the condition for evil spirits to work (whether this person purposely fulfills it, as witches, necromancers, or those who practice planchette do, or unintentionally fulfills it, as Christians may do), they will definitely work on this person. We should realize that there is a law to all the activities of evil spirits. As long as a person fulfills the condition required by the law, he will immediately experience the activities of evil spirits. This is a law of cause and effect. Fire will burn a person, water will drown a person; these are laws. No one has ever put himself into a fire without getting burned, and no one has ever submerged himself into water without getting drowned. It is the same with regard to the work of evil spirits. As long as one fulfills the condition that evil spirits need to attach to him, they will attach themselves to him. Once there is a cause, there must be an effect. It does not matter if you are a Christian or not; if you fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work, they will work. Evil spirits attach themselves to all those who fulfill the condition for their work. Hence, a Christian is not spared from this danger just because he is a Christian. A Christian cannot put himself into fire to be burned or into water to be drowned and say that he will not be injured or killed because he is a Christian. Similarly, he cannot fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work and say that he will not be possessed by demons because he is a Christian. Fire burns everyone who puts himself into it; water drowns everyone who puts himself into it. Likewise, evil spirits attach themselves to everyone who gives them the ground. It does not matter whether or not he is a Christian.

For this reason, if a believer gives evil spirits the opportunity to work, they certainly will not give up; rather, they will take the opportunity to attach themselves to the believer.

What is the condition for evil spirits to attach themselves to man? What must man do before he will be possessed by evil spirits? What condition does he have to meet before evil spirits will work? This is the most crucial question. The Bible calls this condition the "place" (Eph. 4:27). This "place" or "room" is the empty spot left in man for evil spirits. This place is the footing that evil spirits can gain in man. Evil spirits attach themselves to man according to the place they are given. The amount of place they are

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given is the degree to which they attach themselves to man. Whether this place is given by a heathen or by a Christian, demons will attach themselves to that person just the same. Whatever in man allows evil spirits a spot to attack, an opportunity to invade, a footing to stand on, can be called a "place." If a man gives place to evil spirits, he cannot help but be possessed by them. Since there is a cause, there must be an effect. If a believer gives place to evil spirits, relying on the notion that he will not be possessed because he is a Christian, he has already been deeply deceived by evil spirits.

In short, the place that the believers give to the devil is sin. Sin includes all the places. When believers tolerate sin, they tolerate the evil spirits behind sin. Any kind of sin will give place to evil spirits. Nevertheless, sin can be classified into two kinds: one is active and the other is passive. Active sin is the sin that man commits, such as committing evil with the hands, beholding lewdness with the eyes, listening to licentious sounds with the ears, or speaking profanity with the mouth. These all give evil spirits an opportunity to attach themselves to the hands, eyes, ears, and mouth. There is an invitation for evil spirits to come and dwell in whatever part of man's body commits sin. We should pay attention to three matters in determining how active sin develops a relationship with evil spirits: (1) some sins do not result in the possession by evil spirits, (2) other sins call for the possession by evil spirits, and (3) still other sins are caused by being possessed with evil spirits. If a believer is possessed by evil spirits as a result of committing some sin, he should specifically forsake that sin. After he regains that ground, he will be delivered. Otherwise, he will see the ground that he has given to the evil spirits gradually increase and not stop until his whole being is possessed. Many believers are still not delivered from besetting sins, even though they have accepted the fact of their crucifixion with Christ, because the source of their sickness is not just the "flesh," but the possession of their bodies by supernatural, evil spirits.

This aspect of affording evil spirits an opportunity to work through an active sin, comparatively speaking, is easier to apprehend. Most believers believe in this. We will not speak more concerning it because it is outside our present scope. We will now pay attention to the second aspect of sin—the place given to evil spirits by passivity. This is the aspect that is least understood by today's believers; most believers err in this aspect. Furthermore, this kind of sin is in the realm of the will. Therefore, we will speak of it in detail.

There is a difference between active sin and passive sin. A person commonly regards active sin as sin and does not regard passive sin as sin. In addition to calling the various unrighteous acts committed by man on his own as sin, the Bible also says, "Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). The Bible not only regards what man does as sin; it also regards what man does not do as sin. Sin is the place where evil spirits attach themselves. (We will call this demon-possession from now on.) Therefore, besides an actively-committed sin, which gives ground for demon-possession, there is also a passive sin of not doing something, which gives ground for demon-possession.

Passive sin gives ground to evil spirits through passivity in the believers. In God's eyes, both giving up the use of any part of our being or using it wrongly are sin. God has endowed us with various faculties. They are not there for us to use wrongly or leave unused. When a believer does not use any part of his faculties, allowing it to fall into passivity, a way is opened for evil spirits to use it instead of the believer. This will give place for demon-possession. Although all believers admit that sin is a condition for demon-possession, they do not realize that passivity also is a kind of sin and a condition for demon-possession. Once the place is given, a person cannot help but be possessed; once he is possessed, he

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cannot help but suffer.

### **PASSIVITY**

The reason "heathens" and fleshly believers are demon-possessed is mainly due to sin. But the reason some consecrated believers are demon-possessed can be stated in one word, "passivity." The meaning of passivity is that the will no longer actively rules and directs a person's spirit, soul, body, or any part; consequently, he does not use his will to choose and decide everything that is related to himself. Being passive is the opposite of being active. There are two aspects to the passivity of the believers: (1) losing self-control—this means one cannot control his entire being or a part of it; (2) losing freedom—this means one cannot make decisions that would coincide with God's will. For a believer to be passive means that he does not use his various faculties, and that he allows his faculties to fall into a state of passivity. Though he has a mouth, he does not speak; rather, he wants the Holy Spirit to speak through his mouth. Though he has hands, he does not use them; rather, he wants God to use his hands. He is unwilling to move any part of his being; he wants God to move them. He thinks that he is totally consecrated to God and that he no longer needs to use any part of his being. In this way he falls into passivity and allows evil spirits to deceive him and attach themselves to the passive members of his body.

Many believers accept what we spoke about in the last chapter concerning the union with God's will. However, they are misled to think that such a union with God, such a comprehension of His heart's desire and such a denial of one's own intention require that they passively submit to God. They think that their will should be nullified and that they should become like robots. They assume that the meaning of submission to God is not using their own will anymore and not using any part of their bodies through their will. Such a person will no longer (1) choose, (2) decide, and (3) use his own will to act. Outwardly, there seems to be an indication of a great victory because he used to be stubborn in his will, but suddenly he has become very submissive and is as weak as water. He does not have an opinion in anything and is completely submissive in following orders. He does not use his mind or will, and he does not exercise the discernment of his conscience. Rather, he simply becomes a person of complete obedience—whenever God moves, he would move. But this is an inducement for demon-possession.

Since the believer has consecrated to God this way, he naturally falls into a passive state. He does not move at all. All day long he quietly waits for an external force to move him. When there is such an external force, he moves. Otherwise, he remains calm. When this condition continues for a long time, he finds that he cannot act at the times he should be acting because there is an absence of an external coercing force. Perhaps he even wants to move, but in the absence of an external urging force, he cannot move. As this drags on, the believer finds that without an external force, he is not able to move even one step. Even when the will wants to move, it seems as if it is suppressed by something. (He seems to have a kind of bondage around him, which restricts him from moving as he wishes.) He must wait until an external force urges him before he moves. In this circumstance, the believer thinks he is very submissive to God because he does not have any activity. But even if he desired to move, he could not do so.

### **THE BELIEVER'S IGNORANCE**

When a believer has fallen deeply into passivity, he may think that he is submissive to God. But he

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does not realize that evil spirits are utilizing his passive state to accomplish their deceit. The believer thinks he must be very passive before he can truly submit to God and before he can be truly in union with God in his will. He does not realize that God has no use for his passivity. It is the power of darkness that has use for his passivity. Moreover, God requires that the believer exercise his own will to actively work with Him. This is what the Bible repeatedly says: "If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know..." (John 7:17), and "Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (15:7). God does not annihilate our will.

Human beings have a free will. God never infringes upon this and does not change this. He wants man to actively work with Him. Though He wants us to be submissive to Him, He does not annihilate our personality. (Author's note: in this book, "personality" refers to "man's person," not "man's character." The readers should take heed.) He wants us to propose on our own and choose what He wants us to choose. He will not choose in our place, allowing our will to lapse into a state of deadness. He requires active cooperation from us. God delights to see man reaching the highest level of attainment as a creature, which is the total freedom of the will. God in creation established man's free will. God in redemption regains man's free will. At creation, God did not want man to obey Him mechanically. Therefore, after redemption, He definitely does not want man to follow His direction like a machine. Indeed, God is so great that He does not require man to become wood and stone to submit to Him. His way is to rely on the working of His Spirit in us; the Spirit causes us to obey Him willingly. But He will never make any decision on our behalf. The difference here is truly immeasurable.

The principle of God's work and Satan's work in man is the same. When God created man, He wanted man to have a free will. This is why He gave man a free will. He wanted man to have the right to choose and determine everything related to himself. Though God is the Lord of the universe, He delights in being limited and does not infringe upon man's free will. He does not want to force man to be loyal to Him. Similarly, without man's consent (consciously or unconsciously), Satan cannot occupy any part of man. Both God and the devil require the permission of man's will before they can work in man. Just as man "wants" a good thing and God accomplishes this for him, if man "wants" an evil thing, evil spirits accomplish this for him. This is what we see in the garden of Eden.

Before man is regenerated, his will is a slave to Satan and cannot be free. But with a regenerated and victorious believer, his will is freed; he is able to choose all that is of God. However, Satan will not give up on these newly regenerated believers. He will scheme to gain them. He knows he cannot obtain their clear permission for evil spirits to come into them and rule them. Therefore, he uses deceit to obtain the required permission. We should note that Satan must obtain the believer's permission. However, a believer will certainly not give him the permission. This is why he can only steal this permission through deceptive maneuvering. Evil spirits will not come into a person without first gaining the permission of man's will. Even the degree to which they enter is determined by man's will.

Evil spirits know if a believer is fully submissive to God and willing to pay the price to follow Him to the end. Hence, they deceive the believer by counterfeiting God Himself, by counterfeiting God's voice, God's work, and God's presence. Among the believers who have contact with the spiritual realm, there are many who assume that certain things are from God because of supernatural experiences they receive in their feeling. Consequently, they accept many counterfeits of the evil spirits and place themselves in danger. In this way, believers are deceived and regard the counterfeits of the evil spirits as genuine, allowing the evil spirits to continue working on them. In the beginning, they were merely deceived. But after they have given their consent, they passively allow evil spirits to work! In this way,

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evil spirits gain the approval of the will and deceive them further, to the extent that certain parts of their being become possessed by evil spirits. Being passive is the first step to demon-possession.

If a believer is aware of the condition for the working of evil spirits and aware of the principle of spiritual life, he will not fall into this kind of danger. However, if the believer does not know that passivity affords convenience to the evil spirits and does not know that spiritual life requires an active will to work with God, he may allow his will to become passive. We should note in particular that God never replaces man's will with His will. Man should be responsible for what he has done. God will not make any proposal for him.

Actually, if the activity of evil spirits is not present in a passive person, his passivity will merely result in laziness and inactivity. In ordinary cases of "inactivity" (i.e., when there is no activity of evil spirits), an inactive person can become active again at any time. But when he falls into passivity and becomes demon-possessed, he cannot become active again even if he wants to, that is, even if his will wants to.

Here we can see the difference between God's work and Satan's work on man. God wants man to be entirely consecrated to Him; He wants man to exercise all the faculties of his entire being to cooperate with His Holy Spirit. Satan wants man's will to be wholly passive; he wants man to stop all activities and allow his evil spirits to act on his behalf. God wants man to actively, consciously, and willingly choose and act according to His will so that man's spirit, soul, and body will be totally free. Satan wants man to be his passive slave and prisoner. God wants man to be independent and free and his own master in a conscious way. Satan wants man to be his puppet, machine, and worker. God never requires man to stop his activity before He works. Satan, on the contrary, wants man to be entirely passive and stop all activities. God wants man to work with Him in a conscious way. Satan wants man to be passive so that he can coerce man into obeying him. God requires that man stop only his sinful activity, whether it is out of his nature or life, because only in this way can man work with the Holy Spirit. But Satan wants man to stop all of his activities—even the function of the soul—because he wants to act on behalf of man. He wants man to be an unconscious machine only, bearing no responsibility of his own.

It is a very dreadful thing that believers do not understand the principle of God being in man and working through man. They think that God wants them to become dead like wood and stone and be maneuvered by Him. They do not realize that when God created man, He gave man a free will. It is true that He does not want man's will to demand anything or do anything apart from Him. But He does not want man to be without a will and obey Him like a machine either. As long as the believer's will chooses what God wants, He is satisfied. God does not require man to become a person without a will. There are many things that the believers have to do themselves; God will not do these things for them. Today there is a wrong teaching that says one should entrust everything to God and allow Him to do everything for him. This kind of teaching assumes that we do not need to lift our hands or move our feet; it assumes that God will lift and move them for us. It says that we should wholly yield to the Holy Spirit within and let Him arrange everything for us. There is some truth to this teaching. But the errors mixed in with it are perhaps more than the truth contained in it! (More will be spoken about this in the next chapter.)

### DANGER

Because the believers are so ignorant, they are deceived by the power of darkness and unconsciously taken in by Satan's deceit. They fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work and are thus possessed by demons. We should note the order in this matter because it is very crucial: (1) the believer becomes

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ignorant, (2) he is deceived, (3) he becomes passive, and (4) he becomes demon-possessed. The believer's ignorance is the initial cause for demon-possession. Because of the believer's ignorance concerning the principle of the evil spirits' work and the Holy Spirit's demand, Satan is able to deceive him. If the believer knows the truth, knows how to work with God, and knows the rules of God's working, he will not accept Satan's lies. When he is deceived by evil spirits, he thinks that his entire being should be passive in order for God to live and work through him. Consequently, he accepts many supernatural manifestations of evil spirits and considers them to be from God. In this way, he is deceived further, and evil spirits are able to attach themselves to him.

(1) When a believer gives place to evil spirits, it is an invitation for evil spirits to attach themselves to him. (2) After they come in, they will certainly manifest themselves through their activities. (3) If the believer misreads these activities and does not know that they come from the devil, he will give more place to the evil spirits because he has already believed their lies. This is a cycle which repeats itself over and over again. In this way, the believer's possession by demons deepens day after day. As soon as the believer falls into passivity, that is, after he gives place to evil spirits, the danger cannot be overstated.

When a believer falls into passivity and does not make a choice in everything pertaining to himself, he will passively submit to all that comes upon him from the environment. He will think that God is making decisions on his behalf, in his environment as well as in the people related to him, and that he only needs to submit passively. Everything that befalls him becomes God's will and God's ordering; he silently accepts them because he thinks that they are given to him by God. After a while, he finds that he cannot make any decision concerning anything in his life. He cannot make any decision regarding many things that he ought to do and cannot take the initiative in these things. He is afraid to speak out what he likes and is reluctant to speak out what he decides. Others can choose, decide, initiate, and act. But he is like seaweed floating on the water, being tossed about at the mercy of the wind and the waves. He longs to see someone else make decisions for him or circumstances provide him with only one way to go so that he does not need to make a choice. He is happy to be forced by others to do something because this relieves him from worries. Since it is very difficult for him to make choices, he would rather be coerced by the environment than be free within the environment, because this requires the making of choices.

After he becomes so passive, he finds that it is a heavy burden to make even the smallest decision. He constantly looks for help everywhere and finds assistance from outside so that he can make decisions. He feels very sorry because it seems as if he cannot handle even the small things in his daily life. He has difficulty understanding what others say. He finds it very hard to remember or recall anything. If he has to make any decision, he is at a loss as to what to do. He dreads the thought of having a discussion on any matter because his passive will is not able to bear such a heavy responsibility. His will is so fragile that he must receive help from his environment or seek help from man. If one person always helps, he feels that this person has robbed him of his will; however, in a sense, he also delights in having this person make all of his decisions for him! While he waits for the assistance of an external force, immeasurable time is wasted. We are not saying that such a passive believer does not like to work. When he is stirred up, he wants to do certain things or assumes that he can do certain things. But when he should start working, the stirring ceases, and he feels that his strength cannot match his need. Many works begin well but end in failure because of the passivity of the will.

How inconvenient is a state of passivity! During this period of time, the believer must take many notes

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to remind himself of many things. He must speak aloud to help himself in his thoughts and use a hundred other "crutches" that he invents to support him through the day. Eventually, he finds that his feelings are gradually becoming numb and that he has unconsciously acquired many strange desires and habits. When he speaks to others, he does not dare look at them in the eyes. He hunches his back when he walks. He is either extremely concerned with the needs of his body or inordinately suppresses the needs of his body. When he does anything, he tries to give up the partial or whole use of his mind, will, reasoning, and imagination.

In his ignorance, the believer fails to realize that these symptoms of sickness come from passivity and demon- possession. He thinks that they are caused by his own natural weakness. The believer comforts himself by thinking that these symptoms are present because he does not have as many "gifts" as others, because his "intelligence" is different from others, or because his "natural ability" is inferior to others. He has no feeling of alarm that he is the way he is. Little does he realize that these symptoms are the lies of evil spirits, the purpose of which is to deceive him more. He dares not work and dares not take anything upon himself because he considers that he has a repulsion for work, being mentally weak, ineloquent, and slow of thought. He thinks that he has probably overworked in the past and that he is physically unfit. He never asks why other believers are not this way. Why are those who are behind him in gifts not this way? Why was he not this way in the past? He thinks that these things are innate, natural, and dispositional, and does not realize that they are the work of evil spirits. This foolishness enables evil spirits to gain more ground and causes the believers to endure more sufferings.

The authorities of darkness know the present condition of the believer. They fashion many difficulties in the believer's environment to persistently bother him. Once the believer's will becomes passive and unable to work, evil spirits will put him in a position where he is forced to use his will, in order to discourage him and make him a laughingstock in front of others. At this time, the believer becomes a caged bird, and the evil spirits are like naughty children, teasing him as much as they desire. They are always stirring up storms and troubling the believer with many things. The believer has no power to protest or resist them. His environment becomes worse, and life becomes more meaningless. Although the believer has the authority to deal with everything, he keeps silent. In this way the authorities of darkness gradually gain the upper hand and cause the believer to turn from a state of ignorance, deception, and passivity to that of demon-possession, thus suffering torment in the hand of demons. Nevertheless, God's children are surprisingly ignorant that these conditions cannot be from God. Instead, they passively accept them.

When a believer reaches this state, unconsciously he relies upon evil spirits to help him! We have already seen how the believer does not have the strength (within himself) to make decisions and that he has to rely on external forces to support him. Many times, because of torment by evil spirits (without realizing that the torment is from evil spirits), a believer longs for the external force which has been helping him all along to come to his aid! This is why evil spirits want a believer to become passive. All the unused faculties of the believer have fallen into the evil spirits' hand. If the believer tries to use his faculties in this condition, it only gives evil spirits an opportunity to express themselves through him. Evil spirits are very happy to make proposals for man. Since man has looked to them for help, they will not refuse the request. They will often inject preconceived thoughts into the believer's mind, giving him all kinds of visions, dreams, voices, lights, fires, and Scriptures out of context. Through these things, they render ideas and decisions on behalf of the believer. The believer does not realize the real situation; he considers these to be truly God's revelations and in accord with God's will. Moreover, these things do not require him to make any painful decisions or exercise any determination. As a

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result, he blindly follows along. Evil spirits gladly help man not to think or use his will but to walk foolishly according to outward revelation. Consequently, they very frequently bestow miraculous things on the believer.

It is very pitiful that in the midst of his ignorance of God's principle of work, a believer can be deceived to think that he is actually submitting to God. At such times, he can (1) believe in evil spirits, (2) rely on them, (3) obey them, (4) consecrate himself to them, (5) listen to them, (6) pray to them, (7) be led and guided by them, (8) accept their message, (9) accept the Scriptures given by them, (10) work with them, (11) work for them, (12) assist them in accomplishing their heart's desires and work, while still thinking that he is turning to God and that he is for God. One thing should be noted: "To whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey" (Rom. 6:16). In name we may be consecrating ourselves to God, but if we are consecrating ourselves to evil spirits in actuality, we will inevitably become their slaves. Even though we are deceived, we have clearly offered ourselves to a counterfeit god. Therefore, we have no way to escape being responsible. The believer should know that if he does not communicate with God according to the condition of fellowship, but rather communicates according to the condition of demon-possession, his prayer will be a prayer to evil spirits, his consecration will be a consecration to evil spirits, and his trust will be a trust in evil spirits. In his heart he thinks that he is communicating with God and that what he has gained has come from God; actually he is communicating with evil spirits and accepting their "gift."

We should realize the steps of this process. Because the believer looks for the presence of God in his feeling and in other experiences (as we have mentioned in Sections Three and Seven), evil spirits deceive him and give him a counterfeit. Because of his ignorance, he blindly accepts it, thinking that it is from God. Consequently, he brings himself into passivity. When the believer falls into passivity, he thinks that he does not need to move and that God will move for him. As such, he does not move. However, God will not move him because He wants man to actively cooperate with Him. God does not want man to become a senseless machine. Because the believer fulfills the condition for the working of evil spirits, they move in on him. When man does not move and God does not move, evil spirits will move in. The believer should know that after he clearly understands God's will in the intuition of his spirit, his entire being has to rise up to carry out God's will in an active way; he must not be passive. After the believer is possessed by demons, he may be ignorant of his true condition and consider himself very spiritual, having many wonderful experiences. But those who are trained in the Lord and who possess spiritual discernment know that even though this kind of believer experiences wonderful things, he has a "double personality." A double personality is a clear sign of demon-possession.

### **A DOUBLE PERSONALITY**

A double personality means that there are two personalities or two masters within a man. This is different from the new man and the old man that we usually speak of. In a person who is seriously possessed by demons, we can clearly see the characteristic of a "double personality." When a person is possessed to the uttermost, others will sense that another brain is controlling him. He will do things that are contrary to his nature. His body will seem to be taken over by an external force. His nerves and muscles will stress, contract, and tremble involuntarily. His mouth will speak words that he does not know or scarcely knows, and his voice will seem to belong to another person. We can observe that the manifestation of demons comes and goes in many heathens who are demon-possessed. Before the demons "come," the person is quiet and normal, but when the demons "come," he immediately changes from his normal posture and acts like a madman. From this we can see one thing: when a man is

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possessed by demons, he has a double personality. In addition to his own person, there is another person within him who employs the various faculties of his soul and body. When demons are manifested, they nearly take over everything; all the activities belong to them, and man's own personality is not active. Consequently, after the demons depart, many do not know what they did, spoke, or expressed when the demons were there. The reason for this is that the demons' personality was acting; man's own personality was not functioning. As a result, man's personality does not know or is completely ignorant of what previously transpired.

However, the "manifestation" of demons is sometimes very refined. Quite often, demons make a man speak and behave like a normal human being. Actually, the demons' personality is operating; man's personality is left dormant. In this kind of manifestation, we are often misled to think that this is man's work; we have difficulty realizing that it is the activity of demons. Only when demons behave abnormally can we discover a double personality in a person.

When believers are possessed by demons, there is also a double personality. Since the degrees to which they are possessed differ, the manifestations of a double personality also differ. Evil spirits surprisingly control every part of the being of those who are seriously deceived. They make believers tremble and burn, and they give them all kinds of strange feelings, casting them down to the floor, causing them to speak in unknown tongues, and putting voices in their ears that others have never heard and visions in their eyes that others have never seen. At the same time, these believers still can be very peaceful in their spirit and have fellowship with God. They are not discerning and assume that since they can contact God these manifestations must be from the Holy Spirit.

Little do they know that: (1) the Holy Spirit never takes over any part of man's body and uses it on His behalf. When Paul saw the vision, he could still control himself and still speak on his own (Acts 9:5). When Peter saw the vision, his mind was also clear, and he was able to control himself (10:9-17). Even when John saw the vision, he was able to control himself. This is why he could write the book of Revelation. At first he fell on the ground because he could not withstand the Lord's light of glory. After the Lord strengthened him, however, he rose up. He could remember what he had seen. This is unlike many today who claim that they have been knocked down to the ground by the Holy Spirit without knowing what they were doing and what they experienced while they were down.

(2) The believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in his spirit, yet at the same time his body is possessed by evil spirits. Therefore, he has the experience of a double personality. In his spirit he has fellowship with God, but evil spirits manifest their works in his body. The believer must not think that whatever he does in his outward body must be something from God just because he has fellowship with God in the spirit. He should realize that because he is regenerated, his new life will always have fellowship with God. One thing is certain: a life that is truly filled with the Holy Spirit will never have an experience of a double personality. A double personality indicates that a person is possessed by demons.

With those who are less deceived, a double personality is not as obvious as it is in the ones mentioned above. Sometimes a believer may find that someone besides himself and outside of him is laying hold of his faculties. Many thoughts that are not from him may come rolling in. His will may seem to be paralyzed, numb, and unable to decide, choose, or determine. His imagination and memory may seem to be locked up by someone else. He cannot remember or think about anything. His reasoning may seem to be somewhat cold and hard, and he may not know how to think logically. Many unexpected words, behaviors, and attitudes may proceed out of him without the consent of his will, which he finds

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unable to control. This is a more hidden manifestation of a double personality.

The meaning of a double personality is the existence of two independent, human, and personified entities. It means that there is no need for the person to exercise his own will to decide anything, that his soul and body, in part or in whole, can move surprisingly on their own. It means that outside of man's will, there is still another will, which directly rules man's soul and body. A demon-possessed believer is one who has the will of evil spirits in him in addition to his own. A demon-possessed believer is one whose own will is suppressed and over whom the will of the evil spirits reign. This is a double personality.

When a believer has a double personality, there are two kinds of power in his body. Sometimes the Holy Spirit sends out His power from the believer's inner man, and sometimes evil spirits direct their power from the believer's outer man. Sometimes the Holy Spirit expresses His grace, blessing, and light, and sometimes evil spirits also display their works from the believer, which are counterfeits of God's work. They will cause him to see visions, laugh wildly, sing loudly, cry sorrowfully, or feel a kind of numb happiness surging through his body. Today there are numerous workers who have this double personality! But there are few who can discern the spirits! Satan will use this kind of people to accomplish his work. Because many of the things they do are spiritual and of God, believers are afraid to reject what Satan puts behind them later. The believers will talk about what is of God among these things and say, "Are not these things very good?" The believers forget that this is the mixed work of evil spirits.

Satan always does a work of mixture. The principle of all his works is to sow tares among the wheat. He does not preach lies only; he preaches truths also. He uses the truths to trumpet his lies. Furthermore, he is willing to preach truths more than lies so that his plots will not be exposed. After he gains his ground, he will reverse the original proportion! We can see this mixture in many meetings. The believers must learn how to discern and prove all things; otherwise, they will be infected by workers with double personalities. They will also fall into passivity and be possessed by demons.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **THE MISCONCEPTION OF THE BELIEVERS**

We should not have a misconception that believers who are deceived by evil spirits are very defiled, degenerate, and sinful. We need to realize that these believers have completely consecrated themselves to God and are actually more advanced than ordinary believers. They strive to obey the Lord and are willing to pay any price to follow the Lord. Because they have wholly consecrated themselves to the Lord but do not know how to cooperate with God, they fall into passivity. Those who are not like this do not have the possibility of being passive. Even though they may consider themselves to be wholly consecrated to God, their manner of life is still according to the thoughts and reasonings of their natural life. They still live according to their own will. This kind of believer will not fall into passivity; they will not be possessed by the demons. They may give ground to evil spirits in other matters, but in the matter of obeying God's will, they will not give the ground of passivity to evil spirits. However, only those who are truly consecrated, who disregard their own gain or loss, and who are willing to listen to and obey God's every command can become passive and possessed. This type of believer has a will

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that is prone to fall into passivity. Only the ones who are willing to wholly obey every order can become passive.

Many would ask, "Why does God not protect them? Is not their motive very pure? Is it likely that God would allow those who faithfully seek after Him to be deceived by evil spirits?" Many people suppose that God should protect His children in every circumstance. Little do they know that in order to receive God's protection, one must fulfill the condition for being protected by God. If a believer fulfills the condition for evil spirits to work, then God cannot forbid them from working. God is a God who observes the law. Since a believer has given himself, either intentionally or unintentionally, into the hands of evil spirits, God cannot impede them from having the right to rule over the believer. Many people think that as long as their motive is pure, they will be spared from being deceived. Little do they know that the people who are most easily deceived in the world are those who have a pure motive. Honesty is not the condition for not being deceived; knowledge is the condition. If a believer is not concerned with the teachings of the Bible and does not watch and pray, and if he thinks that a pure motive alone will enable him to not be deceived, he will definitely be deceived. If he is deceived and fulfills the condition for evil spirits to work, how can he expect God to protect him?

Many believers assume that they definitely will not be deceived because they belong to the Lord. Or they presume that they will not be deceived because they are wholly consecrated to the Lord and have acquired many spiritual experiences. Little do they know that when a believer regards himself as being stable, he is already deceived! If a believer will not humble himself a little, he will be deceived to the uttermost; that is, he will be demon-possessed and still think that he is filled with the Holy Spirit. Being possessed is not a matter of life and is not a matter of motive; it is a matter of knowledge. When a believer receives too many idealistic teachings at the beginning of his Christian life, it becomes difficult for the Holy Spirit to instruct him with the truth he needs. The believer also may have a prejudice toward an interpretation of the Scripture that makes it difficult for other believers to impart light that he lacks to him. When a believer boasts of security when he is in such danger, he either affords evil spirits an opportunity to work or allows them to continue working.

We have already seen that passivity is the reason for being possessed by demons, but ignorance is the reason for being passive. If a believer is not ignorant, he will not fall prey to demon-possession. Actually, "passivity" is simply misconstrued obedience and misconstrued consecration. We also may say that it is excessive obedience and excessive consecration. If a believer acquires knowledge and thereby realizes that evil spirits love to have and need to have man's passivity before they can work, he will not possibly allow himself to fall into passivity and, consequently, afford evil spirits an opportunity to work. If a believer knows that God needs men to co-labor with Him and that He does not desire that men transform themselves into machines, he will not allow himself to fall into passivity and expect God to come and move him. Today believers lapse into this stage mainly because of ignorance.

Believers need knowledge to distinguish God's moving from Satan's work. Believers need knowledge to comprehend the principle of God's working and the condition of Satan's working. Only those who have this knowledge can keep themselves from the power of darkness. Satan relies on lies for his attack on the believers; therefore, there must be truths to replace them. Satan wants to keep believers in darkness; therefore, the light must shine. We should firmly bear in mind the principle that the working of evil spirits differs from that of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, every time they work, they always work according to their own principle. Even though evil spirits are adept at changing their appearance, if we look at the totality of their work, we can perceive that the principle within is always the same.

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After we realize this distinction, we should examine our past experiences and discern the principle that served as the basis for our experience. Through this we will be able to discern what is of the Holy Spirit and what is of the evil spirits. Whatever has been done according to a certain principle must have been done by that corresponding spirit.

Because believers fall into demon-possession through ignorance, we need to take a detailed look at several matters that are very easily misunderstood by believers.

### DYING WITH CHRIST

The passivity of many believers is due to a misunderstanding of the truth of "dying with Christ." The apostle said, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). Based on this, believers assume that the highest spiritual life is "no longer I." They assume that they should lose their personality, that they should have no more will and self-power, and that their "I" should die completely. Thus they become a machine to obey God. They think that they should not have any more feelings, that they should annihilate their personality, and that they should annul all the desires, interests, and preferences of life. They become like a corpse. Henceforth, there are no more "I"s; their "persons" are all gone. They think this kind of commandment requires them to efface themselves, destroy themselves, and "commit suicide" to the point that they do not have any feeling about themselves or their need, situation, sensation, desire, environment, state, comfort, affliction, etc., so that they only sense God's operation, working, and moving. They assume that dying to oneself means having no more self-consciousness. Therefore, they hand their "self-consciousness" over to death and try to die to the point that they do not feel anything but the presence of God. They realize that death must be fulfilled. Therefore, every time they have self-consciousness, they single-mindedly put themselves to death. Every time they sense that they have a desire, lack, need, interest, or feeling, they single-mindedly deal with it and put it to death.

They assume that they have been crucified with Christ and that the "I" is gone. They also assume that Christ is living within them and that the "I" is living no longer. "I am crucified with Christ." Therefore, the "I" has died. They try to put this death into practice by no longer having any thoughts or feelings. They think that their personality should no longer exist because "it is Christ who lives in me." Since Christ is within them, they think that they should subject themselves to Him in a passive way and let Him think and feel on their behalf. Yet they fail to notice the next phrase of Paul: "The life which I now live in the flesh!" Paul has died, but Paul has not died! The "I" was crucified on the cross, yet the "I" still lives. After passing through the cross, Paul said, "I now live"!

The cross does not annihilate the "I." It will exist forever. Even after going to heaven, there will still be "I." What meaning is there to salvation if someone can substitute for "me" to go to heaven? The meaning of accepting Christ's death is to die to sin and hand over our soul-life to death. Even the best, the noblest, and the cleanest have to be handed over to death. We have spoken about this many times before. God wants us to reject the heart that lives by our natural life; He wants us to live by Him and absorb His life moment by moment so that our whole being is supplied its needs. He does not intend to annihilate the various functions of our being, nor does He want our entire being to fall into passivity. On the contrary, the Christian life requires us to daily, single-mindedly, actively, and trustingly exercise our will to deny our natural life and draw on God's spiritual life. Just as the death of man's body is not an annihilation, and death in the lake of fire is not an annihilation, crucifixion with Christ in

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the spiritual life is not an annihilation. Man's person should exist, and the representative of man's person—his will—also should exist. Only the natural life by which man lives should die. This is the teaching of the Bible.

After a believer accepts the misunderstanding concerning dying with Christ and allows himself to fall into passivity (1) he will no longer be active, (2) God will no longer use him either, because this would go against the principle of His working; and (3) evil spirits will seize the opportunity to attach themselves to him because this situation fits the condition for evil spirits to work. Therefore, the consequence of this misconception about dying with Christ and trying to practice it is nothing other than demon-possession and a pretense of being filled by God. We have seen believers in many places become possessed by demons and have many peculiar experiences after they misapprehended the teaching of Galatians 2.

After the believer "dies" in this way, evil spirits cause him to have no feeling and make him ignorant of the need for any feelings of his own. When he contacts others, they feel that he is like a sculpture of iron or stone; he seems to have no sensing organs at all. He does not realize the sufferings of others, and he does not realize how he has caused others to suffer. He has no ability to know, differentiate, sense, or examine everything that is outside of him or within him. He is not at all conscious of his attitude, appearance, or actions. He does not exercise his will to think, deduce, or determine before he speaks and acts. He does not know where his words, thoughts, and feelings come from. His own will never takes any action, yet many words, thoughts, and feelings express themselves through him by taking hold of him as though he were a flowing channel. All his actions and conduct are mechanical. He does not know the reason for these things. He is bewildered and acts only because he receives commands and pressure from some unknown source. Even though he has no "self-consciousness," when others mistreat him slightly, he is very prone to misunderstand and feel hurt. He passes his days in a state of numbness. He supposes that he has died with Christ and does not sense even himself anymore. Little does he know that "the lack of consciousness" is both the condition as well as the consequence of evil spirits possessing him. This enables evil spirits to cling to him, hinder him, attack him, impress him, make suggestions to him, think for him, support him, and urge him on without any restraint whatsoever because he is void of any feeling.

Therefore, we must remember that what we commonly know as "dying to self" is the dying to the life, power, opinion, and activity of the self outside of God. It is not the death of one's person. We do not exterminate ourselves to render our person non-existent. This must be made very clear. When we say that we do not have the self, it means that we do not have the activity of the self. We are not saying that there will not be the existence of our person! If a believer thinks that he should annihilate the existence of his person, that he should not think, feel, or have an opinion, or that he should not have any movement of the body, but instead that he should live his life in a dream, both day and night, without any knowledge of where he is, he will be possessed. He may think that this is a true death to the self, that he is indeed a person void of the self, and that his spiritual experience is higher than that of anyone else. Yet his consecration is not a consecration to God, but a consecration to evil spirits.

### **GOD'S OPERATION**

"For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). This verse is also very easily misunderstood. A believer may think that only God is the One who wills and works, that God puts the willing and the working into him, and that God wills for him and works

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for him. This means that he need not will or do anything; God wills and works for him. He is a super believer and has no need of willing and working anymore; God is the one who wills and works. He is merely an unconscious machine and has nothing to do with willing and working.

These believers do not know that this verse means that God will only work within us to the extent that we are willing to will and work. God will not work further than this; He will only work to this point. God will not will and work for man. Rather, God will only work when man becomes willing to will and work according to His good pleasure. The willing and the working should still be of man himself. The apostle was very cautious. This is why he said, "It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working." God is not willing and working alone, but "in you"; your person still remains. You still have to will and work yourself. To will and work is still your own affair. Though God operates, He is not a substitute. To will and work is man's affair. The meaning of God's operation is that God works within us, moves within us, softens us, and encourages us in order to produce in us a heart that is inclined to obey His will. He does not will for us to obey His will. He only causes us to be inclined toward His will. Then we ourselves still have to will to obey. This verse teaches that man's will needs the support and help of God's power. Apart from God, whatever man determines and does according to his own will is of no use. God does not will for man; neither does He want man to will on his own. He wants man to rely upon His power to will. It is not that God takes our place in the willing, but that we will by His working.

However, a believer may not realize this. He may think that since God is operating within him, he does not need to move. He only needs to passively allow God to operate and go along with Him without and within. Since God operates to will, he need not exercise his will; all he has to do is allow another will to come upon him and use him. Hence, he dare not determine, choose, or resist anything; rather, he passively waits for the descent of God's will. When an outside will makes a decision for him, he accepts it. He extinguishes everything out of his own will. As a consequence of this action: (1) the believer does not use his own will; (2) God also does not use His will to make any proposal for him, because He wants the believer to actively co-labor with Him; (3) evil spirits take the opportunity to seize his passive will and act on his behalf so that he either becomes paralyzed, without any progress, or burns with the "fire of demons"; and (4) at this time, the believer may think that God is thinking for him. In actuality, the authority of darkness has become lord to him.

We must see the difference between God "willing" in place of us and our cooperation with God through the exercise of our will. If God determines on our behalf, a matter will have absolutely nothing to do with us. Though our hands may do something, our hearts have not proposed it. When we become sober, we will realize that these things were not done by us. However, if we use our will to actively work with God, we will see that, even though something is done by relying on God's strength, it is actually done by us. A person who is utterly possessed by demons is not conscious of any of his actions when the demons "come." He may become crazy for a while, but afterwards he is entirely ignorant of what he has done. This tells us that all the crazy things were done by demons through his will and on his behalf. When a believer is deceived, he may think at that time that he has done everything, spoken every word, and thought every idea. But as soon as he is enlightened by God's light and starts to ask himself whether he really wants to do, speak, and think these things, he will realize these have nothing to do with him. Rather, the things that are attached to him are doing it for him.

God's will is not to annihilate our will. If we say, "Henceforth, I will not have my own will. I will just let God's will be manifested from me," we have not consecrated ourselves to God; rather, we have

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made a covenant with evil spirits because God will not use His will to replace our will. The correct attitude should be, "I have my own will, but my will wants God's will." We should put our will on God's side, not by our own strength, but by the life of God. The real truth is that the life that used our will in the past has been put to death. Now we use our will by the life of God. We have not annihilated our will; it is still there—only the life has changed. The natural life is dead, but the function of the will still exists. It is renewed by God, and our new life is now using it.

### **THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

There are many believers who have fallen into passivity and possession because of their ignorance of the work of the Holy Spirit. There are several very common misunderstandings:

#### **A. Waiting for the Holy Spirit**

The church today is indeed very ignorant of the Holy Spirit in experience! Many well-intentioned believers in many places stress teachings concerning the Holy Spirit. Among these teachings, the most common ones are that one should "wait for the filling of the Holy Spirit," "wait for the descending of the Holy Spirit," and "wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit." In practice, some pray through the night in their house and fast for a long time, "waiting to receive their personal Pentecost." Some meetings change to "waiting meetings" as soon as the sermon is over, so that those who want to seek for the Holy Spirit can wait. Consequently, many actually receive unusual experiences and experience supernatural spirits descending upon them that cause them to have unusually wonderful sensations, see visions and strange light, hear voices, speak in tongues, shake, and have other phenomena. After this the Lord Jesus becomes more precious to them, and many obvious sins are cast away. They become more joyful and enthusiastic, thinking that they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These actions are based upon the following verses: "And behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but as for you, stay in the city until you put on power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4).

We should pay attention to a few important points. Truly the Lord Jesus commanded the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to be upon them. After Pentecost, however, we do not find anywhere in the Acts or the Epistles where the apostles commanded the believers to "wait" to receive the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost, "receive" is used instead of "wait" (Acts 19:2).

Furthermore, when the disciples were waiting for ten days, the Holy Spirit did not say they were "waiting" passively. Rather, they were praying and petitioning in one accord. The passive and nightlong waiting of today (some even more than ten days) is different from the disciples' experience.

Furthermore, after Pentecost, whenever we read about the believers being filled with the Holy Spirit, they were filled immediately. They did not have to wait like the apostles did in the beginning (cf. Acts 4:31, 9:17, 10:44).

The Holy Spirit cannot be called on directly. Neither does He come through our beseeching, because He is a gift (cf. Luke 11:13; John 14:16). Furthermore, He descended at Pentecost. In the whole New Testament, no one ever called on the Holy Spirit directly. There is not a case in the Bible where men asked for the descension and baptism of the Holy Spirit directly. Instead, the Bible says that the Lord Jesus "will baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 3:11).

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In addition, as we mentioned before, the Holy Spirit only comes upon the "new man," that is, the inner man. Expecting the Holy Spirit to come upon the physical body, demanding a feeling, and prescribing a certain sensation as the verification of the descension of the Holy Spirit are the source of deception.

Therefore, today's practice of "waiting for the Holy Spirit" is not scriptural, because this practice is entirely passive. Much of this kind of waiting occurs late at night when the body is already very tired. In addition, there is usually a long period of fasting and numerous days of waiting. The mind of the believer naturally becomes very confused. Moreover, prolonged praying, either sitting or kneeling, "waiting" for the descension of the Holy Spirit upon the body, puts the will very easily into complete passivity. The believer does not resist, discern, or choose anything. He just passively waits for a spirit to come upon him, knock him down on the floor, or use his tongue and mouth to give him a strange sensation. Such waiting affords a way for evil spirits to come. It is no wonder that in this condition the believer receives supernatural experiences. The supernatural ones have to wait for man to become very passive before they can manifest themselves. The Holy Spirit, however, will not do any work, because it would go against the principle of His working. Evil spirits take advantage of the opportunity and become very active. They perform many counterfeit works on the believer. At this time, all the prayers, promises, and faith offered to the Holy Spirit are actually offered to evil spirits. Even though a pleasant atmosphere seems to fill the house in this kind of meeting with everyone feeling peaceful and happy, and even though there may be many consecrations and works as a result of such a meeting, the natural life still has not been dealt with.

### **B. Obeying the Holy Spirit**

The believers, in accordance with the word in Acts 5:32, "the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him," think that they ought to "obey the Holy Spirit." Because they do not follow the commandment in the Bible to examine and discern the spirit of truth from the spirit of error, they consider every spirit that comes upon them as the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they passively obey the spirit that is upon them. Their entire being merely becomes a machine. Whatever the spirit upon them instructs them to do, they obey accordingly. Whenever they do anything, they first turn to their bodies to wait for a commandment. As time goes on, this passive state gradually worsens, and the spirit upon them is able to directly take over their members, such as their mouths and their hands. The believers think that this kind of obeying the Holy Spirit is pleasing to God. Little do they realize that this verse never tells us to obey the Holy Spirit. Rather, it says that we should obey God the Father through the Holy Spirit. The apostle told us in a preceding verse (v. 29) that we should "obey God." If the believer takes the Holy Spirit as his object of obedience and forgets God the Father, he will be led to follow a spirit within him or around him and not obey the Father in heaven through the Holy Spirit. This is the beginning of passivity, and this affords evil spirits an opportunity to practice falsehood. Once a person goes a little beyond the Bible, he faces many dangers!

### **C. The Holy Spirit Being the Master**

We have said in another place that God disciplines our spirit through the Holy Spirit and that our spirit governs our body, our entire being, through our soul (i.e., will). A casual glance at this word does not seem to reveal anything of importance, yet the spiritual relationship it implies is very crucial. The Holy Spirit only makes His will known to us by affecting our intuition. When the Holy Spirit fills, He fills only our spirit. He does not directly govern our soul or our body. Neither does He directly fill our soul or our body. This point must be well noted. We cannot expect the Holy Spirit to think through our

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mind, feel through our emotions, and propose through our will. Rather, the Holy Spirit manifests His will in the intuition so that the believer himself thinks, feels, and proposes according to His will. Many believers assume that they have to offer their mind (their head) to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to think from within them. Little do they know that this is the biggest mistake. The Holy Spirit never directly replaces man or uses man's mind in this way. The Holy Spirit never requires man to consecrate passively. He wants man to work with Him. He will not work for man. The believer has the power to quench His move. He does not force the believer to do anything.

The Holy Spirit will not directly rule man's body either. In order for a man to speak, he himself has to use his mouth. In order for a man to move, he himself has to lift his feet. In order for a man to work, he himself has to use his hands. God's Holy Spirit never infringes on man's freedom. Besides working in man's spirit, that is, in God's new creation, He will not move any part of man's body independent of man's own will. Even if man is willing, He will not substitute for man and move any part of his body because man has a free will. Man must be the master of himself; he must use his own body. This is God's law. God Himself will not transgress His law.

We often say that "the Holy Spirit controls man." If we mean that the Holy Spirit works within us, making us obey God, this expression is correct. If we mean that the Holy Spirit directly controls our entire being, this is absolutely wrong. Based on this we can distinguish between the work of evil spirits and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit in order to show that we belong to God; evil spirits cleave to our bodies for the purpose of driving us like a machine. The Holy Spirit asks for our cooperation, while evil spirits seek complete and direct control. Our union with God is in the spirit, not in the body or in the soul. If we mistakenly think that our mind, emotion, body, and will should all be directly "moved" by God, evil spirits will bring in their counterfeit work. It is true that the believer should not act according to his own thoughts, emotions, and will. But when he receives revelation in spirit, he should use his mind, emotion, and will to carry out the order of the Spirit. Forsaking one's soul and body and expecting the Holy Spirit to directly use them is the initial step to demon-possession.

## SPIRITUAL LIVING

Believers today have many misunderstandings with regard to spiritual living. We can only briefly look at a few now:

### A. Conversation

"For you are not the ones speaking, but the Spirit of your Father is the One speaking in you" (Matt. 10:20). A believer may think this means that God will speak on behalf of him, that he need not speak, and that God will speak words out from his mouth. Such a believer "consecrates" his mouth to God. He does not make any decision and expects to be God's "mouthpiece." His lips and vocal cords fall into passivity, and he allows any outside supernatural force to use him. Some who deliver messages for the Lord think that they do not need to use their mind and will during the meeting and that they simply need to offer their mouth passively to God and allow God to speak through their mouth. The consequences of this action are: (1) the believer himself does not speak; (2) neither does God speak, because God does not regard man as a recorder; and (3) evil spirits utilize the believer's passivity to speak through his mouth. This often causes the believer to experience a kind of power speaking through his mouth, enabling him to receive "messages from heaven." Since what is spoken may be very

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good, the believer considers these words to be from God.

The verse in Matthew simply refers to a situation in which one is persecuted and tried. It does not say that the Holy Spirit will speak on behalf of the believer. The experience of the apostles Peter and John before the Sanhedrin later confirms this.

## 2. Guidance

"And your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, /This is the way, walk in it" (Isa. 30:21). Believers do not realize that this verse specifically refers to the Israelites—God's people in the flesh—during the millennium. At that time, there will not be the counterfeit work of evil spirits. Believers consider this kind of guidance by a supernatural voice to be the highest leading. They think they are superior to others, having supernatural guidance all the time. They neither use their conscience nor their intuition. They just passively wait for a supernatural voice. They assume that they do not need to think, consider, choose, or determine, but just "obey" passively. They allow a voice to substitute for the function of their intuition and conscience. As a result: (1) the believers do not use the conscience and intuition; (2) God will not command them to make them obey as a machine; and (3) evil spirits will use a supernatural voice to replace revelation in the intuition. Then evil spirits will attach themselves to the believers.

From that point on, believers no longer care for the prompting of their intuition, the voice of their conscience, what they understand and sense, or what others say. They just stubbornly follow the supernatural voice without even considering it for a moment. Their moral standard gradually falls, and they are not even aware of it because they have allowed evil spirits to be a substitute for their conscience, and they can no longer discern good and evil.

## C. Memory

"But the Comforter...will...remind you of all the things which I have said to you" (John 14:26). The believer does not realize that the meaning of this word is that the Holy Spirit will enlighten his mind to cause him to remember the Lord's words. He assumes it means that he does not need to use his memory anymore and that God will make him remember everything. As a result of this, the believer allows his memory to lapse into passivity. He no longer exercises his will to use his memory. The consequences are: (1) the believer does not exercise his will to use his memory; (2) God does not use it either, because there is no one to cooperate with Him; and (3) evil spirits come in and display everything that is expedient for themselves in front of him, so that he cannot refuse them. His will becomes passive so that he has no way to control his memory anymore.

## D. Love

"The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). Believers misunderstand this verse to mean that they do not have to love and that the Holy Spirit will give them God's love. They ask God to love through them and supply them fully with His love so that they can be full of God's love. They no longer love; rather, they want God to make them love. They no longer use their loving ability, and they allow their loving function to fall into a cold numbness. The results are: (1) the believers themselves do not love; (2) God will not negate man or the natural function of his love; He will not give man a supernatural love; and (3) evil spirits will live on behalf of man and express their love and hatred according to their will. Evil spirits are allowed to give him a substitute for

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love because he is so passive and does not use his will to control his loving function. Eventually, the believer will become like a piece of wood and stone. He will feel cold toward everything and will not know what love is. This is the reason so many believers are hard and unapproachable even though they may be holy.

The Lord Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength" (Mark 12:30). Whose love is this? Whose heart, whose soul, whose mind, and whose strength are these? Of course, they are ours. Our natural life should die, but all these functions of ours should remain.

### **E. Humility**

"For we do not dare to class or compare ourselves with any of those who commend themselves" (2 Cor. 10:12). Because a believer misunderstands the meaning of humility, he thinks that he should hide himself in everything. As a result, the proper self-esteem that God allows is not there anymore. Much of self-abasement is just another form of passivity and possession. The results are: (1) the believer denies himself; (2) God does not fill him; and (3) evil spirits take advantage of his passivity to keep him further in this state of "humility."

When a believer is very possessed and self-abased, his surroundings seem to become all darkness, despair, and weakness. Those who are in contact with him sense a kind of coldness, depression, and sorrow. At crucial moments, he will retreat and cause embarrassment to others. God's work bears no importance to him. Both in words and deeds, he pays particular attention to hide the "I." But while he acts this way, his "I," to the contrary, is all the more exposed. Furthermore, it becomes a real frustration to those who are truly spiritual. When great needs arise in God's kingdom, his extreme self-abasement will not allow him to lift so much as a finger. A sense of prolonged inability, hopelessness, impossibility, and sensitivity is manifested in him. The believer thinks that this is true humility, in which one does not consider himself. Little does he realize that this is the result of evil spirits' work of overt introspection. True humility looks to God and progresses forward.

## **GOD'S ORDERING**

In this world, in addition to man's will, two other wills are entirely opposite to each other. God not only wants us to obey Him; He also wants us to withstand Satan. Hence, God puts these two matters together two times in the Bible. James 4:7a says, "Be subject therefore to God," and 4:7b says, "Withstand the devil." First Peter 5:6-9 says, "Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God...Your adversary, the devil...Him withstand, being firm in your faith." This is balance in the truth. A believer should submit himself to God in everything he encounters. He should confess that God's ordering for him is the best. Though he suffers, he willingly obeys because this is the will of God. This is what we have spoken of in chapter one. This is half of the truth. The apostles knew that we are in danger of being biased, so they immediately said that we have to withstand the devil after we submit. The reason for this is that in addition to God's will, there is also the devil's will. Many times he counterfeits God's will, particularly in our circumstances. If we are misled to think that there is only God's will in this world, we will be deceived by the devil and take his will as God's will. Hence, God wants us to obey Him and, at the same time, withstand the devil. To withstand is a work of the will. To withstand is for the will to oppose, to be unwilling, to decline, and to disagree. God wants us to use our will. This is why He says, "Withstand." God will not withstand on our behalf; we ourselves have to

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withstand. We still have a will, and we still should use our will to obey God's word. This is the teaching of the Bible.

But the believer misunderstands and supposes that God's will is manifested in His arrangement of the environment. To him, everything that comes upon him is fully God's will. Consequently, there is no need for his will to have any further selection, consideration, determination, resistance, or anything else. He merely accepts everything in silence. This sounds good and right. But unavoidably, there can be misunderstanding. It is true that we acknowledge God's hand behind everything. We also know that we should fully submit under God's hand. But this is more a matter of attitude than a matter of conduct. If whatever befalls us is God's commanded will, do we have anything to say? This is a matter of attitude. When we become willing to obey God, we can further examine and ask: Are these matters from evil spirits? Or are they permitted by God? If they are ordained by God, we have nothing to say. But if they are not, we should work with God to withstand them. We should not submit to every circumstance without daily examining and testing it. Our attitude should be the same all the time, but our practice should be carried out only after we understand the circumstance. Otherwise, we may be obeying the devil's will.

Believers should not be people without a mind. They should not be entirely passive and controlled by the circumstance. Rather, whenever they encounter anything, they should always vigorously, actively, and consciously examine its source, test its nature, understand its content, and then decide on a course of action. Being submissive to God is important, but this does not mean blind submission. A vigorous investigation does not mean that we can disobey God in our circumstance. Rather, it means that we have the intention to submit to God, but we want to know if it is God that we are submitting to. Today few believers are submissive in their attitude. This means that even if they know something is of God, few will submit. Yet when they have been broken by God, they still do not discern if a matter is from God; as long as something comes to them, they accept it without any question. The balanced truth is to be submissive in attitude yet, at the same time, to accept something only after one is clear about its source.

Many fully consecrated believers do not understand this difference. They just passively submit to the circumstance, assuming that everything is God's arrangement. This gives evil spirits the opportunity to utilize and afflict them. Evil spirits prepare the circumstances as traps in order to cause the believers to accomplish their will. They may stir up storms and may cause the believers to be afflicted by them. In this way, they make believers suffer the sin of others, while considering this to be an example of not resisting "him who is evil" (Matt. 5:39). Little do they realize that God also wants them to be "struggling against sin" (Heb. 12:4), to overcome the spirit of this age through overcoming the circumstances.

The results of such a practice are: (1) they no longer use their will to choose and decide; (2) God will not pressure them through their environment; and (3) evil spirits will utilize the circumstance to take over their passive will. Then the believers will be submitting to evil spirits and think that they are submitting to God.

## **SUFFERING AND WEAKNESS**

Because the believer is totally consecrated, he thinks that he should take the way of the cross and suffer for the sake of Christ. He also thinks that his natural life is of no use. He wants to receive power from God, so he willingly becomes weak, hoping that by so doing, he will become strong. Both suffering

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and weakness are pleasing to God, yet both can become the basis for evil spirits to work through the believer's misunderstanding.

A believer may consider it to be the highest gain for him to suffer. After his consecration, he may passively submit to every suffering that befalls him, no matter through what means the suffering comes. He believes that his suffering is for the Lord and that it is with a reward and for a gain. He does not realize that he must explicitly exercise his will to choose what God wants him to choose and withstand everything that the evil spirits give to him. If he passively accepts all the sufferings, evil spirits will have a good opportunity to make him suffer their sufferings. To suffer passively may cause evil spirits to inflict sufferings on the believer. After the believer suffers afflictions and believes that they come from God—believing the lies of the evil spirits—he presents evil spirits with an opportunity to put him under suffering for a long time. He may not realize that his suffering is the result of his fulfillment of the condition for evil spirits to work and that his suffering does not come from God. He may think that he is suffering for the sake of the church, to fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ. He may think that he is a martyr, when in reality he is only a victim. He glories in suffering, not knowing that this is a symptom of being possessed!

One thing deserves our attention. Sufferings that come as a result of demon-possession are always meaningless. They produce absolutely no result and are purposeless. They are sufferings that bear no significance whatsoever. Furthermore, there is no witnessing of the Holy Spirit in our intuition that these are from God. These thoughts simply come from the believer.

If the believer investigates a little, he may discover that before his consecration, he did not have this kind of experience. It was only when he consecrated himself to the Lord and chose to suffer that he had this kind of experience. Furthermore, after he chose and accepted all the sufferings, he thought that all of the sufferings were from God. Actually, if not all, at least a majority of them came from the power of darkness. Since he gave ground to evil spirits and believed in their lies, his whole life became full of afflictions. There is no reason for them, he does not know their cause, and there is no merit in them. If the believer knows about demon-possession, he will understand this matter. Just as there are many sins that cannot be removed because of demon-possession, there are many afflictions of unknown source which are caused by demon-possession. After a believer knows the truth about demon-possession, he will be able to remove sins and also remove the meaningless afflictions.

Concerning weakness, the believer can have a similar misunderstanding. He may think that he should be weak for a long time in order to gain God's power. He considers the apostle's word, "When I am weak, then I am powerful" (2 Cor. 12:10), and thinks that he has to be weak before he can be strong. He does not realize that the apostle never said, "I have to be weak so that I can be strong." He was just speaking about one of his experiences. He just said that when he was weak, God's grace strengthened him to accomplish God's will. Paul did not ask for this weakness. He was actually weak, but God made him strong. This is not an exhortation for believers to choose weakness; Paul had no intention that the strong believer should purposely choose weakness so that God would make him strong. Rather, his intention was to instruct those believers who are already weak that they can be strong!

Choosing weakness on purpose is wrong; it affords a ripe opportunity to evil spirits. Choosing weakness and choosing afflictions both fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work because they put man's will purposely on the side of evil spirits. Many believers were healthy at one time. But they have chosen weakness, and they think that by so doing, they will be strong in God. To their surprise, they

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find that the weakness they have chosen becomes more apparent as time goes by, while the strength they expected never materializes. In the end, they become a burden to others and are completely useless in the work of God. This choosing of weakness will never bring God's strength. On the contrary, it will give evil spirits an opportunity to attack. If a believer does not resist, oppose, and refuse such weakness in a definite way, he will remain weak for a long time.

### **THE MOST CRUCIAL POINT**

Much of what we have covered concerns only the behavior of extreme ones. There are many who do not have this extreme behavior. Nevertheless, the principle is the same. Whoever is passive in the will or fulfills the condition for the work of evil spirits will find demons working in him. Even though many believers have not consciously chosen these things, they unconsciously fall into passivity and give ground to evil spirits. As a result, they sink into a dangerous position. Let all who have the experiences mentioned above ask themselves whether they have been fulfilling the condition for evil spirits to work. This will rescue them from many false experiences and unnecessary sufferings.

We know that evil spirits utilize biblical truth. But the truth they utilize is stretched beyond measure and beyond its original limit. The denial of the self, submission, waiting on God's ordering, suffering, etc., are all biblical truths. Yet because of the believer's ignorance of the principle of the spiritual life, evil spirits are able to utilize the foolishness of the believer and cause him to fulfill the condition for them to work. If one does not examine the principle regarding every teaching to see if it corresponds with the working of the Holy Spirit or the working of evil spirits, he will be deceived. Every truth that is stretched a little becomes gravely dangerous. Therefore, we have to be careful.

Now we should be thoroughly clear about the fundamental difference between the principle of God's work on us and that of Satan's work on us: (1) God wants the believer to exercise every faculty of his entire being through his own will, cooperating with God to the point of being filled with the Holy Spirit. (2) Evil spirits require that the believer be passive, forsaking every faculty of his entire being, in whole or in part, in order to facilitate their work.

In the former case, the Holy Spirit fills man's spirit and gives his spirit life, power, liberty, enlargement, and renewal, as well as strengthens his entire being and sets him free from slavery. In the latter case, evil spirits occupy man's faculties through passivity. If man does not discern it, they cause him to lose his personality and will; they make him their puppet by imprisoning, suppressing, robbing, coercing, and encircling him. They want to conquer man's soul and body, to bring man into bondage and take away his freedom. In the former case, in addition to understanding God's will in his intuition, the believer can think and understand with his mind and direct his whole being through the free exercise of his will for the accomplishment of God's will. In the latter case, the believer is pressured by an external force and assumes that the force is the representative of God's will; he cannot think or make any decision. He is coerced by a force in a mechanical way.

Today countless numbers of God's children have subconsciously allowed themselves to fall into passivity. They have stopped the function of their will and mind; consequently, they have become possessed and suffer. No matter how small the degree of passivity is, it is sufficient to cause evil spirits to work. If the degree of passivity is high, it will give place to the manifestation of many supernatural wonders through the body. This manifestation will be similar to manifestations seen in sorcerers when they give place to evil spirits. The only difference is that in the former case, there is the outward form

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of a Christian. We should not be surprised by the supernatural experiences of many believers, such as tongue-speaking, seeing visions, hearing voices, etc. They merely follow a law. Just as in the natural realm every matter has a law, in the spiritual realm, everything has a law. If there is a certain phenomenon and behavior, there must be a consequence that results from the phenomenon and behavior. The God who establishes the laws will abide by the same laws. Therefore, if a person intentionally or unintentionally transgresses this law, he will experience a predicted consequence. Whether you are a Christian or one who practices sorcery, as long as you are passive, evil spirits will attach themselves to you. If a man cooperates with God through exercising his will, mind, and strength, God's Holy Spirit will work. This also is a law.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE WAY TO FREEDOM**

A consecrated believer can fall into passivity in a foolish and deceived way for several years and still be ignorant of the danger of his own position. He can become more and more passive as time passes, until the sphere of passivity becomes so great that it inflicts unspeakable pain to his mind, emotion, body, and environment. Hence, it is essential to preach the true meaning of consecration to him. In the previous chapters we emphasized the importance of knowledge because the knowledge of the truth is absolutely indispensable in rescuing one from passivity. Without the knowledge of the truth, it is impossible to experience deliverance. A passive believer falls into his condition because of deception, and the reasons for deception are foolishness and ignorance. Without foolishness and ignorance it would be impossible to be deceived.

### **KNOWING THE TRUTH**

We have to know the truth concerning all things. We have to know the truth concerning co-working with God; we have to know the truth concerning the work of evil spirits; we have to know the truth concerning consecrating ourselves; and we have to know the truth concerning supernatural things. This is the first step toward deliverance. A believer must know the truth concerning the source and nature of all of his experiences before he has the hope of deliverance. The believer is (1) deceived, (2) then he becomes passive, (3) then he becomes possessed, (4) then he is deceived into further passivity. Therefore, if a believer wants to be free, to avoid being possessed, and to avoid all the deception and passivity that come as a result of possession, he must remove the deception. If the first point—deception—is eliminated, then other points—passivity, possession, and further deception and passivity—will be disintegrated one after another. When a person is deceived, he opens a door for evil spirits to come in. When a person is passive, he gives ground for evil spirits to stand and remain. The result of this action is possession by demons. In order to be delivered from possession, one must remove the passivity. In order to remove the passivity, one must remove the deception. In order to remove the deception, one has to know the truth. Therefore, the knowledge of the truth is the first step toward deliverance. Indeed, only the truth can set men free!

Since the beginning of this book, we have repeatedly warned the believers about the danger of all supernatural experiences (such as signs, voices, miracles, wonders, flames, speaking in tongues, sensations, etc.). We do not mean that all supernatural experiences should be refused, rejected, and

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opposed. This would be unscriptural to say, because the Bible tells us that God has done many supernatural things. Our purpose is to show the believers that there is not only one source of supernatural experiences. Evil spirits can imitate what God can do. It is very important to distinguish what is and is not from God. If a believer has not died to his emotional life and earnestly seeks after experiences in his feeling, he will be deceived. We are not saying that believers should refuse all supernatural things. We are simply advising the believers to refuse all of the supernatural things from Satan. In this chapter we want to point out the fundamental differences between the work of the Holy Spirit and that of evil spirits so that believers will know how to distinguish between the two.

Today believers are particularly susceptible to deceptions in supernatural things. Because of these deceptions, they are possessed by evil spirits. We earnestly hope that a believer would spend the time to discern supernatural things to avoid being deceived. A believer should never forget that if the Holy Spirit gives him a supernatural experience, he can still use his own mind. There is no need for him to be totally or partially passive to obtain such an experience. Even after receiving such an experience, he can still use his own conscience to discern what is good and evil, and he can decide to accept or reject it. There should be no compulsion. If evil spirits give a person a supernatural experience, they must first put him into a state of passivity; his mind must become blank, and all of his actions must be driven by an outside power. This is the basic difference. In 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle speaks of the spiritual, supernatural gifts of the saints. Among them, there are revelations, prophecies, speaking in tongues, and other supernatural expressions. The apostle admits that they all come from the Holy Spirit. But in verse 32 he tells us the characteristic of these divine gifts. "The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets." The apostle said that if a prophet (believer) obtains something that is really from the Holy Spirit, the spirit that he has obtained will be subject to him. If the Holy Spirit gives man numerous types of supernatural experiences, the spirit is still subject to him; the Holy Spirit will not go against man's will to use any part of his body. A man should still have control over himself. Only the spirit that is subject to the prophet is from God. Any spirit that demands the prophet's subjection is not from God. Therefore, we should not refuse all supernatural things. However, we have to check whether or not the supernatural spirit requires us to submit to him passively. If a person who has received the gift of tongues or some other similar gift cannot control himself, if he cannot speak when he wants to speak and be quiet when he wants to be quiet, if he cannot sit still and is forced to throw himself on the ground, or if a power from outside controls him, this indicates that the spirit he has received is an evil spirit. This is the basic difference between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of evil spirits. The former wants man to have full freedom, while the latter want man to be passive. Therefore, if a believer wants to know where his own experience comes from, he should do some checking and find out if he is passive or not. This will solve all the problems. A believer is deceived because he does not know this basic truth.

Therefore, if a believer wants freedom, he must eliminate his foolishness. In other words, he must know the truth. Knowing the truth simply means knowing the real condition concerning a matter. The lies of Satan bind the believer, and the truth of God sets the believer free. But there is a problem: in order to know the truth, one needs to pay the price, because this truth will shatter the vainglory which the believer gained from his past experiences. He may think that he is making twice as much progress as others, that he is already spiritual, and that he will not make mistakes. It is very difficult to make him admit that he may be possessed by the demons or prove to him that he is in fact possessed by the demons! If a believer is not willing to be faithful to all the truth of God, it will be very hard for him to accept the truth that will cause him to suffer and be humbled. Accepting what one likes is not hard; but accepting the truth that takes away one's vainglory is not so easy. However, whoever vehemently

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resists this truth should be careful lest he be possessed by demons. It is easier for him to realize that he can be deceived. It is much more difficult for him to realize that he is already possessed and admit that he is possessed! God must grant us the grace. Otherwise, even if we know the truth, we will still resist it. To accept the truth is the first step to salvation. We have to be willing to know all the truth concerning ourselves. Nevertheless, it takes humility and honesty to be willing to know the truth concerning our own spiritual and supernatural experiences.

There are different ways for possessed believers to obtain the truth. Some have been bound so tightly that they have lost their freedom in everything. As a result, this causes them to wake up and realize the truth about themselves. Some believers obtain the truth because they realize that even though ninety-nine percent of their experience seems to come from God, there is still a tiny portion of wrong elements mixed in. This raises their suspicion and causes them to doubt if their experience is really from God. Through this they understand the truth. Some obtain the truth when other believers preach the truth to them and enlighten them concerning the real fact. In whatever way a believer obtains the truth, he should never refuse the first ray of light.

Doubting is the first step to acquiring the truth. This is not to doubt the Holy Spirit or to doubt God and His word. This is to doubt our own past experiences. This doubt is necessary and even scriptural because God wants us to prove the spirits (1 John 4:1). If we believe in something, there is no need to test it; if we have to test it, this means that we cannot decide for certain where it comes from. We often have the wrong idea that this kind of testing may offend the Holy Spirit. We do not realize that the Holy Spirit wants us to make such tests. If something is of the Holy Spirit, it will still be of the Holy Spirit even though it is tested. If it is of evil spirits, it will be exposed as a counterfeit. Has God caused you to fall into your present position? Can there be contradictions in the work of the Holy Spirit? Is it possible that you never make any mistakes in all that you do?

When a believer receives a little light from the truth, he will admit that it is very possible that he can be deceived. This gives the truth a chance to work. The biggest mistake that a believer can make is to think that he can never be wrong. Someone else can be wrong, but he can never be wrong. This will cause him to be deceived to the end. But after he humbles himself, he will see that he has been deceived. If he compares the principle of God's work with the condition of the evil spirits' work, he will see that his past experiences were all received in passivity. He fulfilled the condition of the work of evil spirits, and the result was many strange experiences; in the beginning they made him happy, but later they brought him sufferings. When he makes a comparison between his past attitude, the principle of God's work, and the condition of the evil spirits' work, he will find that he was not actively co-working with God. Rather, he was just trying to passively follow God's will. Therefore, all of his wonderful or frustrating experiences must have come from evil spirits. Then he will admit that he was deceived. A believer must not only receive the truth, he must also acknowledge it. Only by acknowledging the truth are Satan's lies eliminated. A believer's experience should be according to the following steps: (1) he should believe that it is possible for a believer to be deceived; (2) he should particularly believe that it is possible for him to be deceived; (3) he should acknowledge that he is indeed deceived; and (4) then he should go on to ask why he is deceived.

### **THE DISCOVERY OF THE GROUND**

While we can say with certainty that a believer can give ground to evil spirits, we need to ask what the ground is. Before a believer asks what ground he has inside, he should first study what is a ground. Otherwise, he will consider demon-possession to be something that it is not, or something that is not

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demon-possession to be demon-possession. Perhaps he will confuse his daily spiritual warfare with the dark authority with warfare for the freedom from demon-possession. By doing this, he will afford convenience for evil spirits to do their work.

In addition to the matter of sins, a believer should realize that he allows his will to become passive whenever he accepts the counterfeit of evil spirits, and he gives ground to evil spirits whenever he believes in their injected thoughts. (This point has been discussed in the previous chapter.) Presently our attention is on passivity. Being passive is allowing one's own mind or body to fall into a state of complete inactivity—stopping the use of all one's faculties. It is stopping all conscious effort to control the mind and use the will, conscience, and memory. Through passivity crucial ground is surrendered. Among the believers, the degree of passivity varies. The depth of passivity dictates the depth of one's possession. Nevertheless, no matter to what degree of passivity the believer has fallen, he should remove this ground as long as there is passivity. A believer should resolutely, definitely, and steadfastly oppose evil spirits from gaining any ground in him. He should particularly oppose them in the areas where he was deceived. It is very important for a deceived believer to know the ground he has given up and claim back the ground.

A common thought concerning the matter of demon-possession is that one only needs to cast the demons out by the name of the Lord. But this method is not adequate when it comes to demon-possession in the believers, because there is a difference between possession in believers and possession in heathens. Heathens are possessed through their sins, while believers are possessed through deception. Hence, the way for deliverance is to be deceived no longer. If the cause of possession is deception, and we only order the demons to depart, we are only dealing with the effect and not the cause. This may work for a while, but one will not gain lasting freedom. Unless one deals with the cause of demon-possession, which has to do with the ground, the demons may obey and leave for a while, but they will come back through the ground they still occupy. This is not a theory. This is what the Lord meant in Matthew 12:43-45. If a "house" in which demons previously lived is not torn down, they may leave for a while, but they will soon come back, and the condition of the man will be worse than before. This "house" is the ground which man gives to evil spirits.

Hence, while it is important to cast out the demons, it is indispensable that one deals with the matter of the ground. Casting out demons is useless if the ground is not dealt with, because the demons will still come back. This is why many believers cannot secure a lasting freedom for themselves or others after casting out the demons in the name of the Lord. While demons can be cast away, the ground cannot be cast away; rather, the ground needs to be reclaimed. Unless one specifically and continuously reclaims the deceived and passive ground, there will not be lasting freedom.

If a believer does not deal with the ground he gives to evil spirits, it will cause evil spirits to come in and stay. Although one may cast out the demons in himself or others in the name of the Lord, and although the demons may appear to have left, the person is not really free. Only certain manifestations of the demons are gone. They may change to another kind of manifestation, or they may stop the present manifestation for a while to avoid further attack. When the believer becomes less watchful, they will renew their manifestations. In short, if the ground is not dealt with, demons will still have something to hold onto. The mind must receive the truth, and the will must vigorously, actively, and resolutely repudiate all the ground. This is the only way.

Therefore, when a believer realizes that he is possessed through deception, he should seek for light,

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find out what ground he has surrendered, and remove the ground. Evil spirits come in through the ground given to them. If we remove the ground, they will depart.

Therefore, when a believer finds out that he has given ground to evil spirits in a particular matter, he should immediately reclaim the ground. Since he became possessed by giving up his sovereignty and self-control and by falling into passivity, he should exercise his will vigorously and oppose the power of darkness through the power of God in the midst of various temptations and sufferings, rendering void the promises he gave to the evil spirits in the beginning. Since passivity sets in gradually, it can only be removed gradually. The degree of passivity that the believer has discovered is the degree that he can reject. If the passivity has extended for a long period of time, the deliverance will also take a long time. It is easy to go downhill, but it is hard to go uphill. It is easy to become passive, but it is hard to be free. It requires the cooperation of the believer's whole being to reclaim the ground that he has surrendered. Only then can he be set free.

A believer must pray and ask God to show him where he is being deceived. He must sincerely desire God to show him the true condition of his whole being. Generally speaking, whatever a believer fears to hear and makes him uneasy when it is mentioned is an area where he has given ground to evil spirits. If the believer is afraid of dealing with something, he should deal with it, because nine times out of ten, evil spirits are occupying the ground behind it. A believer must receive light from God to examine his own sickness as well as other factors. After he is clear about his sickness, he should reclaim his ground from evil spirits in a definite way. Light is indispensable. Otherwise, the believer will regard supernatural things as natural things and things that belong to evil spirits as things that belong to the physical body. This enables evil spirits to attach themselves to the believer permanently without any hindrance. Having this attitude is the same as saying "amen" to the demons.

### **RECLAIMING THE GROUND**

There is one common principle that underlies all the ground given to the evil spirits. This is passivity, which means that the will is not active. Hence, in order to reclaim the ground, the will must become active once again. The believer must (1) obey God's will, (2) oppose Satan's will, and (3) exercise his own will and join himself to the will of the saints. The responsibility of reclaiming the ground lies with the will. Since the will was passive, the will has to oppose the passivity.

The first step that the will has to take is to decide. To decide is to set the will in a certain direction. Once a believer, who has suffered from evil spirits, becomes enlightened by the truth and stirred up by the Holy Spirit, he will no longer be able to bear the continuous attachment of evil spirits. Spontaneously, he will be led to a position of hating the evil spirits. He will resolve to oppose all the works of evil spirits. He will decide to regain his freedom and his sovereignty. He will also decide to drive out evil spirits. God's Holy Spirit will work in him to create a hatred for evil spirits. The more he suffers, the more he hates. The more he is bound, the more he hates. The more he thinks about it, and the more time that goes by, the more he hates. In the end, he will be determined to be fully delivered from the power of darkness. This kind of decision is the first step towards reclaiming the ground. If this decision is genuine, a person will not turn back no matter how much he is opposed by evil spirits in the process of his reclamation. He has resolved and made up his mind to oppose evil spirits hereafter.

The believer must also exercise his will to choose. This means that he must choose his own future. In the days of warfare, the choice of a believer occupies an important place. The believer should constantly declare that he chooses freedom, wants freedom, and will not be passive. He will exercise

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his own faculties and identify all the wiles of evil spirits. He wants the evil spirits to fail, and he wants to cut off all ties with the power of darkness. He will reject all the lies and excuses from evil spirits. This kind of choosing with the will and this kind of repeated declaration is very useful in warfare. We should realize that this kind of declaration simply shows that the believer has made such a choice; it does not mean that the believer has decided to do such a thing. The power of darkness is not affected by what the believer has "decided" to do. However, if the believer chooses to oppose evil spirits in a specific way with his will, they will flee away. All these things are related to the principle of man having a free will. Although the believer may have once allowed them to come in, he now can choose something different from what he once allowed and leave no ground to evil spirits.

In this warfare, the believer should carry out all the work of the will vigorously. In addition to making decisions and making choices, he must also resist. This means that he exercises the power of the will to withstand evil spirits. Moreover, he should reject. To reject is to close oneself and give nothing to the evil spirits. On the one hand, the believer should oppose the work of evil spirits in him, and on the other hand, he should reject evil spirits. To oppose means to stop evil spirits from further works; to reject means to remove all previous promises given to evil spirits, that is, to remove all the promises that brought in their work. Hence, when rejection is added to opposition, the evil spirits will be unable to work. First we must oppose, then we must have a rejecting attitude. For example, we should reject the evil spirits by saying, "I am resolved." This means that we exercise our will to lay hold of freedom. But we also need to oppose, which means that we have to exert strength in a real way to combat the enemy and maintain the freedom that our will has secured through rejection. This kind of rejection and opposition must continue until we are completely free.

Resisting is a real warfare. Resistance requires the combined strength of the spirit, soul, and body. But the main part that must be exercised is the will. Deciding, choosing, and rejecting are all matters of attitude. But resisting is a matter of practice. Resisting is the act that expresses the attitude. It involves a wrestling in the spirit and with the power of the spirit in which the will pushes out the ground that the evil spirits stand on. It is an assault on the battleground of the power of darkness. Resisting is a driving away, a chasing out, and a pushing aside with the power of the will. Evil spirits occupy the ground that the believer has given to them. When they see the believer's attitude of opposition, they still occupy their original ground and will not retreat. To resist is for the believer to drive out evil spirits with "real power." To resist is for the believer to "compel" the evil spirits and force them to be "evicted." Hence, when a believer is engaged in such a resisting work, he must exert his strength and exercise his will to drive out the evil spirits. Otherwise, a declaration in the attitude is useless. Practice must go side by side with attitude. Moreover, it is of little use to resist without also rejecting, because promises given to evil spirits at the beginning must be reclaimed.

In the process of reclaiming the ground, the believer must decide with his will and choose and reject. He must resist with his will. He must decide to fight the warfare. He must choose freedom. He must reject all ground and withstand the enemy from occupying further ground and taking away his freedom. In the midst of such decision, rejection, choosing, and withstanding, the believer is fighting for his sovereignty. We should never forget the matter of the free will. God has given us a free will. Hence, we ought to be our own master. Yet now, evil spirits have taken over our members and their functions and have become the masters of our "being." We have lost our sovereignty. When a believer begins to reclaim his ground, he is opposing the evil spirits in their work of "replacing" him. Therefore, he has to fight. The believer must continually declare that he will not allow evil spirits to infringe on his right. He will not allow evil spirits to infringe on his personality. He will not allow evil spirits to attach

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themselves to him. He will not allow evil spirits to take over his being. He will not follow evil spirits blindly. He will not! He will not! He will be his own master. He wants to know what he is doing. He will take control of his being. He wants his whole being to be subject to him. He rejects all the works of evil spirits on him. He rejects all their rights to work on him. When he exercises his own will to utter his own decision, choice, and rejection, evil spirits will not be able to go on with their works. Since the will has decided, rejected, and chosen, he should follow up with the resistance of his will.

When the believer reclaims the ground with his will, his life will experience a new beginning. What was done wrongly is done. Now he has a fresh start. He can reclaim all the things that he offered to evil spirits. His spirit, soul, and body must be taken back from the enemy. He should consecrate them once again to God. All the ground given to evil spirits through ignorance should be repudiated. All the rights given to them should be taken back. The way is as follows:

Rejecting everything that he once received.

Departing from everything that he clung to.

Canceling everything that he scheduled.

Repealing everything that he promised.

Not believing in anything that he believed in.

Destroying everything that he did before.

Retracting everything that he said.

Dissolving everything that he joined himself to.

Speaking out on everything that he held silence on.

Opposing everything that he cooperated with.

Refusing to give what he previously gave.

Overturning all previous considerations, discussions, and promises.

Rejecting all previous prayers, answers, and healings.

All these measures are aimed at evil spirits. Previously the believer regarded the evil spirits as the Holy Spirit. Therefore, there was an intimate relationship. Now he is clear about this relationship, and he is going to reclaim what he gave to them in his ignorance. One yields the ground to evil spirits in isolated incidents. Hence, in order to reclaim the ground, one has to remove the barriers one by one. The greatest barrier to freedom for the believer is an attitude of reclaiming with his will the ground in a general, inclusive, and unclear way, while refusing to claim back the ground specifically, point by point, in a detailed way. A general objection to the ground gained by evil spirits will only give the believer a right attitude. In order to gain freedom, he has to reclaim all the ground in detail. This may seem difficult. But if the will is indeed for freedom, and if the believer asks for the enlightening of God's light, when the Holy Spirit points out everything in the past, he only needs to resist item by item, and everything will go away. If the believer is willing to press on patiently, he will see that this is a practical way to deliverance. Item by item he will be liberated into freedom. A general resistance shows

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that we are opposed to the evil spirits' work, but a detail resistance forces evil spirits to let go and give up the ground that they held.

For a believer to become passive in his will is like going downhill; everything progresses downward until he falls to the lowest point. In order to reclaim his ground, he has to turn back and ascend step by step. He has to climb up the same number of steps that he descended at the beginning; he cannot skip one step. He gradually fell into deception and passivity, so he must gradually understand and come alive. All the passive places must be overturned one by one and reclaimed one by one. As his feet take another step up, he is reclaiming another step. Formerly, he had another downturn with each step he took. Now, he is making another upturn with each step he takes. We should note that what we have most recently surrendered to evil spirits is what we have to reclaim first. The last step of our descent is the first step of our ascent.

The overturning of the ground in the believer must not stop until he reaches his original place of freedom. A believer must know from where he descended. He must return to his original condition. He should know his normal condition; he should know how active his will was, how clear his mind was, and how strong his body was. He should know his present condition and compare the two. Then he will realize how far he descended through passivity. He has to set his normal condition before him all the time, yet still consider this normal condition as the least of his goals. He should not be satisfied until his will is actively controlling every part of his whole being; until this is reached, he has not reached his normal condition. In the process of regaining his freedom, a believer should clearly identify his normal condition. Only then will he not be deceived to think that he is free when he is in fact not recovered to his normal condition.

We should fully regain the things that we can no longer control, things that seem to lie beyond our sovereign power, whether they be our thoughts, memory, imagination, discernment, judgment, love, power to choose and withstand, or any part of our body that has fallen into passivity and lost its normal condition, which makes us unable to become our own master. We should use our will to oppose this kind of passivity and exercise our will to use our faculties. The moment we fall into passivity, evil spirits will take hold of our passive faculties and use them in our stead or with our help. When we see our own real condition and want to reclaim the ground and use our own faculties again, we will feel that this is very difficult to do. This is because: (1) our own will is still weak and cannot control everything, and (2) the evil spirits will exhaust all their strength to fight us. For instance, a believer may have fallen into passivity in the matter of determination. Even though he repudiates this ground and does not allow evil spirits to work anymore, and even though he has decided to exercise his own determination and not be under the control of evil spirits anymore, he will find that: (1) he cannot determine anything by himself, and (2) evil spirits will not allow him to determine anything or act in any way. When a possessed believer tries to overturn the authority of evil spirits, evil spirits will try to stop their prisoner from acting freely.

Now the believer has to choose whether he will remain passive, allowing evil spirits to continually move him. If he is unwilling to let evil spirits use him in this way, even though he is temporarily unable to "determine" anything, he will not allow evil spirits to use his power of determination. So the battle for freedom begins. This fight is altogether a contest of the will. Because the will has fallen into passivity, it allows every faculty of the whole being to fall into passivity. The will (the person) has lost its sovereignty and no longer can freely control and direct every faculty of the entire being. As a result, evil spirits come in to substitute for the will (the person) and to control and direct every faculty of the

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entire being. Hence, if the believer wants to be free, the will needs to rise up to: (1) oppose the rule of evil spirits, (2) recover the lost ground, and (3) work actively together with God and exercise his own entire being. Everything is dependent on the will. When the will opposes the evil spirits and does not allow them to occupy its faculties, they will withdraw. As we have mentioned before, evil spirits are able to come in because the believer gave them permission. Therefore, his present rejection is needed to cancel out his previous consent so that the evil spirits will lose their ground of attack. When he very carefully withstands them, evil spirits cannot possibly work anymore.

Every inch of ground must be recovered. Every point of deception must be exposed. The believer should have the patience to fight with the enemy in everything and fight to the end. He should know that rejecting all the ground does not mean that he has already recovered all the ground, because not all the ground is recovered immediately after he has rejected them. Evil spirits will still make their final struggle. The will of the believer still needs to pass through very fierce warfare before it can become strong, powerful, and free. Hence, the believer must continually carry on to overthrow the ground. Furthermore, he needs to overthrow with endurance, until every point of ground is exposed, rejected, and abolished, until all the faculties of his whole being can turn according to the human will. All the passive faculties should be recovered to their normal working condition. The mind needs to think clearly; it needs to be able to think about the subjects that the will wants to think about. Moreover, no thought should be outside the will's control. The memory needs to be able to memorize the things that a person wants to remember and not be filled with thoughts that he does not want. Other actions of the body—singing, speaking, reading, and praying—also need to be controlled by the will. The will needs to be active so that it can be the master of the whole being. All the various abilities of man's whole being need to function normally.

A believer should not only refuse the ground taken by evil spirits, he also should refuse all the work done by evil spirits. A believer needs to exercise his will to take the stand of opposing all the work of evil spirits. This will inflict suffering upon evil spirits. Then the believer needs to ask God to give him light so that he will know the works of the evil spirits and refuse them one by one. The works of evil spirits on the believer include: (1) replacing the believer's activities and (2) influencing the believer's activities. Therefore, the believer ought to reject their work by not allowing (1) his activities to be replaced or (2) his activities to be influenced. The believer should refuse not only the ground that gives rise to evil spirits but also the ground that preserves them in their present position. When a believer withstands in this way, he will see them use all of their means to oppose him. Unless he engages them in combat with all his might, he cannot return to his normal condition and regain his freedom. When a believer battles this way, he will discover that initially he cannot use his own faculties. But when he marshalls all his strength to attack their full power, his will can fully bounce back from passivity to activity, and he can once again rule over his whole being. Both passivity and demon-possession are destroyed in the warfare.

When the believer battles to regain his ground, he will pass through very painful times. In resolutely trying to regain his freedom, he will feel great pain and an intense struggle because of the resistance of the power of darkness. When he tries to use his will to (1) oppose the authority of evil spirits and (2) to carry out his duty, he will experience the intensity of the resistance of the evil spirits who have been occupying him. When he begins to fight he does not realize how deeply he has fallen. Only after he has fought with evil spirits little by little and regained the ground bit by bit, feeling the opposition and bondage from the evil spirits, does he realize the depth of his fall. Because evil spirits are so intense in their opposition, and because they are so reluctant to let go of their bondage, his symptoms become

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worse when he initiates the warfare to regain the ground. It seems that the more he fights, the less power he has, and the areas that are possessed by the enemy are more confused and disorderly. This condition is a sign of victory. Although the believer feels worse than before, his condition is actually improving because these symptoms indicate that the believer's resistance has produced effects, and the evil spirits are feeling the believer's attack. Consequently, they have risen up to resist. However, this is only their final struggle. If the believer persists, evil spirits will definitely flee.

During this warfare, it is very important for the believer to always stand on Romans 6:11, recognizing that he is one with the Lord and that since the Lord has died, he has died also. This faith will free him from the authority of evil spirits because they have no authority over a dead man. This must be the believer's firm standing. During this time he also has to learn to use the Word of God to deal with all the lies of the enemy, because they will tell him that he has fallen so deep that he cannot be restored. In the midst of the suffering of the conflict, particularly when the evil spirits are making their last struggle and the believer experiences the uttermost pain, they will cause him to become discouraged and feel that he is hopeless and unable to be free. If the believer listens to the devil, he will fall into the greatest danger. The believer must realize that Golgotha has destroyed Satan and his evil spirits (Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:14-15; John 12:31-32). Salvation has been accomplished. Every believer can be delivered out of the authority of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of His love in his experience (Col. 1:13). Moreover, based on the fact that the reclaiming of ground has brought about greater suffering, we know that the evil spirits are trembling at this reclaiming work. Therefore, what has been done is right, and more ground should be recaptured. No matter what new manifestations evil spirits come up with, and no matter how much they have caused one to suffer or act, as long as he recognizes that the source is evil spirits, he should reject the manifestations and ignore them. Do not feel sorry about them or discuss them. After one has refused them, he should not pay any more attention to them.

If a believer is very faithful to ignore any temporary sadness and boldly reclaim his ground with his will, he will see his freedom gradually coming back. If the ground is rejected and reclaimed in a detailed way, the degree of demon-possession will also be reduced bit by bit. If a believer does not give new ground to evil spirits, the power of demon-possession will decrease in proportion to the shrinking of their ground. Although it may take some time before a believer can be completely free, nevertheless, he is on the way to freedom. Perhaps in the past he had no feeling for himself, for his own senses, his appearance, or his daily life. Now gradually these feelings will come back. The believer should not be misled to think that his spiritual life is going backward because he feels these things once again. He should realize that he lost consciousness of these things when he was possessed by the demons. Since he is beginning to be freed, the feelings for them are coming back. These feelings show that evil spirits were attached to his senses but they are departing from him now. When a believer reaches this step, he should advance faithfully, because he will soon experience a full release. However, before he has returned to his normal condition, he should not be satisfied with a little success. If the demons are to be fully expelled, the ground must be fully recovered.

## **THE TRUE LEADING**

We should understand God's way of leading as well as the relationship between man's will and God's will.

We must realize that a believer's submission to God should be unconditional. Moreover when a believer's spiritual life has reached a climax, his will should be one with God's will. This does not mean

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that the believer no longer has his own will. The faculty of the will still exists, but the natural temperament is gone. God still needs the faculty of man's will to work with Him for the accomplishment of His will. When we look at the pattern of the Lord Jesus, we can see that a person who is one with God still has the capability of his will. "I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30). "Not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (6:38). "Yet, not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Here we can see that the Lord Jesus who is one with the Father has His own will besides the Father's will. The verses do not say that He does not have His will; rather, they say that He did not seek, perform, or accomplish His own will. Therefore, whoever is really one with God should not eliminate the function of the will; rather, he should put his will on the side of God's will.

Genuine leading does not mean that the believer should obey God like a machine. Rather, it means that the believer should actively carry out God's will. God does not want the believer to follow Him blindly; He wants the believer to use his whole being sensibly to do His will. Lazy ones like to see God acting for them while they passively follow. But God does not want believers to be lazy. God wants believers to vigorously prepare their members and actively obey after they have spent the time to examine and understand God's will. We have spoken previously on how to know God's will through the intuition. Therefore, we will not repeat it here. If a believer desires to obey God, he must go through the following steps: (1) he must resolve to obey God's will (John 7:17); (2) he must receive the revelation concerning God's will through his intuition (Eph. 5:17); (3) he must be strengthened by God to resolve to carry it out (Phil 2:13); and (4) he must be strengthened by God to execute it (Phil. 2:13). God will not replace the believer in carrying out His will. After a believer understands God's will, he should set his will to carry it out. After his will is set, he should claim the power of the Holy Spirit to carry it out practically.

A believer must claim the power of the Holy Spirit because his will is too weak to act alone. It is always the case that "to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not" (Rom. 7:18). Therefore, the Holy Spirit is needed to strengthen our inner man so that we can practically obey God. First God operates within us to make us willing. Next God operates within us for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

God reveals His will through our intuition. If a believer's will is united to Him, God will multiply strength to the believer and enable the believer to set his will according to God's will and carry it out. God wants the believers to be one with His will. Yet He does not want to replace His children in the application of their will. God's purpose in creating and redeeming man is that man would become completely free in his will. Through the salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus on the cross, believers today can freely choose and follow God's will. This is why many commandments in the New Testament (all of them pertaining to life and godliness) require the exercise of the will on the part of the believer to choose or reject. If God wanted to eliminate the faculty of the will, would these commandments have any meaning?

A spiritual believer is one who has the full power to exercise his own will. He should constantly choose God's will and reject Satan's will. Although many times he cannot tell what is from God and what is from Satan, he can still choose and reject. He can say, "Although I do not know what belongs to God and what belongs to the devil, I will choose God and refuse the devil." Though he does not know what belongs to God, he can choose God in his "motive" and choose everything that is of God. He can adopt the attitude that he does not want anything that is from the devil, whatever it may be. Whatever comes

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upon him, he should choose and reject. It does not matter if he does not know; he still must always choose God's will. He can say, "Whenever I know God's will, I want it. I will always choose God's will and reject Satan's will." By doing this, God's Holy Spirit will work within him, and He will strengthen the will that stands against Satan day by day to the point that Satan will lose his power day by day. Then God will gain one more faithful servant in a rebellious world. When one continuously rejects Satan's will in his motive and asks God to prove what is according to Him, he will realize in his spirit the great role that the attitude of the will plays in the spiritual life.

### **SELF-RULE**

When the believer's spiritual life reaches its climax, he can rule over himself. When we say that the Holy Spirit within us lords over us, we do not mean that the Holy Spirit Himself directly rules over any part of our person. If the believer has this misunderstanding, he will either be possessed by the demons or become discouraged when he does not see the Holy Spirit ruling over his life in this way. If a believer realizes that the Holy Spirit is leading him into self-rule, he will not fall into passivity; on the contrary, he will advance greatly in his spiritual life.

"The fruit of the Spirit is...temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23, KJV). The original meaning of temperance is self-control. The work of the Holy Spirit is to lead the believer's outer man into full submission to his self-rule. The Holy Spirit depends on the believer's renewed will to reign over himself. Whenever a believer acts according to the flesh, the outward man rebels against the spirit. This rebellion does not come as one integrated rebellion, but as uncoordinated rebellious acts. When a believer is really spiritual and when he bears the fruit of the Spirit, not only can kindness, joy, meekness, etc., be found in him (in his soul), but also the power of self-control can be found in him. Although the outward man was confused at one time, it is now totally subdued and fully under the reign of his own rule in accordance with the will of the Holy Spirit.

First a believer must control his spirit so that his spirit is always in a proper condition. It should not be too hot or too depressed, but in a proper position. Our spirit, like our other parts, needs to be under the control of our will. A believer can only control his own spirit and keep it in the proper place when his mind is renewed and when he is full of the power of the Holy Spirit. The experienced believer knows that when his spirit becomes agitated, he has to exercise his will to control it. When the spirit becomes too depressed, he has to exercise his will to uplift it. Only in this way can the believer walk in the spirit every day. This word does not contradict what we said before about the spirit ruling over the whole being. When we say that the spirit controls our whole being, we mean that the intuition of the spirit expresses God's will. Consequently, the spirit controls our whole being (including our will) through God's will. When we say that our will controls our whole being, we mean that our will is directly controlling our whole being (including our spirit) according to God's will. Experientially these two things are fully compatible with each other. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Prov. 25:28).

Second, the believer should control his mind and the other faculties of his soul. Every thought should be subjected to the control of the will. All wandering thoughts must come under the control of the will. "Take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). "Set your mind on the things which are above" (Col. 3:2).

Third, the body should be under control. Man's body should be a tool to him and not become his master

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through wild cravings and lusts. The believer must use his will to control, train, and subdue his body so that it can be completely obedient and wait on God's will without any resistance. "But I buffet my body and make it my slave" (1 Cor. 9:27). When the believer's will reaches the state of total self-control, he will not be frustrated by any part of his being. Once he knows God's will, he can instantly respond. Both the Holy Spirit and man's spirit need an autonomous will to carry out God's revelation. Hence, on the one hand, we should be one with God; on the other hand, we should buffet our whole being so that it will obey us fully. This is very important to our spiritual life.

## **SECTION TEN**

### **THE BODY**

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **THE BELIEVER AND HIS BODY**

We need to know how God views the position of the body. No one can deny that there is a relationship between the body and the spiritual life. In addition to having a spirit and soul, we also have a body. Although the intuition, fellowship, and conscience of our spirit may be very healthy, and although the mind, emotion, and will of our soul may be renewed, we have not become a spiritual man if our outward body is not healthy and renewed in accordance with our spirit and soul. We cannot be considered complete, and we are still lacking in something. As human beings we not only have a spirit and soul, but we also have a body. We cannot overlook the body and care only for the spirit and soul. If we do so, our life will wither.

The body is needed and important; otherwise, God would not have given man a body. If we carefully read through the Bible, we can see the importance that God places on the body of man. Nearly everything that is recorded in the Bible has to do with the body. The incarnation is the most conspicuous and convincing point. The Son of God took a body of flesh and blood. Though He has passed through death, He still has this body throughout eternity.

#### **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BODY**

Romans 8:10 through 13 tells us in detail about the condition of our (the believers') body, how the Holy Spirit helps our body, and the proper attitude towards the body. By understanding these few verses, we will not be mistaken concerning the position of the believers' body in the plan of God's redemption.

Verse 10 says, "But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." Both our body and our spirit were originally dead. But after we believed in the Lord Jesus, we received Him within us to be our life. Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, now dwells within

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the believers. This is the most important truth of the gospel. Every believer, no matter how weak he is, has Christ dwelling within him. This is the very Christ who is our life. At the moment He entered into our inward part, He enlivened our spirit. We have seen this previously. Originally our body and spirit were dead. Because we have received the indwelling Christ, our spirit is alive. The spirit and body were previously dead, but now the spirit is revived; only the body remains dead. This is the common condition of every believer—the spirit is alive and the body is dead.

This experience (shared by every believer) causes major differences between the outward and inward parts of the believers. Our inner man is full of life, but our outward man is full of death. We are living, and our spirit is full of life, but we dwell in a body of death. In other words, the life of our spirit and the life of our body are completely different. The life in the spirit is truly life, and the life in the body is nothing but death, because our body is still a "body of sin." Consequently, no matter how much growth in the spiritual life we have, our body is still a "body of sin." We have not yet received the body of resurrection, that glorious and spiritual body. The redemption of our body is in the future. Today's body is nothing but an "earthen vessel," an "earthly tabernacle," and it is still in "dishonor." Although sin has been cast out from the spirit and the will, the redemption of the body is still something in the future. Therefore, sin has not been cast out from the body. Since sin is still in the body, the body is dead. This is the meaning of "the body is dead because of sin." In the meantime our spirit is living, or more accurately stated, our spirit is life; because of the righteousness of Christ, our spirit received life. When we believed in Christ, we simultaneously received (1) the righteousness of Christ and (2) God's justification. In the first case, Christ dispensed His righteousness into us. This is a fact that has truly transpired and is not a figure of speech. Christ has dispensed His righteousness into us like one dispenses material things of the world. In the second case, God through Christ has reckoned us righteous. This is only a legal procedure. If there were no dispensing of righteousness, there would be no justification. When we received Christ, we received justification from God positionally. He dispensed Christ's righteousness into us at the same time that He entered into us to be our life and revive our dead spirit. This is why Romans 8:10 says, "The spirit is life because of righteousness."

Verse 11 says, "And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." The preceding verse says that God causes our spirit to become life, and this verse tells us that God causes our bodies to receive life. Verse 10 says that only the spirit is living; the body is still dead. This verse continues by saying that the body can also become living after the spirit is revived. First it says that the spirit is living because Christ lives within us; then it says that the body is living because the Holy Spirit lives within us. The Holy Spirit wants to give life to our body.

We have already seen how our bodies are dead. Although the shell is not dead, it is heading toward the tomb. Spiritually speaking, the body is also reckoned dead. Although humanly speaking, the body has life, God regards that life as death because it is full of sins. "The body is dead because of sin." On the one hand, even though the body has strength, we cannot allow it to express its own life. It should not have any action because the actions of its life are nothing but death. Sin is the life of the body, and sin is spiritual death. The body is living in a kind of spiritual death. On the other hand, we know that we should be witnessing for God, serving God, and doing God's work. All of these need the strength of the body. Since the body is dead spiritually and since its life is also dead, what should we do so that our bodies can be used to supply the needs of the spiritual life without utilizing its life of death? Our body is unwilling as well as unable to walk according to the will of the indwelling Spirit of life. On the contrary, it opposes and fights with that will. What must the Holy Spirit do in order to enable the body

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to walk according to His will? The answer is that the Holy Spirit wants to give life to our mortal bodies.

The One "who raised Jesus from the dead" is God. But God is not mentioned directly; He is referred to as the One "who raised Jesus from the dead" because the emphasis is specifically on God's work of raising up the Lord Jesus from the dead. This draws the attention of the believers to this point: if God raised up the dead body of Jesus, He is able to raise up the mortal bodies of the believers. The apostle states that if the Spirit of God, namely the Holy Spirit, who is also the Spirit of resurrection, "dwells in you," God will "also give life to your mortal bodies" through Him. This is the second time that the apostle used the word "if." But he was not in doubt about whether the Holy Spirit is within the believers. In verse 9 he said that those who have partaken of Christ already have the Holy Spirit. He meant that since one has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, his mortal body must receive His life also. This is a privilege shared by everyone who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. He was unwilling for even one believer not to know and draw upon this in faith, thereby losing this portion of blessing.

This verse tells us that if the Spirit of God dwells in us, then God should give life to our mortal bodies through the indwelling Spirit. This does not refer to the time of resurrection in the future. This has absolutely nothing to do with resurrection. God is only making a comparison between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and our bodies that have now received life. This verse does not speak of the body which has died; if it did, this would be dealing with resurrection. It is only speaking of the "mortal" body that has not died, but which will die. The body of the believers is spiritually dead. This is different from saying that it is already dead. In reality, it is heading toward the tomb and it will die. Just as the Holy Spirit dwelling within us is a matter of the present world, the Holy Spirit giving life to our mortal bodies is also an experience of the present world. Neither does this verse speak about our regeneration, because the Holy Spirit is mentioned as giving life to our body, not to our spirit.

In this verse, God tells us that the believers' bodies are privileged to receive life through the Holy Spirit that is dwelling within us. This does not mean that "the body of sin" becomes a holy body, that "the body of our humiliation" becomes a glorious body, or that the "mortal body" becomes an immortal body. These are impossible in our present life; these things will happen only when the Lord takes us up and our bodies are redeemed. The nature of our body can never be changed during the present life. For the Holy Spirit to give life to our body means: (1) if our body has illness, He can cause it to be recovered, and (2) if our body does not have illness, He will preserve us from encountering any illness. In short, the Holy Spirit wants to make our body strong, so that it can meet all the requirements of God's work and living, and so that neither our life nor the kingdom of God will suffer any damage because of the body.

This is what God has prepared for all of His children. But how many believers really have the experience of the Spirit of the Lord giving life to their mortal body every day? Are not many still influenced by their physical constitution, thus endangering their spiritual life? Do not many often fail because of the weakness of their body? Are they still unable to participate in vigorous work for God because of the bondage of illness? The experiences of the believers today cannot yet match the provisions of God. There are many reasons for this. Some are ignorant of the provisions which God has put in the Holy Spirit. Some consider that this is impossible because of unbelief. Some think that this has little to do with them because they do not want it. Some know it, believe in it, and want it, but do not present their bodies as a living sacrifice. They simply hope that God, through the Holy Spirit, will give them strength so that they can live for themselves. Therefore, they also cannot experience it. If

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believers are really willing to live for God, and if they will claim these promises and provisions by faith, they will see that it is truly a fact that God will fill up the body with life. (We will have more to say about this later.)

Verse 12 says, "So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh." This verse thoroughly speaks about the proper relationship between the believer and the body. Countless numbers of believers today have fully become the slaves of the body, and countless numbers of them have their spiritual life completely confined in their body! They are like two different people; when they turn within to themselves, they feel that they are very spiritual, very close to God, and very high in their spiritual life, but when they live in the outward flesh, they feel that they are fallen, fleshly, and separated from God. They obey their bodies. Their bodies seem to be a heavy burden. Once there is a little ailment, they change the way they live. Once there is a little weakness, disease, or pain, they are at a loss; they begin to love and pity themselves and lose all the peace in their heart. In this circumstance, it is impossible for them to have a spiritual life.

The apostle's words "so then" connect this verse with the preceding text. Verse 10 speaks of the body being dead, and verse 11 speaks of the Holy Spirit giving life to the body. Based on these two conditions, the apostle continued, "So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh." (1) Since the body is dead because of sin, we must not live according to it; otherwise, we will sin. (2) Since the Holy Spirit has given life to our mortal bodies, we do not need to live according to the flesh, because our flesh has no authority to bind our spiritual life anymore. Based on these provisions of the Holy Spirit, our inner life can now give orders directly to the outer body without any hindrance. Formerly, we were debtors to the flesh. We had no way to stop its desires, cravings, and lusts. So we obeyed it and committed many sins. However, since the Holy Spirit has made these provisions for us, the lust of the flesh cannot force us to do anything, and even the weakness, disease, and pain of the flesh can no longer control us.

Many people think that the flesh has its lawful desires and cravings and that we should fulfill them. But the apostle tells us that we do not owe the flesh anything since "we are debtors not to the flesh." Beyond keeping the flesh in a proper condition as a vessel to God, we do not owe it any debt. Of course, the Bible does not forbid us to have some care for the body; when illness occurs, it will require more attention. Clothing, food, and dwelling are all needed. Sometimes, rest is indispensable. But we are saying that we should not allow our life to be solely centered on these things. We must eat when hungry, drink when thirsty, rest when tired, and put on clothing when cold. But we must and should not allow these things to enter deeply into our hearts or become part of the goals of our daily living. We should not crave these things. These things should come according to needs and go according to needs; they should never linger inside us for a long time. It is not right for them to become our cravings. At times the body does have these needs. Yet because of the work of God or because more important needs exist, we should be able to buffet ourselves and not be under the body's subjection. Both the sleepiness of the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane and the endurance of hunger by the Lord Jesus at the well at Sychar express the need to overcome even lawful desires. Otherwise, these desires will lead to failures. We owe no debts to the flesh. Therefore, we should not sin through the lust of the flesh, and we should not reduce the spiritual work because of the weakness of the flesh.

Verse 13 says, "For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." Since God has made such provisions, the believers will suffer punishment if they do not receive them and live according to the flesh instead.

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"If you live according to the flesh, you must die." Here the word "die" and the word "live" in the following phrase have several meanings. We will only mention one of them: the death of the body. As far as sin is concerned, our body is "dead"; as far as the outcome is concerned, our body is "mortal." If we live according to the flesh, the mortal body will become the body that is "about to die." If we live according to the flesh, on the one hand, we cannot receive the life which the Holy Spirit gives to the body, and on the other hand, the aging of the body will speed up. All sins are harmful to the body. All sins will produce an effect in the body, and this effect is death. We must fight against the death in our body through trusting in the Holy Spirit who gives life to our body. Otherwise, the death in the body will speed up its work.

"If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." We should not only receive the Holy Spirit to be the life-giver to our body; we should also receive Him as the mortifier of the practices of the body. If we neglect to put to death the practices of the body by the Holy Spirit, we cannot expect the Holy Spirit to give life to our body. We can only live by putting to death the practices of the body through Him. If the body wants to live, the practices of the body must first die. Otherwise, death will be the imminent result. This is the mistake of many people; they think that they can live for themselves, direct their own body, do the things that please themselves, and still receive life from the Holy Spirit for their body to keep their body strong without ailments. How can this be possible? The Holy Spirit gives life and power to man in order that man would live for Him! The life which God gives to our body is for Himself; it is for the purpose of living for Him. If we have not consecrated ourselves fully, we would only live for ourselves more if the Holy Spirit gave us health, strength, and power! Many believers who pursue the Holy Spirit so that life will be given to their body should realize that they cannot receive what they are asking for if they do not pay attention to this point.

Originally, we could not control our body. Now, through the Holy Spirit, we can. He gives us the power to put to death the practices of the body. Every believer has experienced lust within his members, stimulating the body to rise up to fulfill the desire of his lust, and seen how powerless he is to deal with it by himself. But through (or by) the Holy Spirit, he is able to do it. This is a very important point. It is useless for the self to crucify the self. Today many believers understand the truth of co-crucifixion on the cross. But very few really express this life. The truth of co-crucifixion is merely a teaching in the life of many people. They have not seen clearly the place of the Holy Spirit in salvation. They do not know that the Holy Spirit is working together with the cross. If we only have the cross without the Holy Spirit, the cross is absolutely useless. Only the Holy Spirit can "apply" what the cross has accomplished, and only He can cause it to become our experience. If we do not allow this truth to become real in our lives "by the Spirit," after we hear about the truth of the cross, all that we see will be just theories.

It is good to know "that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled." But if we do not "by the Spirit"—by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Spirit—"put to death the practices of the body," the knowledge of this truth alone will not deliver us from the practices of the body. Many believers clearly understand and accept the truth of the cross, but it has virtually no effect on them. This makes them doubt if the salvation of the cross on the practical side is real. It is not surprising that they think this way, because they have forgotten the Holy Spirit who alone can turn the cross into experience. Only He can make salvation real to us. Yet He is forgotten by men. Unless a believer denies himself entirely and trusts fully in the power of the Holy Spirit—riding on the power of the Holy Spirit—to put to death the practices of the body, the truth he recognizes will only be a theory. Only through the mortifying power of the Holy Spirit can life be given to the body.

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## GLORIFYING GOD

First Corinthians 6:12 through 20 adds considerable light to the matter of the believers' body. We will now briefly consider this portion verse by verse.

Verse 12 says, "All things are lawful to me, but not all things are profitable; all things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of anything." The apostle was talking about the question of the body. (This will be explained later.) He said that everything is lawful because, according to nature, all the desires of the body, such as eating, drinking, sex, etc. (v. 13), are natural, necessary, and lawful. But he said that these things (1) are not all expedient and (2) should not bring people under their power. In other words, there are many things, humanly speaking, that a believer can do related to his body but may choose not to do because he belongs to the Lord and wants to glorify God.

Verse 13 says, "Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach for foods; but God will bring to nought both it and them. But the body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." The first half of this verse is paired with the first half of the last verse. Food is lawful, but food and the belly will both be brought to nothing. Therefore, not all are expedient. The last half is also paired with the last half of the last verse. A believer can be completely free from the control of sexual lusts and offer his body completely to the Lord (7:34).

"The body is...for the Lord." This statement is very crucial. The apostle has just spoken on the problem of food. The matter of eating and drinking provides believers with an opportunity to carry out the instruction, "The body is...for the Lord." The original cause of man's fall was food. The Lord Jesus was also tempted by food in the wilderness. Many Christian believers do not know they should glorify God in the matter of eating and drinking. They do not consider that the purpose of eating and drinking is only to make the body fit for the Lord's use. They eat and drink to satisfy their own desires. We should know that the body is "for the Lord" and not for ourselves. Therefore, we should not use our body to please ourselves. Eating and drinking should not hinder our fellowship with God; they should only preserve our body in its normal condition.

The apostle also spoke on the question of fornication. This kind of sin defiles the body. Therefore, it is absolutely contrary to the teaching of "the body is...for the Lord." The fornication mentioned here does not include only the indulgence of the lust of the flesh outside of marriage, but also between a husband and a wife. The body is for the Lord; this means that the body is completely for the Lord and not for one's self. Therefore, lawful indulgence should also be forbidden.

The apostle wants us to see that everything that passes the limit or ignores the limit—no matter what it may be—ought to be resisted absolutely. Since the body is for the Lord, no one ought to use the body in addition to the Lord. Whoever employs the body, no matter what part, for his own pleasure, does not please God. In addition to being a vessel for righteousness, the body should not serve any other purpose. The body, like our person, should not serve two masters. Even though food and sex are matters of nature, we can only allow them to be satisfied when need arises. When the need is met, the body is still for the Lord, not for food and sex. Today many Christian believers pursue only after the sanctification of their spirit and soul, but do not know that in order to attain sanctification of their spirit and soul, they must attain sanctification in their body. In many respects the sanctification of the spirit and soul depends on the sanctification of the body. They forget that all of their nerves, sensations, activities, living, working, eating, drinking, speaking, etc., should be for the Lord. Otherwise, they will

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not arrive at perfection.

"The body is...for the Lord" means that the body belongs to the Lord. Nevertheless, it is in the hand of man for him to keep for the Lord. Today, however, few know about this or practice this! The reason many of God's children suffer weaknesses, diseases, and afflictions is that God is chastening them and calling them to offer their bodies completely to Him. After they do this, He will heal them. He wants them to know that their bodies are not their own, but the Lord's. If they still live according to their own will, they will see that God's chastisement will not leave them. If there are some among us now who are sick, they should pay attention to this word.

"The Lord [is also] for the body." This is a marvelous word. Ordinarily we think that the Lord came to save the soul. But this verse tells us that "the Lord [is also] for the body." Many believers despise the body too much. They believe that the Lord only cares to save souls and that the body does not have any use. They consider the body worthless in the realm of spiritual life and that there is no provision of grace for it in God's salvation. But this verse tells us that "the Lord [is also] for the body." God says that the Lord is also for the body that man despises.

Since believers despise the body in this way, they think the Lord Jesus only takes care of the sins of the spirit and soul and does not take care of the illness of the body. Therefore, when they suffer from weaknesses and illnesses, they resort to human ways for remedy. Although they know that the Lord healed the body more than He saved souls in the four Gospels, they interpret these acts spiritually. They believe the ailments only pointed to their spiritual condition. They acknowledge that when the Lord was on earth, He healed diseases of the body, yet they believe the Lord only heals their spiritual sicknesses today. They are willing to commit their spiritual illnesses to the Lord for His healing, but they think the Lord has no concern about their bodily illness and that they should find their own treatment. They forget, however, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, even forever" (Heb. 13:8). They think that the Lord Jesus healed the sicknesses of the body when He was on the earth but that He is only healing the sicknesses of the spirit today.

Among most believers, the body is put aside. It seems as if God has not provided anything for their body, that all of Christ's salvation is limited to the spirit and soul, and that the body has no share whatsoever in it. They do not pay any attention to the fact that the Lord Jesus healed the sick when He was on the earth, and the apostles continued to experience the power of healing. The only reason for this is unbelief. The Word of God, however, indicates that the Lord is also for the body. The Lord is for the body. All that the Lord is, is for the body.

In the context that our body is for the Lord, the Lord is also for our body. Here we see the relationship between God and man. God gave Himself entirely to us because He expects us to give ourselves entirely to Him. After we have given ourselves to Him, according to the thoroughness of our giving, He will give Himself to us. God wants us to know that He has already given up His body for us. He also wants us to know that if our body is truly for Him, we will surely experience that He is for our body. The significance of "the body is...for the Lord" is that we offer our own body completely to the Lord, to live for the Lord. The significance of "the Lord for the body" is that the Lord has already accepted our offering with pleasure. The Lord will give His life and power to our body. He will guard, keep, and nourish our body.

Our body is weak, defiled, sinful, and mortal. It seems unbelievable that the Lord could be for our body. But when we see God's ways of salvation, we will understand. When the Lord Jesus descended

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to the earth, He was incarnated in the flesh. He had a body. When He was on the cross, He bore our sins in His own body. When we join ourselves to Him by faith, our body is also nailed to the cross with Him. Hence, He releases our body from the power of sin. In Christ, this body has now been resurrected and ascended to the heavens. Now the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Therefore, we can say that the Lord is for our body. He is not only for the spirit and soul, but also for the body.

There are several meanings to the words "the Lord [is] for the body." First, the Lord is for the body because the Lord desires to deliver our body from sin. Almost all sins are involved with the body. Many sinful actions are initiated by the peculiar physiological constituents of the body. For example, drunkenness is the result of a craving in the body. Reveling is the result of the demand of the body. The wrath of many is influenced by the peculiar constitution of their body. A physiological makeup that is overly-sensitive and provocative easily leads to frigidity, severity, and harshness of speech. The reason many people have a peculiar disposition is that they are peculiar in their physiological constitution. Many people are especially defiled, wanton, fornicating, and lawless because their physiological constitution is different from that of ordinary people. When they are dominated by their body, they commit all these sins. But the Lord is for the body. Therefore, if we first offer our body to the Lord and acknowledge that He is the Lord of all, and if we claim His promises by faith, we shall see that the Lord is for the body; that is, He will deliver us out of sin. Therefore, no matter what kind of physiological constitution we have—whether it is weaker than others or not—we can rely on the Lord to overcome it.

Second, the Lord is also for the sickness of the body. Just as He annihilates sin, He heals diseases. In all things concerning our body, He is for us. Therefore, He is also for our illnesses. Our illnesses are for the purpose of revealing to us the power of sin on our body. The Lord Jesus wants to save us completely. Therefore, whether it is sin or illness, He desires to deliver us out of both.

Third, the Lord is also for our living in the body. The Lord wants to be the strength and life of our body so that our body would live by Him. In our daily living, He wants us to experience His resurrection power and see that our body also lives by Him on this earth. (The above two points will be covered in detail in a separate chapter.)

Fourth, the Lord is also for the glorification of our body. This is for the future. The highest point that we can attain today is to live by Him. But this does not involve changing the nature of our body. When the day arrives, the Lord will redeem our body and make it the same as His body of glory.

We should not neglect the importance of the words: "The body is...for the Lord." If we really want to experience that the Lord is for the body, we must first practice having the body for the Lord. If we do not consecrate our body completely to live for the Lord, and if we use our body according to our own desire, to please and enjoy ourselves, it is impossible for us to have the experience of "the Lord for the body." Only when we put ourselves completely in the hands of God, submitting to His orders in all things and presenting our members as vessels to righteousness, can we prove that the Lord is truly for our body. He will give us life and power. If our body is not for the Lord, we cannot experience the Lord being for our body.

Verse 14 says, "And God has both raised up the Lord and will raise us up through His power." This verse explains the last phrase of the foregoing verse: "The Lord for the body." The resurrection of the Lord was the resurrection of His body. Our resurrection in the future will also be a resurrection of the

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body. God has already given resurrection to the body of the Lord Jesus. God will also give resurrection to our body. These two occurrences are facts. How can the Lord be for our body? With His power, He will raise us. This is the climax of, "The Lord for the body." This will take place in the future. But how about today? Today we can have a foretaste of the great power of His resurrection.

Verse 15 says, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Absolutely not!" The first question is a marvelous one. Other passages only say, "Now you are the body of Christ" (12:27). Only this passage says, "Your bodies are members of Christ." Indeed, "you," your whole person, is a member of Christ. Why does this verse speak of the body here? It seems that we only believe that our spirit is the member of Christ, because it is spiritual. How can our physical body be a member of Christ? Here we see a very marvelous fact.

We must understand our union with Christ. God does not regard any individual believer as a separate believer. God put all believers in Christ. No believer can be outside of Christ, because his daily life is supplied by Christ. In God's eyes the union of the believers to Christ is an absolutely true fact. The body of Christ is not a spiritual term, but a real fact. Just as the head is joined to the body, Christ is joined to all the believers. In the eyes of God, our union with Christ is complete, eternal, and absolute. In other words our spirit is joined to Christ's Spirit. This is very crucial. Our soul is joined to the soul of Christ. This is a union in mind, emotion, and will. Our body is also joined to the body of Christ. If the union between us and Christ is without any breach, our body cannot be an exception. If we are members of Christ, our body must also be Christ's member.

Of course, this will only be consummated at the time of the coming resurrection. But today, through our union with Christ, this has become a fact already. This teaching is very crucial. We can gain much consolation if we know that the body of Christ is for our body. Every truth can be experienced. Have we found some physiological defect in our body, such as illness, affliction, or weakness? We have to see that the body of Christ is for our body. Our body is joined to His body. Therefore, we are able to draw life and power from the Lord Jesus to supply all the needs of our body. Whoever has a deficiency in his body ought to exercise his faith to stand firmly on the position of his union with the Lord and acknowledge that he is for the Lord and the Lord is for him. In this way, he can apply all that the Lord is for the body.

The apostle was amazed that the Corinthian believers could not comprehend such an obvious teaching. He reckoned that if the believers knew this teaching, they would not only have plenty of spiritual experiences, but they would also receive a warning concerning their practice. If the body is a member of Christ, how could they join themselves to a prostitute?

First Corinthians 6:16 says, "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body? For He says, The two shall be one flesh." Here the apostle explained clearly the principle of union. Whoever is joined to a prostitute is one flesh with the prostitute. Therefore, he becomes a member of the prostitute. The believer who is joined to Christ is a member of Christ. If we take the members of Christ and join them to a prostitute, making them also members of a prostitute, where will Christ stand then? This is why the apostle said, "God forbid" (KJV).

Verse 17 says, "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." In these three verses we can see the mystery of the union of our body with the Lord. The most crucial point in these three verses is the matter of union. Verse 17 means that since those who join their body to a prostitute become one flesh

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with her and become her members, the believers who are joined to the Lord in one spirit will all the more have their body become His members! This is a very crucial thought. If the mere joining of one's body with a prostitute makes two bodies one, will not those whose whole being is joined to Christ be one with Him in the body?

The apostle believes that one who is joined to the Lord is initially "one spirit" with the Lord because this is the union of spirits. But he never considered the body of a believer to be independent of his spirit. He admits that the initial joining is in the spirit, but the union of the spirit also makes the believer's body become a member of Christ. This statement is a proof of what he just said, that "the body is...for the Lord" and "the Lord [is also] for the body."

All the problems rest on the matter of union. God's children must know clearly that their own position in Christ is an uninterrupted union. Hence, our body is a member of the Lord. The life of the Lord can be manifested from our body. If the Lord were weak, anguished, and sick, we would have nothing. But since He is not, our union with Him can secure the health, power, and life of the Lord for us.

However, we must stress one point: this does not mean that since our body is a member of Christ, our body should sense all the spiritual fellowship and spiritual matters. Christians are often misled to think that since the body is a member of Christ, everything should be evidenced by the body. They think that God's presence should be felt in the body, that God shakes the body, and that the shaking of God is in the body. They think that God rules over the body directly, that the Holy Spirit fills the body, and that the Holy Spirit communicates His will to the body, using the tongue and mouth of the body to speak for Him. In this way, the body replaces the spirit in its work. As a result the spirit loses its function, and the body works for the spirit. Sometimes the body cannot endure much labor and breaks down. Furthermore, evil spirits, that is, spirits without a body, love nothing more than man's body. Their main purpose is to attach themselves to man's body. If a believer exalts the position of his body beyond what it should be, evil spirits will take the opportunity to work. This is in accordance with the law of the spiritual realm. If a believer thinks that God and His Spirit communicate with him through his body, he may expect God and His Spirit to communicate with him through his body. But God and His Spirit do not communicate directly through his body but through his spirit. If the believer still insists on pursuing after the experience of God in his body, evil spirits will take this opportunity to come into him because this is exactly what they want. The result is nothing other than evil spirits attaching themselves to the believer's body. When we speak about the union of our body with Christ, we are simply saying that the body can receive God's life and be strengthened by it, and that one should use it carefully because its position is so noble. We are not saying that the body can take over the work of the spirit.

Verse 18 says, "Flee fornication. Every sin which a man may do is outside the body, but he who commits fornication sins against his own body." The Bible considers the sin of fornication to be more serious than any other sin. This is because fornication is especially related to the body, while our body is a member of Christ. We should not be surprised that the apostle emphatically reminded and repeatedly exhorted the believers to flee fornication. We pay attention to the moral defilement of fornication. But this is not the apostle's emphasis. Other than fornication, no sin causes our body to be joined to that of another. Therefore, fornication offends the body. Other than fornication, no sin changes the members of Christ to members of a prostitute. Therefore, fornication is a sin that offends the members of Christ. Because a believer is joined to Christ, fornication becomes all the more deplorable. We can look at it another way: if fornication is so deplorable, the union of our body with Christ must be very real.

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Verse 19 says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God." This is the second "do you not know." The first "do you not know" (v. 15) refers to "the body is...for the Lord." The second "do you not know" refers to "the Lord [is also] for the body." In 1 Corinthians 3:16 the apostle already told us that "you are the temple of God." But now he specifically says, "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit." This means that the residence of the Holy Spirit expands from the spirit to the body. It would be wrong to assume that the Holy Spirit first settles in our body as His residence; the Holy Spirit initially dwells in our spirit and only communicates directly with our spirit. But there is nothing to restrict Him from issuing His life from the spirit and giving life to our body. If we think that the Holy Spirit comes first to our body, we will be deceived. But if we limit the Holy Spirit only to our spirit, we will suffer loss.

We ought to know that our body has a place in God's salvation. Christ wants to sanctify our body and fill it with the Holy Spirit so that it can be a vessel for Him. Because His body has passed through death, resurrection, and glorification, He can supply the Holy Spirit to our body. Just as our soul-life saturated our body, His Holy Spirit will saturate our body. He wants to flow into every member and supply us with life and strength beyond what we can think.

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is an established fact and something that we can experience in a living way. Many believers, like those in Corinth, seem to have forgotten this fact. Although the Holy Spirit is indwelling them, they appear as if He is not in them. We need faith to believe, acknowledge, and receive God's facts. If we claim them by faith, we will see the Holy Spirit not only put Christ's holiness, joy, righteousness, and love in our soul, but also put His life, power, health, and vigor into our weak, weary, and sick bodies. He will bring to our body the life of Christ Himself and the element of His glorified body. When our body is willing to obey Him completely, when we are willing to reject all self-will and independent action, and when we seek nothing other than to be a temple for the Lord, in short, if we have really died in Christ, the Holy Spirit will surely manifest the life of the resurrected Christ in our body. How wonderful it would be if we saw that the Lord, through His Spirit dwelling in us, heals us, strengthens us, and becomes our health and life! If we believe that our own body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we will follow the Spirit in awe and joy with much holiness and love.

First Corinthians 6:20 says, "For you have been bought with a price. So then glorify God in your body." The last part of verse 19 is a continuation of the question in the same verse. "Do you not know...you are not your own?" You are the members of Christ. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You are not your own; you have been bought with a heavy price by God. All that is yours, especially your body, belongs to God. Christ is joined to you. The sealing of the Holy Spirit dwells in you. All this proves that your body belongs particularly to God. "So then glorify God in your body." Brothers, God wants us to glorify Him in our body. He wants us to glorify Him through a consecration in which "the body is...for the Lord," He wants us also to glorify Him through the grace in which "the Lord [is] for the body." Let us be sober and watchful, not allowing ourselves to employ our body for our own use, neither allowing our body to fall into a state as if the Lord is not for the body. Only then will we be able to glorify God, and only then will He be able to freely manifest His power. Then, on the one hand, we will be freed from selfishness, self-love, and sin, and on the other hand, we will be freed from weakness, sickness, and pain.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### SICKNESS

Sickness is the most commonly encountered thing in the human life. If we want to know the way to preserve our body in a condition that glorifies God, we must know the attitude that we should have toward sickness, how to utilize our sickness, and how to have our sickness healed. Since sickness is so common, we will inevitably have a great lack in our lives if we do not know how to deal with it.

### SICKNESS AND SIN

The Bible reveals that sickness and sin are closely related. The ultimate result of sin is death. Sickness lies between sin and death. Sickness is the issue of sin and the forerunner of death. If there were no sin in the world, there would surely be neither death nor sickness. One thing is certain: if Adam had not sinned, there would be no sickness today on the earth. Like other afflictions, sickness is brought in by sin.

We have a spiritual nature and a physical nature. Both of these were affected when man fell. The "soul" (for now, I will combine the spirit and the soul and call them one thing, the "soul") was damaged by sin, and the body was invaded by sickness. Sin within the "soul" and sickness in the body prove that man is destined to die.

When the Lord Jesus came to save, not only did He forgive man's transgressions, but He also healed man's sicknesses. He saved man's "soul" and also man's body. When He began His work, He healed man's sicknesses. When His work ended, He became an offering of propitiation on the cross for man's transgressions. He healed many sick people when He was on the earth. His hands were always ready to touch and raise the sick. Whether considering His own acts or the commandments He left to the apostles, the salvation that He brought always included the healing of sicknesses. His gospel is the forgiveness of sins and the healing of sicknesses. The two go together. The Lord Jesus saves man from sin and sickness so that man will know the love of the Father. Whether in the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, or the Old Testament, we can see that the healing of sicknesses and the forgiveness of sins go together.

Isaiah 53 is the passage in the Old Testament that explains the gospel most clearly. Many passages in the New Testament that speak of the Lord Jesus' redemption as being a fulfillment of prophecy make reference to Isaiah 53. Verse 5 says, "The chastening for our peace was upon Him,/And by His stripes we have been healed." Here we clearly see that the healing of the body and the peace of the "soul" are given to us at the same time. Another even more obvious point is the two different uses of the word "bear" in this chapter. Verse 12 says, "He alone bore the sin of many." Verse 4 says, "Surely He has borne our sicknesses." The Lord Jesus bore our sin, but He also bore our sicknesses. Just as we do not need to bear our own sin because the Lord Jesus has borne it, we do not have to bear our own sicknesses because the Lord Jesus has borne them. (However, the extent to which the Lord has borne sin and the extent to which He has borne sickness are somewhat different.) Sin has damaged our "soul" and our body. The Lord Jesus wants to save these two things. Therefore, not only did He bear sin for us, He also bore sicknesses for us. Hence, He will save us not merely from sin but also from sickness. The believers can now rejoice with David, saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul...who forgiveth all thine

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iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psa. 103:2-3). It is a pity that many believers can only give a partial praise because their salvation is partial. They themselves suffer pain, and God also suffers loss.

We should realize that if the Lord Jesus only forgives our sins without healing our sicknesses, His salvation is still not complete. Although He has saved our "soul," He still leaves our body behind to be dominated by sickness. Hence, when He was on earth, He took care of both things equally. Sometimes He forgave the sin first and then healed the sickness. At other times He healed the sickness before He forgave the sin. He gave to man according to what he could receive. If we study the Gospels, we will see that the Lord Jesus seems to have done more healing work than anything else. This is because it was harder for the Jews to believe in the Lord's forgiveness of sins than in His healing of sickness (Matt. 9:5). However, believers today are completely the opposite. In those days, men believed that the Lord Jesus had the power to heal sickness, but they doubted His grace to forgive sins. Believers today believe in His power to forgive sins, but doubt His grace to heal sickness. Believers seem to think that the Lord Jesus only comes to save people from sin, but they have forgotten that He is also the healing Savior. Man's unbelief always divides up a perfect Savior into two halves. Nevertheless, Christ is always and forever the Savior of man's "soul" and body. He forgives as well as heals.

To the Lord Jesus, it is not enough for a man to be only forgiven but not healed. Therefore, after He said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," He also said, "Rise, take up your bed and go to your house." To us, even though we are full of sin and sicknesses, it is enough as long as we receive forgiveness from the Lord—we should bear our own sickness or think of other ways for healing. But the Lord Jesus never intended for the man who was sick of palsy to be carried home again after he had seen the Lord and been forgiven of his sins.

The Lord Jesus' perception of the relationship between sin and sickness is different from ours. In our eyes, sin is an item of the spiritual realm; it is something God dislikes and condemns. Sickness is merely a condition in our human lives and does not seem to have any relationship whatsoever with God. However, the Lord Jesus regards both sin in the "soul" and sicknesses in the body as the works of Satan. He came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Hence, whenever He met demons, He cast them away. Whenever He encountered sicknesses, He healed them. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle wrote concerning His healing: "Healing all those who were being oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). Sin and sickness are as closely related as our "soul" is to our body. Hence, forgiveness and healing are mutually dependent upon each other.

### **GOD'S DISCIPLINING**

We have seen something concerning the matter of sickness in a general way. Now we want to pay particular attention to the source of the believers' sicknesses.

The apostle said, "Because of this many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we would not be judged. But being judged by the Lord, we are disciplined that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:30-32). The apostle considered sickness as a kind of chastisement from the Lord. Because believers have made some mistakes before the Lord, the Lord allows them to become sick. This is for the purpose of chastising them so that they would judge themselves and correct their mistakes. God is gracious to His children by chastising them so that they will not be condemned with the world. If the believers repent, God will not chastise them again. If we are willing to judge ourselves, we will avoid sickness.

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We often think that sickness is only a problem of the body and that it has nothing to do with God's righteousness, holiness, and judgment. But the apostle tells us most vividly that sickness is the result of our sin and that it is a chastisement from God. Because of the story of the blind man in John 9, many believers do not consider that sickness is a chastisement from God because of sin. They do not realize that the Lord Jesus never said that sin and sickness were unrelated. He was merely warning His disciples not to use sin to blame each and every person who was sick. If Adam had not sinned, that man would not have been blind. Furthermore, he was "born" blind; therefore, his case is completely different from that of the believers' sicknesses. Perhaps all our "born" sicknesses have nothing to do with our sin. But the sicknesses that we incur after we have believed in the Lord, according to the Bible, are related to sin. James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed." One has to confess his sins before he can receive healing. Sin is the root of sickness.

Hence, sickness is usually God's disciplining so that we would pay attention to the sin that we have neglected and repudiate it. God allows sicknesses to come upon us in order to chastise us and cleanse us, so that we may see our mistakes. Perhaps we have some unrighteousness in us and owe someone something. Perhaps we have offended someone and not corrected it. Perhaps we have pride and a love for the world. Perhaps we have harbored a presumptuous and covetous heart in the work, or have become disobedient after God has spoken. When these happen, God's hand comes heavily on us to make us pay attention to them. Hence, sickness is God's clear judgment on sin. This does not mean that whoever becomes sick have sinned more than others (cf. Luke 13:2). On the contrary, those who are chastised by God are mainly the most holy ones. Job is one example.

Every time a believer is disciplined by God and becomes sick, there is the potential of receiving great blessings. "The Father of spirits...discipline[s]...for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness" (Heb. 12:9-10). Sometimes sickness makes us recall and examine our life; it makes us aware of any hidden sin and any indomitableness and self-will that would cause God to discipline us. Only during such a time will we see what kind of barrier there is between Him and us. Only then will we search the deepest part of our heart and realize how much our past life has been filled with self and how much is incompatible with God's holy life. In this way, we will be able to advance in the spiritual life and receive God's healing.

Therefore, a sick believer should not hastily seek after healing or methods of healing at first. He does not need to be terrified or afraid. He should put himself fully in the light of God and sincerely examine and find the shortage in himself that has led to God's discipline. He should judge himself and condemn himself. Then the Holy Spirit will reveal to him the area where he failed. Whatever he sees he must repudiate immediately, and he must confess the sin to God. If this sin has caused a loss to others, he should do his best to compensate and believe that God is pleased with this. He must consecrate himself anew to God and be willing to do all of His will.

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God "does not afflict willingly/Or grieve the children of men" (Lam. 3:33). When the self-conviction that He wants has been achieved, He will cease His scourging. When His chastisement becomes no longer necessary, He will be very happy to withdraw it. The Bible tells us that if we judge ourselves in this way, He will not condemn our sins. God wants us to be rid of sin and self. Therefore, when this is achieved, the sicknesses will end because they have accomplished their mission. The great need of a believer today is to know that God chastens with a specific purpose. Therefore, he should allow the Holy Spirit to point out his sin so that God's purpose can be fulfilled. When God's goal is achieved, discipline is not needed anymore; God can and will heal him.

After a believer confesses and eliminates his sin and believes that his sin has been forgiven, he can believe in God's promise and know with boldness that God will raise him up. His conscience will not accuse him anymore. Hence, he has the boldness to come to God to ask for grace. When we are far away from God, we have difficulty believing, or we are unable to believe. However, by obeying the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, by eliminating sin and evil, and by obtaining forgiveness, we will be led to the presence of God. Once the source of the sickness is removed, the sickness will subsequently go away. Since it is not hard for a sick believer to believe that the Lord has scourged his body because of sin, and since his sin has been forgiven, his body will also obtain forgiveness and grace. At such times, the Lord's presence will become more obvious, and His life will enter the body to enliven it.

Do we not know that our heavenly Father is not satisfied with us in many areas and wants to correct us? By means of sicknesses He helps us understand our own shortcomings. If we do not suppress the voice of our conscience, the Holy Spirit will surely tell us the reasons for our chastisement one by one, through our conscience. God is happy to forgive our sins and heal our sicknesses. The great work of the Lord Jesus' redemption includes both the forgiveness of sins as well as the healing of sicknesses. Nevertheless, He does not want to have any distance between us and Himself. He wants us to live by Him. Therefore, now is the time that we should completely obey and trust Him. The heavenly Father would rather not scourge us. He is so willing to heal us and bring us into a more intimate fellowship with Himself through our further perception of His love and power.

### **SICKNESS AND SELF**

All of our bad and hostile environments expose our true condition. These environments will not bring out sins that we do not have. They will only expose the true conditions within us. Sickness is one of these environments, and it makes us understand our own true condition.

We never know how much we live for God and how much we live for self. When we become sick, especially during a long illness, we find this out. At other times, we can say that we are totally willing to obey God and that we are satisfied no matter how God treats us. However, when we become sick, we find out whether or not our previous words were true. What God wants to accomplish among His children is that they would consider His will as their satisfaction and take His ordained will as their enjoyment. God does not want them to murmur against His will—especially His arrangement—on account of their own feelings. He occasionally allows sicknesses to come upon His beloved children in order to see their attitude toward His ordained will.

It is most unfortunate when a believer who is under God's trial complains because of his own desires and questions why he has fallen into such a state. He does not consider what God has given him as the best. (When we say God gives sicknesses, we mean that God allows them to come upon us. Satan is the one who causes sickness directly. But the sickness comes to us through God's permission, and it comes

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with a purpose. The experience of Job is the best example.) His heart is filled with many hopes for an early recovery. Hence, God has to prolong the period of sickness on his body because He will not remove His means until His goal is accomplished. God's goal in communicating with the believers is for them to obey Him unconditionally, so that no matter how He treats them, they would obey willingly. God is not pleased when He sees a believer praising Him during favorable times but murmuring against Him, doubting Him, or misunderstanding His works during troubled times. God wants a believer to obey Him to the extent that he will not resist even if he is to be put to death.

God wants His children to realize that everything that befalls them is given by Him. Regardless of how precarious the conditions of the body and environment are, they are all measured by His hands. Everything that has to do with them is under His will; even the falling of a strand of hair is no exception. If a believer resists the things that come upon him, he inevitably resists the God who permits such things to come upon him. If he becomes bitter through the suffering of his illness, he will inevitably resist the God who permits such illness to come upon him. It is not a question of whether or not a believer should become sick, but whether he should resist God. God wants a believer to forget his sickness while he is sick and simply look to Him. If the Lord wants you to be sick this way and continue to be sick in the future, are you willing to take it or not? Can you obey His almighty hand and not resist? Will you crave for health outside of His present will during your suffering? Can you obey until He has accomplished all that He wants to accomplish and only then ask for healing according to His will? When you are disciplined, will you refrain from seeking after healing apart from Him? At times of extreme suffering, will you try unwittingly to have what He will not give you? All these questions should deeply pierce the heart of every sick believer.

God has no delight in seeing His children become sick. His love would rather see His children pass through favorable days. However, He knows there is a danger: when believers have favorable days, all their love for Him, all the words of praise for Him, and all the things they do for Him are done only because of the favorable conditions. He knows that it is very easy for our heart to be turned away from Him and His will and turned toward His gifts. Therefore, He allows sickness and other similar things to come upon us so that we will see whether we are for God or for His gift. If, in every adverse circumstance, we do not seek after anything by ourselves or for ourselves, we are indeed seeking for God. Sickness can reveal if a man is after his own will or if he is after God's arrangement.

We still have our own will. Our daily life is too filled with our own will. In God's work, in our dealing with people and matters, in our thinking and opinions, there are too many indomitable wills. Therefore, God has to bring us to the door of death so that we will see the plight of those who resist Him. God allows us to pass through profound grief and pain in order to break us and cause us to give up the self-will that He deplors. Countless numbers of believers do not seem to hear what the Lord says to them during ordinary days, but when the Lord makes their bodies suffer, they become willing to obey completely. The Lord's way is to resort to scourging when the admonition of love has lost its effect. The purpose of His scourging is to break our self-will. It would be well for every sick believer to examine himself concerning this matter.

Aside from our own hopes and desires, what God hates the most is our self-love. Self-love damages spiritual life and destroys spiritual works. If God cannot expel self-love from within us, we can never soar in the spiritual journey. Our self-love is especially related to our body. To say that we have self-love is to say that we love our body and our life. Therefore, in order to abolish our self-love, God allows many sicknesses to come upon our body. Because we love ourselves and are afraid that our

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body might become weak, God allows it to be weakened. We are afraid to see our body suffer, yet God allows it to suffer. We long to recover, but our sickness worsens day by day. We want to preserve our life, but ultimately even the hope of life is gone. Naturally, God's dealing varies from person to person. Some dealings are heavier, while others are lighter. However, God's intention to eliminate self-love is the same in both cases. Many strong believers have to wait until they approach the door of death before they give up their self-love. When the body is broken down, when life is at stake, when sickness has engulfed one's health, when pain has worn out one's strength, and everything is shattered, what else is there left to love? At this point, the believer may want to die, and he may realize that he is hopeless and that there is nothing more to hold onto in his self-love. It is unfortunate that even when he reaches such a point, he still does not know how to turn around and grasp the promise of God's healing.

It is very difficult when the believer's heart is far apart from God's heart. God's purpose is to have the believer lose his self-love. Therefore, He allows him to become sick. However, the more he becomes sick, the more he loves himself, and the weaker he becomes, the more he cares for himself. God's goal is that he would forget about himself, but he keeps thinking about his own sickness, the pain in his body, the way to be healed, and whether or not his sickness is getting better. All his thoughts are centered around himself! He pays attention to his food and how he should refrain from this and avoid taking that! When he feels a little uncomfortable, he becomes terribly upset! He pays considerable attention to his own warmth and sleep. When he has a little temperature, catches a little cold, or loses a night of sleep, he becomes very uncomfortable. It seems that all these are fatal to him. He is very sensitive about how others treat him. He is very sensitive about how often people think of him, care for him, and come to see him. He spends a great amount of time thinking about his own body and its condition, and not the Lord and what He wants to accomplish in him. Indeed, many believers are totally "obsessed" with their own self during their sickness! We usually are not very aware of how much we love ourselves. But when we are sick, we realize that we love ourselves very much!

Is this what God delights in? He wants us to realize that self-love damages us more than anything else. He also wants us to know that we love ourselves immensely. In the midst of a sickness, He wants us to learn not to look at our symptoms and care for our pain, but to look at Him wholeheartedly. He wants us to commit our body completely into His hand and let Him care for it. Every time a bad symptom is discovered, it should always warn us not to think of the body anymore, but to wholly think of the Lord.

However, because of self-love, the believer seeks for healing as soon as he becomes sick. It never occurs to him that he should first remove the evil deed in his heart before asking for healing. He only sees the hope of being healed. He will not inquire as to why God allowed the sickness to come upon his body, what he needs to repent of, what he needs to eliminate, or what he must reject so that he does not waste God's work. He cares for himself. He cannot afford to get weak and longs to be strong immediately. Therefore, he seeks for ways to be healed. He inquires of man and begs God, hoping to have an early recovery. Under this condition, God will never reach His goal. Although many times we see this kind of believer momentarily healed, the healing does not last; after a while, the old sickness recurs. How can long-term healing be possible when the root of the sickness is not removed?

Sickness is God's way of speaking to us. He does not intend that we frantically look for healing but that we obey and pray. It is very pitiful that the believer does not say to the Lord, "Speak, for Thy servant heareth." Rather, he hopes to obtain a speedy recovery. Our goal is to be delivered from pain and weakness immediately. Hastily we try our best to seek for the best medicine. It seems as if sickness forces us to invent all kinds of remedies. Every single symptom scares us and wrecks our brain. God

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seems to be far away from us. We forget our spiritual condition. We can only think of our suffering and remedy. If the sickness is prolonged, we will misperceive the Father's love. If the medicine works smoothly, we will praise God's grace. However, we should ask if it is indeed the leading of the Holy Spirit that we be wholly delivered from pain? Will such an exercise of fleshly strength glorify God?

### MEDICINE

Self-love naturally produces self-effort. Because believers love themselves so much and do not deal with God in a basic way, they seek after the healing of earthly medicine when they are sick. At this point we will not pass judgment on whether or not medicine should be used. We do not have the time here to debate that question. Nevertheless, since the Lord Jesus prepared salvation for us on the cross, and since our body can receive His healing, it seems that if we still turn to the world to seek for medicinal assistance, it is out of ignorance, if not unbelief.

Many people debate whether or not one should use medicine as if once this question is settled, all questions will be settled. Little do they realize that the principle of spiritual life is not a matter of whether or not something can be done, but whether or not there is God's leading and whether or not something is out of one's own activity. Hence, our question is: when a believer is driven by self-love to fervently seek healing and a cure in medicine, are his activities out of his own self, or are they done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Naturally speaking, with regard to God's salvation, man always wants to be saved through his own work. Only after many dealings from God is man willing to be saved through faith. But is this not also true in regards to the healing of the body? I am afraid that in the latter case, the struggle is more serious than the struggle for the forgiveness of sins. A person knows that aside from depending on the salvation of the Lord Jesus, there is no way to gain access to heaven's door. However, there are still many medical techniques that can be used for healing the body. So why should he depend on the salvation of the Lord Jesus? The point we want to emphasize is not whether medicine can be used, but whether our application of medicine is out of our "own" activity and whether it sets aside God's salvation. Does not the world also claim to have many ways of delivering men from sin? Does it not have numerous philosophies, psychologies, ethics, morals, regulations, and education to advance men upward and deliver men from sin? Do we trust in these methods for our perfection? Are we after the salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus on the cross, or are we after these worldly methods? In the same manner, the world also has numerous medicines to help deliver people from sickness. On the cross, the Lord Jesus accomplished the salvation that delivers people from sickness. Do we want to obtain healing according to human ways, or do we want to trust in the Lord Jesus?

We admit that sometimes God also manifests His power and glory through some media. However, according to biblical teaching and the experience of the believers, man's feelings have taken over all of his living since the fall, so he spontaneously trusts more in some of God's media than in God Himself. Therefore, when a believer is sick, he pays more heed to medicine than to God's power. Although his mouth says that he trusts God's power, his heart is totally turned to medicine. It seems that without medicine, God's power will not be expressed. In this condition, there is unrest, vexation, anxiety, and panic. He seeks for the best available source of healing. He does not have the peace that comes from trusting God. Because medicine occupies his heart so much, he loses God's presence and turns to the world. Consequently, the sickness which was meant to turn him to a closer relationship with God turns him away from God. Perhaps some people can use medicine without being harmed by it. But I am afraid that such people are rare. The majority of believers cannot use medicine without damaging their spiritual life. They always consider the media more important than God's power.

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There is an enormous difference between being healed by medicine and being healed by trusting in God. The power of medicine is simply natural, while the power of God is divine. The ways to obtain these two kinds of healings are also totally different. The healing that comes from medicine depends on man's intelligence, while the healing that comes from trusting in God depends on the merit and life of the Lord Jesus. Even when a doctor, who is a believer, asks God to grant him wisdom and bless the drugs that he uses, he still cannot give the healed ones a spiritual blessing. Unconsciously, the patient allows his heart to turn to medicine more than to the Lord's power. Even though his body may be healed, his spiritual life is greatly damaged. If a believer trusts in God, he does not need medicine. He needs only to commit himself to God's love and power. He should examine the source of his own sickness before God and see where he has displeased God. Consequently, when he is eventually healed, he will not only derive benefit for his body but also receive blessing in his spirit.

Most believers regard medicine as something given by God and therefore believe that they can use it. However, we want to pay attention to whether one uses the medicine according to God's leading. We will not debate whether or not medicine is given by God. We only want to ask: is not the Lord Jesus explicitly given by God to the believers as the Savior of their sicknesses? Should we follow unbelievers in the world or believers who are weak in faith to seek after medicine or healing by natural means, or should we receive the Lord Jesus whom God has prepared and fully trust in His name?

Trusting in medicine and accepting the life of the Lord Jesus are two completely different matters. We admit that medicine can cure people. The sciences of medicine and pharmacology have invented many ways and items to heal people's sicknesses. However, this kind of healing is only natural, and it is not the best that God has prepared for His children. A believer can ask God to bless the drug and still be healed; after he is healed, he can still thank God for it and consider that God has healed him. However, this way of healing is not through receiving the life of the Lord Jesus. This is a sign of a believer who has left the battle of faith for convenience' sake. If the whole goal of our struggle with Satan in sickness is to obtain a cure, any kind of healing is sufficient. But if we are trying to accomplish something more important than mere healing, we have no choice but to remain quietly before God and wait for His way and His time.

We will not adamantly say that God never blesses the use of medicine. On many occasions God has blessed the use of medicine because He is kind and forgiving. Nevertheless, these kinds of believers do not stand on the position of redemption; they simply stand on the same position as the worldly people. Concerning the matter of sickness, they are the same as the worldly people and cannot give any testimony for God. Swallowing medicine, applying a salve, and injecting medicine cannot give us the life of the Lord Jesus. When we trust in God, we are simply standing on a ground above the natural standing. In many cases, the healing that comes from medicine is painful and prolonged, whereas the healing that comes from God is swift and with blessing.

One thing is certain: if we are healed through trusting in God, the spiritual benefit we derive from such healing can definitely not be obtained by healing that comes from a medicinal cure. For many people, sickness seems to be more advantageous than cure. When they are in bed, they repent for the life they lived in the past. But after they become well, they are further away from the Lord than before. If they are healed through trusting in God, they will not end up this way. They will confess their sins, deny their self, believe in God's love, and trust in His power. They will accept God's life and holiness and have an inseparable, new relationship with God.

The lesson for us is that God's goal in all illness is to have us cease from our own activities and depend

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on Him utterly. While we often fervently seek after healing, our hearts are simply inspired by our self-love. Because we love ourselves, we single-mindedly seek after healing and forget about God and the lesson He wants to teach us. If God's children are free from self-love, how can they seek after healing in such a fervent way? If they have stopped their own activities, how can they still turn to the world for medicinal assistance? They will surely judge themselves quietly before the Lord and first try to understand the reason that God has given them sickness, before they seek for healing from Him through the Father's love. Here we see the difference between trusting in medicinal assistance and trusting in God's power. In the former case, the believer anxiously seeks a cure; in the latter case, the believer quietly seeks God's will. A believer seeks for medicine in his sickness because he has a strong inclination and because he is filled with self-love and tries to exercise his own strength. If he is seeking God's power instead, he will not behave this way. If a believer wants to trust in God for his healing, he has to genuinely confess and deal with his sins, and he must be willing to consecrate himself fully to God.

There are many sick believers today. However, the Lord has His purpose in all of them. Anytime the "self" loses its authority, the Lord will carry out His healing. If a believer is not willing to bow down his head and accept his sickness, and if he cannot acknowledge that God has given him the best, seeking instead for healing outside of God and rebelling against the way He deals with him, He has no choice but to let him become sick again. If the believer is not willing to give up his self-love, and if he continues fastidiously to care, nurture, pity, and consider himself, not abandoning himself in God, God will give him more things that will make him pity himself even more. If the believer is not willing to cease his own ways and activities, and if he continues to seek for healing outside the salvation of the Lord Jesus, God will show him that earthly medicine will not offer him a lasting cure. God wants His children to know that a strong, healthy body is not for one's own happiness, nor is it for the purpose of carrying out one's own will; it is entirely for Him. The Spirit of healing is the Spirit of holiness. We are not short of healing, but holiness. The first thing we need to be delivered from is not sickness, but our self.

After a believer stops using earthly ways or medicine and trusts in God wholeheartedly, his own faith will become much stronger than before. This will afford him a new relationship with God, and he will begin to have a life of trust and belief that he never had before. He will commit not only his "soul" but also his body to the hand of God. He will see that God's will is to manifest the power of the Lord Jesus and the love of the Father; He wants us to be exercised and established in our faith. He wants to prove to us that the Lord not only redeems our "soul," but our body as well. Therefore, we need not "be anxious...for your body" (Matt. 6:25). If we have committed ourselves to the Lord, He will surely take care of us. If we see deliverance immediately, we should praise the Lord. But if the sickness becomes more serious, we must not doubt. Instead, we must fix our eyes only on God's promise and not allow "self-love" to rise up again. God is trying to wring out every drop of self-love from us. If we care for our body, we will have doubts. If we fix our gaze on the promise, we will draw near to God, our faith will be enhanced, and we will receive the healing.

However, we also have to be careful lest we drift into extremes. It is true that God wants us to trust in Him completely. But after we have truly repudiated our own action and have fully trusted in Him, He is also happy to see us using some natural media to help our body. We can see this in the case of Timothy's wine. Timothy's appetite was not good. He was often sick. Paul did not accuse him of a lack of faith or of not receiving God's direct healing. On the contrary, he encouraged him to use a little wine because wine was good for him. It is interesting to note that the apostle would encourage him to use

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something like wine, which is on the borderline between good and evil.

We can learn a lesson from this case. We must believe in God and trust in Him. (This is what Timothy did.) However, at the same time, we must not rush into extremes. If our body has some weakness, we need to take in, according to the Lord's leading, the things that are nourishing and beneficial to our body. If we follow the Lord's guidance and take in things that are nutritious to the body, they will increase our body's strength. Before the redemption of our body, we are still humans with a body, and it is still necessary to pay proper attention to the natural aspect of things.

Nutritious food can go together with faith; they do not have to contradict one another. However, the believers must not be conscious of the need for nutritious food while failing to believe in God.

### **MUCH BETTER TO BE HEALED**

There are also some believers who have gone to another extreme. According to their natural disposition, they are hard and stubborn. However, through God's allowed sickness, they have become broken by God. As a result of going along with God's will through His chastisement, they have become very gentle, kind, yielding, and holy. Accordingly, they consider that being sick is a great benefit for them, and they begin to love sickness more than health. They think that sicknesses cause their spiritual life to advance greatly. Therefore, they do not seek healing. If they realize that they should be healed, they would rather have God heal them. They accept all the sicknesses that come upon their bodies, thinking that it is easier for them to be godly when they are sick than when they are healthy. They think they are closer to God when they are lonely and in pain than when they are well and active. They think it is far better to lie in bed than to be free to run around. They do not want to ask for healing from God. They think that it may be more profitable to be weak than to be strong! We admit that many believers have given up their evil works by becoming sick, and that they have acquired some profound experiences through their sicknesses. We also admit that many handicapped and disabled persons have exceptionally godly and spiritual experiences. But we must say that many believers are quite unclear concerning several points in this area.

Although one who is sick can be holy, such holiness is compelled. Perhaps if he were healthy and could choose freely, he would want to turn back to the world and his natural self. He becomes holy only when he is sick, and he becomes worldly when he is not sick. The Lord has to keep him in sickness continuously before he can be holy continuously. His holiness is dependent on his sickness! A living that is for the Lord should not be restricted to times of sickness. We should not let others think that the only way God can subdue a believer is by sickness, and that without sickness, he is incapable of glorifying God in his daily life. A believer should express God's life in his daily life. While it is good to endure suffering, it is better to obey God at a time when one is full of strength.

We should know that healing is of God; it is God who heals us. If we seek after healing through man's medicine, we will find ourselves separated from God. However, if we seek after God's healing, we will become more intimate with God. A person who receives God's healing will glorify God more than one who remains in sickness for a long time. It is true that sickness can glorify God because sickness provides God an opportunity to manifest His healing power (John 9:3). But if one remains sick all the time, how can God be glorified? When one receives God's healing, he sees God's glory through the demonstration of His power.

The Lord Jesus never considered sickness as a blessing, as something which believers should bear until

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they die. Neither did He say that sickness is an expression of love from God the Father. The Lord Jesus desired His disciples to bear the cross, but He never said that the sick should remain in sickness all the time. He told the disciples the manner in which they should suffer for Him, but He never said that they should suffer sickness for His sake. Although He said we would have suffering in the world, He did not consider sickness a suffering. He indeed suffered while He was on the earth, but He was not sick. Moreover, every time He saw sick ones, He healed them. He always considered sickness to be from sin and the devil.

We must differentiate between suffering and sickness. "Many are the misfortunes of the righteous man,/But Jehovah delivers him from all of them./He keeps all his bones;/Not one of them is broken" (Psa. 34:19-20). James said, "Does anyone among you suffer evil? Let him pray" (James 5:13), so that he may obtain grace and strength. "Is anyone among you ill? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him" (v. 14), so that he may be healed.

First Corinthians 11:30 through 32 clearly depicts the relationship between sickness and the believer. Sickness ultimately is a discipline from God. If a believer will judge himself, God will cause the sickness to disappear. God never intends for believers to suffer sickness continuously. If a believer removes what God condemns and, at the same time, permits sickness to stay in his body, he does not know God's purpose in allowing him to be sick. No discipline should last forever. Once the cause of discipline is removed, the discipline itself should quickly disappear. "Now no discipline at the present time seems to be a matter of joy, but of grief; but afterward..." (Heb. 12:11a). Believers almost forget that with God there is still an "afterward." "Afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it" (v. 11b). Discipline is not meant to last forever. In fact, the most excellent fruit comes after the discipline is over. Neither should we be misled to think that God's discipline is His punishment. Strictly speaking, believers will no longer be punished. First Corinthians 11:31 makes this quite clear. We should never allow the concept of law to come in. It is not a matter of how many sins we have committed; we do not have to suffer a certain amount of punishment before our sins can be balanced out. This is not an affair to be settled in court but a problem to be dealt with in the family.

If we turn back to the direct teaching of the Bible, we will see what God ultimately wants of our body. We need to read only one verse, and the concepts of many will be completely overthrown. "Beloved, concerning all things I wish that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers" (3 John 2). This is a prayer which the Holy Spirit reveals to the apostle, and it shows God's intention towards the believer's body and His desire in eternity. God has no intention for His children to remain sick all their lives and unable to actively work for Him. He delights to see His children prosper and healthy, even as their soul prospers. This allows us to conclude unquestionably that prolonged sickness is not God's will. He may temporarily discipline us and cause us to lose our health, but He is not pleased to see us constantly in weakness.

Paul's word in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 also shows us that prolonged sickness is not God's will. The condition of the body should match the spirit and the soul. If our spirit and soul become sanctified wholly and preserved complete without blame, but our body is still weak, sick, and full of affliction, God will definitely not be satisfied. His goal is to save man's entire being. His goal is not just to save certain parts of man.

All the earthly works of the Lord Jesus reveal God's intention toward the matter of sickness. His only work was to carry out God's will; He had no other work throughout His whole life. We can especially

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see the heart of the heavenly Father and His attitude toward sickness in the story of the healing of the leper. The leper said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can cleanse me." It seems as if this person was knocking on the door of heaven and asking if healing is God's will. "And stretching out His hand, He touched him, saying, I am willing; be cleansed!" (Matt. 8:2-3). It is always God's will to heal. If a believer thinks that God is not willing to heal him and that he should remain in sickness forever, he does not know God's will. The work of the Lord Jesus on earth was to heal "all those who were ill" (v. 16). We should not think that He has changed His attitude today.

We know that God's goal today is for "Your will [to] be done, as in heaven, so also on earth" (Matt. 6:10). The will of God is done in heaven, but is there sickness in heaven? Based on this, sickness is absolutely not compatible with God's will. Today a great number of believers pray for healing for a short period of time. When God does not seem to answer their prayers and they have lost all hope, they say, "May the Lord's will be done," as if the Lord's will is synonymous with sickness and death. This is a great mistake. God's will for His children is not sickness. Although sometimes His permissive will allows them to become sick, it is for their profit; His ordained will is always for them to be healthy. There is no sickness in heaven. This proves that God never intends for His children to be sick.

If we consider where sickness actually comes from, we will realize that it is right for us to seek healing. Acts 10:38 tells us that all sickness is due to the oppression of the devil. When the Lord Jesus spoke of the woman who was bent double, He said that she had been "bound" by Satan (Luke 13:16). When He healed Peter's mother-in-law, He "rebuked the fever" (4:39) as if He were rebuking the devil. If we read the book of Job, we will see that it was the devil who caused Job to become sick (chapters one and two), and it was God who healed Job (chapter forty-two). The thorn that caused the apostle Paul to be weakened was "a messenger of Satan" (2 Cor. 12:7), but the One who made him strong was God. Hebrews 2:14 tells us that the one who has the might of death is the devil. When sickness ripens, it brings forth death. Sickness is only an indication of death. If Satan has the power of death, he also has the power of sickness; death is simply a further step of sickness, while sickness is the first step to death.

After reading all these verses, we have to conclude that the source of sickness is the devil. Because there are some defects in the believers, God allows Satan to attack His children. If God's children (1) refuse to yield to God's demands and allow sickness to remain in their bodies, or (2) if they have forsaken what God has commanded and still allow sickness to remain in their bodies, they are voluntarily putting themselves under the oppression of Satan. After we have obeyed God's revelation, we should refuse the sickness and reckon that it is from Satan. Therefore, there is no reason for us to be under his bondage anymore. We must clearly understand that sickness belongs to our enemy, and that we should not welcome it. The Son of God has come to free us and not to bind us.

Many people may ask: when there is no need for believers to be sick, why does God not remove the sickness? We have to realize that God accomplishes things according to our faith (Matt. 8:13). This is an unchanging principle by which God deals with us. Many times, God is willing to heal His children. But since they do not believe and do not pray, God has to allow the sickness to remain. If a believer allows himself to be sick, or worse still, welcomes sickness, thinking that it will make him more unworldly and holy, the Lord can do nothing except give him what he wishes. God often deals with His children according to what they can take. God may want very much to heal them, but because they do not have the faith to ask, they never receive this gift.

We should not think that we are wiser than God or that we can act beyond what the Bible reveals. Even

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though the sickroom may sometimes feel like a sanctuary, and everyone who enters may be touched by the atmosphere, this is not God's ordained will and not God's best. If we act according to our emotion and ignore God's revelation, He can only allow us to walk as we please. Many believers say, "No matter what happens, I will commit myself to God's hand. Whether I get well, or whether I remain sick, I will let God make the decision for me, and I will let Him deal with me as He pleases." But very often, we see these people resorting to medicine at the same time. Is this what one does when he commits everything into God's hand? In seeking after God's healing, they put the responsibility in God's hand, and in seeking after man's healing, they resort to medicine all the same. This is too contradictory. The fact is that many believers have lost their willpower through their prolonged period of bed rest. They can no longer hold onto God's promise. Their submission is actually a kind of spiritual laziness. They desire to be healthy, but this desire will not cause God to do any work on them. Many believers have become passively resigned to their illness for a long time; they have grown habitually sick and have no boldness to seek freedom. They would rather have others believe for them or have God give them faith and make them believe apart from their own effort. However, unless their will is motivated, and unless they resist the devil and hold onto the Lord Jesus, the God-given faith will not come. Many patients do not have to be sick; they are sick because they do not have the strength to claim God's promises.

We must realize that the spiritual blessings that we receive in sickness are far less than the spiritual blessings we gain in restoration. If, through trusting in God and consecrating ourselves to Him, we are healed, we should continue to live a holy life after our restoration. Only this will maintain us in a healthy state. By healing us in this way, the Lord gains our body. This joy is unspeakable. Yet this joy comes not because we are healed, but because we have a new relationship with our Lord. We have a new experience of Him and receive new contact and new life from Him. At such times, God is glorified much more than when a believer is sick.

Therefore, God's children should rise up and seek healing. First we should go before the Lord and listen to what He wants to speak to us through our sickness. Next we should walk with a single heart according to what He has revealed to us. Finally we should put our body wholeheartedly into His care and consecrate our body to Him. If there are elders of the church who can anoint with oil (James 5:14-15), we should invite them to come and let them follow the injunction of the Bible. Otherwise, we should remain in calmness and exercise our faith to hold onto God's promise (Exo. 15:26). God will heal us.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **GOD AS THE LIFE OF THE BODY**

We have previously seen how our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We should pay particular attention to the fact that the apostle was very concerned for our body. Ordinarily we think that Christ's life is for our spirit and not for our body. But actually, after our spirit receives the Holy Spirit, God's salvation goes to our body also. If God intended for the Holy Spirit to dwell only in our spirit so that only the spirit would benefit, why did the apostle not say, "Your spirit is a temple of the Holy Spirit," rather than saying, "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit"? By now we should be clear that the fact of our body being the temple of the Holy Spirit is more than a special privilege; it is also an effective power. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit not only strengthens our inner man and enlightens the eyes of

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our heart, it also makes our body healthy.

We have also seen that the Holy Spirit gives life to our mortal body. He is not waiting until we die before He resurrects us; even today He is imparting life to our body. In the future He will resurrect our corrupted body, but today He gives life to our mortal body. The power of His life enters into every cell of our being and causes us to experience His life and power.

No longer do we believe that our body is a pitiful prison; rather, in it we see God's life. We are now going forth to experience the words, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." Christ is now the source of our life. He lives in us today as He lived in His body of flesh in those days. We should be more clear about these words: "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly." This abundant life supplies all the needs of our body. The apostle told Timothy to "lay hold on the eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12). In this instance, however, Timothy did not need eternal life to be saved. Therefore, is not "eternal life" the life that is "really life" in verse 19? Does not the apostle mean that Timothy should experience eternal life in this age and that this life is powerful enough to overcome all the effects of death?

We are not ignorant of the fact that our body is a body of death. But we must know that we need life to swallow up the power of death. Within our body are two forces: death and life. On the one hand, there is the breaking down, and on the other hand, there is the replenishment by food and rest. The breaking down leads us close to death, while the supply of food and rest maintains our life. An oversupply makes the body produce an "excess" because the force of life is great; overexhaustion makes the body weak because the force of death is also great. It is best to keep the forces of life and death in balance. The weariness that a believer feels in his body is in many ways different from that of ordinary people. His exhaustion is not merely in the physical body. Since he walks with the Lord, bears the burdens of others, has compassion for his brothers, works for God, intercedes before God, fights against the power of darkness, and buffets his body, food and rest alone cannot replenish the loss of strength in his body. This is why many believers, who were very healthy before they were called to the work, feel weakened not long afterwards. Our contact with the spiritual realm and all of our spiritual life, work, and warfare are beyond what our physical body can bear. Our contact with sins, sinners, and evil spirits dries up our body's resources so that we become unable to meet many needs. Therefore, if a believer relies on only natural means to replenish his physical needs, he will not make it. We need Christ's life because this alone can satisfy our needs. We should realize that if we rely on material food, nutrition, and medicine, we are looking to the wrong source. Only the life of the Lord Jesus can meet all the needs of our spiritual life, work, and warfare. He alone can replenish the strength we need to fight against sins and Satan. Only when a believer really knows what spiritual warfare is and how to wrestle in spirit with the enemy, will he know the preciousness of the Lord Jesus as life to his physical body.

Every believer must see the reality of his union with the Lord. The Lord is the vine, and we are the branches. Just as the branches are in union with the vine, so are we in union with the Lord Jesus. Through their union with the vine, the branches receive the life flow. Does not our union with the Lord Jesus result in the same? If we limit this union to the spirit, our faith will not consent to such a restriction. Our Lord has called us to realize the practicality of our union with Him; He wants us to believe and receive His life flow into our spirit, soul, and body. If we are cut off from the Lord, we will lose not only peace in the spirit but also healing in the body. If our union with the Lord is continuous, His life will fill our spirit and also flow into our body. Unless we truly share in the life of the Lord Jesus, we will neither be healed nor obtain health. Today God is calling His children to have a deeper

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union with the Lord Jesus.

For this reason, we need to see that though these things transpire in the physical body, they are spiritual matters. Receiving God's healing and strengthening is not a physical experience but a spiritual experience, even though it occurs in the physical body. Such experiences are nothing less than the life of the Lord Jesus being expressed through our mortal body. Just as the life of the Lord Jesus resurrected our dead spirit in the past, it now enlivens our mortal body. God wants us to learn how to allow the resurrected, glorious, and ever-overcoming life of Christ to be manifested in every part of our being. He wants us to renew our strength from Him day by day and hour by hour. This is our real life. Even though our physical body is still animated by our soul-life, we should not live by it. Rather, we should depend on the life of God's Son which gives life to our members in a way that the soul-life cannot. We should pay attention to the word "life." All of our spiritual experiences come from this wonderful thing called "life" which richly enters into our being. God simply wants us to realize that Christ's life is our strength.

Matthew 4 shows us that God's word is life to our physical body: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God" (v. 4). This clearly points out that God's word can sustain our physical body. According to the natural way, man must live by bread; but when the word of God proceeds with its power, man can live by it as well. Here we see two ways of living: the supernatural and the natural. While God does not tell us not to eat, He wants us to know that His word can give us life that bread cannot. When bread cannot produce the effect that we expect, His word can give us the life that the bread fails to provide. Some live by bread, while others live by the word of God. The former sometimes fails, but the latter never changes.

God puts His life into His word. Just as He Himself is life, so also is His word. If we take His word as a teaching, creed, and moral standard, it will not have any power toward us. God's word should be digested by and united with us in the same way that bread is. Hungry saints realize that God's word is their food. When they receive it by faith, the word becomes their life. God said that His word can sustain our life. Therefore, when natural food fails, we can believe God according to His Word. We will then see that God is life not only to our spirit but also to our physical body. Today our failure to realize that there is a rich provision in God's Word (the Bible) for our physical body is a great loss. We limit God's promises to our spiritual life and forget about our physical body. But actually, the need of our physical body is no less than our spiritual needs.

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SAINTS OF OLD**

God never intends for His children to be weak and ill; His will is for them to be healthy and strong. He does not want His children to be afflicted with weakness until death. His Word says, "And as your days are, so shall your strength be" (Deut. 33:25). This refers to our body. If we live on this earth for even one more day, the strength that the Lord promises to our body will extend for one more day. God does not have the intention of giving us another day in our life without giving us the strength for that day. Because believers do not apply this precious promise by faith, their strength is far behind their days. God wants His children's strength to be the same as their days; therefore, He promises that He will be their strength. Hence, as God lives, so we will live, and so also will our strength last. Because of God's promise, every morning that we get up to find the break of day, we can say in faith that because God lives we will definitely have strength for the day, spiritual strength as well as physical.

It was very common for the saints of old to know God as their strength or to experience His strength

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being given to their physical body. We find this first in Abraham. "And not weakening in his faith, he considered his own body as already dead, being about a hundred years old, as well as the deadening of Sarah's womb" (Rom. 4:19). He begot Isaac because he believed in God. God's strength was expressed through a seemingly dead body. The matter of importance here is not the condition of our body but the strength of God in our body.

When we read about Moses, the Bible records, "And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor had his freshness left him" (Deut. 34:7). Clearly, the power of God's life was expressed in him.

The Bible also records the physical condition of Caleb. After the Israelites entered into Canaan, he said, "And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in" (Josh. 14:9-11). Caleb wholly followed God, and God became Caleb's strength according to His promise, so that even after forty-five years he had not lost any of his strength.

When we read Judges and see the strength of Samson, it becomes clear to us that the Holy Spirit can bestow great strength upon man's body. Although Samson did many immoral things and although the Holy Spirit may not necessarily give this great strength to every believer, one thing is certain: if we depend upon His indwelling, we will always obtain His strength to supply all of our daily needs.

By looking at some of David's songs in the Psalms, we can find that he received God's strength in his body: "I love You, O Jehovah, my strength...The God who girds me with strength/And makes my way perfect,/Who makes my feet like hinds' feet/And sets me on my high places,/Who teaches my hands to wage war/So that my arms may bend a bronze bow" (18:1, 32-34). "Jehovah is the strength of my life;/Whom shall I dread?" (27:1) "May Jehovah give strength to His people" (29:11). "Your God has commanded your strength...The God of Israel, He gives strength and power to the people" (68:28, 35). "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;/so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (103:5).

Other psalms record how God was strength to His people. Psalm 73:26 says, "My flesh and my heart fails,/But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever." Psalm 84:5 says, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You," and 91:16 says, "With long life will I satisfy him,/and show him my salvation."

Elihu told Job about the punishment of God and its results: "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,/and the multitude of his bones with strong pain:/so that his life abhorreth bread,/and his soul dainty meat./His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen;/and his bones that were not seen stick out./Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave,/and his life to the destroyers./If there be a messenger with him,/an interpreter, one among a thousand,/to show unto man his uprightness;/then he is gracious unto him, and saith,/Deliver him from going down to the pit:/I have found a ransom./His flesh shall be fresher than a child's:/he shall return to the days of his youth" (Job 33:19-25). This is how the life of God was expressed through a person who was at the gate of death.

The prophet Isaiah also testified to this matter: "God is now my salvation;/I will trust and not

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dread;/For Jah Jehovah is my strength and song,/And He has become my salvation" (12:2). "He gives power to the faint,/And to those who have no vigor He multiplies strength./Although youths will faint and become weary,/And young men shall collapse exhausted;/Yet those who wait on Jehovah will renew their strength;/They will mount up with wings like eagles;/They will run and will not faint;/They will walk and will not become weary" (40:29-31). All these verses clearly refer to the physical body. The strength of God shall come upon those who wait on Him so that they can be this kind of people.

When Daniel saw God's vision he said, "No strength was left in me, but my color turned deathly pale; and I retained no strength" (10:8). But God sent an angel to strengthen him. Daniel mentioned this and recorded, "Then the one who was in appearance like a man touched me again and strengthened me; and he said, Do not be afraid, man of preciousness. Peace to you. Be strong, yes, be strong. And when he spoke to me, I received strength and said, Speak, sir, for you have strengthened me" (vv. 18-19). Here we see most clearly that God can give strength to the human body.

God's children today should know that He is concerned for their physical body. God is the strength not only of our spirit but also of our physical body. In the Old Testament, grace was not manifested as much as it is today, yet the Old Testament saints experienced God as their physical strength. Can it be that the blessing we receive today does not match theirs? What we experience in our physical body should be the same as what they experienced. If we do not know the riches of God, we may think that He can only give us something spiritual. But if we have faith, we will not limit the life and strength of God only to the spirit and forget about the body.

One thing that we stress very much is that God's life not only heals our sicknesses but also keeps us healthy, apart from sickness. We have mentioned before that God heals our sicknesses. Now we are emphasizing that, as our strength, God enables us to overcome both sicknesses and weaknesses. God does not just heal us so that we may be healthy and live according to our natural life. Rather, He becomes life to our physical body so that our body may also live by Him and receive all the strength needed for His work. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, God said to them, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exo. 15:26). Later this promise was wholly fulfilled: "There was not one feeble person among their tribes" (Psa. 105:37). May we know that God's healing is not just to heal us but also to keep sicknesses away and to preserve our strength and health. If we are perfectly submissive, not purposely against God's will in anything, and if we with a believing heart take God's life as the strength of our body, we will see that Jehovah still heals us.

## **THE EXPERIENCE OF PAUL**

If we accept the biblical teaching that our body is a member of Christ, we also have to take the teaching that Christ's life flows inside of our body. The life of Christ flows from the Head to His Body, imparting life, vitality, and liveliness to it. Since our body is a member of that Body, it certainly follows that this life will flow into it. Yet this life is received only by faith. The amount of life we receive depends on the degree of faith we exercise in appropriating that life. From the Bible we have seen that the life of the Lord Jesus can be applied to and received by the believers' body, but this cannot be done without faith. Many believers may be astonished when they first hear such a teaching. But we must not understate the explicit teaching of the Bible. If we look into Paul's own experience, we will

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see the preciousness and reality of this matter.

In 2 Corinthians 12 the apostle Paul mentioned the condition of his body. He told us that he had a thorn in his flesh and that he entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from him. But the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (v. 9a). Therefore the apostle said, "Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me...for when I am weak, then I am powerful" (vv. 9b-10). What was the thorn in the apostle's flesh? We can bypass this question for now since the Bible does not answer it. But one thing is certain: this thorn in the flesh had the effect of weakening his body. The original word for weakness refers to weakness in the body. The same word is used in Matthew 8:17. Even the Corinthians knew that the apostle's body was weak (2 Cor. 10:10). The apostle himself said that when he was first with them, he was in weakness (1 Cor. 2:3). This does not mean that the apostle was lacking in spiritual power, for both the first and the second Epistles sufficiently reveal that he was full of spiritual power. Moreover, the word "weakness" is the same word used to describe the physical weakness mentioned above. It is also used in two other passages to indicate the dying condition of the physical body.

Therefore, from these verses we can see the apostle Paul's physical condition. His original physical condition was very weak, but did he always stay weak? No. He tells us that the power of Christ rested upon him to make him strong. We should pay attention to the "principle of contrast." The thorn never left Paul, and neither did the weakness that came with the thorn; yet the power of Christ rested upon his weak body and enabled him to meet every need. The power of Christ was in contrast to the weakness of Paul. This power did not take away the thorn or remove the weakness, but it lived in Paul, dealing with everything that his weak body could not handle. This may be likened to a wick that burns with a flame but is not consumed because the lamp is full of oil. The wick is still very weak, but the oil supplies everything that the flame requires of it.

Here we see the principle of God's life being our body's strength. His life does not change the weak and mortal nature of our body; rather, it saturates the body with what it cannot provide. Therefore, according to his natural condition, Paul was the weakest, but according to the power he received from Christ, he was the strongest. The strength mentioned in this portion of the Bible specifically refers to the apostle's body. We know how the apostle Paul worked continually day and night, laboring mentally and physically, doing a work that even three or four strong men could not handle. If his weak body had not received the Holy Spirit's enlivening, how could it have borne so much burden? It is a definite fact that God gave strength to Paul's body.

How did God strengthen him? In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul mentioned the problem of his body. He said, "Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (vv. 10-11). What attracts our attention the most is that even though verses 10 and 11 are seemingly repetitive, they actually are not. Verse 10 speaks of the life of Jesus being manifested in our body; whereas verse 11 speaks of the life of Jesus being manifested in our mortal flesh. Many people can express the life of Jesus in their body but do not take a step further to do so in their mortal flesh. The distinction between these two is very great. When they are sick, many believers show real obedience and endure much without murmuring or anxiety. They sense the presence of the Lord and manifest His virtues in their countenance, voice, and action. By the Holy Spirit they indeed manifest the life of Jesus in their body. Nevertheless, they do not know that the Lord Jesus can heal their sickness, nor have they heard that His life is also for their humble

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body. They never apply their faith to appropriate the Lord's healing of their body in the way that they did for the Lord's cleansing and enlivening of their dead spirit. As a result, they do not manifest the life of Jesus in their "mortal flesh." By the grace of the Lord they endure pain but do not receive healing. They have the experience of verse 10 but not of verse 11.

In this verse we see how God heals us and strengthens us by the life of the Lord Jesus. This is very crucial. When our mortal body is strengthened, the nature of this body is not changed to be immortal. The nature of the body stays the same; it is the life which supplies strength to the body that is changed. In the past we depended on our natural life as the source of our strength, but now we depend on the life of Christ for our supply. We can be strengthened to work because we have the resurrection life of Christ for our body's sustenance.

The apostle did not mean that having once lived by the Lord, he would never be weak again. Whenever the power of Christ did not rest upon him, he would be as weak as before. We may lose the manifestation of the life of the Lord Jesus in our body by way of carelessness, independence, or sin. Sometimes there may be no shortcomings in ourselves, but simply because we boldly attack the power of darkness, we face its assault on our body. At other times we may suffer constantly for the sake of the Body of Christ because of our deep experience with it. However, a man usually does not experience these last two unless he is very spiritual. One thing is certain: although we may be weak, God's will is that we would never be handicapped, fail in His work, or cause Him to suffer. The apostle Paul was often weak, but God's work was never weakened because of it. We recognize God's infinite authority, but we must not excuse ourselves of our responsibility.

Here we see that "the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh," is based upon "always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." In other words, we must deny our own life completely before the life of Jesus will be manifested in our body. In this we see the relationship between a spiritual, selfless living and a healthy body. God's life is for God. He manifests His life in our body for the sake of accomplishing His own work. He does not have the intention of giving us His life and strength so that we may work and live for ourselves. He does not give His life to our body so that we may waste His strength; nor does He supply strength for the accomplishment of our purpose. If we do not completely live for Him, He has no desire to give us this life. Here we see the reason that many seek healing and strength but never get them: they think that health and strength are something for them to enjoy. They seek God's life for their body in order that they may be more comfortable, happy, free, and less bound when taking any action. That is why they still remain in weakness and inability. God will never give us His life for our private use in order that we may live by our self-life and cause His purpose to continually suffer loss. God is now waiting for His children to come to their end before He will give them what they are seeking.

What is meant by "the putting to death of Jesus"? It is the life of the Lord Jesus which continually delivers the self unto death. The Lord's whole life was one of self-denial. Until death He never did anything by Himself; rather, He carried out God's work. The apostle tells us that he allowed the death of Jesus to work in his body so that the life of the Lord Jesus could also be manifest in his mortal flesh. Can we receive such a teaching? God is now waiting for those who are willing to accept the death of the Lord Jesus so that He may live in their body. Who is willing to obey God's will completely? Who will not initiate anything by himself? Who is willing to continually assault the power of darkness for God's sake? Who refuses to use his body for accomplishing anything for himself? This kind of person deserves to have the life of the Lord Jesus manifested in his flesh. If we pay attention to the aspect of

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death, God will take care of the aspect of life. When we consecrate our weakness to Him, He gives His strength to us.

### **NATURAL POWER AND THE LIFE OF JESUS**

If we fully consecrate ourselves to God, we can believe that He has indeed prepared a body for us. We often think that it would have been great if we could have decided how our body was to be formed. Our greatest hope is that our body would be free from so many natural defects and that it would have greater resistance so that we could enjoy a longer life without pain and illness. But God did not consult us. He knew what we should have. We should not blame our forefathers for their mistakes and sins; neither should we doubt God's love and wisdom. Everything which concerns us was decided before the foundation of the world. God has His good intention in giving us a body that is prone to being limited by pain and illness. His purpose is not for us to forsake this body or consider it a burden; instead, He wants us to lay hold of a new body by the indwelling Holy Spirit. When He prepared our body for us, He knew all of its limitations and dangers, intending that we would seek a new body through our painful experiences, one which does not live by our natural strength but by the life of God. Thus we can exchange our weakness for His strength and realize that even though our body has not become new, the life by which it lives is already new.

The Lord loves to saturate our every nerve, blood vessel, and cell with His strength. He does not exchange our weak constitution for a strong one, nor does He simply impart a great amount of strength to us. He desires to be the life of our body so that we may live by Him every moment. Some may think that receiving the Lord Jesus as the life of our body means that God conducts a miracle to transfuse a great amount of strength into our body, with the result being that we will no longer suffer or become sick throughout our entire life. But this was not the apostle's experience; he said, "For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." His flesh was always weak, but the life of the Lord Jesus continuously flowed into him. He lived by the life of the Lord moment by moment. To receive the Lord Jesus as life for our body requires continued dependence. In ourselves we cannot deal with the environment for one moment, but through our dependence on the Lord, He will give us the strength we need moment by moment.

This is what God meant when He spoke to Jeremiah: "But I will give your own life to you as spoil in all places where you may go" (Jer. 45:5). We do not feel safe at all in our natural strength; instead, we commit ourselves to the Lord's life for every breath. There is the most security in this because He lives forever. We do not have any reserve strength by which to act freely. Rather, every time we need strength, we must draw breath from the Lord. A moment's breath enables us a moment's living; nothing can be put in reserve. This is a life completely joined to and dependent upon the Lord. "I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:57). This is the secret of this life. If we were able to live independently of the life-giving Lord, would we not be led to follow ourselves and lose our heart of dependence? Would we not be like those of the world who waste their strength wantonly? God wants us to have continuous needs and continuous dependence. Just as manna could be gathered only once daily, so must our body live by God hourly.

In this way we do not limit our work by our natural strength, nor are we in perpetual anxiety over our body. If anything is God's will, we dare to obey even if it is risky according to man's wisdom. He is our strength; we should just wait for His commissioning. We ourselves have no strength to bear anything, but our eyes are upon Him. We have nothing to rely upon; we go on in victory only because of Him.

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We all are much too strong. We do not know how to stop trusting in our own strength or how to depend on Him without reservation. His strength can only be made manifest in our weakness. The more we have nothing to depend upon (referring to our attitude), the more His strength is manifested. Our strength can never co-work with the Lord. If we want to help God's strength with our own, the result will be nothing but failure and shame.

Since the Lord requires dependence on Him, this kind of experience should be not only for those who are naturally weak but also for those who are naturally strong. Some believers may think that they do not need to pursue this kind of experience until they begin to be weak, because their bodies are strong. This is a mistake; both our natural strength and natural weakness need God's life. Whatever we receive in the old creation is not satisfactory to God. If a believer has been deeply taught by God, he will lay aside his own strength to receive God's strength, even if his body is so strong that he seemingly has no need to seek for God's life. This does not mean that he exercises his will to choose to be weak; rather, it means that he does not believe in his strength, just as he does not believe in his ability. This kind of consecration saves him from boasting according to his fleshly strength—a common ill of the Lord's workers today. He dares not act beyond what the Lord has commanded. He is like those who are naturally weak, who without the Lord's strengthening dare not do anything. He dares not overwork, carelessly eat, or freely expose himself to danger as those who are naturally weak dare not do.

In this kind of life it is crucial for the "self" to be restricted by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, one is destined to fail. Some believers would love to pursue this life, but they cannot completely stop their own work. They still disregard God's will and do things independently. As a result people may admire them for a short time, but the strength of their body will not sustain them for long. God's life is not the servant of our own will. He will not supply strength for us to do work He has not authorized. If we work apart from Him, we will see God's life leak away and find ourselves once again bearing the work with our own poor body. In order to live by God, we must not do anything freely according to our own will; we must begin a work only after we definitely know that it is God's will. If we are obedient we will see that His life is indeed for us; if not, He will never give us His strength in order for us to disobey Him.

### **THE BLESSING OF THIS LIFE**

If we receive the life of the Lord Jesus as the life of our body, our body will be strengthened by the Lord, and our spiritual life will be prosperous because of Him as well.

According to knowledge, we realized long ago that our body is for the Lord; yet because of our self-will, the Lord has been hindered from saturating us. Now we commit everything into His hand. We accept whatever treatment He bestows upon us. We present our bodies a living sacrifice and no longer dominate our own life and future. We now truly understand what it means to present our body to the Lord. What once caused us anxiety cannot shake us anymore. Although the enemy still tempts us to think that this is very risky and self-abasing, we are no longer as fearful as before. We know that we belong to the Lord completely. Nothing that He does not know or allow will befall us. Whatever attack comes upon us only shows that He has a purpose and that He will protect us. Our body is no longer ours. All of its nerves, cells, and organs are committed to Him. We are no longer our own masters; hence, we no longer bear the responsibility. If the weather suddenly changes, it is His business. If insomnia occurs unexpectedly at night, it will not make us anxious. No matter how much Satan abruptly attacks us, we will always remember that God is fighting and not us. When we behave in this

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way, God can live His life through our body. Others may be uneasy, frustrated, worried, or they may anxiously try to find a remedy when placed in the same condition; but we calmly live by God through faith because we know that we are living not by nice food, good sleep, or proper climate, but by the life of God. Consequently, nothing threatens us.

Now that the believers know God is for their body, all the riches of God are ready for them to apply. Whenever there is an urgent need, God always has the supply; therefore, they rest because of God's provision. They do not ask for more than what God supplies; neither are they satisfied with less than what God has promised. Before God's hour comes, they never use their own strength to help Him. They look to the Father's care. Worldly people may be desperate and may run at such moments because of the suffering in their flesh, but a believer calmly looks to God's riches and timing because of his union with Him. He does not put his life in his own hands. What peace this is!

In this situation a believer glorifies God in all things. No matter what happens, he considers it an opportunity to manifest God's glory. He does not allow his own method to be employed while the praise that God deserves is forfeited. He sees the deliverance of God's operating power as his opportunity to praise Him.

The goal of the believers should not be merely to receive God's blessings. God Himself is more precious than all of His gifts. If healing does not magnify God Himself, the believer will not take healing. We are fallen already if we only covet God's protection and supply, or if we only call upon Him to escape from our trials. God as our life is not for us to have a heart of profit. A believer who really knows God does not seek healing, but God Himself. He does not want health if it does not glorify God or if it turns him away from God. He should always remember that he is gradually falling away if his goal is merely to seek God's gift rather than to care for God Himself. If a believer lives completely for God, he will not be desperate to ask for help, to pursue blessings, or to seek supply; instead, he will commit himself unconditionally into God's hands.

## **CHAPTER FOUR OVERCOMING DEATH**

The experience of overcoming death is not rare among the saints. By the blood of the lamb, the Israelites were delivered from the hand of the angel who smote the firstborn of Egypt. David was delivered from the paws of the lion and the bear and also from the hand of Goliath. Elisha once cast meal into a pot to get rid of a fatal poison (2 Kings 4:38-41). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were not hurt in the burning fiery furnace (Dan. 3:16-27). Daniel saw God shutting the lions' mouth when he was cast into their den (6:21-23). Paul once shook off a viper into the fire without being hurt (Acts 28:3-5). Enoch and Elijah were both raptured into heaven without tasting death—even more excellent examples of overcoming death.

God's intention is to lead His children into the experience of overcoming death. To overcome sin, the self, the world, and Satan is very crucial; but our victory still is not complete if we fail to overcome death. If we want to have a complete victory, we must overcome "death, the last enemy" (1 Cor. 15:26). We leave one enemy undefeated if we do not experience overcoming death.

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There is death in the natural world, death within us, and death that originates from Satan. The earth is under a curse, and every creature is under the ruling of this curse. If we want to live with constant victory in this world, we have to overcome the death in this world. Moreover, death is in our body. On the day we were born, death was already operating in us. And who among us, having been born, is not now going toward the grave? We should not think of death merely as a "gate"; we should know that death is a process. Death is already in us, and it is gradually and continually eating us up. The final breaking away from our physical body is simply the work of death at its climax. Death can attack our spirit to make it short of life and power; it can attack our soul to make it confused and devoid of feeling, thought, and opinion; or it can attack our body to make it weak and sick.

Romans 5 says that "death reigned" (v. 17a). This is not only death; it is the reign of death. This reigning of death exists in the spirit, soul, and body. Although our body is not dead yet, death already reigns in it. Although the power of death has not reached its climax, it is already reigning and expanding its territory in the entire body. The various sicknesses that we find in our body show how much the power of death is in us. All of these lead us to the end of our human life.

In addition to this reign of death, there is also the reign of life (v. 17b). The apostle said that whosoever receives the gift of righteousness by Jesus Christ "will reign in life," a reigning that far surpasses the power of the operation of death. Because believers today put so much emphasis on the matter of sin, they forget the problem of death. Overcoming sin is crucial, but we must not neglect the overcoming of death—the two complement each another. Romans 5 through 8 deals most clearly with the matter of overcoming sin, but this passage gives equal attention to the matter of overcoming death: "The wages of sin is death" (6:23). The apostle stresses not only sin itself but also the result of sin. He not only shows that righteousness is versus sin but also that life is versus death. Many believers concern themselves only with overcoming various manifestations of sin in their daily life and character, yet they neglect overcoming death, which is the result of sin. But God does not say much through the apostle in these chapters regarding the various manifestations of sin in daily living; He rather stresses very much the result of sin—death.

We must see clearly the relationship between sin and death. Christ died to deliver us not only from sin but also from death. God is calling us to overcome both. As sinners we were originally dead in sin, and sin and death reigned (as kings) in us. Because the Lord Jesus died for us, our sin and death were swallowed up by His death. Death was originally the king in us. Since we have been baptized into His death, however, we are not only dead unto sin; we are also able to receive life and live unto God (6:11). We are joined unto Christ; therefore, as "death lords it over Him no more" (v. 9), so neither can it bind us anymore (v. 14). The salvation of Christ replaces sin with righteousness and death with life. If we read this passage of the Bible carefully, we shall see that these are the main points of the apostle. If we receive only half, surely we will not be complete. When the apostle speaks of the completeness of the salvation of the Lord Jesus, he says, "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death" (8:2). We may have much experience of overcoming sin, but how much have we experienced overcoming death?

Because God's uncreated life entered into our spirit when we believed in the Lord and were regenerated, we have some experience in overcoming death. But is this the only experience that we can possibly have? To what extent can life overcome death? One thing is certain: most of today's believers have not experienced the overcoming of death to the degree that God has purposed. We must admit that death operates in us in a stronger way than does life. Therefore, we should pay equal attention to both

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sin and death in the same way that God does. We must overcome death in the same way that we overcome sin.

Since Christ has overcome death, believers need not feel that they must die, although they still may die. Similarly, since Christ has condemned sin in the flesh, believers no longer must sin, although they still may sin. Since it is a believer's goal to be free from sin, it should also be his goal to be free from death. A believer should understand that as a consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, his relationship with death is the same as his relationship with sin. He has overcome these completely in Christ; therefore, God is now calling him to overcome them in his experience. We think that since Christ has overcome death for us we do not have to do anything. But if this were the case, we would not be able to testify to the Lord's victory experientially. Without Golgotha, we would have no ground for victory. But passively waiting for nature to take its own course is not the way to overcome either. We do not overcome sin this way; neither do we overcome death this way. God desires that we take the matter of overcoming death as a reality; that is, by the death of Christ, we overcome the death in us practically. We have overcome many temptations, the flesh, the world, and Satan; now we should rise up to defeat the power of death.

Since we must resist death in the same way that we resist sin, our attitude toward death should be totally changed. Because death is the common heritage of fallen man, we naturally tend to be submissive to it. Believers have not learned to resist death. All mankind is inclined toward the grave. Although we know that the Lord's second coming is very close and that not everyone will die because of the rapture, in our daily experience most of us are still waiting for death. When the righteousness of God operates in us, we spontaneously hate sin; but we have not allowed God's life to work in us so that we would also hate death.

To overcome death a believer must change his attitude from one of submission to one of resistance. Unless a believer rids himself of such passivity, he will never overcome death but will instead constantly be harassed by it and end up among the graves of those who die prematurely. Most believers mistake passivity for faith. They think that they have committed everything to God. If they should not die, He will definitely rescue them from it; if they should die, nothing can stop God from letting them. They simply consent to God's will being done in everything. Such an attitude sounds good, but is this faith? It is simply a lazy passivity. When we do not know God's will, we should say, as the Lord did, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). This does not mean that we do not have to cry out to God specifically, making our requests known to Him. We should not yield passively to death; God wants us to work together actively with His will. Unless we know for sure that God wants us to die, we should not passively allow death to suppress us. Rather, we should actively work together with God's will to resist and reject it.

We do not have such a passive attitude toward sin, so why should we have such an attitude toward death? The Bible considers death as our enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). Therefore, we should be resolute in fighting and overcoming it. Since the Lord Jesus has met and overcome death for us, He wants every one of us to overcome it in our present life. We should not ask God to grant us strength to bear the power of death; we should ask instead for the strength to overcome its authority.

Because death comes from sin, our deliverance from death is based upon the fact that the Lord Jesus has died for us and saved us from sin. His redemption is deeply related to death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil, and

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might release those who because of the fear of death through all their life were held in slavery." The cross is the basis for overcoming death.

Satan has the power of death. He holds this power because he has sin as his basis: "Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). But the Lord Jesus Himself entered into the realm of death and through His redemption abolished its sting—sin—so that Satan has lost his power. Through Christ's death, sin has not only lost its effect, but death has also lost its power. Therefore, we must now break through the power of death by the death of Christ and appropriate all that has been accomplished at Golgotha so that our whole being can be delivered from the siege of death.

There are three ways for believers to overcome death: (1) by believing that they will not die before their work is completed; (2) by believing that the sting of death has been removed, so that even if they die, there is nothing to be afraid of; and (3) by believing that they will be totally delivered from death because of the Lord's second coming and rapture. Let us now look at these one by one.

### **DEATH AFTER THE COMPLETION OF OUR WORK**

Unless a believer is clear that his work is finished and that the Lord does not need him to remain on the earth any longer, he should not die; that is, he should always resist death. If the symptoms of death have gradually occurred in his body and he knows that his work has not been finished, a believer should completely deny these symptoms and refuse to die. He also should believe that the Lord will carry through his resistance because He still has work for him to do. Therefore, if we have not finished the work assigned to us, we can be calm and still believe even though our body may be beset with danger. As long as we work and fight together with the Lord, He will definitely work to swallow up our death with His life.

The Lord Jesus withstood death. When people wanted to cast Him down the edge of a hill, "He, passing through their midst, went away" (Luke 4:29-30). At another time "Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him" (John 7:1). Yet another time, the crowd "picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple" (8:59). He resisted death again and again because His time had not yet come. He knew there was a definite time for the Messiah to be cut off; He could not die ahead of the time God had appointed, nor could He die at any place other than Golgotha. We also must not die before our time.

The apostle Paul also had many experiences of withstanding death. The powers of darkness wanted him to die ahead of time, but he overcame them one after another. Once when imprisoned and very much in danger, he said, "But if I am to live in the flesh, if this to me is fruit for my work, then I do not know what I will choose. But I am constrained between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue" (Phil. 1:22-25). He was not afraid of death; because the work was not finished, he trusted in God, knowing that he would not die. This was his overcoming of death. Afterwards, when he knew that he had "fought the good fight...finished the course...kept the faith," he concluded that "the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6-7). When we know that we have not finished our course, we must not die.

Not only was Paul this way; Peter was the same. He knew when he would leave the world. "Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is imminent, even as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to

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me" (2 Pet. 1:14). It is a mistake for us to think that our death is imminent merely because of the condition of our environment or our health, without any clear indication from the Lord. Just as we live to the Lord, we die to the Lord. Therefore, we must withstand any calling of death that is not from the Lord.

In reading the Old Testament we see that all the forefathers died "full of days." What does it mean to be "full of days"? It means that they fully lived the days God had appointed them. God has allotted a special number of years (Josh. 21) to each one of us. If we do not live to that time, we have not overcome death. But how do we know how many years God has appointed us? The Bible gives us a general number: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; /and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years" (Psa. 90:10). We do not mean that everyone must live to be at least seventy years old; God's sovereignty cannot be infringed upon by man. But if we do not receive a clear indication of a shorter time, we should take this number as a standard and resist any death that would come sooner. By standing upon the Word of God we will see that victory is ours.

### **DEATH WITHOUT FEAR**

Based on what we have said about overcoming death, we do not necessarily mean that our body will never die. Although we believe that "we will not all sleep" (1 Cor. 15:51), saying that we will not die is too superstitious. Since the Bible takes seventy as a general standard for human life, we can hope to live until that time if we have faith. But we should never think that we are immortal because we have the Lord Jesus as life. Moreover, we know that God often allows exceptions; some die before seventy. Our faith can only ask God that we would not pass away before our work is done. Whether we live briefly or for a long time, we should not perish like sinners before half of our days are over. Our days should be long enough to finish our work in this life. Then when the end does come, we can depart from the earth in peace by the grace of God, in a way that is as natural as the falling of a ripe melon. Job described this kind of death as "a shock of corn cometh in in his season" (5:26).

Overcoming death does not necessarily mean escaping death, because God may want some people to overcome it in resurrection just as the Lord Jesus did. But even though a believer passes through death, like the Lord Jesus, he does not have to fear death. A believer who strives to overcome death simply because he fears and abhors death is already defeated. How can he expect to overcome? The Lord may decide to completely save us from death by rapturing us alive to the heavens; but we should not ask the Lord to come back soon out of our fear of death. Such a fear is a symptom that we are already defeated by death. Even if we die, death is just like walking from one room to another. There is no need for any traumatic pain, anxiety, or fear.

Originally, we were men who "because of the fear of death through all their life were held in slavery" (Heb. 2:15). But the Lord Jesus has "released" us so that we do not have to fear it anymore. Its pain, darkness, and loneliness cannot scare us. An apostle who experienced overcoming death told us, "For to me...to die is gain...having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better" (Phil. 1:21, 23). Here is an attitude that sees no trace of fear. This is true victory over death.

### **RAPTURED ALIVE**

To be raptured alive is the last way to overcome death. When the Lord Jesus comes back, many believers will be raptured alive. Both 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 teach this.

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There is no definite day for the Lord's second coming. He could have come back at any moment during the past two thousand years. Believers have the hope of being raptured alive at any time without passing through death. The time of the Lord Jesus' second coming is now closer than before. Therefore, believers today have more hope of being raptured than those in past generations. We do not want to say much here, but we can safely say a few words with assurance: if the Lord Jesus comes back while our generation is still here, would we not be raptured alive? If so, we should overcome death, not allowing ourselves to die ahead of time so that we may be raptured alive. According to the prophecy in the Bible, there will eventually be a group of believers who will be raptured without passing through death. Their being raptured alive is a kind of overcoming of death. As long as we live on the earth, we should not say that we may not be those people. Therefore, should we not prepare ourselves to overcome death completely?

Believing that we will never die physically is not a superstition, because the Bible gives us this hope. We may die, but it is not a must that we die. The Lord clearly teaches us: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6:54). But He also says, "This is the bread which came down out of heaven, not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread shall live forever" (v. 58). He means that among His believers some will die and be resurrected, while others will not pass through death at all.

The Lord Jesus expressed this idea more explicitly at the time of Lazarus's death: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live; and every one who lives and believes into Me shall by no means die forever" (John 11:25-26). The Lord Jesus is not only the resurrection but also the life. Most of us believe that He is the resurrection but forget that He is also the life. We only know that after we die He will resurrect us, but we forget that while we are living He wants to be our life to save us from dying. The Lord Jesus told us of these two kinds of work, but we only believe in one of them. He said, "He who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live." This is what believers of the past two thousand years are going to experience. But He also said that there will be a group of people who "lives and believes into Me," who will "by no means die forever." We do not know how many thousands have believed in God and have already passed away, but God's Word says that some will "by no means die forever"—not that some will be resurrected, but that some will "by no means die forever." We have no reason to say that we must first die and then be resurrected. Since the second coming of the Lord Jesus is already near, why should we have to die before then and wait for resurrection? Why not look to Him to rapture us at His second coming so that we may be totally delivered from the power of death?

The Lord tells us that not only is He the resurrection to many, but also the life to some. Although it is marvelous to be resurrected from the dead as Lazarus was, this does not mean that there is no other way to overcome death other than resurrection. The Lord said that there is another way to "by no means die forever." Originally, we were appointed to fall into the gloomy valley of death, but God has built a "pontoon bridge" for us to get to the heavens directly. This pontoon bridge is the rapture.

If some wish to be raptured and if the time of rapture is indeed near, then God would desire that we learn how to overcome death and be among the number who will be raptured alive. Before rapture, the last enemy to overcome is death. On the cross the Lord Jesus fully overcame death, but God desires that the church would experience His victory. We all feel that we are at the end of this age and that before our rapture the Holy Spirit is now leading us to wage the last battle against death.

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Satan knows that his time is short. He is trying his best to frustrate the believers from being raptured. As a result, the children of God today experience many physical attacks. Because of such frequent physical attacks, they become accustomed to breathing in the atmosphere of death and lose the hope of being raptured alive. Believers do not know that this is just the challenge of the enemy to frustrate them from being raptured. When a believer has truly received the calling of rapture, he will spontaneously develop a fighting spirit against death; in his spirit he will feel that death is a frustration to his rapture that must be overcome.

The devil was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). His job is to murder. The goal of all that Satan does to the believers is to cause them to die. In the end time he deals with God's children in a special way: he wears them out (Dan. 7:25). If he can add a little anxiety to a believer's spirit, put a little more fear and worry in his mind, give him insomnia one night, and cause him to eat less and become overworked at other times, he has succeeded in bringing in an invasion of death. Although a drop of water is powerless, a repeated dripping over a period of time can wear away a stone. Knowing this, Satan uses little worries, anxieties, and neglect to wear out the saints.

At other times Satan directly attacks believers and causes them to die. Actually, many such attacks have happened, but believers do not recognize them as such. Sometimes the attack comes simply as a cold, sunstroke, insomnia, fatigue, or loss of appetite. Sometimes it may be uncleanness, anger, envyings, or indulgence. Not knowing the deadening significance behind these, believers lack perfect victory. If they recognized these deadening attacks and withstood them just as they withstand death, they would overcome. Because the believers do not have sufficient knowledge to understand the real meaning of these experiences, they attribute them to their age or other factors, not realizing that the enemy is using death to attack them because the rapture is close.

The Lord Jesus is coming back soon; therefore, we should wage a full-scale battle against death. In the same way that we fight with sin, the world, and Satan, we should also fight against death. We should not only strive to overcome; we should also lay hold of victory. In every aspect we should firmly grasp the work of Christ in overcoming death. If we look back on our past experience and ask God to shine upon us, we will see the numerous times that we have been attacked by death without realizing it. We considered these attacks to be something else and, in so doing, failed to have the power to deal with them. If we had identified these as the attacks of death, God would have supplied us with the power to overcome them experientially. We often seem to pass over broken bridges and through torn-up streets; it seems as if our environment and everything else tell us that we are about to die, but we cannot die. We often even despair of life, but we cannot die. Why should we die now? Recently the children of God have had considerable experiences of fighting for their life. It is most painful, yet they feel that they cannot die. It seems as if they are saying that they do not want to die. What does this mean? These are the attacks of death to prevent us from being raptured. God is leading us to pitch our last battle against death before our rapture.

Today we should apply the victory of Christ to shut the door of Hades. We should stand up and refuse to let death have any power over us. Reject everything that has the element of death in it. Apply this view to every sickness, weakness, and pain. Sometimes the body may not feel anything, but death has already done its work. All vexing in the spirit and sorrow in the soul result in death. God is now calling us to be raptured; therefore, everything that frustrates this rapture should be destroyed.

God is putting His children in different environments that strip them of their strength and all that they

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depend on, causing them to place their lives into His hand and hang on by a thread of faith. Otherwise, they would have no hope of survival. At such times there seems to be no way except to cry, "Lord, keep me alive." The battle today is truly a battle of life and death.

The evil spirits of murder are working everywhere today. Unless the believers stand against them and pray, they will fail. If you are still as passive as before, you will certainly die. You may say, "Lord, make me overcome death." But the Lord will say, "If you stand against death, I will make you overcome death." Prayer alone will not work very well if the will does not resist death. You should say, "Lord, because You have overcome death, I now reject all the attacks of death. I am determined to overcome right now. Lord, grant me a victory over death." The Lord desires that you would overcome death. Grasp the promise that God has given you, pray to be delivered from death, and believe that nothing can hurt you. Do not accept the fact that death can touch you. For example, if you are in a disease-infected area, reject the diseases and forbid them to come close to you. Do not let death attack you through disease.

We should not wait passively for the second coming and presume that somehow we will be raptured. We must be prepared. Being raptured, just like any other matter, requires God's church to cooperate with Him. Faith never lets things take their own course. Death must be resisted with determination. Likewise, the rapture is something that must be grasped with determination. Faith is indispensable, but that does not mean we may passively abandon responsibility. If we theoretically consent to the fact that we can be completely freed from death, but yield passively to its power, what profit is this?

### **A SIN UNTO DEATH**

The Bible tells us that there is a kind of sin called "a sin unto death" (1 John 5:16) which believers may commit. The "death" mentioned here is not spiritual death because God's eternal life will never die. Neither is it "the second death" because the Lord's sheep will never perish. This "death" is physical death.

We need to specifically look at this "sin unto death" so that we who wait for the rapture will know how to be careful, lest our flesh be corrupted through committing such a sin, and lest we lose the blessing of being raptured alive. If the Lord delays His coming and we have to pass through the grave, our deliverance from this sin will keep us alive until we are "full of days" so that we may work for the Lord before passing away. Because of their neglect, some of God's children have had their days on the earth shortened and their crowns lost. Many workers might still be working for the Lord today had they paid attention to this matter.

The Bible does not tell us explicitly what kind of sin the sin unto death is, but it is certain that such a sin does exist. According to the record in the Bible concerning the believers' experiences, we know that this sin varies among people. To some, a certain sin may be a sin unto death, but to another it may not and vice versa. This is because of differences in the grace received, the light obtained, and the position taken by each believer.

Even though the Bible does not say what kind of sin this sin is, we know that anyone who dies from committing a sin has committed a "sin unto death." The children of Israel committed such a sin at Kadesh (Num. 13:25—14:12). Although they had tempted the Lord ten times before (14:22), He tolerated it. But this time He caused their bodies to fall in the wilderness, even though He forgave them for the sin of refusing to enter Canaan (v. 32).

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Because he spoke unadvisedly with his lips by the waters of Meribah (Psa. 106:33), Moses died outside the land of Canaan. He was not allowed to enter into the land. This was his "sin unto death." Aaron committed the same sin as Moses, and he also did not get into the holy land (Num. 20:24). The man of God who journeyed from Judah to Bethel committed a sin unto death simply because he disobeyed God's commandment concerning eating (1 Kings 13:21-22). In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira were punished with death because they also committed a sin unto death; they kept back part of the proceeds of their land and lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5). The believer in Corinth who had his stepmother also committed a sin unto death; therefore, the apostle said that he would "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh" (1 Cor. 5:5). The Word says that many Corinthian believers slept because they were "guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord" (11:27, 30). They also committed a sin unto death.

To overcome death we should continually overcome sin because death comes from sin. If we want to live until we are full of days or until the Lord comes back, we should be careful not to sin. Many believers who were not careful in this went to the grave before their time. This does not mean that they committed a particularly frightening sin; the sin we talk of here is not the same for everyone. The fornication of the Corinthians was considered a sin unto death, but the unadvised words that Moses spoke were considered a sin unto death as well, for we are told that Moses was "very meek, more than all men who were on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). Therefore, we cannot overlook any sin.

Today is the age of grace and God is full of grace; therefore, we can be at peace. Do not let Satan accuse you, suggesting that you have committed this type of sin and must die. Although the Bible does not tell us to pray for others who commit this type of sin, God will forgive us if we examine ourselves and repent. Many believe that the person recorded in 2 Corinthians 2:6-7 was the one who had his stepmother. First Corinthians 11:30-32 also tells us that even though we may have committed a sin unto death, we can still be freed if we are willing to judge ourselves. Therefore, we should never tolerate any sin lest it become our sin unto death. Our flesh may be weak, but we should never lose a heart of self-judgment. We should judge our own sin and never tolerate it. In this life it is impossible to reach sinless perfection, but frequent confession and dependence upon God's grace are indispensable. God still forgives us. Those who want to overcome death should pay extra attention to this. "Then he showeth them their work,/and their transgressions that they have exceeded./He openeth also their ear to discipline,/and commandeth that they return from iniquity./If they obey and serve him,/they shall spend their days in prosperity,/and their years in pleasures./But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword,/and they shall die without knowledge. /But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath:/they cry not when he bindeth them./They die in youth,/and their life is among the unclean" (Job 36:9-14).

## **THE TEACHINGS IN PROVERBS**

Proverbs is a book that deals with the believers' daily walk. It teaches much on how they can preserve their lives. Let us take a closer look so that we may know the way to overcome death.

"My son, forget not my law;/but let thine heart keep my commandments:/for length of days, and long life,/and peace, shall they add to thee" (3:1-2).

"It shall be health to thy navel,/and marrow to thy bones" (3:8).

"Let thine heart retain my words:/keep my commandments, and live" (4:4).

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"Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;/and the years of thy life shall be many" (4:10).

"Take fast hold of instruction;/let her not go:/keep her; for she is thy life" (4:13).

"For they [my words] are life unto those that find them, /and health to all their flesh" (4:22).

"Keep thy heart with all diligence;/for out of it are the issues of life" (4:23).

"But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding:/he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (6:32).

"For whoso findeth me [wisdom] findeth life,/and shall obtain favor of the Lord" (8:35).

"For by me [wisdom] thy days shall be multiplied,/and the years of thy life shall be increased" (9:11).

"But righteousness delivereth from death" (10:2).

"The fear of the Lord prolongeth days:/but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (10:27).

"In the way of righteousness is life;/and in the pathway thereof there is no death" (12:28).

"The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,/to depart from the snares of death" (14:27).

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh:/but envy the rottenness of the bones" (14:30).

"The way of life is above to the wise,/that he may depart from hell beneath" (15:24).

"He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul" (15:32).

"In the light of the king's countenance is life" (16:15).

"He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul" (16:17).

"He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; /but he that despiseth his ways shall die" (19:16).

"The fear of the Lord tendeth to life" (19:23).

"The getting of treasures by a lying tongue/is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death" (21:6).

"The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding /shall remain in the congregation of the dead" (21:16).

"He that followeth after righteousness and mercy/findeth life" (21:21).

When the Holy Spirit of God leads us to overcome death, we will find new meaning to these verses. We are accustomed to thinking that life is merely a term. But after receiving enlightenment, the life of our physical body will definitely be lengthened if we truly fulfill God's conditions. Therefore, we have to pay close attention to the verses above. If we do not follow their precepts, we will see our life gradually leak away. For instance, God's promise says, "Honor your father and mother...that it may be

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well with you and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3). If we disobey this, we will see our days shortened by sins. God wants us to obey His words, receive wisdom, pursue righteousness, and preserve our hearts. (The mind of the heart has much to do with life.) In this way, we will not lose life. If we want to gain life, we must obey.

### **THE POWERS OF THE AGE TO COME**

In the coming kingdom the Lord Jesus will be the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). At that time no inhabitant will say, "I am sick" (Isa. 33:24). Believers will see that "this corruptible will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality." And "then the word which is written will come to pass, 'Death has been swallowed up unto victory'" (1 Cor. 15:54). The characteristics of the kingdom age for believers are freedom from weakness, sickness, and death, the redemption of the body, and having Satan under our feet.

However, the Bible tells us that we can now have a foretaste of "the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5). Although our body is not yet redeemed, we can taste by faith the powers of the coming age in having no weakness, sickness, or death. This is a very deep experience, but if a believer fulfills God's conditions and believes God's words with his whole heart, he will see that this kind of experience is possible. Faith transcends time; it can appropriate both what God has accomplished for us in the past and what He will accomplish for us in the future.

In 2 Corinthians 5 the apostle speaks of the future transfiguration of the body: "For also, we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has wrought us for this very thing is God, who has given to us the Spirit as a pledge" (vv. 4-5). The word "pledge" means "down payment," which is a partial payment guaranteeing full payment in the future. The Holy Spirit in us is God's pledge "that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." Although we have not experienced this completely, we can experience part of it because we have the down payment of the Holy Spirit. The granting of the Holy Spirit is for our foretaste of the coming victory of life.

The apostle speaks clearly in 2 Timothy 1: "Our Savior Christ Jesus, who nullified death and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel" (v. 10). Life and immortality are the common possession of everyone who receives the gospel. The question now is: how much has the Holy Spirit led the believers to experience this possession? Death has been abolished; believers have experienced this to a certain degree. But now this age is coming to an end, and with the hope of imminent rapture, the Holy Spirit is urging believers to experience more of the inheritance which they received from the gospel.

It is possible to have a foretaste of the powers of the age to come. When the apostle says, "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57), he is referring to the present and specifically to the problem of death. He is speaking about overcoming death in the future. However, he does not think that the experience of overcoming death is entirely for the future. He says that we can overcome through the Lord Jesus now.

God has a principle: whatever He intends to do in the age, He first does in a group of people. What everyone will experience in the millennium, the members of Christ should first experience on the earth today. In past ages there were always some who tasted the powers of the coming age; therefore, the church today should have much more experience of Christ's victory over death. God wants us to break

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through the realm of Hades today. The Lord wants us to overcome death for the sake of His Body. If we have not overcome death, our battle is not yet complete.

Each of us should now seek the Lord's mind concerning our future. (We do not superstitiously believe that we will not die.) But if this is the end time and Christ's second coming will be delayed no longer, occurring even while we are still alive, we should lay hold of God's word by faith and believe that we will not die but will remain alive to see the Lord's face. Because of such a hope, we should purify ourselves even as He is pure. We should live for Him moment by moment and apply His resurrection life for the needs of our spirit, soul, and body.

"By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death" (Heb. 11:5). May we also have faith to believe that we will not die. May we believe that victory over death is a reality, that the rapture is definite, and that the time will not be long. "For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God." What about us?

Oh, how excellent is the glory to come! Oh, how complete is the salvation God has given us! Now is the time for us to rise and go up. Oh, may "heaven" so saturate us that the flesh has no more ground and the world poses no more distraction. Oh, may the love of the Father be so much in us that we have nothing more to do with His enemy! Oh, may the Lord Jesus so satisfy our hearts that we desire nothing else besides Him! Oh, may the Holy Spirit create in every believer a prayer that cries, "Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
This is the pathway the Father has lately shown.  
The Holy Spirit has this clearly taught,  
That we may turn from the world to the throne.

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
Oh what glory, we will return to our heavenly place!  
In the twinkling of an eye we will be fully changed,  
And will be raptured to see Him face to face!

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
Such promise is true and faithful indeed.  
Though we know not the day or the hour,  
We feel that the time is drawing close.

You will not die, therefore be sanctified,  
Cut off all ties with all sins,  
The world soon passes away, and heaven's glory will appear,  
May we pass our days in godliness.

You will be raptured to see the Lord in the air!  
Therefore keep your spirit from all earthly defilements,  
We are not waiting to die here,  
But are looking moment by moment to be raptured from this world.

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!

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Advance therefore until the day breaks.  
Hold fast, that no one takes away your crown,  
For soon, the Lord will reward you with the throne.

You will not die, but will be raptured to see the Lord!  
God's children, what victory this is!  
Your spirit should say, "Come Lord!  
Come quickly, and be with us forever."