

**THE MINISTERS IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY—
GENUINE MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT**

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PREFACE

In recent years various defamatory statements have been published both in print and online with the express purpose of shaking the saints' confidence in the leadership of the Lord's recovery, often by presenting a list of allegations against the leading ones in the ministry and the local churches, both past and present, including Brother Nee and Brother Lee. Others have taken up the responsibility to challenge the veracity of such claims as well as the accuracy of purportedly scriptural objections. But due to human nature as well as the nature of the fiery darts that the devil employs against the believers, it is possible that after coming into contact with such accusations that are later proven to be baseless, some saints may remain shaken, and it is possible that even a thorough factual and scriptural refutation may not result in complete inward restoration. Therefore, in this document I seek to address the spiritual nature of the ministry in the Lord's recovery in order to assure the hearts of the saints of its authenticity. It is not enough to be convinced that a negative claim has proven to be inaccurate at best and often outright libelous. Much more, we need to see the immense positive value of our inheritance as those who are mercifully chosen to be in the Lord's recovery.

Although I wrote this document in fellowship with other members of the Body of Christ, the enclosed contents are the fruit of my own investigation and represent my personal thoughts and convictions before the Lord. Any deficiencies or errors are likewise my own, and I would appreciate being alerted to them. I submit this writing to the discernment of the Body, knowing that my treatment of this subject, though extensive, is not exhaustive. I look to the Lord to bless it so that many saints would receive an uplifted appreciation of the ministry in the Lord's recovery and as a result reap from this ministry the rich spiritual blessings that the Lord has prepared for His lovers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The publications that have negatively impacted a number of saints in the local churches are characterized not only by false accusations of certain wrongdoings against the leading ones in the Lord's recovery but also a gross mischaracterization of both the person and ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, with the intention of undermining the saints' confidence in the ministry and even prompting them to forsake it. This recalls the situation among the saints in Corinth at the time Paul wrote his second Epistle to them. The authenticity of Paul's apostleship had been called into question, not only by the false Judaistic apostles but by the Corinthians themselves. Due to the saints' accusations and their failure to come to his defense, Paul was forced to vindicate his own apostolic authority. He felt compelled to do so not for his own sake but for the sake of the Corinthians, for their "building up," so that they might be brought back to a sober realization concerning their relationship with the apostle (11:16-17; 12:1, 19). Regretting this shameful necessity, Paul told the Corinthians that his commendation as an apostle should have come from them, among whom the signs of his apostleship had been wrought (v. 11). For my part, I refuse to commit the same error. As a beneficiary and a witness of the many signs of the new covenant ministry that have been wrought among us in the local churches by Brother Nee and Brother Lee, I cannot be silent in the face of the attacks that have been directed against these faithful servants of the Lord. I consider it my privilege and duty to commend the ministry in the recovery as the authentic ministry of the new covenant and by so doing to encourage the saints who have been shaken to return to a proper understanding and full enjoyment of this ministry.

Concerning this Witness Lee says:

We should learn from this verse [2 Cor. 12:11] that there are occasions when we need to say something on behalf of the elders or those in the ministry. If a certain brother is the target of attack or opposition, he may not be able to say anything to defend himself. In such a situation we need to speak up and commend him. For example, years ago when Brother Nee was the target, I did something to vindicate him. The young ones especially need to learn to commend someone in such a situation. They should be bold to speak out. They should not be silent, and they should not be held back.¹

The Divine Standard of Ministry

My burden in this document is to consult the Bible for a divine standard of what constitutes the genuine New Testament ministry. Among so many voices affirming or questioning, upholding or denying, whose voice rings true according to the pure revelation of the Word? Upon detailed investigation, an unmistakable correspondence emerges between the New Testament pattern of proper ministers and the ministry carried out in the Lord's recovery by Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and those co-workers who have closely followed them to live to and serve the Lord in the same spirit and in the same steps (2 Cor. 12:18, cf. 2 Tim. 3:10). Such a comparison will serve to strengthen the saints' trust in, and uplift their appreciation of, the ministry of Brother Watchman Nee and Brother Witness Lee, which has been continued by the co-workers in today's recovery. The goal is not to elevate these men, who are but slaves of Christ for our sake, or in any way to give them an air of infallibility, but rather to maintain the saints in

¹ *Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*, p. 494

the divine truth and grace that this ministry so richly imparts for the fulfillment of our God's desire and purpose (Eph. 3:2, 7-11). May we all be spared from being tossed by waves of dissent and carried about by the winds of different teachings in the sleight of men, and may we hold to the truth of God's New Testament economy revealed in His Word in order to grow up into our Head, Christ, in all things, so that out from Him the Body may build itself up in love (Eph. 4:14-16).

The Unique and Genuine New Testament Ministry

According to the Bible, what is the ministry of the new covenant (which I will also call the New Testament ministry)? It is the service that the believers render to God in order to carry out God's new covenant of grace for the accomplishment of His New Testament economy. The book of Ephesians reveals that the work of the new covenant ministry is to impart the unsearchable riches of Christ into the believers for the building up of the Body of Christ (3:8, 18; 4:12-13). Although this ministry is uniquely one (2 Cor. 3:8; 4:1; Acts 1:17, 24-25; 1 Tim. 1:12), it is not the ministry of any one person but the corporate ministry of the Body of Christ carried out by the personal ministries (i.e., services) of all the perfected members of the Body (2 Tim. 4:5; Col. 4:17; Acts 21:19; Rom. 11:13; 1 Cor. 12:5; Eph. 4:12). Because he clearly saw the corporate nature of the unique New Testament ministry, Brother Lee acknowledged that the ministry in the Lord's recovery is not "one man's individual ministry but a corporate ministry of the Body."² He further clarified that his own ministry did not encompass the entire New Testament ministry but was only "a part of the one ministry."³ Therefore, let no one mistake the purpose of this document, which is not to contend that the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee is the *only* ministry of the New Testament or equivalent to the *entire* New Testament ministry—a claim that they themselves would wholeheartedly deny. Rather, my intention is to investigate whether or not theirs meets the biblical standard of ministry.

That standard is clearly laid out in 2 Corinthians, which contains the definitive description of the genuine new covenant ministry. Indeed, to present such a description is one of the main purposes of this Epistle. Against the backdrop of the inauthentic and false apostleship of his opposers, Paul defines the characteristics of legitimate and true ministers. All ministries must therefore be measured according to this standard. After much study, I am convinced that the ministry in the Lord's recovery is fully genuine, as it closely adheres to the pattern of the New Testament apostles. But concerning this matter the burden of proof lies mainly with the testimony borne by the conscience of the saints, to whom the apostles commended themselves in vindicating their ministry (2 Cor. 4:2). Dear fellow saints, let us consider together the characteristics of the new covenant ministry and examine whether the ministry in the Lord's recovery matches the criteria laid out by the apostle.

² *CWWL, 1994-1997*, vol. 1, p. 27

³ *CWWL, 1988*, vol. 3, p. 407

CHAPTER TWO

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Ministry of the Spirit

According to Paul's word in 2 Corinthians, the ministry of the new covenant is first "the ministry of the Spirit" (3:8). This implies that the Spirit, who is the realization of the resurrected Christ (John 14:17-20; 2 Cor. 3:17), is the *essence* of the new covenant ministry. This corresponds with the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-33, in which Jehovah declares, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...I will put My law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people." In Ezekiel 36:26-28 Jehovah makes a similar proclamation to the children of Israel: "I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you...And I will put My Spirit within you...and you will be My people, and I will be your God." Whereas Jeremiah 31 speaks of God putting His law into our inward parts and hearts, Ezekiel 36 speaks of God putting His Spirit within us, indicating that the law of God here is none other than the Spirit of God who is dispensed into us (Rom. 8:9, 11). In contrast to the outward and objective law of the old covenant, in God's new covenant of life He dispenses His own Spirit as His law—"the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2)—into us so that we may be saturated with the new essence of His life.

Today in His heavenly ministry, Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant executes God's promise to impart into us the life-giving Spirit as the reality of all the bequests in the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Isa. 42:6; Phil. 1:19). Likewise, in cooperation with Christ, the genuine ministers of the new covenant dispense not the letter that kills but the Spirit who gives life (2 Cor. 3:6). Hence, the authentic new covenant ministry is appropriately referred to as "the ministry of the Spirit" (v. 8), as it is constituted with the life-giving Spirit. It should come as no surprise then that the new covenant ministers are able to impart the life-giving Spirit to others only by being saturated with this Spirit themselves (Acts 6:3, 5, 10; 13:52). What qualified Paul and his fellow apostles to be sufficient as ministers of the new covenant was not a religious education or the accumulation of theological knowledge but the constitution of the life-giving Spirit in their inward parts (2 Cor. 3:5-6). In fact, the profound view that Paul presents is that the ministry is not simply a work that the ministers carry out. Rather, it issues out of their constitution, that is, their Spirit-saturated being.

The new covenant ministers impart the Spirit with whom they are constituted into the believers to make them a "letter of Christ," "inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh" (vv. 1-3). The resurrected Christ, who as both Alpha and Omega constitutes the entire spiritual alphabet, is realized as the divine ink of the life-giving Spirit inscribed upon the believers as letters of Christ through the apostles as the writers (Rev. 22:13; 1 Cor. 15:45b). The effect of the apostles' ministry is that the believers become not only individual letters conveying Christ to others but also a corporate letter of Christ, the Body of Christ as His universal expression (Eph. 2:15-16; 1:22-13).

Brother Lee's ministry followed this pattern of the genuine new covenant ministry in both content and goal. Although he did not possess a theological degree, he was a sufficient minister of the new covenant because he was thoroughly constituted with the Spirit. Indeed, he was fully occupied and possessed by the Spirit. Perhaps this was because his personal discovery of the reality of the Spirit represented a major turn in his experience of the Lord:

I tried to change my behavior for years, but I was never successful. One day I realized that I had been anointed and sealed [with the Spirit]. When I saw this, I was happy, beside myself, and full of praise to the Lord. It seemed that I forgot where I was. Spontaneously I began to be kind to my mother, yet I had no realization that I was being kind to her...According to my feeling, I had no change, but actually I was altogether a different person, a person bearing the image of God. This was not the result of trying to improve my behavior; it was the result of His anointing.⁴

Anyone who has even a casual familiarity with Brother Lee's ministry knows that he disparaged self-improvement and behavioral correction. Instead, the unique emphasis in his ministry in helping the saints to live a proper human life, family life, Christian life, and church life was to exhort them to turn their hearts to the Lord and exercise their spirit to touch the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:16-18). Since the Spirit had become his own content—the content of his being and living—the Spirit also became the content of his ministry.

In keeping with the apostles' pattern, the goal of Brother Lee's ministry was to produce letters of Christ by inscribing the life-giving Spirit of the living God into the saints. Concerning this matter he stated:

I am not here just to preach the gospel or teach the Bible. My burden is to write living letters of Christ...It is not my desire merely to pass on doctrine...Rather, I care for the writing of Christ in life. Then the saints will receive not only the knowledge of doctrine, but the actual inscribing of Christ in their hearts.⁵

Whereas many teachers in traditional Christianity speak of the Spirit in terms of power or influence, few speak of—much less minister—the life-giving Spirit as the reality of Christ. Brother Lee realized that proclaiming the scriptural yet overlooked truth concerning the resurrected Christ being the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17-18) would make him unpopular and would draw fierce opposition from organized Christianity and even from some in the local churches. Indeed, a former co-worker of Brother Nee, though admitting the truth that Christ became the Spirit, strongly warned Brother Lee that if he taught this, he would not be received by most Christian teachers in the United States.⁶ It is a testament to Brother Lee's unwavering faithfulness to the Lord that he nevertheless declared this crucial truth with boldness and perseverance, ministering the life-giving Spirit into the believers in order to produce them as letters of Christ. So central was the Spirit to his ministry that he regarded the resurrected Christ being the life-giving Spirit as “the most significant item of truth recovered by the Lord in the twentieth century”⁷ and testified, “If I could not speak on Christ as the Spirit, I would have nothing to speak.”⁸

The organic issue of their ministry of the Spirit becomes the apostles' boast and vindication. As a tree is known by its fruit (Matt. 7:15-18), Paul and his fellow apostles did not need any validation in addition to the believers in Corinth, who had become their living letters of commendation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1-2). Similarly, countless saints in the Lord's recovery can testify that the ministry of Brother Lee has dispensed and continues to dispense the Spirit as the “ink” into their hearts, producing an indelible inscription of Christ

⁴ *CWWL, 1977*, vol. 2, p. 324

⁵ *Life-study of 2 Corinthians*, pp. 53, 170-171

⁶ *CWWL, 1990*, vol. 2, p. 395

⁷ *CWWL, 1981*, vol. 2, p. 108

⁸ *CWWL, 1990*, vol. 2, p. 395

within and a radiant expression of Christ without. The thousands of saints who have been saved and perfected under Brother Lee's ministry are not only letters of Christ but also living letters of commendation for Brother Lee and his ministry. In particular, graduates of the full-time training, who dedicated two years of their life to being constituted with the ministry in the Lord's recovery, now number in the thousands, while hundreds more sign up to attend year by year throughout the earth. Many of these saints have been inscribed with the Spirit to such a degree that not only do they themselves testify of the benefits they have received from this ministry, but their family, friends, and colleagues can read Christ in their renewed manner of life. In their post-training journey the graduates pass through deep valleys of weeping as well as high peaks of unspeakable joy (Psa. 84:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:8), and some may even experience a winter of spiritual dormancy before entering into a spring of spiritual revival (S. S. 2:10-13; Acts 3:20; cf. Hosea 6:1-2; Hab. 3:2). Yet despite their varied circumstances and changing spiritual seasons, the great majority of the graduates of the training continue to receive and participate in the ministry in the Lord's recovery. They have especially been trained to exercise their spirit in their daily life for the release of the spirit in the church meetings to contribute to the ministry of the Spirit in the local churches for the expression of Christ. Under this ministry, they have become both letters and letter-writers of Christ.

In stark and sobering contrast, like the Judaizers in the apostle Paul's day, those who recklessly spread false accusations and distorted rumors against the faithful co-workers in the Lord's recovery have cast the ministry of the Spirit aside. What they minister is not the life-giving Spirit to produce shining letters of Christ but evil suspicions and unhealthy gossip that produce spiritual death (1 Tim. 6:4, 20; 5:13; 2 Tim. 2:16, 23). Who can testify that upon reading their defamatory publications, the readers were supplied with the Spirit to express Christ? Or who can attest that they read the person of Christ in the vitriol broadcasted to an unsuspecting audience online? It is a tragic and serious matter to cut oneself off from the ministry of the Spirit, and thus from the bountiful supply of the Spirit and the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let us all receive mercy from the Lord to remain in this ministry that the Spirit of the living God may be inscribed into our hearts day by day, constituting us with the all-inclusive Christ and making us a living letter of Christ, His organic corporate expression (Acts 2:42; 6:4; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:10).

The Ministry of Righteousness

In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul speaks not only of the ministry of the Spirit but also of "the ministry of righteousness" (v. 9). Whereas *the Spirit* refers to God living and operating within us to supply us with the riches of life, *righteousness* refers to the image of God expressed to become our appearance outwardly (cf. Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; Rom. 8:4, 29). The Spirit is the realization of the resurrected Christ, who is the righteous One (Acts 3:14). Hence, when the believers are saturated with the Spirit by receiving the ministry of the Spirit, Christ is wrought into them and expressed through them as subjective righteousness in their living (Matt. 5:20). The righteous requirements of the law are spontaneously and unconsciously fulfilled in them (Rom. 8:4), and they become right with God and others, even becoming the very righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

Such was Brother Lee's goal and the testimony of his conscience concerning his ministry, as he explicitly stated, "This new covenant ministry is the ministry in the Lord's recovery. In the recovery we only minister Christ as the life-giving Spirit and as our living righteousness."⁹ Many saints in the Lord's recovery can affirm that by receiving this ministry, they became right with God in many aspects of their

⁹ *Life-study of 2 Corinthians*, pp. 263-264

daily life, experiencing deliverance from sinful habits and addictions. For example, in the 1960s a number of hippies who came to hear Brother Lee minister the word were dynamically saved and turned from their former manner of life to begin living out the proper humanity of Jesus (Eph. 4:22-24). This drastic change was not effected by outward regulations but by the ministry, which led them to call upon the name of the Lord and pray-read the Word of God (Rom. 10:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18; cf. Jude 20-21). Through these life practices they were supplied with the Spirit to spontaneously live out Christ, the righteous One (1 Cor. 12:3, 13). Similarly, by enjoying the ministry in the recovery, many became right not only with God but with others, including a number of couples who were brought back from the brink of separation or even divorce into pleasant oneness and harmony in the Lord.

The glorious issue of the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness is the adornment of the bride, the wife of the Lamb, for her participation in the marriage dinner of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-8). The overcoming believers as the bride of Christ will be clothed in fine linen, which is "the righteousnesses of the saints" (v. 8). As the believers partake of the Spirit of life, Christ as their subjective righteousness is constituted into them and lived out of them to become their garment of righteousness (Rom. 8:2, 4). In order to prepare our wedding garment and thereby make ourselves ready for the marriage dinner of the Lamb, we need to remain under the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness (Phil. 1:19-21). May we receive mercy from the Lord to never depart from the ministry in the Lord's recovery that we may be overcomers filled with the Spirit and clothed with the wedding garment of righteousness at the marriage dinner of the Lamb.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

In 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 the apostles as ambassadors of Christ beseeched the believers, “Be reconciled to God” (v. 20). They regarded their ministry as a work of reconciliation involving two steps that correspond to the two aspects of God’s full salvation: bringing sinners back to God through His judicial redemption, and bringing believers into God to make them fully one with Him through His organic salvation. The first step is mentioned in verse 19: “God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them.” This refers to sinners being reconciled to God through the objective aspect of Christ’s death on the cross, where He died that we might be forgiven of our sins and justified by God (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). The second step of reconciliation is mentioned in the following verse, in which Paul beseeches the believers in Corinth (not unbelievers in the world) to “be reconciled to God” (v. 20). Here, reconciliation refers to believers living in the natural life being brought to God out from the flesh through the subjective aspect of Christ’s death. Christ died not only for our sins but for us, the sinners, that is, for the termination of our fallen nature; He was made sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21). To be fully reconciled to God is to be saved in His life to the uttermost (Rom. 5:10; Heb. 7:25), until there is no trace of enmity, separation, or discrepancy between God and us but complete peace, oneness, and harmony (Rom. 5:1; 8:6; 1 John 3:2).

These two steps of reconciliation are signified by the two veils of the tabernacle in the Old Testament. The first step is portrayed by the screen, the outer veil at the entrance of the tabernacle. Through the reconciliation of the propitiating blood a sinner could pass through this screen and enter into the Holy Place of the tabernacle, which signifies the dwelling place of God (Exo. 26:36-37). The pillars attached to this screen signify evangelists who provide an entrance for sinners to come into God’s dwelling place (Acts 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10). The second step of reconciliation is portrayed by the second veil, the veil within the tabernacle separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (vv. 31-32). This inner veil signifies the flesh of Christ that was rent through His death on the cross to open a new and living way for man to contact God in Christ as the propitiation place in the Holy of Holies, which typifies the regenerated human spirit (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:19-20; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 4:12, 16; cf. Exo. 25:22). The pillars attached to this veil signify the overcoming believers who live in union with the crucified Christ, those who no longer live in their flesh (that is, in their soul, their natural life) but bear the testimony of having been crucified with Christ (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; cf. 2:9; Rev. 3:12). Such believers, having passed through the second veil to dwell with God in their regenerated human spirit, seek to bring their fellow believers from the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies to enjoy God Himself in His fullness (Rev. 1:10; 4:2; John 14:19; 2 Cor. 13:4; 1 Thes. 5:10).

Paul and his fellow apostles were such pillars, fully reconciled to God in their inward being through a thorough experience of Christ’s death and ushering God’s people into their spirit as the true Holy of Holies that they might abide in God and live with Him (1 John 2:27-28; 4:13). Because they themselves were abiding in the Holy of Holies, they could call others to come forward to join them there (Heb 10:22; cf. 4:16). It is crucial to see that God entrusts the ministry of reconciliation to those who themselves have been fully reconciled to God through Christ. Apart from the pillars there is no entrance—signifying that only by the ministry of such ones who co-work with God can we be fully reconciled to Him (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1; Mark 16:20). If we do not receive their ministry, we will unavoidably be severed from this work of bringing the believers fully back to God and presenting every man full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28-29).

In carrying out the ministry of reconciliation, Paul exhorts the believers to no longer live to themselves but to live to the crucified and resurrected Lord (2 Cor. 5:15, 18, 20). This means that they would no longer live in their flesh (as fleshly men) or in their soul (as soulish men) but in their spirit, the practical Holy of Holies (as spiritual men) (1 Cor. 2:14-15; 3:1-3). Regrettably, many teachers in traditional Christianity are not able to carry out this ministry, because they consider man a dichotomous being of only body and soul, neglecting the biblical revelation that man is a tripartite being composed of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). The soul was created as an organ to express God but became corrupted through Adam's fall to become the self, an entity independent of God with its own expression (Luke 1:46; 9:23); the categorical demand of the Lord Jesus is to deny this mutated part of our being (Matt. 16:24). The spirit, which was created to contact, receive, and contain God, is born of the Spirit at the time of a believer's regeneration to become the place of fellowship and service to God (John 3:6; 4:24; Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 12:11); the unequivocal teaching of the New Testament is to walk by this regenerated spirit (8:4). Those who maintain that man is bipartite are equally unaware of the peril of living according to the fallen soul and of the importance of living according to the regenerated spirit (1 Cor. 2:14-15). As a result, they cultivate the human soul as a means to serve God and thereby unwittingly encourage the development of fallen humanity. Under their erroneous teaching, countless believers remain in a soulish state (cf. Jude 19). Like the Israelites who spent forty years roaming the wilderness, these misguided believers tarry aimlessly in their soul and fall short of the promised land of their regenerated spirit (Heb. 4:8-12), where their divine inheritance, Christ as the life-giving Spirit, lies tragically untapped (Gal. 3:14; 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:16).

The ministry in the Lord's recovery not only affirms the scriptural view that man is composed of body, soul, and spirit but also repeatedly stresses the pivotal importance of the mingled spirit—the human spirit mingled¹⁰ with Christ as the life-giving Spirit—as the focal point of the believers' experience of the Triune God and the vital means by which God carries out His eternal purpose. It is in their mingled spirit that the believers are born of God to become His children (John 3:6; Rom 8:16), and it is in their mingled spirit that the believers realize their organic union with God in Christ (1 Cor. 6:17), receive revelation from God to know Him and His economy concerning Christ and the church (Eph. 1:17; 3:3-5), worship the Father as true worshippers (John 4:23-24), serve God in newness and in the gospel of His Son (Rom. 1:9; 7:6), spontaneously fulfill the righteous requirement of the law (8:4), partake of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23), are renewed in their mind (Eph. 4:23; cf. Rom. 6:4; 7:6), and are built into God's corporate dwelling place (Eph. 2:22). Further, the ministry in the Lord's recovery has tirelessly exhorted the saints to walk according to their spirit, regarding this practice as the apostle Paul's "unique commandment" (Rom. 8:4; cf. Gal. 5:16, 25).¹¹ By encouraging the believers to live in their mingled spirit, this ministry has shepherded many to become spiritual men, those who live in their spirit as the Holy of Holies, enjoying direct fellowship with God face to face (1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 2:13; 6:7; 3:18; 4:6).

The overwhelming majority of believers today have been reconciled to God only partly, having passed through the first veil but still living mostly in their flesh, their natural life (1 Cor. 3:1, 3). This is largely because most of them are under superficial teachings that emphasize the objective aspect of Christ's

¹⁰ The human spirit can be said to be mingled with the divine Spirit (cf. Lev. 2:4) because the former is joined to and indwelt by the latter without confusion or without producing a third substance (1 Cor. 6:17) while the distinction between the two spirits is preserved in their combination (Rom. 8:15).

¹¹ *The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity*, p. 236

death as the price of their redemption; they are not taught concerning the subjective aspect of Christ's death as the means of deliverance from the flesh. In contrast, the ministry in the Lord's recovery unveils the death of Christ as the means by which God in Christ not only judicially redeems fallen human beings but also terminates the flesh of the believers for their full reconciliation to God. Further, the ministry in the Lord's recovery provides a way to experience this vision. We see under the Spirit's enlightenment that our old man was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6), we realize that the efficacy of Christ's terminating death is an element of the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit (Phil. 1:19; Gal. 5:16, 24-25), and we put to death by the Spirit the practices of the body, thereby allowing the Spirit to execute the death of Christ upon our flesh (Rom. 8:13). By receiving the word of the cross presented by the Lord's ministry in His recovery, numerous saints have learned to apply the death of Christ to their flesh by the Spirit, thereby experiencing the rending of their flesh that they might be fully reconciled to God, entering into a deep harmony and oneness with God in the Holiest of all.

In brief, the ministry in the Lord's recovery has shepherded many saints to deny their soul and live in their spirit by remaining faithful to the word of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18). The word of God as a sharp two-edged sword divides soul from spirit (Heb. 4:12), exposing what is soulish and condemning the natural life. By releasing the word of the cross, this ministry has saved many from wasting years wandering in their soul and opened the way for them to enter into the highest enjoyment of Christ in their mingled spirit (Deut. 12:9; Col. 1:12). It is a great validation of Brother Lee's ministry that under his perfecting many of his co-workers experienced the breaking of their flesh for the second step of reconciliation and have gone on to serve the saints with the ministry of reconciliation, ushering them into the Holy of Holies for their uttermost enjoyment of the Triune God.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BETROTHING MINISTRY

Under the ministry of the new covenant the believers are not only fully reconciled to God but betrothed to Christ, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, “For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 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.” Paul was not a dispassionate trainer seeking to one day present the saints as learned theologians to Christ. He had allowed the very jealousy of God to become his own, and so he regarded the believers in Corinth as virgins and his ministry as espousing them to Christ their Husband. Paul feared that just as Eve was diverted by the serpent from the tree of life to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:1-6), so also the Corinthian believers would be deceived by the Judaizers, the ministers of Satan (2 Cor. 11:13-15), to become distracted from the pure enjoyment of Christ as their life, life supply, and everything. It is a precious function of the ministry of the new covenant that it betroths the believers to Christ, causing them to love Him in simplicity and purity and enjoy Him as their life and everything in order to become His chaste bride.

The church in Ephesus serves as a tragic example of falling away from the betrothing New Testament ministry. In Ephesus certain dissenters had departed from the simplicity and purity of Paul’s ministry (cf. Acts. 20:29-30). When Paul directed Timothy to charge these ones not to teach anything but God’s economy, he indicated that his goal was to keep the saints in love (1 Tim. 1:3-5), implying that the differing teachings were not only causing discord among the saints but also leading to their estrangement from Christ, their Husband. In order for the saints to preserve their bridal love for the Lord and brotherly love for one another, it was imperative that they continue steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles, including Paul’s ministry, which was centered on the unique teaching of the divine economy (Acts 2:42; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:8-9). Sadly, the church in Ephesus did not heed the warning and eventually forsook the apostle Paul’s betrothing ministry (2 Tim. 1:15; cf. 3:2, 4). As a result, she left her first love, her bridal love for Christ, and consequently lost the enjoyment of Him as the tree of life (Rev. 2:4, 7). Furthermore, by departing from Christ her husband, Ephesus sowed the seeds of degradation that would eventually blossom into apostasy. How serious this is! Only by remaining in the betrothing new covenant ministry can we maintain our first love for Christ as our unique Husband and partake of Him as our life and life supply.

We need to see in this negative example a crucial criterion for genuine ministry: does it cause us to love the Lord and love all the saints (1 Tim. 1:4-5)? A great many saints in the Lord’s recovery can attest that the ministry in the recovery has betrothed them to Christ, revealing the loveliness and preciousness of Christ as their husband and encouraging them to love Him with a single and pure heart. Following the pattern of the Lord in Luke 24:27, this ministry opens the Word of God to us by explaining to us clearly in all the Scriptures countless aspects of our dear Lord Jesus, which include the unsearchable riches of the all-inclusive Christ and the immeasurable dimensions of the all-extensive Christ (Psa. 119:130; John 5:39; Eph. 3:8, 18-19; Col. 1:15-20; 2:16-17). As a result, our hearts, like the disciples’, burn with love for Him and with the zeal of God’s house, the church (Luke 24:32; John 2:17).

Moreover, the ministry in the recovery reveals that the intrinsic content and central thought of the Bible is a romance, in the most pure and holy sense, of a universal couple—the Triune God in Christ as the Bridegroom and His chosen and redeemed people as the corporate bride—and that this mysterious

couple is the secret of the universe and the fulfillment of the desire of God's heart (Gen. 2:21-24; S.S. 1:2-4; Isa. 54:5; 62:5-7; Jer. 2:2; 3:1, 14; 31:3, 32; Ezek. 16:8; 23:5; Hosea 2:7, 19-20; Matt. 9:15; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9-10; 22:17). The ministry also opens up the practical way to enter into the experience of this romance, leading us to cultivate a personal, affectionate, private, and spiritual relationship with Christ by having much intimate and secret fellowship with Him—even telling Him a thousand times a day, “Lord Jesus, I love You” (John 21:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; John 14:21, 23).¹² Furthermore, the ministry exhorts us to be built together as His corporate bride and to be one with the church-loving Christ to forsake ourselves on her behalf, so that Christ may gain His ultimate rest and satisfaction in His perfected bride, the New Jerusalem (Eph. 4:16; 5:23-27; 1 John 3:16; Rev. 21:2, 9-10).

Brother Lee began his first Life-study training with the classic statement that “the Bible is a romance,” and he concluded his more-than-twenty-year study with Song of Songs, in which he unveiled the progressive experience of a lover of Christ. Surely he had a portion in the betrothing ministry of the new covenant! Indeed, where else have we ever heard of a universal romance between a mysterious divine-human couple? To whom can we go to hear of Christ descending from His majesty to court us, a mere country girl, and by His salvation make us His counterpart, His queen (S.S. 1:1-8; 6:13)? What other ministry unlocks the experience of the high peak of the divine revelation—that God became man to make man God in life and nature (but not in the Godhead)—through the history of love in an excellent marriage as portrayed in the Song of Songs? It behooves any lover of Christ to dive into this ministry that from beginning to end so faithfully and purely espouses us to Him.

Regrettably, in organized Christianity many preachers and leaders have used their gifts and charisma to draw groups of Christians after themselves to create a following, their own “increase.” The ministers of the new covenant in His recovery never did this. Instead, they presented to us Christ as our Husband, the most pleasant person in the universe, and unveiled to us through the Word His supreme preciousness, unrivaled loveliness, and surpassing worth, stirring up our love for Him that we may be His increase, His bride (Phil. 3:8; John 3:29-30). Although we at times may become distracted by idols, vain substitutes for Christ, in the world or in our heart (Ezek. 14:3; 1 John 5:21), whenever we encounter the ministry—whether by reading a few pages of a publication, listening to a message, or singing a hymn—we are motivated to love the Lord again, being captivated afresh by His unsurpassed beauty and brought back to the enjoyment of Him as our Husband and our life supply. As a case in point, for many years I have been immensely supplied by Brother Lee's poignant description of His profound love for the Lord Jesus:

Since I was a little boy, I learned to sing that little hymn, “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know, For the Bible Tells Me So.” At that time I was taught to love Him because He died for me. That is good, but we must not merely love Him because He died for us. That is not sufficient. Oh, we love Him because He is so lovable! If He would throw me into hell, I would still love Him, because He is altogether lovely. I care more for what He is! I just love this person.¹³

¹² *CWWL, 1972*, vol. 1, “Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs,” p. 235

¹³ *CWWL, 1973-1974*, vol. 2, p. 11. In saying “If He would throw me into hell, I would still love Him,” Brother Lee was speaking hypothetically to make a point. This statement recalls the declaration of Daniel's three friends when king Nebuchadnezzar threatened to throw them into the blazing furnace of fire (Dan. 3:1-16): “If it be so, God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the blazing furnace of fire, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image that you have set up.” (vv. 17-18). Being abundantly clear regarding the assurance and security of the believers' eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9; Eph. 5:8; John 10:28-29), Brother Lee certainly was not suggesting that the Lord would

The love that Brother Nee and Brother Lee had for the Lord Jesus could not be quenched by many waters of trials or drowned by many floods of persecution, because to them the Lord was the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely (S.S. 8:7; 5:10, 16). Because their ministry has opened our eyes to the Lord's inestimable loveliness, despite our passing through fiery ordeals, we cannot but love Him, treasure Him, and remain loyal to Him (1 Pet. 2:4, 7; cf. Dan. 3:13-18; 1 Pet. 1:6-8). Now we, too, have seen that He is fairer than the sons of men and is altogether desirable (Psa. 45:2).

Because Brother Nee and Brother Lee were ardent lovers of Jesus, those who gave Him the preeminence in all things and sacrificed everything for His interest (Rev. 2:4; Col. 1:18), their ministry is able to produce many such lovers of Jesus. Both Brother Nee and Brother Lee were like Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His word; they received the revelation concerning the Lord's incomparable preciousness and, in expressing their love for this precious One, broke their alabaster flask to pour ointment of great value on Him, "wasting" upon Him all that they had and were for the satisfaction of His heart (Luke 10:39, 42; Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9). As a result, the fragrance of Christ fills the church as the house of the living God (2 Cor. 2:14-15; John 12:3; 1 Timothy 3:15). Each time we read their publications or sing their hymns, we not only see the revelation concerning the precious Lord but also breathe in this sweet aroma. It is this rare and exquisite fragrance of Christ that creates in us a deep and lasting spiritual hunger to know and love the Lord and motivates us to demonstrate our love for Him by breaking our own alabaster flask, consecrating ourselves to Him unreservedly for His satisfaction.

In the past century innumerable saints in the local churches have seen the Lord's utmost worthiness through the help of this ministry and have followed the footsteps of our brothers to willingly and joyfully pour out on the Lord their material possessions, advanced degrees, promising careers, respectable positions, and even costly spiritual treasures (S. S. 1:8). They did so under no compulsion other than the constraining love of Christ in response to His incomparable loveliness as revealed in the Bible and opened up through this ministry (2 Cor. 5:14). Upon coming into contact with the ministry in the Lord's recovery, many former clergymen in organized Christianity, out of their love for the Lord, laid aside their titles and salaries as pastors, took up common jobs in the secular world, and served the Lord and the saints simply as brothers in the churches. Under the ministry that encouraged them to love the Lord as their Husband to the uttermost, thousands of brothers and sisters have set aside their bright futures or well-paying jobs in order to serve the Lord full-time, while countless others, though holding a secular job, have lived to the Lord by spending on Him their being, their time, and their energy (2 Cor. 5:14-15; 12:14-15). Many saints have answered His call to set aside their careers or migrate to the ends of the earth, following the Lamb wherever He may go in order to please Him and meet His need (Rev. 14:4; 2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10; Rom. 12:1-2). Dear saints, let us close our ear to anyone who would distract us from the purity and simplicity of the betrothing ministry. May we continue to receive the ministry in the Lord's recovery that presents to us the lovely Christ, reveals His incalculable value, and kindles our fervent love for Him so that we may be produced to be Marys, who waste ourselves on the Lord.

allow one of His believers to perish. He was merely testifying that the Lord is lovable not only for what He has done and will do for us, but even more for who and what He is; even if the Lord would not do anything for us, nevertheless, He would still be altogether lovely.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MINISTRY PRODUCED THROUGH REVELATION AND SUFFERING, PART ONE: REVELATION

Ministry Produced through Revelation Plus Suffering

Second Corinthians reveals another—and very personal—characteristic of the new covenant ministry: it is the product of revelation plus sufferings. Though revelation may come suddenly (Acts 9:3-6), ministry does not immediately follow. This is because ministry requires the believers to grow in the divine life and is formed not only by receiving “revelations of the Lord” but also experiencing “the sufferings of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:1; 12:1; 1:5; 1 Cor. 3:1-2, 5-7). Hence, ministry differs from gift or teaching. Balaam’s donkey suddenly spoke with human language; this was certainly a miraculous gift but certainly did not qualify as ministry (Num. 22:28-30). God does entrust the revelation of His mystery, “the stewardship of God,” not to believers who merely possess some gift but to those who have a ministry (1 Cor. 9:17; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:11-12). These ministers are “chosen vessel[s]” to the Lord (Acts 9:15) to whom He shows not only glorious visions of Christ (vv. 3-6, 17; 26:16) but also “how many things [they] must suffer on behalf of [His] name” (9:16). The suffering that follows the revelations produces endurance and approvedness in the apostles (Rom. 5:3-4; 1 Thes. 2:4) and brings about a weighty and glorious expression of the God of resurrection in their very being and their daily living (2 Cor. 1:9 4:11,17)—a manifestation of the divine, heavenly, powerful treasure in human, earthly, weak vessels (vv. 1, 7). The issue of their suffering is life ministered to and operating in the saints (v. 12) and grace and thanksgiving abounding in the church unto the glory of God (v. 15). How much greater is ministry than gift or teaching!

The genuine ministry, which is produced through revelation plus suffering, is seen clearly in the pattern of the apostle Paul. From his conversion Paul, a Pharisee trained at the feet of Gamaliel and exceedingly knowledgeable in the letter of the Old Testament, received the revelation concerning Christ as the centrality and universality of God’s economy (Col. 1: 17, 25-28; 3:10-11; Eph. 3:8-11). This revelation became the content of Paul’s ministry (vv. 2-5). In fact, Paul identified his *gospel*, which he received through a revelation by Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12), as the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to *the revelation* of the mystery (Rom. 16:25). This mystery is principally of two aspects: Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ (Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4-6; Matt. 16:16-18). But authentic ministry is not merely the passing on of a teaching, knowledge, or even a revelation but an expression of what we are in Christ; it is a manifestation of the Son of God as the gospel who has been not only revealed in us but also formed in us (Gal. 1:16; 4:19). Without revelation Paul would have had nothing to minister; however, in order for what was revealed to him to be wrought into him to become his ministry, Paul needed to pass through many sufferings. Just as a painted pattern is made one with a porcelain vase through intense heat, so also the revelation given to Paul was “burned” into him through severe suffering for the purpose of bringing forth genuine ministry. Therefore, Paul needed the revelation he received to be burned and constituted into him by suffering. Ministry is costly. How much a believer is able to minister the riches of Christ to others—not merely teach them about Christ—depends not only on the amount of revelation he has received but also the extent to which he has suffered for what has been revealed to him. While suffering of itself is not a sign of ministry, proclaiming the revelation of God’s New Testament economy coupled with suffering is. Conversely, the absence of suffering indicates a lack of genuine, faithful ministry.

Whereas much preaching in traditional Christianity is primarily a matter of gift, which is shallow and often comes with little price, the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee is most costly and precious because it was formed through profound revelation¹⁴ accompanied by immense suffering. This chapter will cover the scriptural revelations received by Brother Nee and Brother Lee, and the following chapter will cover the sufferings in the apostle Paul's ministry and in the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee. These two chapters should be read and considered together, for neither revelation alone nor suffering alone is sufficient to produce ministry. Both are indispensable for bringing forth genuine ministry.

The Revelations Received by Brother Nee and Brother Lee

Brother Nee and Brother Lee received great and profound revelations concerning the Triune God and His eternal economy, and these precious truths formed the content of their ministry to the saints. To be clear, the revelations received by these two brothers were always based uniquely on the Word. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the ministry in the Lord's recovery is that the teachings and practices presented by this ministry take the Holy Word as their sole basis. From the beginning of the Lord's recovery among us, Brother Nee declared that we do not have any creed; we have only the Bible as our creed.¹⁵ Similarly, Brother Lee proclaimed that although we may seek help from spiritual books, we must not treat any of them as our highest authority, for the Bible is "our highest authority, our constitution," and "our criterion."¹⁶ Brother Nee and Brother Lee did not accept any standard or authority other than the Bible. If a certain teaching or practice was not according to the Bible, no matter how long or dearly cherished, the brothers rejected it. Conversely, they faithfully taught any truth clearly revealed in the Bible, no matter how severe the opposition to its proclamation might be. In 1925 Brother Nee stated,

¹⁴ The Greek word translated *revelation* in the New Testament (ἀποκάλυψις) literally means "the opening, the lifting, of a veil"; its intrinsic meaning pertains to the spiritual significance of the Scriptures concerning the Triune God, His full salvation, and His eternal economy (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rom. 5:10; Eph. 1:10; 3:9). To receive revelation does not mean to see something further than what is recorded in the Bible. We believe that the Bible contains the completed divine revelation (cf. Col. 1:25), beyond which there is no further revelation of God. The last chapter of Revelation severely warns against adding anything to or taking anything away from the Word of God (22:18-19), making it nothing less than blasphemy for anyone to proclaim a so-called revelation outside that which has been written in the Bible. Genuine revelations concern the intrinsic significance of the Scriptures concerning the all-inclusive Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God, who is realized as the Spirit (Luke 24:27, 32, 44-45; Acts 28:23; Gal. 1:15-16; Col. 2:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; cf. Neh. 8:13), and concerning the church as the Body of Christ, the organism of the Triune God (Eph. 1:22-23; 3:16-19; 4:4-6; Col. 1:18, 24; 2:19; 1 Cor. 12:12-13). Such revelations are received from the Lord through the enlightenment of the divine Spirit in the believers' regenerated human spirit, "a spirit of wisdom and revelation," as they prayerfully read and carefully study the Bible in fellowship with God, turning their heart to the Lord and exercising their spirit to contact the Lord Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-16; Eph. 1:17; 3:4-5; 6:17-18; Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; 2 Cor. 3:14-18; 13:14; 2 Tim. 2:23).

¹⁵ *Elders' Training*, vol. 8, pp. 7-8

¹⁶ *CWWL, 1965*, vol. 4, p. 193; *CWWL, 1966*, vol. 3, p. 53; *CWWL, 1986*, vol. 3, p. 63; *CWWL, 1994-1997*, vol. 2, p. 252

The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree even if everyone approved of it.¹⁷

In keeping with this thought, Brother Lee testified, “Using the Bible as our only standard, we accepted whatever was according to the Bible and rejected whatever was not according to the Bible”¹⁸; “in our fellowship with others, our attitude is that if we are wrong in any of our teachings or practices according to the Bible, we are willing to be adjusted.”¹⁹

Brother Nee and Brother Lee unwaveringly confessed the essential items of the Christian faith delivered once for all to the saints (Jude 3), which include: the Bible as the infallible and divinely inspired Word of God (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16); the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:14-16); the incarnation of Christ as God becoming man (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:5; 3:16), His substitutionary, redemptive death on the cross (Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2:21, 24; 3:18), His bodily and spiritual resurrection (1 Cor. 15:44-46; Luke 24:39), His ascension to the heavens to be enthroned as the Lord of all (Acts 1:9-11; 2:36; 10:36), His dwelling in the believers as their life (Col. 1:27; 3:4; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20), and His second coming (Rev. 19:7; Rev. 22:20); and the believers’ dwelling with God in eternity (Rev. 21:2-3; 22:3-5). On the other hand, they also categorically rejected all heretical doctrines and repudiated the groups that hold such doctrines, including the Mormons, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and various modernists. Many theologians who have studied the ministry publications have publicly testified that what Brother Nee and Brother Lee ministered is fully according to the common faith. Moreover, the seeking saints in the churches—who, like the noble Bereans in Acts 17, have carefully compared the teachings of Brother Nee and Brother Lee to the Scriptures to see whether these things are so—can attest that their ministry matches the Word in content, substance, and flavor (v. 11).

An outstanding feature of both Brother Nee and Brother Lee was an avid love for the Bible. They read the Bible diligently and voraciously, and by so doing gained a comprehensive knowledge of the Word of God (2 Cor. 6:4, 6). As a young man, Brother Nee loved the Bible so much that he read through the New Testament once a week for an entire year, carrying his Bible with him and reading it wherever he went. Within the first four years of his Christian life, Brother Nee had read through the entire Bible at least fifty times, and by the age of forty six he had read through the New Testament more than two hundred times.²⁰

Through their reading of the Holy Word, both Brother Nee and Brother Lee not only apprehended its factual contents with a sober mind but also received revelation of its spiritual significances by means of a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17). Conscious of the inability of the natural mind to understand the Bible, they exercised their regenerated spirit to contact the Lord through a prayerful reading of the Word, thereby receiving revelations from the Lord through His Spirit in their spirit (Matt. 11:27; 16:17; Gal. 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:10-15). Endeavoring to transcend fanciful imaginations, doctrinal concepts, religious traditions, secular philosophies, and cultural bias (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:16-17), they received mercy from the Lord to be unashamed workmen who cut straight the word of the truth, interpreting the word of God in its various parts rightly without distortion under the divine guidance (2 Tim. 2:15). Brother Nee and Brother Lee abided by the principle of interpreting the Bible with the Bible: “The basic principle of

¹⁷ CWWN, vol. 7, p. 1231

¹⁸ CWWL, 1977, vol. 1, p. 157

¹⁹ CWWL, 1977, vol. 1, p. 166

²⁰ Samuel Chang’s testimony given in a meeting; CWWN, vol. 57, p. 220

interpreting the Bible is that in order to interpret any verse we need to consider not only the context of that verse but also the context of the entire book and a bird's eye view of the entire Bible concerning God's purpose."²¹ Under the enlightenment of the Spirit, the brothers surely received many priceless revelations concerning the Triune God, His complete salvation, and His eternal economy contained in the Holy Word. It is worth considering the expansive breadth and profound significance of the truths concerning Christian faith and practice that the Lord revealed to Brother Nee and Brother Lee, which include but are not limited to the following items:

1. the assurance of the believers' salvation (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:16; 10:9-13; 1 John 3:14; 5:13)
2. the difference between eternal salvation by grace through faith and the kingdom reward as the result of working according to the Lord's will (Eph. 2:8; Gal. 2:16; Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:14; Rev. 11:18; 22:12)
3. the evil of denominationalism in dividing the believers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Gal. 5:19-20)
4. the clergy system as a human hierarchical organization annulling the function of the members of the Body of Christ (cf. Rev. 2:6, 15; Matt. 20:25-26; 23:8-11; Eph. 4:16)
5. the universal priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; cf. Exo. 19:6)
6. the truth concerning the death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Luke 24:51; Eph. 4:8-10; 1 Thes. 1:10)
7. the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for life and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for power (John 7:38-39; 14:17; 20:22; Rom. 8:9, 11; Acts 2:1-4, 17-18, 33; 10:45)
8. the tripartite nature of man (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12)
9. Christ as life (John 11:25; 14:6; 1 John 5:12; Col. 3:4)
10. the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2)
11. the overcoming life of Christ (John 16:33; Rev. 5:5; 12:11; Rom. 5:17; 8:37; 1 John 5:4, 18; cf. Phil. 4:13)
12. the calling of the overcomers (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21)
13. the boundary and ground of a local church (Acts 8:1; 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11)
14. the centrality and universality of Christ (Col. 1:15-20; 3:10-11)
15. the practicality of the church life related to proper meetings and the service of the elders and the deacons (Acts 4:24, 31; 5:42; 12:12; 14:24; 20:7, 11, 28; 1 Cor. 10:17; 14:31-33; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)
16. the genuine oneness of the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:16; 4:3-6; John 17:11, 21-23)
17. the authority of the Holy Spirit in the Body (Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-7)
18. the Holy Spirit as the reality of the Christian's life and living (John 16:12-15; Gal. 5:16, 25)
19. the deputy authority in the church (Acts 20:28; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2)
20. the building of the church and the coordination in the church life (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:11-16)
21. spiritual warfare as a matter of the Body (6:10-18; cf. Rom. 16:20)
22. the discipline of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 12:5-11; cf. Rom. 8:28)
23. the breaking of the outer man for the release of the spirit (2 Cor. 4:7-12; cf. John 12:24-25)
24. the believers' human spirit (Eph. 1:17; 2:22; 3:5, 16; 4:23; 5:18; 6:18)
25. the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; John 14:17-20)
26. enjoying the Lord—eating, drinking, and breathing Him (John 6:57; 7:37; 20:22)
27. the all-inclusive Christ as the good land (Col. 1:12; 2:7; cf. Josh 14:1; Deut. 8:7-10)

²¹ CWWL, 1977, vol. 1, p. 163

28. the economy of God (1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9-10)
29. pray-reading the Word of God and calling on the name of the Lord (Eph. 6:17-18a; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; 2 Tim. 2:22; cf. Psa. 27:8; Jude 20-21)
30. the believers' transformation for God's building (Rom. 12:2, 4-5; 2 Cor. 3:18; cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-17)
31. being joined to the Lord as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 8:16)
32. the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit (Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Exo. 30:23-25)
33. the seven Spirits of God being the sevenfold intensified Spirit (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
34. the scriptural way of meeting and serving (Matt. 28:19; John 15:16; 21:15-16; 1 Thes. 2:7-8; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Cor. 14:1, 3-4, 26, 31)
35. the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42; Titus 1:9; cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-4)
36. the ministry of the New Testament (Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8-9; 4:1; 5:18; Eph. 4:12)
37. the eternal life of God for the believers' salvation and reigning in life (Rom. 5:10, 17, 21)
38. God's complete salvation—judicial redemption and organic salvation (v. 10, 17; Gal. 4:4-6)
39. the Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God (Eph. 1:3-23; 4:3-6, 16; Col. 2:19)
40. the deification of the believers (John 1:12; 3:6; 12:24; 15:5; Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:4)
41. the Triune God as the divine and mystical realm (John 14:10, 20; 17:21; cf. 15:4)
42. the New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's eternal economy (Rev. 21—22)

These great revelations concerning the Triune God and His eternal economy constitute the very rich "capital" with which Brother Nee and Brother Lee ministered to the saints for their enjoyment of the Triune God.

Our appreciation of the profundity of the divine revelations received by the ministers in the Lord's recovery is strengthened when we consider them in contrast to popular yet superficial (or even erroneous) teachings found in traditional Christianity. For instance, a great many preachers hold a narrow view of God's salvation, seeing it primarily as a deliverance of humankind from God's wrath and punishment. In contrast, the ministry in the Lord's recovery presents the full scriptural revelation concerning God's complete salvation. Such a salvation indisputably includes the precious and foundational matter of judicial redemption accomplished through the vicarious death of Christ, in which the believers in Christ are saved from God's condemnation (Rom. 3:24-25; 5:8-9; Gal. 3:13), yet the ministry goes on, as Paul does in the book of Romans, to stress "much more" God's organic salvation, in which the believers are brought into the enjoyment of the divine life by being regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified (John 3:16; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 5:10; 6:4, 22; 8:2, 17, 29-30; 12:2). By receiving this comprehensive and balanced view of God's full salvation, we have learned not only to appreciate Christ's eternally efficacious redemption as the unique basis for our justification before God but also to enjoy the continual operation of His divine life within us so that we attain the lofty goal of His salvation in becoming the same as He is in life, nature, element, and expression, but not in the Godhead (Col. 3:4; John 3:6; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

The subject of eternal life provides another area of contrast between biblical revelation in the Lord's recovery and the common teachings in traditional Christianity. Eternal life is erroneously understood by many popular preachers to merely mean everlasting human life untouched by death—thus relegating the believers' experience of the eternal life to the distant future. The ministry in the Lord's recovery, on the other hand, offers a fully scriptural and deeply spiritual understanding of eternal life that not only transcends all physical conceptions of the blessings in eternity future but also unlocks the believers' *present* enjoyment of God's gift of life in His Son (Rom. 6:23; John 1:4). Eternal life is nothing less than the divine, uncreated, indestructible, and incorruptible life of God (John 3:16; Eph. 4:18; Heb. 7:16); it is

God Himself embodied in the Son, realized as the life-giving Spirit, and imparted into the believers' tripartite being to become their life, saving them and enabling them to reign over all things (Col. 2:9; 1 Cor. 15:45; Col. 3:4; Rom. 5:10, 17; 8:6, 10-11). Under the shining of such a rich and experiential understanding of eternal life released by the ministry in the Lord's recovery, many saints have been saved from a purposeless Christian life spent in passive expectation of a blissful afterlife to come. Instead, they have been perfected to partake of the Triune God as eternal life in the present age and to receive the dispensing of this life into their spirit, soul, and body that they may "have life" and "have it abundantly" and thus be saved in life and reign in life over Satan, sin, and death (John 10:10; 5:40; Rom. 8:2; 16:20).

Such superficial views of salvation and eternal life described above are matched by the erroneous yet pervasive concept of "going to heaven," according to which many preachers mistakenly portray the New Jerusalem as a literal, physical city replete with earthly pleasures designed to satisfy the believers' soulish longings. In contrast, the ministry in the recovery unveils the intrinsic significance of the holy city as a symbolic vision of the fulfillment of the desire of God's heart and the ultimate issue of God's work with and within humanity: a consummate union, mingling, and incorporation of God and man; an eternal mutual abode of the redeeming God and His redeemed people; a universal couple—the Spirit and the bride—composed of Christ the Lamb and the believers as His wife; and an eternal, corporate enlargement, expansion, and expression of the processed and consummated Triune God in His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite people (Rev. 21:2, 9-11, 22; 22:17). It is under such a heavenly vision of the New Jerusalem that, instead of harboring false hopes of one day inheriting a heavenly mansion, we aspire to abide in the Triune God and enjoy His abiding in us in order to be increasingly mingled with Him today so that we may become the New Jerusalem as His corporate dwelling place, beloved counterpart, and organic increase and expression (1 John 4:12-16; John 3:29-30; 14:2, 23; 15:4-5; Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 5:25-27). The weight and preciousness of these scriptural revelations given in the Lord's recovery are in such contrast with common Christian teachings that we can only thank the Lord for His mercy that we could see them, while also remembering the great price paid by Brother Nee and Brother Lee to release them in the face of opposition.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MINISTRY PRODUCED THROUGH REVELATION AND SUFFERING, PART TWO: SUFFERING

The Apostle Paul's Suffering for His Revelations

The apostle Paul not only needed to receive revelations to become a genuine minister of the new covenant; he also had to pass through sufferings in order for those revelations to be wrought into him. Thus, in vindicating his apostolic authority Paul was compelled to speak not only concerning the visions and revelations the Lord had given to him (2 Cor. 12:1) but also of his suffering a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, which the Lord allowed to buffet him so that he would not be exceedingly lifted up by the transcendence of those revelations (v. 7). It was through such suffering that what Paul saw was constituted into him to become his ministry. Instead of removing the thorn, the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (v. 9a). As a result, Paul declared, "Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me. Therefore I am well pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am powerful" (vv. 9b-10). What Paul received was not merely a revelation of the sufficiency of the Lord's grace but also a deep, subjective experience of the Lord as grace through suffering, issuing in real ministry (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:20; 5:4). The stewardship of God's grace that Paul received was not a mere gift—an ability bestowed by the Spirit in a short period of time, which is objective, doctrinal, superficial, and temporal. Instead, his stewardship was a ministry—a constitution in and of the divine life formed through many years of suffering, which is subjective, experiential, deep, weighty, costly, and eternal (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). Thus, whereas in 1 Corinthians Paul dealt negatively with gifts, in 2 Corinthians he emphasized positively that what he had received was the ministry (2 Cor. 4:1). In 1 Corinthians Paul stated that although the believers in Corinth did not "lack any gift" (1:7), there was a litany of problems among these immature and fleshly believers, such as divisions, strifes, parties, fornication, lawsuits, partaking of the Lord's table in an unworthy manner, and heresy concerning resurrection (1:10-13; 5:1-13; 6:1-11; 11:17-34; 15:12-19). In 2 Corinthians the apostle did not boast of any gift but commended himself as a minister of the new covenant, a minister of God, Christ, and the life-giving Spirit (6:4; 11:23; 3:6), whose sufficiency was from God and whose ministry produced the believers as letters of Christ and sought to build them up and perfect them to think the same thing and be at peace with one another (2 Cor. 3:2-5; 10:8; 12:19; cf. Phil. 2:2; Rom. 15:5). Paul incisively diagnosed the believers' preoccupation with gifts as a factor that divides them and tears down the church as the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17), but he prescribed the enjoyment of the ministry of life to keep them in oneness and build up the church as the Body of Christ (2 Cor. 13:10-11; Eph. 4:12). For this reason, in Colossians he did not promote a particular gift or teaching but underscored in no uncertain terms: "I Paul became a minister" (Col. 1:23).

It is crucial to see the scriptural contrast between gift and ministry. A gift is a capacity given by the operation of the Spirit to enable a believer to carry out spiritual services and may be obtained in a relatively brief time. Ministry, however, is a constitution of Christ as eternal life within a believer and is produced by a lengthy period of the experiences of the unsearchable riches of the all-inclusive Christ, which experiences are gained not only through high revelations concerning the excellent person and work of Christ (Phil. 3:8) but also through unrelenting sufferings, consuming pressures, and the killing

work of the cross (v. 10). For instance, a believer who has a teaching gift may speak a message on the cross accurately and eloquently. In contrast, a believer who possesses a life-dispensing ministry *is* what he speaks, for he lives a crucified life in resurrection day after day and is thus qualified to minister to others not just the biblical teaching of the cross but also the spiritual reality of the cross that he himself has experienced. Because Paul was a bona-fide minister of the new covenant, in whom the message was one with the messenger, he testified with a pure conscience not only that he preached Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23-24) but also that he was determined not to know anything among the Corinthians except this Jesus Christ crucified (2:2) and that he “always” bore about in his body “the putting to the death of Jesus,” allowing death to operate in him continually to minister life to others ceaselessly (2 Cor. 4:11-12). Such life-imparting ministry can be formed only through revelation plus suffering.

Accordingly, in 2 Corinthians Paul not only speaks of exceedingly great revelations and visions but also describes in detail numerous trials and tribulations (1:5-11; 4:8-12; 6:4-10; 7:4-5). For instance, in 6:4-10, where Paul commends himself and his co-workers as “ministers of God,” Paul lists as part of their qualifications endurance, afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labors, fastings, and long-suffering. Paul further describes various afflictions that befall the genuine new covenant ministers: dishonor from the devil and those who follow him, evil reports that come from the opposers and persecutors, being perceived as deceivers in the sight of religious and philosophical persons, dying in suffering persecution, being seen as disciplined by God in the opposers’ superficial realization, being made sorrowful by the negative condition of the churches, being poor in material things, and having nothing in an earthly sense. In 2 Corinthians 11, where he emphasizes his status as a minister of Christ (v. 23), he enumerates a number of additional afflictions, including stripes, being beaten with rods, being stoned, being shipwrecked, hunger, thirst, poverty, all manner of perils, drawing near to death, and, in his own words, there was above all, “the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches” (vv. 24-28).

Unlike some contemporary preachers who emphasize health, affluence, and material prosperity as signs of God’s blessing on His genuine elect, Paul, a follower of the despised, persecuted, and crucified Jesus, boasted of his weakness, afflictions, and poverty (v. 30). The reason Paul had the greatest ministry among the apostles in the New Testament was not only that he received the highest revelation concerning Christ but also that what he had seen was engraved upon his being through a commensurate degree of suffering. For instance, the comfort Paul and his co-workers gave to the believers in Corinth was neither theoretical nor secondhand; it was the very comfort with which they had been comforted by the God of all comfort as they underwent multitudinous afflictions in the course of their ministry (1:3-5). God in Christ as the believers’ abounding comfort had been wrought into them, and from that constitution they could comfort others in every affliction (vv. 4-6).

At his conversion, Paul received a commission from the Lord to be a minister and a witness both of the things in which he had seen the Lord and of the things in which the Lord would appear to him (Acts 26:16). Shortly afterward, the Lord told Ananias that He would show Paul how many things he must suffer on behalf of His name (9:16). This indicates that Paul as a God-commissioned minister would endure many sufferings for the sake of the formation, enrichment, and carrying out of his portion of the new covenant ministry. The Lord’s prophecy concerning Paul’s destiny to suffer for his ministry was fulfilled most significantly in the last phase of his life during his lengthy imprisonment by the Romans. Even though Paul’s bonds caused him considerable suffering and effectively terminated his spoken ministry, they did not terminate his written ministry. On the contrary, his last eight Epistles, most of which were written in his confinement, only became richer, higher, and deeper. In these Epistles, Paul

presented the profound revelation concerning God's New Testament economy for the completion of the word of God, furnishing immeasurable supply and benefit to the church throughout the generations (Col. 1:24-39; Eph. 3:9). Ultimately, when the time of his departure was at hand, Paul declared that his sufferings as a prisoner of his Lord were for the sake of the gospel of divine grace and eternal life, which he continued to preach as a God-appointed herald, apostle, and teacher (2 Tim. 1:8-12; 4:6). How we need to thank the Lord that Paul willingly participated in Christ's sufferings for the constitution of this precious ministry that we could receive the untold riches that poured out of his being as a living sacrifice (2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; cf. 1 Pet. 4:13)!

Afflictions Suffered by Brother Nee and Brother Lee for Their Revelations

The ministry in the Lord's recovery is not only rich in the divine revelation of the Bible; it is also costly, having been obtained at a great price by those who suffered under the vision they had received. Throughout his Christian life, Brother Nee's portion was to endure profound suffering for the sake of his ministry. These sufferings are well chronicled in chapter 21 of his biography, *A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, written by Brother Lee. Brother Nee was led by the Lord not to work as an employee of any organization but rather to live purely by faith in God. Under the Lord's sovereign care like the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28-30; S.S. 2:1-2, 16), he learned to serve the Lord even through dire poverty. In the early days of his ministry in Shanghai, there were times when he had nothing but a little bread to eat for the entire day. In 1922, he was burdened to publish a magazine in order to care for the increasing number of newly saved believers, but he had no money to print the magazine. He wrote articles for the magazine by faith, believing that if he completed the draft, God would supply the means to publish it. Shortly afterward he received a donation from a saint that allowed him to print fourteen hundred copies of his first magazine entitled *The Present Testimony*.

Throughout his ministry Brother Nee also suffered various illnesses. In 1924, due to intense labor and lack of adequate physical care, he contracted tuberculosis, which he suffered from for five years. During this period of illness he spent four months to complete the three volumes of *The Spiritual Man*. Concerning this labor he testified:

At that time my disease became so aggravated that I could not even lie down. While writing I sat on a chair with a high back and pressed my chest against the desk to alleviate the pain. The writing of this book was a real labor of blood, sweat, and tears. I despaired of life, yet God's grace brought me through. After completing each time of writing, I would say to myself, "This is my last testimony to the church."²²

Following the publication of the book, Brother Nee was told by a doctor that his medical condition was hopeless and that he had only a few weeks to live. However, he was miraculously healed by standing on the words of the Bible that became God's living speaking to him: that he would live, stand, and walk by faith (Rom. 1:17; 2 Cor. 1:24; 5:7). Brother Nee was also afflicted with a heart disease called angina pectoris for the last forty years of his life until he went to be with the Lord in 1972. As early as 1934, he told Brother Witness Lee that he might die at any moment. The pain was so intense that many times while speaking in meetings, he would break out in a cold sweat or need to lean on the podium for support. Because of his ill health, he learned to greatly depend on the Lord and to minister not by his physical strength but by resurrection life.

²² *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 91

Brother Nee also suffered severe opposition from the denominations, primarily due to his teaching concerning the genuine ground of the church—having only one church in each city for the practical expression of the one Body of Christ in that locality—which annulled the standing of all the denominations (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rev. 1:11; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Brother Nee boldly exposed and renounced the denominations' deviation from the truth in the Scriptures concerning the proper ground of locality, condemning the denominations as divisions (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Gal. 5:20; cf. Rev. 3:8). Consequently, he was fiercely criticized and opposed by both native Chinese Christians and Western missionaries, in secret and in public. The denominations sought to destroy his ministry, despising him and spreading false rumors, just as certain opposers dishonored Paul and his co-workers and disseminated an "evil report" against them (2 Cor. 6:8). This fulfilled the Lord's prophetic word in Matthew 5:11 concerning His faithful disciples: "Blessed are you when they reproach and persecute you, and while speaking lies, say every evil thing against you because of Me." Because Brother Nee and his co-workers willingly went forth unto the lowly and suffering Jesus outside the camp of organized Christianity, they bore His reproach, bearing the cross (Heb. 13:13; Matt. 16:24; cf. Exo. 33:7-11).

But persecution came not only from the outside; Brother Nee suffered even more at the hands of those within the church. Two years after the church life began to be practiced in his hometown of Foochow, he was unjustly excommunicated by his co-workers for standing for the truth of the Lord's recovery and opposing the practice of having the leading co-workers formally ordained as preachers by a denominational missionary. Most of the believers in the church in Foochow had been saved through Brother Nee's preaching and expressed their disagreement with this unfair treatment. However, Brother Nee was led by the Lord not to vindicate himself but to learn the lesson of the cross by enduring this suffering. He then left Foochow and moved to Pagoda, where he received a burden from the Lord to publish his second magazine, *The Christian*. He wrote all the major articles for this monthly publication, which had four main burdens: to preach the gospel, to expound the Bible, to speak concerning the church, and to cultivate the believers' spiritual life. This magazine enjoyed a wide circulation, having ten thousand subscribers. By reading Brother Nee's articles, many young people throughout China, including Brother Witness Lee, were enlightened to see the truths in the Word, including the degradation of the denominations and the scriptural way to practice the genuine church life. It was through the suffering caused by his unjust excommunication that Brother Nee was able to release these precious messages full of light and revelation, which opened the eyes of many young lovers of the Lord to see Christ and the church unveiled in the Bible (Eph. 5:32).

In 1942 Brother Nee suffered again from dissension within the church life when a great turmoil broke out against him in the church in Shanghai due to a misunderstanding. Brother Nee had been helping his brother's pharmaceutical business because he felt that the profit from the factory could meet the needs of the co-workers, many of whom had died due to malnutrition or were suffering poverty with their families. Brother Nee would later state in tears that he had been compelled to go into business in order to support his co-workers, just as a widow may be forced to remarry for the survival of her children. However, misconstruing Brother Nee's intentions, most of the saints in Shanghai, including the co-workers and elders, opposed him so vehemently that he was forced to discontinue his ministry for six years. By passing through this trial Brother Nee was pressed into the mold of Christ's death for the deepening of his ministry, which became a rich heritage to all the churches in His recovery. He learned by experience that God sovereignly arranges our environment through the discipline of the Holy Spirit in order to break our outer man so that our inner man may be released, enabling us to impart the divine

life to others in both our public ministry and our personal contact with them (2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 8:16, 28-29; 1 Cor. 6:17).

The reason Brother Nee's ministry is full of supply, always imparting to us more than mere knowledge by ushering us into the experiential reality of the divine revelation, doubtlessly comes down to this one fact: it was acquired at the high price of severe personal sufferings. If we have enjoyed the sweet fragrance of frankincense, the fragrance of resurrection, pervading his writings, it is surely because he followed the Lord in His sweet death to remain on the mountain of myrrh (S.S. 4:6).

Following the footsteps of Brother Nee as his senior co-worker and spiritual father, Brother Lee also suffered much for the experience of the revelations he received. In 1943 Brother Lee was used by the Lord to usher in a great revival in the church in Chefoo. However, at the peak of the revival the city was invaded by the Japanese army, and Brother Lee was imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese military police for about thirty days. After his release he became gravely ill with tuberculosis and was bedridden for six months. As a result, he was forced to leave Chefoo and move to Tsingtao, away from the responsibilities of the church and the work, in order to rest and recuperate. During the subsequent two years of acute limitation, the Lord showed him the vision of the tree of life, revealing that the tree of life not only opens and closes the Scriptures but also forms a line that runs throughout the entire Bible (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19; cf. Psa. 36:9; Ezek. 47:12; John 6:48; 14:6; 15:1). The Lord used this vision to measure Brother Lee's ministry, showing him that although he had helped to bring in the revival in Chefoo, his ministry was "still short of the element of the divine life"²³ and that "there was much truth but too little life" in his messages.²⁴ Hence, he repented to the Lord, confessing that he was short of life and that his ministry was "deficient in the element of the divine life."²⁵ He also realized that every problem, either in the church, the work, or the ministry, is the result of a shortage of life. The vision of the tree of life was a great turning point for Brother Lee, and the messages that he spoke on the tree of life in the 1940s laid a foundation for the revival of the church in Shanghai and the resumption of Brother Nee's ministry in 1948. In accordance with the character of the new covenant ministry, it was by suffering from a life-threatening and protracted sickness that Brother Lee received the vision concerning the tree of life, which has continued to benefit countless children of God throughout the earth to this day.

Much like Brother Nee, Brother Lee experienced immense opposition from organized Christianity. Because of his faithfulness to the deeper truths in the Word of God, such as the Triune God and the genuine ground of the church, the oneness of the unique Body of Christ, many actively opposed his ministry, publishing books and articles teeming with baseless accusations and vicious rumors. Responding to the deliberate and malicious misrepresentation of his ministry, Brother Lee stated, "Our unique burden and commission is not to fight against the opposers but to present the divine truths revealed in the Bible to others"²⁶ (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 2:15). He realized that "the opposers' erroneous accusations against us concerning our belief may serve as the dark background that helps to highlight the divine truths that the Lord has shown us in the Bible."²⁷ In other words, the relentless opposition to his ministry enabled Brother Lee to continually receive and release fresh revelations from the Word of

²³ *CWWL, 1983*, vol. 1, p. 516

²⁴ *CWWL, 1983*, vol. 3, p. 332

²⁵ *CWWL, 1983*, vol. 1, p. 516

²⁶ *CWWL 1980*, vol. 2, p. 431

²⁷ *CWWL 1980*, vol. 2, p. 431

God concerning the Divine Trinity, the person of Christ, and the church as the Body of Christ and the one new man. Since Brother Lee went to be with the Lord in 1997, the co-workers who have continued his ministry have met similar opposition from Christianity as they continue to faithfully present these truths in spoken messages at conferences and trainings and written articles published in the journal *Affirmation and Critique*.

Holding to Watchman Nee's pattern, Brother Lee also suffered from dissension within the local churches. In the 1970s certain divisive persons sparked a turmoil among the churches in the United States that wounded Brother Lee deeply. In a message given in 1978 in the midst of the turmoil, he said, "This message is not the result of Bible study; it is the result of intense suffering. Because of this suffering, I have been greatly exercised before the Lord in an attempt to understand the situation."²⁸ Gradually, the Lord showed him that the underlying cause of the turmoil was a shortage of God wrought into the instigators (cf. Col. 2:19). Brother Lee realized that although the dissenters claimed to have seen the ground of the church and to care for the Lord's recovery, they actually damaged the oneness among us because they were not sufficiently filled with the Triune God, who is the unique element of the believers' oneness (Eph. 4:4-6). Brother Lee also realized that they had not allowed the Triune God to spread into their inward parts and transform them, because they were unwilling to let the cross deal with their natural life (2 Cor. 3:18; Matt. 16:24-25). It was because of this intense suffering that Brother Lee received an invaluable revelation regarding our need for the cross to deal with us thoroughly so that we might be transformed in life and receive the dispensing of God into every part of our being in order to be built together and thus safeguarded from dissension and division.

Another turmoil arose in the 1980s, when certain ambitious brothers attempted to establish their own personal kingdoms by drawing away the saints after themselves and cutting off the churches under their influence from both the ministry and the other local churches (cf. Acts 20:30). Seeing yet again brothers whom he loved and had raised up in the Lord's recovery turn away from him and ravage the churches brought Brother Lee tremendous suffering. However, through this trial he realized that all the turmoils and all the problems of the church are due to a lack of knowing the Body of Christ, and that the unique scriptural remedy for this illness is to see, know, care for, and honor the Body.²⁹ Brother Lee was also troubled by what he perceived as a deviation from "organic matters into organizational matters" and a departure from "intrinsic things to the outward things."³⁰ For instance, since the dissenting ones held an organizational—rather than organic—view of the Body of Christ, they erroneously claimed that each local church is an absolutely autonomous body of Christ that is self-governed and separated from the other churches. This unscriptural teaching cuts the local churches into disconnected pieces and thus divides the Body of Christ. Against this backdrop, Brother Lee presented a deeply organic and intrinsic view of the Body of Christ as an organism of the Triune God (Eph 4:4-6). In light of this revelation, Brother Lee emphasized that the universal church as the Body of Christ is not a lifeless human organization but an organism constituted with the life of the Triune God. Just as it is impossible for any part of our physical body to be autonomous from the rest of the body, so also it is impossible for any local church as part of the mystical Body of Christ to be fully autonomous or independent from other churches. Although each church may be independently responsible for some business affairs or other practical matters, there should be a fellowship, a circulation, of the divine life of the Body flowing among

²⁸ *Truth Messages*, p. 100

²⁹ *The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life*, pp. 28-30, 35

³⁰ *The Mysteries in God's New Testament Economy*, p. 12

all the churches (1 Cor. 10:16-17; Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3, 7). Moreover, Brother Lee pointed out that the local churches, though necessary, are not the goal of God's economy but the procedure to reach that goal, which is the unique Body of Christ (Eph. 1:10, 23; 4:12, 16).³¹ Under God's wise sovereignty, as Brother Lee passed through great affliction from the turmoil in the 1980s, his ministry on the Body of Christ was strengthened and developed. Just as the apostle John, while suffering exile on the Island of Patmos, received spiritual visions concerning the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:9; cf. 19:10), so also Brother Lee, in the midst of his sufferings, received fresh visions in the Word of God concerning the organic Body of Christ as the ultimate goal of God's economy.

Brother Lee was able to minister the reality of the riches of the Triune God because he was willing to suffer for what had been revealed to him. When he released the truths concerning the deification of the believers with the new hymn "What Miracle, What Mystery!" in February 1994, he told the brothers that "the enemy Satan would do things to frustrate me from releasing the high peaks of the divine revelation according to the entire teaching of the New Testament."³² In a letter written on March 24, 1997, Brother Lee stated:

In October 1995 I discovered a thorn in my body from a messenger of Satan that I might not be lifted up. By the Lord's rich mercy and sufficient grace, I have lived and ministered to you the deeper truths as His and your slave for over a year....As the Lord provides me the strength and time, I intend to continue to serve and speak in the coming days.³³

Brother Lee's ministry stirred up opposition from the enemy due to its strategic importance in spiritual warfare. Brother Lee stated, "Satan hates the high peak of the divine revelation concerning the ultimate goal of God's economy," particularly "this one main point—that God became a man so that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead to produce the organic Body of Christ for the fulfillment of God's economy to close this age and to bring Christ back to set up His kingdom."³⁴ Brother Lee knew that since ministering the high peak truths would provoke Satan to afflict him with a thorn in his flesh, these truths could only be released at a tremendous personal cost. Undeterred by the prospect of suffering, Brother Lee, by the Lord's abounding grace, was willing to pay the highest price to minister the high peak truths in order to build up the Body for the consummation of the divine economy.

External Opposition and Internal Dissension Authenticating the New Testament Ministry

Contrary to the adage that asserts that where there is smoke there must also be fire, opposition does not invalidate a minister of the new covenant but actually forms part of his qualification. Even a cursory survey of the ministries of the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul makes abundantly clear that the lives of new testament ministers are marked by persecution, not only from the Gentiles but all the more from religious persons and even the ministers' intimate friends. The Lord Jesus, unequivocally the most qualified minister of the new covenant, was rejected by the Jews, God's beloved elect. He "came to His own, yet those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). The Pharisees defamed the Lord

³¹ *Practical Points Concerning Blending*, p. 22

³² *CWWL, 1994-1997*, vol. 5, p. 525

³³ *CWWL, 1994-1997*, vol. 5, p. 525

³⁴ *The Crystallization of the Epistle to the Romans Messages 1-17*, p. 159

Jesus as being in league with Beelzebul, the ruler of demons (Matt. 12:24), and the Jews said that He Himself was demon-possessed and insane (John 8:48; 10:20). The Lord's words in Luke 4:23-27 provoked such hatred that the congregants in the synagogue attempted to kill Him (vv. 28-29). But eventually it was one of the twelve, one whom the Lord Jesus addressed as "friend," who betrayed Him, and that with a kiss (Matt. 26:48-50). It was not profane Romans who bought Judas' wicked service but the esteemed leaders of the Jewish religion. It was deeply religious people who arrested Jesus, judged Him, took counsel against Him to put Him to death, delivered Him to an imperial governor, falsely accused Him, and ultimately persuaded the crowds to call for His crucifixion (vv. 3-5; 47-68; 27:1-2; 18-26). And when the Lord was arrested, His close and beloved disciple Peter denied Him, while all His own abandoned Him in the very hour of trial (26:55-56, 69-75).

Knowing that all of this was to transpire, the Lord Jesus warned His disciples of the persecution that would befall those who followed Him: "It is sufficient for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebul, how much more those of His household!" (10:25). The apostles would be "hated by all," delivered up to sanhedrins, and scourged in synagogues (vv. 17, 22; 23:34). The Lord foretold that just as the religious world had hated and persecuted Him, so also it would hate and persecute the disciples, even considering this persecution a service to God (John 15:18-25; 16:2; 17:14; 1 John 3:13). The Lord's prophecy was fulfilled numerous times in Acts (Acts 4:1-3; 5:17-18, 40; 6:11-14; 7:57-59; 26:9-12). Virtually everywhere the apostle Paul went for the carrying out of his ministry, he was persecuted—not primarily by the Gentiles but by religious figures in the Sanhedrin and the synagogues. Furthermore, even Paul's own co-workers and spiritual children forsook him. Barnabas, who had brought the apostle Paul into his ministry and labored as a fellow apostle with him for a period of time (9:26-27; 11:25-26; 13:2; 14:14), dissented with Paul and separated from him, going his own way while Paul went on in the ministry (15:36-41). According to 2 Timothy, when Paul faced imminent martyrdom, Demas, one of his co-workers, abandoned him because he loved the present age (2 Tim. 4:10; Philem. 24). Even those who had been raised up in Christ under Paul's ministry abandoned him. Under the leadership of Phygelus and Hermogenes, the believers in Asia, who had formerly received Paul's ministry, forsook him (2 Tim. 1:15). Alexander the coppersmith did many evil things against Paul, greatly opposing his ministry (4:14-15). At the time of Paul's first defense, none of the believers in Rome were with him to support him, but all abandoned him (v. 16). In brief, just as the Lord Jesus was mocked, blasphemed, counted as nothing, and shamefully executed as a criminal (Mark 9:12; 15:29-32; Phil. 2:8; Deut. 21:22-23; Heb. 12:2), so also Paul and his fellow apostles were dishonored, reviled, persecuted, and defamed, becoming "a spectacle to the world," "the offscouring of the world, the scum of all things" (1 Cor. 4:9-13).

The fact that both the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul were opposed by Judaism and forsaken by many of their followers does not nullify or devalue their ministry. On the contrary, it manifested their approvedness in being faithful and obedient to God (Matt. 26:39; Phil. 2:8; Rom. 6:19; Heb. 5:8; Rev. 1:5; 3:14; 1 Cor. 7:25; 1 Tim. 1:12). Likewise, opposition from organized Christianity and dissension from those within the local churches neither invalidates nor diminishes the integrity of the ministry in the Lord's recovery. Instead, they prove its genuineness as a faithful continuation of the ministry of the despised, hated, and persecuted Jesus of Nazareth, as well as that of the apostle Paul, who went forth outside the camp of religion, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13). The rejection that Brother Nee and Brother Lee suffered only served to broaden their vision of the divine economy, deepen their experience of Christ, and enrich their ministry of life. Indeed, it is against this backdrop of rejection and persecution that the glorious vision of God's economy that Brother Nee and Brother Lee faithfully released shines all the more brilliantly.

Because Brother Nee and Brother Lee possessed genuine ministry formed and enriched by high revelations of Christ and immense “afflictions of Christ” (Col. 1:24-29), their speaking was not empty “sounding brass” or “a clanging cymbal,” both of which give sounds without imparting life (1 Cor 13:1). Rather, they were sufficient ministers of the unsearchably rich Christ as the life-giving Spirit (Rom. 15:16; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 3:6). Many saints with a measure of spiritual discernment can testify that our brothers, whether in their public ministry or in times of personal fellowship, touched the depths of their being, speaking words that resonated with their spirit and effected a genuine change in their Christian life. This is because their messages were drawn from the depths of their being that had been thoroughly constituted with the very Christ who had made His home in their heart and been formed in them (Eph. 3:18; Gal. 4:19). The impact of their ministry of the word is aptly described by the psalmist’s words: “Deep calls unto deep.” Regrettably, the effect of the sermons given by many preachers in today’s Christianity is characterized by shallowness (cf. Mark 4:5; Matt. 13:5, 21). Because their preaching issues from the exercise of either natural talent or a spiritual gift devoid of spiritual depth, it can affect others only in a superficial way. Even though their preaching may feed the infants in Christ with the milk of the word (1 Cor. 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:2), it cannot reach the hidden depths of the seeking believers who hunger for “solid food,” the healthy teaching of God’s eternal economy that nourishes their inner man for them to arrive “at a full-grown man” (Psa. 51:6; Heb. 5:12; 1 Tim. 1:3-4, 10; Eph. 4:13). In contrast, when we hear or read messages given by Brother Nee and Brother Lee, we have a clear witness in our spirit that this is the genuine ministry worthy of our close following: the mature ministry of Christ who has been deeply experienced, enjoyed, and expressed by the minister through suffering and intense pressure, which ministry is well able to perfect us and feed us with solid food for us to “be brought unto maturity” in life and “presented full-grown in Christ” (Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 3:10; 1 Tim. 4:6; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:11—6:1).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MINISTRY BEARING THE MARK OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The Mark of Death and Resurrection on the Ministry of the Apostle Paul

Perhaps the most essential characteristic of the new covenant ministry revealed in 2 Corinthians is that it bears the mark of death and resurrection. In 4:7-18, Paul confirms the genuineness of “this ministry” (v. 1) by presenting what amounts to a description of the apostles’ living—not their work. In other words, the proof of an authentic ministry lies not in great accomplishments, such as saving crowds of sinners or establishing churches, but in living a crucified life for the manifestation of the resurrection life. This is because the apostles’ life-imparting ministry was fully based upon a life in which they were constantly put to death for the sake of Jesus. In verses 10-12 Paul declares, “[We are] 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. So then death operates in us, but life in you.” The expression *the putting to death of Jesus* refers to “the working of death, the working of the cross, which the Lord Jesus suffered and passed through.”³⁵ Before the Lord was nailed to the cross at Golgotha, He spent thirty-three and a half years living a crucified life, denying His human life and living by the divine life moment by moment. The cross was at work not only through the persecution by His opposers but also through the troubles caused by His disciples, His mother, and His brothers (Matt. 2:7-12, 16-18; John 2:3-4; 7:3-5; Luke 9:54-55). It was through this killing of the cross that the Lord lived and manifested the resurrection life in His human living. In the same principle, Paul and his fellow apostles always experienced the killing work of the cross for the sake of Jesus, which continually issued in the manifestation of His resurrection life within them. And because they were members of the organic Body of Christ and “members one of another” in a corporate union in the divine life, this resurrection life was spontaneously imparted into all the fellow members of the Body (Eph. 5:30; 1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5; Col. 3:4). Therefore, Paul and his fellow apostles ministered the resurrection life of Jesus to the believers not merely by speaking messages but even more by living the resurrection life under the continual killing of the cross. This is the genuine work of the new covenant ministry.

Immediately after speaking concerning His life-releasing death as a grain of wheat in John 12:24, the Lord issued a call to the believers to participate in this aspect of His death, saying, “He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (vv. 25-26). Just as the Lord hated His soul-life, remaining under the shadow of the cross throughout His earthly sojourn, and died and resurrected in order to impart life to the believers, so also the believers should hate their soul-life, take the way of the cross throughout their Christian life, and die to themselves in order to dispense life to others (Luke 14:26). As a reproduction of Christ, Paul continually lived a crucified life in resurrection, allowing the death of Jesus to consume his outer man for the renewal and resurrection of his inner man, so that the divine life in his spirit might be imparted to others (2 Cor. 4:16).

³⁵ *Holy Bible Recovery Version of the Bible*, 2 Cor. 4:10, note 1

Only a crucified and resurrected person can be a genuine minister of the new covenant. This principle is illustrated by God's vindication of Aaron's priestly ministry in Numbers 17:1-10. There Aaron's rod, a dead and dried-up piece of wood, budded overnight, producing blossoms and bearing ripe almonds. The budding rod signifies the believers' experience of Christ in His resurrection as their authority in the God-given ministry, and almond blossoms signify the resurrection life coming out of death (Heb. 9:4). This indicates that God "only recognizes those who have passed through death and resurrection as His servants"; "hence, the mark of ministry is resurrection."³⁶ In other words, "all services to the Lord must pass through death and resurrection before they will be acceptable to God,"³⁷ and "God approves, commissions, and uses only those who are in resurrection."³⁸ In 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 Paul testified concerning the afflictions that befell him and his co-workers in Asia: they were excessively burdened, beyond their power, so that they despaired even of living; they had the response, the sentence, of death in themselves so that they should not base their confidence on themselves but on God, who raises the dead. After he realized his utter hopelessness and extreme weakness, Paul no longer trusted in himself but in the God of resurrection. Therefore, he attested that his sufficiency and power as a new covenant minister was not from himself but from God (3:5; 4:7). Paul's life was a mysterious yet harmonious spiritual paradox in which he simultaneously experienced the operation of death and the manifestation of resurrection life: "as dying and yet behold we live; as being disciplined and yet not being put to death; as made sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things" (6:9-10); "I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction" (7:4); "when I am weak, then I am powerful" (12:10); "we are pressed on every side but not constricted; unable to find a way out but not utterly without a way out; persecuted but not abandoned; cast down but not destroyed" (4:8-9).³⁹ As a result, Paul could feed the believers with "ripe almonds," ministering to them the God of all comfort, the Father of compassions, and the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit, and blessing them with the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (1:3-4; 3:6; 13:14).

The Mark of Death and Resurrection on the Ministry of Brother Nee

Like the ministry of the apostle Paul, the ministry in the Lord's recovery bears the mark of death and resurrection. No ministry in the present age has spoken concerning Christ's death and resurrection and the application of this truth to the believers' life and work so extensively, effectively, and experientially as the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee. Their ministry on this subject produces a deep echo of reality because they, like the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul, were crucified and resurrected persons. Brother Nee taught that the principle of death and resurrection is not only "the ground of our acceptance with God" but also "the basis of our life and service for Him."⁴⁰ This was borne out in his life and ministry. In a message given in the late 1930s, where he stated that "death and resurrection...mark God-recognized ministry,"⁴¹ Brother Nee testified of being decisively broken by the cross over a long period of time before experiencing resurrection:

³⁶ *CWWN*, vol. 47, p. 245

³⁷ *CWWN*, vol. 47, p. 249

³⁸ *CWWL*, 1960, vol. 1, p. 280

³⁹ *CWWN*, vol. 56, pp. 450-452

⁴⁰ *CWWN*, vol. 33, p. 169

⁴¹ *CWWN*, vol. 33, p. 172

The Lord graciously laid me aside once in my life for a number of months and put me, spiritually, into utter darkness. It was almost as though He had forsaken me, almost as though nothing was going on and I had really come to the end of everything. And then by degrees He brought things back again. The temptation is always to try to help God by taking things back ourselves; but remember, there must be a full night in the sanctuary—a full night in darkness. It cannot be hurried; He knows what He is doing.

We would like to have death and resurrection put together within one hour of each other. We cannot face the thought that God will keep us aside for so long a time; we cannot bear to wait. And of course I cannot tell you how long He will take, but in principle I think it is quite safe to say this, that there will be a definite period when He will keep you there. It will seem as though nothing is happening; as though everything you valued is slipping from your grasp. There confronts you a blank wall with no door in it. Seemingly everyone else is being blessed and used, while you yourself have been passed by and are losing out. Lie quiet. All is in darkness, but it is only for a night. It must indeed be a full night, but that is all. Afterwards you will find that everything is given back to you in glorious resurrection; and nothing can measure the difference between what was before and what now is!

I was sitting one day at supper with a young brother to whom the Lord had been speaking on this very question of our natural energy. He said to me, "It is a blessed thing when you know the Lord has met you and touched you in that fundamental way, and that disabling touch has been received." There was a plate of biscuits between us on the table, and I picked one up and broke it in half as though to eat it. Then, fitting the two pieces together again carefully, I said, "It looks all right, but it is never quite the same again, is it? When once your back is broken, you will yield ever after to the slightest touch from God."⁴²

During the six-year period beginning in 1942 in which he was forced to stop ministering, Brother Nee did not attempt to vindicate himself or recover his ministry. Instead, he remained silent, abiding in the mold of the Lord's death by enjoying Him as resurrection life (Phil. 3:10). During those years Brother Nee told a certain brother that "there was no possibility to ever resume his ministry."⁴³ In his mind, his public ministry had been put to death. Much to his surprise, however, after a dark night of six years, the Lord restored Brother Nee's ministry in 1948 through the labor of a few faithful co-workers, primarily Brother Witness Lee. Many of the saints who had opposed Brother Nee repented of their mistakes, and the church in Shanghai was fully recovered, renewed, and revived. Following the revival, Brother Nee conducted a training in Mount Kuling for four months, which resulted in "a tremendous spiritual explosion"⁴⁴ and the raising up of hundreds of churches throughout China. In 1950 Brother Nee went to Hong Kong with Brother Lee, and their ministry issued in a great revival that increased the number of saints meeting with the church from about three hundred to more than two thousand. This great blessing upon the saints and churches in China was the issue of the genuine new covenant ministry marked by life out of death. After the resumption of his ministry, Brother Nee repeatedly emphasized the importance of the breaking of the outer man and the release of the spirit for the ministry of life, asserting that "the extent that a man is broken determines the amount of ministry he has."⁴⁵ Brother

⁴² *CWWN*, vol. 33, pp. 183-184

⁴³ *Life-study of Genesis*, p. 1469

⁴⁴ *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, p. 223

⁴⁵ *CWWN*, vol. 57, p. 263; cf. *CWWN*, vol. 59, p. 45

Nee was truly a person broken by the discipline of the Holy Spirit, one who became an outlet through which Christ as the resurrection life could be released to save sinners and supply the saints.

Brother Nee's life of suffering under the shadow of the cross for the ministry of the resurrection life culminated in twenty years of imprisonment. He was arrested in 1952, following the expulsion of foreign missionaries from China during the Korean War, and was held without trial for four years. In 1956 he was falsely condemned, judged, and sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment, a term that was extended when he refused to renounce his faith. He died in prison on May 30, 1972. During his imprisonment, although Brother Nee's outward ministry was terminated, his ministry of life continued. A few months prior to his death he wrote his sister-in-law, "I maintain my joy...I hope you will also take care of yourself and be filled with joy in your heart."⁴⁶ His words bear a striking resemblance to Paul's utterance in Philippians, also written from prison: "Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and I rejoice together with you all. And in like manner you also rejoice, and you rejoice together with me" (Phil. 2:17-18). Even in his bonds Paul was a strong factor of the Philippians' progress and joy of the faith because he lived, magnified, and ministered Christ, functioning in a hidden way as a joint of supply to the Body of Christ (1:19-25; Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19). Similarly, Brother Nee, though outwardly confined, continued to function as an incalculable means of supply to all the saints.

During his imprisonment Brother Nee surely ministered life to the Body of Christ by prayer. Like the apostle Paul, who ministered to the churches and the believers from prison by unceasingly remembering them and making mention of them in his prayers (Eph. 1:16-23; 3:14-21; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philem. 4), Brother Nee undoubtedly continued to minister life through his ceaseless petition and intercession on behalf of the saints day after day. Years later Brother Lee would testify that "in eternity we will see that much of what the Lord has gained in His recovery during the past two decades was due to Brother Nee's prayer in prison." Brother Lee also stated that "prayer is the spiritual conclusion to our entire spiritual career."⁴⁷ How fitting that in the last years of his life Brother Nee continually burned incense before God in prayer, and that God answered his prayers by dispensing the rich grace of life to the churches and the saints throughout the earth (Psa. 141:2; Luke 1:9-10; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). It was during those years that a number of Brother Nee's books were translated, published, and made available to the children of God throughout the earth. Through those books, many seeking ones were captured by the Lord to take the way of His recovery and began meeting with the local churches and receiving the ministry in the recovery. It is reserved for God to know how dearly Brother Nee served the church by laying down his life for the release of the divine life to her (1 John 3:16; John 10:10-11) and how greatly we still benefit from his living out Paul's words: "So then death operates in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:12).

The Mark of Death and Resurrection on the Ministry of Brother Lee

The pattern of Brother Nee was reproduced and continued in Brother Lee's ministry, which also distinctly bore the mark of death and resurrection. During his month-long imprisonment by the Japanese army in 1943, he was tortured for two three-hour sessions a day, an experience he later described as a walk through "the deep valley of the shadow of death" (Psa. 23:4).⁴⁸ His experience of nearly dying from tuberculosis immediately following his imprisonment forced him to set aside his responsibilities related

⁴⁶ *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, p. 182

⁴⁷ *Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, p. 121

⁴⁸ *Life-Study of the Psalms*, p. 145

to the church and the work for a few years. Brother Lee testified that during that time the Lord dealt with every part of his inner being, cleansing and purifying him thoroughly concerning his motives and intentions (Eph. 5:26; 1Pet. 1:22; James 4:8; 1 John 3:3). Eventually, the Lord healed him not by a gift in power but by grace in the resurrection life—not suddenly with a miracle but gradually through the impartation of resurrection life into his mortal body (Rom. 8:11).⁴⁹

It was also during this period of recuperation that the Lord revealed to him the controlling vision concerning the tree of life (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14), which issued in a revival in Shanghai and Nanking in 1947. The revival spread to a number of local churches in the southern provinces, including Hong Kong, Canton, Swatow, Amoy, and Foochow. Having passed through “so great a death,” Brother Lee experienced the God of resurrection, the One who tears down the old creation within us through the work of the cross and builds up His new creation by dispensing His resurrection life into the depths of our being (2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:16). After Brother Lee’s God-given ministry had been offered back to God on the altar of the cross, it was gloriously restored to him in resurrection and became a blessing to believers throughout the earth (Gen. 22:9-18; Heb. 11:17-19; James 2:21). Surely Brother Lee’s ministry was one that passed through death into resurrection.

From 1955 through 1961 Brother Lee emphasized the building of the church according to the Lord’s prophecy in Matthew 16:18. For this reason the gates of Hades unleashed an assault of death against his ministry and the churches (v. 18). From 1959 to 1965 there was a storm among the churches in Taiwan caused by several ambitious younger co-workers. These dissenting ones, who had been under Brother Lee’s training, spread inaccurate and insidious claims concerning the end of Brother Lee’s ministry and the churches.⁵⁰ A letter written in May 1961 by one of these dissenters even compared Brother Lee’s work to the tower of Babel and the image of Nebuchadnezzar and threatened to tear it all down.⁵¹ Although a few leading co-workers in Taiwan urged him to leave the United States and return to Taiwan to address the situation, Brother Lee chose not to return to Taiwan for several years. During these years he often gave these co-workers a concise reply:

Let them do it and see how much they can do. You need not worry at all. If the work on the island of Taiwan is of the Lord, they cannot destroy it; if it is destroyed, the Lord will still raise it up in resurrection. If they can destroy it, should it not be destroyed? Let us not worry.⁵²

Brother Lee’s reply clearly alluded to the Lord’s word in John 2:19 concerning His death and resurrection: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” This prophecy was fulfilled two thousand years ago when the Lord’s physical body was torn down in crucifixion and resurrected three days later. Yet the principle of death and resurrection implied in this word has continued to operate in the church, the Lord’s mystical Body, throughout the past twenty centuries: the more the church is devastated by death, the more it is built up in resurrection (cf. Acts 8:3-8, 26-40; 12:1-2, 24; 13:1-4; John 12:24, 32). Brother Lee realized that, in a sense, the ravaging of the church by the enemy is necessary, because, like a refining fire, it destroys everything natural so that what is spiritual may be manifested in resurrection (Dan. 11:35; 12:10; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-3; cf. 1 Cor. 11:19; 15:46). After passing through the onslaught of death brought in by the turmoil, the churches in Taiwan were not only preserved but also purified and

⁴⁹ *Life-Study of 1 Corinthians*, pp. 537-538

⁵⁰ *CWWL, 1981*, vol. 2, pp. 298, 302-303

⁵¹ *CWWL, 1965*, vol. 4, p. 555

⁵² *CWWL, 1981*, vol. 2, p. 299

established in resurrection (Isa. 48:10; Jer. 9:7), just as the churches in China were revived and strengthened after the resumption of Brother Nee's ministry (Eph. 3:16; 6:10; 1 Pet. 5:10). Furthermore, the turmoil in Taiwan was used by the Lord in His leading Brother Lee to migrate to the United States and begin to minister there, a move that issued in the raising up of many churches throughout the Western hemisphere. The result of the turmoil is proof that the ministry in the Lord's recovery is a ministry in resurrection; the churches in Taiwan, which were raised up through this ministry, were shown to be not the work of man but the work of God, constituted with the death-overcoming resurrection life (John 11:25; Acts 5:38-39).

The operation of death unto resurrection in the churches did not stop with events in Taiwan but continued as the ministry in the Lord's recovery spread to the United States. The experience of the cross and the God of resurrection is not a one-time event but a lifelong matter; for a genuine minister of the new covenant, deliverance from death must be a continual process (2 Cor. 1:9-10; cf. Phil. 3:10-11). On the eve of the storm among the churches in the United States in the 1970s, Brother Lee went to the Lord in prayer concerning what he perceived as signs of dissension and a deviation from the way of life. The Lord's word to him was "not to do anything outwardly or make an issue of anything but to go to the cross."⁵³ By the Lord's mercy and grace, the more he remained on the cross, the more living messages in resurrection he received. In those days he gave the Life-study of Ephesians trainings as well as conferences, which were published in books such as *The Experience of Christ, Life Messages*, and *The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building Up of the Church*. Brother Lee testified:

Christ crucified is the way of my ministry. When I die with Him, I have much to minister. I have learned this secret. Whenever I need to speak, I go to the cross. Then I receive a word from the Lord. A word from the crucified Christ is a word in resurrection, and a word in resurrection is boundless. If we have merely learned something of dead letters, after we speak it, that is the end of it. But if we go to the cross and are willing to die there, our speaking will be in resurrection. Christ crucified is the way of our ministry.⁵⁴

Brother Lee likened his ministry to a medical treatment that administered the crucified Christ as a divine antibiotic to the churches.⁵⁵ In his endeavor to heal the churches affected by the storm, Brother Lee carried out his ministry by contacting the crucified Christ, remaining in Him, receiving a living and bountiful word in resurrection, and imparting this living word to the churches (1 Cor. 1:18, 24; John 6:63, 68; 15:4-5; 17:8; Phil. 2:16; Acts 5:20). He did not merely learn the theological doctrine concerning the cross of Christ and pass it on to others; rather, he experienced the crucified Christ and ministered this very One in resurrection as an experiential reality (1 Cor. 2:2; 15:45b). Instead of exercising his natural human wisdom to develop a solution to problems among the churches, Brother Lee was faithful to simply abide in the crucified Christ and minister this Christ to the churches. Consequently, the storm abated within a year, and many of the churches were healed and strengthened.

Yet another bout of attack came in the late 1980s as a small number of men who had been reputed to be pillars in the churches became divisive and attempted to overthrow the ministry in the Lord's recovery—seeking to draw the saints in the churches after themselves and their own so-called ministries (Acts 20:30). But once the darkness of the turmoil passed, the day manifested each one's work: whereas

⁵³ *The Recovery of Christ as Everything in the Church*, p. 32

⁵⁴ *The Recovery of Christ as Everything in the Church*, p. 32

⁵⁵ *The Recovery of Christ as Everything in the Church*, p. 31

Brother Lee's ministry budded, blossomed, and bore fruit, that of the dissenting ones became dead, dry, and fruitless (Num. 17:5-8). Those who had been under the speaking of the dissenters testified that when these ones were under the Lord's ministry in His recovery, their speaking imparted life and light and was full of authority and anointing, but after they abandoned the ministry, their speaking injected death and darkness and lacked both authority and anointing. In contrast, Brother Lee's ministry continued to yield fruit to feed the Lord's children with resurrection life, and his ministry only grew richer, stronger, and higher (2 Cor. 3:6; 4:17). As a beneficiary and eyewitness of Brother Lee's ministry in that last decade, I can testify that in this most mature stage of his life and ministry, each time he ministered the word rivers of living water flowed out of his innermost being (John 7:38), raising the tide of life in the Body of Christ (Rev. 22:1).

The Lord's blessing also bore witness to whose was the genuine ministry. Overwhelmingly, the churches that followed the dissenting ones became barren and decreased in numbers, while those that continued to receive the ministry in the recovery flourished. The dissenters, who once banded together to undermine Brother Lee's ministry, eventually divided from one another, and many of the saints who had joined them sadly returned to their former manner of life in the world or to the divided and degraded situation in organized Christianity (Eph. 4:17-22). In contrast, many hundreds of saints who have remained under the ministry in the Lord's recovery are still being brought deeper into the divine oneness and its attendant blessings (Psa. 133:1-3; cf. Eph. 4:3-6). The storms have not only served to discipline, educate, and test these saints but also to establish them for the furtherance of God's move in His economy. For instance, in January 1991 Brother Lee observed that in the immediate aftermath of the turmoil in the late 1980s, "Actually, while we were passing through a turmoil in which the enemy attempted to destroy the church, the Lord still gave the church a twenty-five percent increase through our early practice of the new way."⁵⁶ Further, beginning in 1991 many saints migrated to Russia and Eastern European countries for the spread the Lord's testimony there. This fresh move of the Lord in the recovery through His ministry was richly blessed, resulting in the raising up of many churches in the former Soviet Union, an atheist nation, and in Eastern Europe. As a result of the saints' labor under this ministry, by October 1996 at least thirty-seven churches had been established in the former Soviet Union. Today there are one hundred ninety-one churches in that region, comprising approximately five thousand saints. This abundant blessing on the work of the ministry was a manifestation of the fruit of the resurrection life and a strong vindication of the Lord's ministry in His recovery.

Regrettably, among believers today it is rare to find those who are willing to take this costly way of death and resurrection or appreciate its value in the Lord's eyes. In how many so-called ordination ceremonies are newly initiated ministers instructed that what qualifies them to serve God is to be terminated through the cross and brought into resurrection? On the contrary, in organized Christianity ministers of the word are trained to develop their natural life, ability, and strength, with the view that the Spirit will employ their human capacity, eloquence, and charisma in His work of grace upon a congregation. Hardly a preacher today has the notion, much less the experience, that the Spirit is actually within him and seeks to be released by the breaking of his outer man. By contrast, in the Lord's recovery the constricted way to minister the word is to deny every aspect of the natural life by being conformed to Christ's death in order to impart the Spirit as the reality of resurrection life (Matt. 7:13-14; 16:24; Psa. 16:11; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:11). This way was pioneered by the Lord Jesus Himself, was faithfully followed by the apostles, and remains a mark of the New Testament ministry. As the faithful disciples stayed with the

⁵⁶ *CWWL, 1991-1992*, vol. 1, p. 39

Lord because only He had words of eternal life (John 6:68), should we not remain with those who have taken the way of the cross in order to receive from them the supply of resurrection life (Phil. 1:19; 2:16)? We should heed Paul's word to not be ashamed of either the Lord's testimony or of His servants (2 Tim. 1:8). How very regrettable it would be if we mistook the shame and death they suffer as signs of their being disapproved and were thus defrauded of the riches of resurrection wrought into them for our sake!

Brother Nee and Brother Lee as Grains of Wheat Falling into the Ground and Dying to Bear Much Fruit in Resurrection

At its heart, the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee is characterized by the principle of life out of death exemplified in Christ's death as a grain of wheat for the impartation and multiplication of life in resurrection. According to John 12:24, the Lord as the lone "grain of wheat," the only begotten Son of God, fell into the ground and died, laying down His soul-life to release the divine life from within the shell of His humanity, so that in resurrection He might impart this life into the believers to bring them forth as many grains, the many sons of God as His organic increase and multiplication (John 10:10-11; 3:29-30). In the immediately following verses the Lord indicated that if the believers as many grains of wheat, "the good seed" (Matt. 13:24-25, 38; 1 Cor. 15:35-54), aspire to serve the Lord so as to be honored by the Father, they should "follow" the crucified Lord into the ground, hating and losing their "soul-life" through death, so that in resurrection they too would release His eternal life from within them, thereby bearing others as abundant fruit for the propagation of the divine life (12:25-26; 14:6; 1 John 3:16). Brother Lee stated in *Life-study of Matthew* that the Lord's recovery among us in the twentieth century issued from Sister M.E. Barber, a British missionary, and Brother Nee as seeds of life sown into the ground:

Miss M. E. Barber did not come to China to work. She was in China sowing Christ, even sowing herself in Christ. She was a seed sown into that district in China. Eventually, something grew out of that seed. The Lord's recovery today is the produce of the seed sown by Sister Barber and Brother Nee....

Recently an opposer told a brother, "We are going to stop you." He said that they were planning to stop the Lord's recovery. If the opposers try to do this, they will find themselves in trouble. Do not touch anything of life, for the more you touch it, the more it multiplies. If you leave it alone, it may remain dormant. But if you touch it, it will grow. Suppose you say to some seed, "Seed, I shall stop you. I shall bury you in the earth." How good that would be for the seed! But if you leave the seeds on a pedestal, appreciating them, looking at them, and treasuring them, that will be the most effective way to stop them. But if you try to terminate the seed by burying it in the earth, the seed will grow. The opposers simply do not know what the Lord's recovery is. The Lord's recovery is not work, teaching, or theology. It is a seed; it is the living Christ as a seed....Who can stop the Lord's recovery? The seed has already been sown....The recovery as the seed of life has been sown in America, Europe, Brazil, and many other places. No one and nothing can stop it.⁵⁷

In essence, Brother Nee and Brother Lee carried out their ministry not by teaching biblical doctrine or moral behavior but by sowing themselves in Christ as the seed of life into the ground for the multiplication of the divine life in resurrection. To a great degree, the Lord's recovery in the past century

⁵⁷ *Life-study of Matthew*, 439-441.

is the organic issue of the seed sown by these brothers who willingly and faithfully laid down their soul-life to release the eternal life to the believers for the increase of this life.

The following hymns capture the sentiments and aspirations of these precious saints in the Lord's recovery who took the narrow way of death and resurrection to minister life to others for the growth and building up of the church.

When Sister Barber went to China by faith the second time in the early twentieth century, she "made a firm decision" in the Lord not to travel but to "bury" herself in a small town named Pagoda, where she remained until her death in 1929, "praying daily and ministering to those whom the Lord brought to her."⁵⁸ The following hymn written by Sister Barber characterizes the intrinsic significance of her hidden yet fruitful and valuable life and service to the Lord as a pure seed sown and buried in the ground to bear abundant fruit, whom Brother Lee esteemed "as a seed of life" "sown in China by the Lord for His recovery."⁵⁹

1. Buried? Yes, but it is seed
From which Continents may feed;
Millions yet may bless the day
When that seed was laid away.
2. Buried! hidden! out of sight!
Dwelling in the deepest night;
Losing, underneath the sod,
Everything, except its God.
3. Buried, unremember'd, lost
So thinks man: but all the cost
God has counted to display
Life abundant one glad day.
4. Art thou buried? God's pure seed
Doth thy heart in silence bleed?
Change thy sighing into song,
Thus alone can harvests come.⁶⁰

This hymn proved to be autobiographical and prophetic: because our sister was willing to be sown in China as a seed of life, rich harvests of the divine life were reaped, and countless saints throughout the earth have fed on the riches of this life released through her. One such example was Brother Nee, who received from her immeasurable help concerning the constricted way of the cross and the genuine ministry of life. He was "a seed that grew out of her" and became "a great vessel for the recovery of the proper church life."⁶¹

Continuing the pattern set by Sister Barber, Brother Nee composed a splendid hymn about the deep and thorough work of the cross on our soul-life. The following stanzas of this hymn poignantly illustrate the

⁵⁸ *CWWL*, 1978, vol. 2, p. 148

⁵⁹ *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, pp. 17, 73

⁶⁰ James Reetzke, *M. E. Barber, A Seed Sown in China* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Bibles & Books, 2005), p. 148

⁶¹ *Life-study of John*, p. 314

glorious result of a minister of Christ's subjective experience of the death of the cross – the ministering of life to others in abundance for the multiplication of the divine life:

1. First the blood, and then the ointment,
Cleansing, then anointing comes;
If we pass not thru Golgotha,
Ne'er to Pentecost we'll come.
If the blood has never cleansed us,
Ne'er the Spirit's pow'r we'll know,
If for Christ we'd truly witness,
Self-life to the Cross must go.

CHORUS:

Through the Cross, O Lord, I pray,
Put my soul-life all away;
Make me any price to pay,
Full anointing to receive.

2. Christ, the Rock, must first be smitten,
That the living water flow;
Without death the Spirit's fullness
Ne'er could dwell in man below.
If with Christ we die completely,
Willing thus our all to lose,
He will clothe us with His power
And to win the world will use.
3. When we see the ripened harvest
Of the golden countryside,
We may know that many seeds have
Fallen to the earth and died.
Ere the fruit of life may blossom,
We must surely suffer death;
If with Christ we've not been buried,
We'll not feel the Spirit's breath.
4. Since it must be thus, I pray, Lord,
Help me go the narrow way;
Deal with pride and make me willing
Thus to suffer, Thee t'obey.
I for greater power pray not,
Deeper death is what I need;
All the meaning of the Cross, Lord,
Work in me — for this I plead.

(Hymns, #279)

Walking in the same spirit and in the same steps with Brother Nee (2 Cor. 12:18), Brother Lee wrote the following hymn, which reveals that it is only through the work of the cross that the resurrection life is experienced by us and is poured from us into others.

1. If I'd know Christ's risen power,
I must ever love the Cross;
Life from death alone arise;
There's no gain except by loss.

CHORUS:

If no death, no life,
If no death, no life;
Life from death alone arises;
If no death, no life.

2. If I'd have Christ formed within me,
I must breathe my final breath,
Live within the Cross's shadow,
Put my soul-life e'er to death.
3. If God thru th' Eternal Spirit
Nail me ever with the Lord;
Only then as death is working
Will His life thru me be poured.

(Hymns, # 631)

Brother Lee also wrote the following hymn, which unveils that it is only through the death of the cross that Christ as the resurrection life not only shows its infinite power but also grows and multiplies:

1. Death cannot hold the resurrection life,
The life of God eternal manifest;
'Tis uncreated, indestructible,
'Tis Christ Himself, unconqu'erable, expressed.
2. Death cannot hold the resurrection life,
Though all its force against it may combine;
Death only gives it opportunity
To show the boundless pow'r of life divine.
3. Death cannot hold the resurrection life,
The more interred, the more it multiplies;
All kinds of suff'ring only help it grow
And fruits of life abundant realize.
4. Death cannot hold the resurrection life,
Thru every block and barrier it breaks;
Conqu'ring the pow'r of darkness and of hell,
It swallows death and victory partakes.
5. Death cannot hold the resurrection life,
All of God's fulness it will manifest;

God's righteousness and holiness it yields,
His glorious image by it is expressed.

6. Oh, may I know this resurrection life,
In every kind of death its pow'r outpoured,
In my experience ever realize
This life is nought but Christ my living Lord.

(Hymns, # 639)

These hymns confirm that to the ministers in the Lord's recovery, the death and resurrection of Christ were not just factual historical events but also a constant subjective spiritual reality that they daily experienced for the ministry of life to the members of the Body of Christ. Further, these hymns attest that the ministers in the Lord's recovery were much more than expositors of the Bible; they were grains of wheat who died to themselves to impart the divine life to us in resurrection for the building up of the Body of Christ.

Those who minister in this way, as our brothers did, are truly grains of wheat who allow the death of Christ to break the shell of their soul-life for the release of the eternal, uncreated, resurrection life of Christ from within them to nourish others with the riches of this life (Heb. 4:12; 1 John 5:11-13, 16). Furthermore, they are willing to be identified with Christ as the spiritual rock smitten on the cross to flow out the Spirit of life as the living water in resurrection, and because of this they experience the smiting, the termination, of their natural life through the work of the cross so that the life-giving Spirit as the river of water life can flow from within them to others freely, purely, and abundantly (Exo. 17:6; Num. 20:8; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 7:37-39; 19:34; 2 Cor. 4:10-11, 16; Rev. 22:1). Because the "alabaster flask" of their outer man is broken through the operation of the death of Christ, the fragrant "ointment" of "very valuable pure nard" within the flask—the indwelling compound Spirit as the ointment—can be released from them not only to satisfy the Lord but also to fill the church as the house of the living God with the fragrance of Christ as the resurrection life (John 12:3; Mark 14:3; Matt. 26:6-13; 1 Tim. 3:15; cf. Lev. 2:1). Their earthen vessels are broken through the application of the cross to their natural life, allowing them to manifest and minister to us the resurrected Christ of glory as the excellent and powerful treasure, thereby supplying the church with Christ as the life-giving Spirit, the sufficient grace, and the perfect power (4:7-17; 3:6; 12:9, 10). They are also grains of sand who continually remain in the crucified Christ as the wounded oyster, receiving the life-giving Spirit as His life-juice around them and thereby being formed into pearls of great value (John 15:4-5; Phil. 3:10; 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:31, 45b), serving as gates of pearl, channels of life, through which God's elect can enter into the blessings of the holy city, the New Jerusalem (Matt. 13:45-46; Rev. 21:21; 22:14). Undoubtedly, our brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were such ones who experienced the death of Christ deeply and thoroughly for the release of the nourishing, flowing, fragrant, precious, and powerful resurrection life.

Since Brother Nee and Brother Lee carried out their ministry by dying to themselves to release the resurrection life, long after they went to be with the Lord their ministry remains and prevails throughout the earth. Many Christian revivals and groups have flourished and then withered, attracting a great following for a period of time only to fade away and lose impact after the death of their founders. This is primarily because of a shortage of the ministry of life due to an insufficient degree of experience of the death of Christ. In contrast, the ministry in the Lord's recovery has stood the test of time in the past century. This is principally because our brothers' work is not the mere endeavor of outward activity carried out by natural human zeal but the rich outflow of the resurrection life released through their

continual experience of the death of the cross. The issue of their labor in the Lord is not a mass Christian movement animated by human effort and enthusiasm but the multiplication of the divine life produced through their death as grains of wheat and their ministry of the resurrection life.

Today we witness the result of their ministry of life: many local churches raised up throughout the earth to be practical expressions of the organic Body of Christ. The lasting result and the enduring impact of their ministry attest to the Lord's approval of their ministry. Because they faithfully served the Lord by following Him into the ground, they and their ministry were honored by the Father (John 12:24-26), who as the God of resurrection recognizes only that which has passed through death into resurrection (Rom. 4:17; 8:11; 2 Cor. 1:9; Heb. 11:19). Although our brothers are now with the Lord, their ministry continues to be a source of life supply to the believers throughout the earth. By the Lord's mercy and grace, many saints in the Lord's recovery likewise are being perfected and supplied to take the way of falling into the ground and dying for the multiplication of Christ as life and the glorification of the Father. Because the Lord's recovery among us was initiated, is sustained, and will be supplied by such a ministry of resurrection life released through death, "this work" is not "of men" but "of God"; hence, the recovery will not be overthrown but will continue to grow and prevail until the Lord returns (Acts 5:39).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE MINISTRY ABOUNDING WITH GLORY

Paul's Ministry Abounding with the Glory of God

Because it is in resurrection, the ministry of the new covenant abounds with the surpassing and eternal glory of God (cf. Luke 24:26, 46; Acts 3:13, 15). In 2 Cor. 3:10-11 Paul indicates that the glory of the apostolic new covenant ministry surpasses the glory of the Mosaic ministry of the old covenant, for the former was temporary and has been done away with, whereas the latter is eternal, remaining forever. In describing the ministry he and his fellow apostles had received (4:1), Paul says, "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (3:18). The ministry of the new covenant is nothing less than beholding and reflecting the glory of the Lord to be transformed into His image from one degree of glory to another through the enjoyment of the Lord Spirit. For the new covenant ministers to behold the glory of the Lord is for them to see the Lord of glory themselves, receiving an infusion of Him as the Lord Spirit into their inward parts for their transformation into His image; for them to reflect the glory of the Lord is to enable others to see the Lord through them, infusing others with the Spirit so that they also may experience this transformation. As Paul and his co-workers had turned their heart from everything to the Lord Himself, they were constituted sufficient ministers of the new covenant, filled with the resurrected and glorified Lord as the Spirit to impart Him into others (vv. 16-17).

According to 2 Corinthians 4, Paul and his co-workers, who had the ministry of the new covenant (v. 1), proclaimed "the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God," so that the illumination of this gospel might shine on others (vv. 4-5). The gospel of the glory of Christ preached by the apostles is not theology or doctrine but a wonderful, attractive person, Jesus Christ, in whose face we see the glory of God. Hence, those who receive this gospel enter into face-to-face fellowship with Christ and obtain an inward, subjective knowledge of the glory of God. In verse 6 Paul declares that the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness shined in the hearts of the apostles to illuminate "the knowledge of the glory of God" in the face of Jesus Christ. The illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in verse 6 corresponds to the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ as the image of God in verse 4, indicating that God shined in the apostles' hearts so that they might likewise illuminate others. In other words, the apostles as new covenant ministers preached the gospel of the glory of Christ not merely by relaying the facts of the gospel but by shining into others the very God in Christ who has been shined into the depths of their being.

Paul then immediately states, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us" (v. 7). According to the context, *this treasure in earthen vessels* refers to the Christ of glory, the embodiment and expression of God, who dwells in the believers as the Lord Spirit (3:18; 13:5; 1 Cor. 2:8). In themselves the apostles were weak, fragile, and poor earthen vessels. However, when God shined into their hearts, He dispensed the Lord of glory as the precious treasure into them to make worthless vessels ministers of the new covenant with a priceless ministry. This treasure, which supplied them to carry out their ministry in the midst of unrelenting pressure and affliction, increased in them through their sufferings (1 Cor. 2:4; Eph. 1:19; Col. 1:29). Their momentary lightness of affliction wrought within them an eternal weight of glory, such that the more the ministers underwent "the sufferings of the Christ" (1:5), the more they shone as "Christ's glory" (2 Cor. 8:23).

The Ministry in the Lord's Recovery Abounding with the Glory of God

Like the ministry of the apostles in the New Testament, the ministry in the Lord's recovery abounds with the glory of God. The brothers who minister according to the gospel of the glory of God are not only teachers of the truth but also luminaries that shine forth God in Christ as light (Phil. 2:15; Matt. 5:14). I along with many other saints have closely observed these brothers in their living and work and can testify that they have lived Christ as the truth for the shining of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:2; Phil. 1:19; John 14:6). Rather than walking in craftiness or conducting themselves in fleshly wisdom, they have conducted themselves in the grace of God in His singleness and sincerity (2 Cor. 1:12; 2:17). They have not adulterated the word of God for profit but have always ministered the pure word of God, even at the cost of risking opposition from religion (v. 17). They have not preached themselves but Christ Jesus as Lord of all, conducting themselves as our slaves for Jesus' sake, never making themselves an object of attention but exalting Christ alone (4:5; Acts 10:26; Rom. 10:12).

In traditional Christianity, as preachers grow older, their ministry usually wanes. This is because their ministry mainly depends on their physical strength and natural intelligence, both of which gradually diminish with the passage of time. In vivid contrast, we have witnessed that the more the ministers in the Lord's recovery advance in years, the more they shine with glory. This is because the afflictions that they have endured for the sake of Jesus have worked together to constitute them with the God of glory (Acts 7:2). Their spiritual vitality is ever increasing because they labor not by their natural strength but by depending on the exceedingly great power of God as their indwelling treasure (cf. Eph. 1:19-23). Therefore, the gospel that they preach is simply the shining of their Christ-saturated being and their Christ-expressing living; like the apostle Paul, their very being and living *are* their ministry.

This ministry conveys us into glory because the ministers exercise to live in the Holy of Holies, behold the glory of the Lord, and allow the God of glory to shine through their transparent vessels (Heb. 10:19, 22; 2 Cor. 3:18). This shining is not an outward, visible phenomenon but the spiritual shining of the invisible glory of God, such that those who are under this ministry enjoy a sweet, pleasant, and endearing inward shining of God in Christ. The ministry incorporates the very God who shines forth and speaks to His redeemed people from between the cherubim of glory on Christ as the propitiation place in the Holiest of all (Exo. 25:22; Psa. 80:1, 3; 99:1; Heb. 9:5). Commenting upon Exodus 25:18-22, Brother Lee describes our experience of God's speaking to His people in glory:

When we listen to someone speaking in a meeting, as long as that speaking is the word of the Lord, we should have the sense that we are in glory. Whenever the word of God is spoken in the ministry, we sense glory within us. Many preachers today are eloquent. But when you hear them speak, you do not have any sense of God's glory. You may admire their eloquence and appreciate their knowledge, but there is no sense of God's glory. However, when you listen to the genuine ministry of the Word, you are attracted, not by eloquence or knowledge but by a sense of God's glory. After you return home, the glory may follow you. Years later, you may still recall the glory you sensed in that meeting. From our experience we know that God meets with us in the midst of His glory and speaks to us in His glory.⁶²

I wish to attest on behalf of the ministers of the word in the Lord's recovery that when these ministers give a message, we often do sense the glory of God. We feel that that the God of glory is meeting and speaking with us from between the cherubim of glory in our spirit as the Holy of Holies, shining into us to

⁶² *Life-Study of Exodus*, pp. 1011-1012

fill us with Himself and make Himself known to us in Christ. By leading us to turn our heart to the Lord and exercise our spirit—cultivating a direct, personal, affectionate, and spiritual contact with the indwelling Christ—this ministry brings us face to face with Him in whose radiant countenance we behold the glory of God (Num. 6:24-26). As we enjoy this lovely, precious, charming, and endearing person, looking into the index of His eyes and sensing the shining of God’s glory in our heart, we love Him as the most excellent treasure in the universe, lose our taste for worldly idols, and are spontaneously transformed into His glorious image (2 Cor. 2:10; 4:6-7; 3:18). There is no greater joy or higher delight than gazing upon the incomparable glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ in our mingled spirit. The ministry in the Lord’s recovery ushers us into such an indescribably intimate and unforgettable enjoyment of Him for our genuine transformation into His image from glory to glory so that we may become the New Jerusalem, a city of light that shines forth with the eternal glory of God in Christ the Lamb as the lamp (Rev. 21:10-11, 23; 22:5).

The New Covenant Ministry—the Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels

The new covenant ministry is a matter of the Christ of glory as the precious treasure shining in the believers as earthen vessels. When Paul refers to Christ as the treasure of glory indwelling him and his fellow workers in 2 Corinthians 4:7, he states that the treasure is in *earthen vessels*, not golden boxes. As descendants of Adam, Paul and his fellow apostles in and of themselves were nothing more than earthen vessels; they were weak, poor, “sinful, fallen, and low.”⁶³ Similarly, although the ministers of the word in the Lord’s recovery contain, express, and minister Christ as the treasure, they as earthen vessels are not without weaknesses and imperfections. Brother Lee was not ashamed of acknowledging this:

We must humble ourselves and admit that we are all earthen vessels. You are an earthen vessel, and I am also an earthen vessel; we all are earthen vessels. Nevertheless, a treasure is contained in these earthen vessels. The co-workers, elders, deacons, and brothers and sisters all have weaknesses because they are earthen vessels. How can earthen vessels not have weaknesses? Are we not earthen vessels? Do we not have weaknesses? We must admit that we all have the same problem, and we all need the Lord's mercy...I will never deny that I am full of problems, because I am an earthen vessel in Adam. However, please do not forget that we all have many problems, because we are all earthen vessels in Adam...We all have defects, and we all are earthen vessels.⁶⁴

Recognizing that he was an earthen vessel, Brother Lee emphatically disclaimed any pretense to infallibility: “Today I testify before all that I am also a fallen man. I have made mistakes, and I have my weaknesses. This cannot be denied.”⁶⁵

Not even the apostle Paul was free from mistakes. At the conclusion of his third apostolic journey, he disregarded the Spirit’s admonition not to set foot in Jerusalem (Acts 21:4) and participated in a Nazarite vow, a Judaic practice belonging to the Old Testament dispensation. According to his own teaching, such practices should be renounced in light of God’s New Testament economy (vv. 15-26). Paul’s involvement in this practice jeopardized God’s New Testament economy by bringing in a mixture of Judaism. Therefore, God allowed a riot to prevent Paul from completing his Nazarite vow (vv. 27-30). However, his subsequent arrest and imprisonment were arranged by God so that he would have a quiet environment

⁶³ *Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*, p. 89

⁶⁴ *Christ Making His Home in Our Heart and the Building Up of the Church*, p. 89

⁶⁵ *CWWL*, 1981, vol. 2, p. 320

in which to write his last eight Epistles for the completion of the divine revelation (Col. 1:25). These eight Epistles were included in the canon of the New Testament alongside the six Epistles written by Paul prior to his failure, showing that it did not invalidate his ministry but rather afforded the sovereign God an opportunity to manifest His wisdom for the carrying out of His economy (Eph. 3:10). Brother Lee testifies that this was also his experience:

Our failures, mistakes, defeats, and wrongdoings have also given God opportunities to display His wisdom. None of us likes to be mistaken; on the contrary, we all want to be right. Although I have always intended to do the right thing, I have nevertheless made many mistakes, even some big mistakes. I certainly hate these mistakes, but I can testify that they have afforded God the opportunity to show forth His wisdom.⁶⁶

But though Paul and his co-workers were not perfect in the eyes of God, they nevertheless lived a life that was worthy of the new covenant ministry, conducting themselves irreproachably in the eyes of men (1 Tim 3:2). In 2 Corinthians 6:3 Paul boldly declared, “We give no occasion of stumbling in anything that the ministry may not be faulted.” Similarly, Paul called on the Thessalonians to bear witness to the holy, righteous, and blameless manner in which he and his fellow apostles conducted themselves toward the believers (1 Thes. 2:10; cf. Heb. 13:18). For this reason Paul had the standing in the Lord to exhort the believers to imitate him, an imitator of Christ, that they also might be imitators of Christ (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17). In the same manner, those taking the lead in the Lord’s ministry in His recovery live a life that matches their ministry. Although in the sight of God they are not blameless, for no flesh is such (Gal. 2:16), in the sight of men they are without reproach. They have kept themselves unspotted from the world, fully separated from the world according to God’s holy nature (James 1:27), and they are holy, good, pure, and excellent in all their manner of life in Christ (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2:12; 3:2). Hence, their holy, God-expressing, and Christ-magnifying living, the foundation of their ministry, is a proper pattern that is worthy of our imitation (2 Thes. 3:7, 9).

Many saints who knew Brother Lee can bear witness that he lived a life of the highest moral standard, a life characterized by the excellent virtues needed in a servant of the Lord: extraordinary love (1 Cor. 12:31b; 13:18a; Matt. 5:44), boundless forbearance (Phil. 4:5-7; Matt. 18:21-22), unparalleled faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2; 7:25b), absolute humility (1 Pet. 5:5-6; 3:8; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3), utmost purity (Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22), supreme holiness and righteousness (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 5:20; Rom. 14:17), and brightness and uprightness (John 8:12; Luke 11:34-36; Psa. 36:10).⁶⁷ To some, such a description of Brother Lee’s life may sound hyperbolic, but I believe that those who spent considerable time with Brother Lee can attest before the all-seeing and all-knowing Lord that each of these virtues was exhibited in our brother’s life and service. In my teenage years, in the late 1980s, I was disturbed to learn of several highly publicized scandals involving prominent televangelists in the United States whose immoral private lives contradicted their public sermons, greatly damaging the Lord’s testimony in this country and giving His enemies much occasion to blaspheme Him (Ezek. 36:23; 2 Sam. 12:14). In those years I was encouraged and even astounded when I read Brother Lee’s personal testimony concerning how for many decades he, by the Lord’s grace, had been preserved from earthly defilements to be a chaste virgin for the Lord:

⁶⁶ *Life-Study of Ephesians*, p. 273

⁶⁷ *The Glorious Vision and the Way of the Cross*, pp. 35-37

In order to be a living overcomer we must be kept by the Lord's grace from every defilement and pollution and live on earth like virgins. In the eyes of the worldly people it means little whether we go to the movies or not. But in the eyes of the saved ones it is serious for me to go to a movie theater. If I did, I would be defiled. We must live a life of virginity, a life of chastity. The reason I neither smoke nor drink is that I do not want to be defiled. On occasion some brothers have offered me a drink of beer. But I have always refused. The Lord's mercy and grace have preserved me for more than fifty years. I will not sell myself so cheaply as to be contaminated by drinking beer. Although it may not be sinful to drink beer, I will not allow the drinking of beer to defile my virginity. But do not be legal about things like this. I can sit in the presence of brothers who are drinking beer and not be bothered at all. It is absolutely not a matter of legality; it is a matter of our desire to preserve ourselves as virgins for the Lord. We all must say, "Lord Jesus, I love You. Because I love You, I will remain as a virgin for You. Lord, I don't want to be defiled or polluted by anything. Lord, I want to keep myself for You." As a young man, I prayed this way day by day. How I thank the Lord that He has truly answered my prayer.

In my travels throughout the years, I have found myself in many different situations. In these situations there have been a great many temptations. But I can testify, even before the accuser, that the Lord's grace has preserved me. Although there have been television sets in many of the hotel rooms, the Lord can testify for me that not once did I turn on the television. It would not have been sinful for me to watch television, but I would have been defiled. As I was in my room I said, "Lord, I don't want to be defiled. I want to be kept as a virgin for You. Lord, I did not come to this city for television, but for Your testimony. I know the brothers and sisters cannot see what I am doing in my hotel room, but the demons can see." If I had turned on the television set, my testimony for the Lord Jesus would not have had impact. But because my conscience testified that I was not defiled and that I was kept as a virgin for the Lord Jesus, my speaking had an impact.⁶⁸

How many preachers in Christianity have the boldness in the Lord to offer such a powerful testimony concerning their personal life with a pure conscience before the Lord, Satan, and men, thus commending themselves as ministers of God in pureness and in a holy spirit (1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; 2 Cor. 6:6)? The dynamic impact of Brother Lee's ministry of the word on the saints was largely based upon his exceedingly holy, righteous, and blameless living, which proves that his messages are not based on abstract theories but on the reality in Jesus lived out in this faithful servant of the Lord (Eph. 4:21).

Brother Andrew Yu, a close co-worker of Brother Lee, testified to the notable consistency between Brother Lee's ministry and his living:

He showed me the way to love the Lord. He showed me the way to serve Him and to live Him. He became a pattern to me of all the things that I heard from his messages. He is the living example of a God-man living. Through his seemingly ordinary living shone a testimony that was extraordinary... Our brother's speaking on the podium and his living off the podium were consistent. I saw our brother talking to the president of a nation. I saw him talking to some of the most influential men on earth as well as some of the most lowly men in society. I witnessed him talking to his wife, his children, and his grandchildren. I saw him talking to young people, to mothers, to elders, to co-workers. I was with him in his house, in the meetings, in the car, on airplanes, on vacations, in restaurants, in hospitals, at weddings, at funerals. In all of his conversations, he spoke like a God-man. He never behaved

⁶⁸ *Life-Study of Revelation*, pp. 534-535

improperly...There was something noble about our brother. Words cannot describe his manner. He lived in the divine and mystical realm. Our brother was a living duplication of Jesus Christ. I have never met a man so faithful in everything he did. He was faithful to the Lord, faithful to Brother Nee, faithful to his wife and family, and faithful to his co-workers.⁶⁹

Brother Kerry Robichaux, who worked intimately with Brother Lee on the Recovery Version of the Bible, offered a similar testimony:

Before a person begins to work closely with a well-known and admired leader, a co-worker of his may hold a high respect for that leader, but after spending considerable time working closely with the leader, in many cases he is fully disappointed and disillusioned with the leader's character and life because they do not match his outward persona or reputation. However, the opposite was true of my experience with Brother Lee. The longer I served with Brother Lee in the publication work in the Lord's recovery, the more my respect and admiration for our brother grew because of the consistency between his work and living. I was in awe of his purity, truthfulness, and faithfulness.⁷⁰

The ministers of the new covenant are earthen vessels that contain a heavenly treasure—the Lord of glory wrought into them to be their ministry (James 2:1; Heb. 1:3; col. 1:25-29). When we consider them, we should learn to see beyond the earthen vessel and discern the divine treasure within. This is to know them not according to the flesh but according to the spirit, not according to their outward appearance but according to their inward reality (2 Cor. 5:16-17; cf. John 8:15-19). With our natural human sight it is not difficult to see the imperfections and weaknesses in the earthen vessels of the new covenant ministers. However, it is only with a spirit of wisdom and revelation and by having the eyes of our heart enlightened that we can see the riches of Christ constituted into them to be the intrinsic content of their ministry (Eph. 1:17-18; 3:8; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2:7-8). In Brother Nee's words, "Sometimes...our eyes only see the earthen vessel. Those who know God, however, are able to see the treasure in earthen vessels when they look at God's children."⁷¹ Brother Lee echoes this thought:

We all have defects, and we all are earthen vessels. However, we thank the Lord that He is the treasure in us, the earthen vessels. When we enjoy the saints, we do not look at the earthen vessels; rather, we enjoy and appreciate Christ, who is the treasure in the earthen vessels. No matter how weak a believer is, how many shortcomings or failures he has, or how insignificant he seems to be, we must admit that he has a portion of Christ and that his portion is precious. If we look at the saints from this point of view, we will immediately see that they have a portion of Christ for us to enjoy...The Lord wants us to enjoy the treasure and not look at the earthen vessel. This can be likened to drinking water from a bottle. We should focus on the water, not the bottle that contains the water. We all must see that every believer is an earthen vessel with weaknesses, but he also contains Christ, the treasure.⁷²

Every genuine new covenant minister is a living paradox: an earthen vessel in which the glorious Christ dwells as a priceless treasure, and a lowly thornbush in which the God of glory burns as the holy flame of fire (Exo. 3:2-4; Deut. 33:16; Mark 12:26-27). We need to shift our gaze from the earthen vessel to the

⁶⁹ Andrew Yu in *Witness Lee: Speakings from the Memorial Meetings*, pp. 57-58

⁷⁰ Kerry Robichaux's testimony given in a class of the full-time training in Anaheim

⁷¹ *CWWN*, vol. 56, p. 453

⁷² *Christ Making His Home in Our Heart and the Building Up of the Church*, p. 89-91

heavenly treasure within, from the thornbush to the divine fire. Brother Lee underscores the importance of this matter, offering a personal testimony:

According to God's principle in His creation, in order for anything to grow there is the need for a negative side. Take the example of a chicken. We all appreciate chicken eggs, breasts, and legs, but we certainly do not care for chicken dung, feathers, and bones. Nevertheless, without dung, feathers, and bones, a chicken cannot grow. In order for a chicken to be a chicken, it must have these things. But it is not our portion to eat them. We should enjoy the eggs, the breasts, and the legs, and forget the dung, the feathers, and the bones. If we concentrate on the positive aspects of the chicken, we shall receive much nourishment.

I admit that the church in Los Angeles has made certain mistakes, and I confess that I have made mistakes. The elders can testify of this. Everybody makes mistakes. No one can deny this. I have had to make mistakes in order to grow. These mistakes are my "dung." If you eat this, you are foolish. I also admit that I have "feathers." The church in Los Angeles also has had a certain amount of "feathers" and "bones." However, without these "feathers," "bones," and "dung," neither the church in Los Angeles nor my ministry would be able to exist. Do you intend to gather up the "feathers" and say, "Look! This is the church in Los Angeles. Look! This is what Brother Lee has done. See all these awful 'feathers.'" If you do this, you will not damage the church in Los Angeles or my ministry, but you will surely damage yourself. To do this is not wise. These who have been perfected to be pillars, who surely are not less intelligent than you, are wise. Their eyes are much clearer than yours. But they refuse to devote their attention to the negative things. They would say, "Although Brother Lee has some 'dung,' he has a great many eggs. I don't care for the 'dung' issuing out of his ministry—I want to eat all the 'eggs,' 'breasts,' and 'legs.' I have no time to hear about 'feathers' and 'bones.'" Let us follow the example of such brothers to forget the negative things and to feast upon the "eggs," "breasts," and "legs."

Three or four of us knew Brother Nee very intimately. He fully opened himself to us, and we knew his imperfections. But we realized that these imperfections were the "dung" that enabled him to exist. Unlike others, we would not cling to his "feathers," nor to the "bones" of the "chicken" in Shanghai. If we had done this, we would have sacrificed ourselves. I never suffered such self-inflicted damage. Rather, I enjoyed the fresh, nourishing "eggs," "breasts," and "legs" of Brother Nee's ministry. When a great turmoil was aroused against his ministry, I was not ashamed to say that I was an absolute follower of Brother Nee. I did not care what others said about his mistakes. I only knew how grateful I was to him for the perfection he had rendered to me. I knew the nourishment I had received from him. Even when we are in the New Jerusalem, I shall be able to say that the Lord used Brother Nee to perfect me. Apart from his ministry, I would never be the person I am today.⁷³

In a similar vein, in *The Knowledge of Life* Brother Lee admonishes the saints not to criticize or resist those who have the ministry of the Holy Spirit lest they sustain a tremendous loss:

When the Holy Spirit performs this enlightening work within man, it is a very tender and delicate matter. As soon as He meets resistance from man, He immediately withdraws...Not only does the Holy Spirit work in this way; even those who have the ministry of the Holy Spirit work in this way. A servant who knows God and is used by God is always happy to help others. Yet if you criticize him or intentionally resist him, he will not contend with you, reason with you, or argue concerning right or

⁷³ *Life-Study of Genesis*, pp. 1139-1140

wrong. He has only one way: He simply withdraws, having nothing more to say to you and being no longer able to help you. Thus, he who likes to contend is foolish, and the loss he suffers is tremendous! Toward one who has the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we should really be careful! You may freely criticize those who walk on the street, but you should not freely criticize nor purposely dispute with one who has the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that your criticism is not right or your disputation not reasonable; perhaps all your criticisms are right, and all your disputes are reasonable; but one thing is certain: as soon as you criticize him and dispute with him, his ministry toward you is finished. He may be able to help thousands of people, but he cannot help you. It is not that he would not help you, but he cannot help you. Even if he wants to help you, you would gain nothing. What a serious matter this is! How careful we should be!

Thus, toward both the Holy Spirit who speaks within us and the ministers who speak without, we cannot engage in criticism or dispute. The enlightening of the Holy Spirit within man cannot be disputed with, for once you dispute with Him, you will be in darkness for at least several days. This period of darkness is both a punishment and reminder to you.⁷⁴

If we focus on the imperfections and weaknesses of those who minister to us and close our heart to them, we will suffer loss, for we will disqualify ourselves from receiving the rich portion of Christ that God has deposited into them for the sake of the church. We need to feast on the positive aspects of the ministry in the Lord's recovery and disregard its negative aspects so that instead of inflicting damage on ourselves, we may be nourished and perfected by the ministry (1 Tim. 4:6; Eph. 4:12). May we receive mercy from the Lord to see beyond the fallible earthen vessels to the perfect heavenly treasure contained within so that the God of glory who has shined in the hearts of the new covenant ministers may also shine in ours for our transformation into the image of the Christ of glory. Thus may we become the New Jerusalem shining forth the glory of God in Christ for eternity (Rev. 21:10).

⁷⁴ *CWWL*, 1953, vol. 3, pp. 195-196

CHAPTER NINE

THE TRIUMPHANT MINISTRY

The Triumph of Paul's Ministry

In 2 Corinthians the apostle Paul reveals that the apostolic ministry of the new covenant is not only surpassingly glorious, abounding with the eternal glory of God, but also always triumphant, celebrating the glorious victory of Christ. In 2:14-16 Paul employs paradox to describe the triumph of the new covenant ministry by offering the following vivid description:

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God in those who are being saved and in those who are perishing: to some a savor out of death unto death, and to the others a savor out of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Here Paul alludes to a Roman custom in which a general returning from a successful campaign would parade through the streets of Rome with the prisoners he had taken. The victorious commander would lead the long procession as a display of his triumph until presenting his spoils at the Capitol. Part of the pageantry accompanying the procession was the burning of incense, which to the captives who were about to be executed was a savor of death, but to those who were to be spared, it was a savor of life.⁷⁵ Paul likens the Lord Jesus to such a victorious General and himself and his co-workers to the conquered captives in His triumphal procession. Formerly, Paul was an enemy of Christ used by Satan to persecute the believers and ravage the church of God (Gal. 1:13, 23). However, when the resurrected and ascended Christ appeared to him from the heavens, he was defeated by Christ and placed in His train of vanquished foes (Acts 9:1-30; cf. Eph. 4:8). Henceforth, wherever Paul and his fellow apostles, his fellow captives of Christ, traveled for the sake of the ministry, they as incense-bearers scattered abroad the excellent knowledge of Christ as a sweet fragrance (Phil. 3:8). To the believers the apostles as a fragrance of Christ were a savor of life unto life, but to those destined to perish, a savor of death unto death. Hence, in a seeming paradox, on one hand the apostles were defeated ones captured by Christ, but on the other hand, they were participating in His victory throughout their ministry journeys under His leading.

The ministry of Paul and his fellow apostles brought the victory of Christ wherever they went (Rom. 8:37; cf. 1 Cor. 15:54, 57; 1 John 5:4-5). Despite intense opposition, God always led them in triumph in the Christ. Their ministry was unconquerable and ever-victorious, for it was one with the triumphant Christ. Through Paul, the gospel of God's kingdom spread to the Gentile world, reaching a significant portion of the territory around the Mediterranean Sea. Paul's preaching was so widespread that by approximately A.D. 60, a few years before his imprisonment, Paul declared to the Romans that as "a minister of Christ to the Gentiles" he had "fully preached the gospel of Christ" from Jerusalem to Illyricum, a region in Southeast Europe (Rom. 15:16, 19). Through Paul's triumphant ministry throughout the known Gentile world, many sinners were led to salvation, numerous churches were raised up, the name of the Lord was magnified, and "the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (Rom. 15:16; Acts 19:17, 20; 2 Thes. 1:12).

Moreover, because it bore and emitted the fragrance of Christ in every place, this ministry had a potent effect on people, issuing in life to some and death to others. In carrying out their ministry, Paul and his

⁷⁵ W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1881), p. 98

fellow apostles received both *glory* from the lovers of God and *dishonor* from the followers of the devil (2 Cor. 6:8; 1 Cor. 4:10); they received both *evil reports* from the opposers and *good reports* from the believers (Matt. 5:11; 2 Cor. 12:16; 1 Cor. 4:13; Rom. 3:8); and they were despised as *deceivers* in the eyes of the Judaizers and people of other religions and philosophies but esteemed as *true* in the eyes of those who loved the truth of God (cf. Matt. 27:63; 2 Cor. 4:2; 1 Thes. 2:3). According to the book of Acts, Paul repeatedly faced both warm reception and vehement opposition; while some rejoiced, glorified the word of the Lord, were persuaded, believed, welcomed him, received his word with all eagerness, followed him, and joined him (Acts 13:43, 48; 17:4-7, 11-12; 18:7-8; 19:18-19; 21:17; 28:14-15, 23-24), others plotted to kill him, opposed him, contradicted his speaking, blasphemed God, persecuted him, cast him out from their borders, attempted to treat him outrageously and stone him, stoned him until he was left for dead, beat him with rods, threw him into prison, agitated and stirred up crowds against him, scoffed at him, were hardened against him, spoke evil of “the Way,” instigated an uproar against him, and beat him in an attempt to kill him (9:23-25; 13:8; 13:45, 50; 14:5, 19; 16:16-24; 17:13, 32; 18:6; 19:9, 23-41; 20:3; 21:31-36; 23:2-3, 12-22; 25:1-5; 27:42; 28:24-29). Just as the Lord Jesus came to cast fire on the earth, issuing in divisions among people (Luke 12:49), so also the apostles’ ministry stirred up trouble almost everywhere they preached. For instance, after they spoke the gospel to Jews and Greeks in Iconium, “the multitude of the city was divided, and some were with the Jews and some with the apostles” (Acts 14:1-4). They were accused of throwing the city of Philippi into confusion (16:20), caused “no small disturbance” in Ephesus (19:23), and were labeled as “men who have upset the world” (17:6). Paul was referred to as “a pest and an agitator of insurrections among the Jews throughout the inhabited earth” (24:5). As Paul and his fellow apostles marched in Christ’s triumphal procession, scattering the sweet incense of Christ, many who inhaled this aroma of Christ were likewise conquered by Christ, were made captives obedient to the faith, and joined the procession celebrating Christ’s perpetual victory over His enemies (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

The Triumph of the Ministry in the Lord’s Recovery

The ministry in the Lord’s recovery is likewise a triumphant celebration of Christ’s victory—first over the ministers themselves and then over those under their ministry. Before Brother Nee was captured by the Lord, he was recognized by both his classmates and professors as an exceedingly intelligent and capable young man. He harbored many grand dreams and plans for his future, and he despised Christians and preachers in particular, considering preaching a base profession with a meager income. At the age of seventeen, however, he entered a period of conflict over whether to receive Christ or not, knowing that if he did, he would have to resign all other pursuits to serve the Lord. Eventually, as his inner turmoil peaked, he knelt to pray and received a vision in which he saw himself as an unclean sinner and the Lord Jesus hanging on the cross as the gracious Savior welcoming him with outstretched arms (cf. Gal. 3:1-2). Overwhelmed by the Lord’s dying love, Brother Nee received Him as his Savior, confessing his sins with tears. From that day he decided to serve the Lord. Fully conquered by the Lord’s love, he discarded all his cherished worldly ambitions and his promising future to answer the Lord’s call (2 Cor. 5:9, 14-15). Thus was Watchman Nee defeated and added to Christ’s triumphal procession.

As a captive of the Lord, wherever Brother Nee went for the Lord’s ministry, he participated in His victory. Shortly after he was saved, Brother Nee was burdened and led by the Lord to preach the gospel to his schoolmates and countrymen. For a period of time he fasted every Saturday so that he might be empowered by the Lord to preach the gospel the next morning. As a result of his labor, by 1923 almost all of his schoolmates at Trinity College and hundreds of people in his hometown of Foochow had been led to salvation, thus bringing in a great revival. In the early 1920s he saw the revelation in the Bible concerning God’s intention to raise up local churches as a practical expression of the universal Body of

Christ according to the scriptural principle of one church in one city. As a captive, he obeyed the Lord to carry out this vision, bearing and scattering the fragrance of Christ, which became to some a savor out of death unto death and to others a savor out of life unto life (Acts 26:19). Because he abandoned the denominations for being unscriptural, he was opposed by many denominational Christian leaders, including Western missionaries and Chinese preachers. However, he continued to minister Christ and establish local churches throughout China. Even though only a small number of Western missionaries listened to Brother Nee's messages, those who did were astonished by his spiritual insight and weight, and some who had a pure heart were captured for the Lord's recovery. Through Brother Nee's spoken and published ministry countless believers were stirred up to consecrate themselves to the Lord for His move on earth, thereby joyfully entering into the triumphal train of the Lord's vanquished foes (Rom. 12:1). By the time Brother Nee was arrested in 1952, more than one thousand co-workers had been brought into coordination with his ministry, which had raised up about four hundred local churches throughout mainland China and more than thirty local churches in Southeast Asia.

The crowning act of Brother Nee's obedience to the Lord was his decision to remain in China for the work of the Lord's recovery, knowing that this decision would cost him his life. Like the apostle Paul, Brother Nee considered his life of no account as if precious to himself, in order that he might finish his course and fulfill the ministry that he had received from the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:24). During his last visit to Hong Kong in January 1950, the brothers there implored him not to return to the mainland, fearing for his safety. However, Brother Nee determined to go back in order to care for the churches, co-workers, and believers in China, knowing that he would almost surely be sacrificed for the Lord's testimony (Rev. 1:9; 2:13; 20:4). In so doing, Brother Nee lived out the reality of the hymn he wrote describing the spirit of a true captive of Christ:

Every moment, every member,
Girded, waiting Thy command;
Underneath the yoke to labor
Or be laid aside as planned.
When restricted in pursuing,
No disquiet will beset;
Underneath Thy faithful dealing
Not a murmur or regret.

Ever tender, quiet, restful,
Inclinations put away,
That Thou may for me choose freely
As Thy finger points the way.
Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me,
For my very life art Thou;
Thee I take to all my problems
As the full solution now.⁷⁶

From the moment he was captured by Christ as a young man to his martyrdom after two decades of imprisonment, Brother Nee was manifestly a sweet fragrance of Christ wherever he went. The Christ who had been wrought into Brother Nee became both a pleasant aroma to God for His enjoyment and a

⁷⁶ *Hymns, #403*

savor of life unto life in the countless believers who joined themselves to this ministry and thus became part of Christ's triumphant and fragrant procession.

One such believer was Brother Lee. Prior to his regeneration Witness Lee was full of ambition regarding his education and future, possessing lofty intentions not only for himself but also for the advancement of his country. At the age of nineteen he experienced a dynamic salvation and was captured by a gospel message that revealed man's need to be saved from the usurping and enslaving hand of Satan (1 John 5:19; Acts 26:18; Matt. 12:26; cf. Exo. 1:8-14; 3:7-11). The same day on which Witness Lee believed in the Lord to be delivered from Satan's tyranny (Col. 1:13), he also gave his whole life to serve Him (2 Cor. 8:5), vowing:

"O Lord, even if You were to give me the whole world and make me the king, I would not want it. I want to take my Bible and go to the countryside to preach the gospel from village to village; I want to do this my whole life. If there is no water to drink, I will drink from mountain brooks. If there is no food to eat, I will eat tree roots."⁷⁷

Seven years later the Lord used Brother Lee to raise up a church in his hometown of Chefoo. The following year Brother Lee again experienced the Lord conquering him; after three weeks of struggling to answer the Lord's calling to set aside his job and serve the Lord by faith with his full time, he was at last subdued and gave up his lucrative position. About a year later Brother Nee and his co-workers asked Brother Lee to move to Shanghai to labor with them in the Lord's work there, recommending him to seek the Lord's leading concerning this move. When Brother Lee realized that this was the Lord's leading, he migrated to Shanghai, willingly laying aside his work in the church in Chefoo as well as his personal intention to carry out a prevailing work in northern China (cf. Acts 16:6-10). It was because of such willingness to be conquered by the Lord and obediently enter into another's ministry that Brother Lee could triumphantly manifest the savor of the knowledge of Him in his own ministry.

In particular, from the early 1930s to 1988 the Lord granted Brother Lee what he called "four major successes," referring to his work in Chefoo, Shanghai, Taiwan with the Southeast Asian countries, and the United States.⁷⁸ By shepherding the believers personally and ministering according to Brother Nee's blueprint for the building of the church, Brother Lee ushered in a great revival in the church in Chefoo at the end of 1942. Beginning on January 1, 1943, the church met continuously for one hundred days. Over eight hundred saints offered themselves, their families, and all their possessions to the Lord for the church (cf. Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37). The whole church preached the gospel actively, leading to hundreds of baptisms in the first five months of 1943 (cf. 5:42; 8:4). In the same year many of the saints migrated throughout northern China, including Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, for the spread of the gospel and the Lord's testimony (cf. 8:1, 4; 11:19).

In 1947 the Lord's triumphal procession moved to Shanghai, where Brother Lee continued to implement the blueprint of God's building and presented the vision of the tree of life. Under Brother Lee's ministry, the entire church in Shanghai participated in preaching the gospel. Through this revival many saints who had been affected by the turmoil in 1942, which had caused the church in Shanghai to stop meeting, were recovered and healed. Consequently, from the summer of 1946 to the summer of 1947, the number of saints attending the Lord's table meeting in Shanghai increased from about three hundred to

⁷⁷ *CWWL, 1994-1997*, vol. 4, p. 513

⁷⁸ *The Scriptural Way to Meet and to Serve for the Building up of the Body of Christ*, p. 283

more than one thousand.⁷⁹ In a few years more than one thousand saints in Shanghai consecrated themselves and their possessions to the Lord for the church. In those days the meeting hall of the church in Shanghai was often so crowded with people that some of the saints had to stand on the street outside during the meetings.

This triumphant ministry continued on to the island of Taiwan beginning from 1949, after Brother Lee obeyed the Lord to migrate there from Shanghai for the preservation and continuation of the ministry. Even though Brother Lee dearly wished to remain with Brother Nee and the co-workers in mainland China for the Lord's testimony, they sent him out in order to ensure that the precious things entrusted to them by the Lord would not be lost. Realizing that this was the Lord's perfect will for him (Matt. 26:39, 42), Brother Lee obeyed as a slave of the Lord and moved to the then-backward island of Taiwan (Phil. 2:8). Although the work began with a small number of saints and very few churches, through the Lord's blessing on Brother Lee's tireless labor and faithful ministry of the word, the number of saints in Taiwan increased more than thirtyfold within the first year. In less than six years, from 1949 to 1954, the number of saints increased from fewer than five hundred to about fifty thousand.⁸⁰ The churches in Taiwan were so prevailing that when Brother T. Austin-Sparks visited Taiwan in 1955, he testified that in his entire life he had never spoken before such a marvelous congregation.⁸¹ The 1950s saw not only a revival and rapid increase in the churches in Taiwan but also the spread of the Lord's recovery to countries in the Far East and Southeast Asia, including Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore. Through his labor hundreds of churches were raised up. Such a prevailing move was truly a splendid march of the victorious Lord "in every place" (2 Cor. 2:14).

In the 1960s the Lord's triumphal procession continued on to the United States. Although Brother Lee had no intention to move to the West, on his third visit to this country the Lord constrained him to remain here for His work. As a man in his late fifties who had lived all of his life in the Chinese-speaking world, Brother Lee realized that carrying out the Lord's work in the United States would involve considerable hardship. Nevertheless, undaunted by linguistic and cultural barriers, Brother Lee submitted himself to the Lord's commission to minister in a new country, beginning with a conference in Los Angeles in December 1962. Throughout the 1960s he not only ministered in Los Angeles but also traveled extensively within the United States at the invitation of numerous Christian groups, many of which were dissatisfied with the denominations and had begun to meet as independent groups. Through these visits many seeking believers were captured by the Lord and decided to take the way of His recovery. One such group of Christians voluntarily sold their meeting hall, offered the money from the sale to the church in Los Angeles, and migrated to Los Angeles in order to meet with the church there. In the early years of the work in this country, from 1963 to 1969, most of the increase came from Brother Lee's personal visitations throughout the States. Further, the church life in Los Angeles was so attractive and prevailing that many seekers of the Lord from various parts of the United States, and some even from Africa, New Zealand, and Europe, came to experience the sweet one accord. Many were led to consecrate themselves for Christ and the church and paid the price to migrate to Los Angeles for the church life, joining the ranks of the Lord's conquered captives.

⁷⁹ *CWWL, 1981*, vol. 2, p. 132

⁸⁰ *The Intrinsic Problem in the Lord's Recovery Today and Its Scriptural Remedy*, p. 42; *The Crystallization of the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 96; *Life-Study of Romans*, p. 72

⁸¹ *Further Consideration of the Eldership, the Region of Work, and the Care for the Body of Christ*, p. 25

The work of the Lord's recovery in the United States began with only about twenty-five saints meeting in a home. Eight years later, in 1970, Brother Lee held a conference with more than one thousand saints meeting in the Embassy Hotel in Los Angeles. In that year, under Brother Lee's leadership, over four hundred saints migrated out of Los Angeles to ten major U.S. cities for the spread of the Lord's testimony. By 1973 twenty-seven churches had been raised up in the United States, and a conference that Brother Lee held in the Los Angeles Convention Center that year was attended by more than three thousand saints. Surely this testifies to the triumph of the true new covenant ministry.

As a genuine new covenant minister, Brother Lee was not only a savor of life unto life to seeking believers who received his ministry but also a savor of death unto death to those who felt threatened by the results of his work. It was after the successful migration of the saints in 1970 that Brother Lee's ministry began to encounter intensified opposition from leaders in organized Christianity, some of whom were alarmed that members of their groups were joining the local churches. Just as Paul was called a pestilent fellow (Acts 24:5), Brother Lee was accused of being "a trouble-maker" and agitating the religious status quo. However, as Brother Lee noted, the intense opposition from Christianity against the Lord's recovery proved that His recovery in this country had become quite prevailing, since "people do not oppose anything that is not prevailing."⁸² Brother Lee was a man of Chinese descent who ministered the word in accented English and did not have a theological degree or seminary training. Nonetheless, thousands of Americans eagerly received his ministry and eventually joined the Lord's triumphal procession as defeated captives. This is because the sweet-smelling savor of Christ, who was constituted into our brother and emanated out of him, was a savor of life unto life to these hungry seekers of Christ.

As Brother Lee predicted in 1987, the United States proved to be "the center of the Lord's spread throughout the earth to prepare the way for His return."⁸³ Indeed, from the United States, the Lord's recovery spread to Europe, Australasia, Africa, and South America.⁸⁴ Moreover, because Brother Lee released his messages in English, the Lord's ministry in His recovery was no longer confined to the Chinese language and could easily be spread throughout the earth. By 1997, the year Brother Lee went to be with the Lord, a great number of books containing his messages had been translated into at least fourteen languages, including Chinese, Spanish, Russian, Korean, Japanese, and Portuguese. This paved the way for the ministry in the recovery to spread to every continent. During the 1970s and 1980s Brother Lee visited many countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Israel, Brazil, and a number of European countries, in order to strengthen the churches and perfect the saints. His tireless labor resulted in the building up of the local churches throughout the entire earth. By 1996 there were approximately two hundred-fifty local churches in the United States and two thousand three hundred local churches on earth, not including mainland China. This abundant fruit and glorious triumph of the ministry in the Lord's recovery testifies that this ministry is indeed the genuine New Testament ministry.

That our brother's ministry triumphed in every place he visited is confirmed by a note that Brother Lee wrote in 1977 on Joshua 1:5-7, which reads, "When I was called by the Lord to serve Him with my full time in 1933, He gave me verses 5 through 7 as a promise. Since then, for over forty years, this promised has been all the time fulfilled to me."⁸⁵ The verses are as follows:

⁸² *CWWL 1973-1974*, vol. 1, p. 136

⁸³ *CWWL, 1987*, vol. 1, p. 3

⁸⁴ *CWWL, 1987*, vol. 1, p. 3

⁸⁵ *CWWL, Bible Notes & Hymns*, vol. 1, pp. 326-327

No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you nor forsake you. Be strong and take courage, for you will cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give to them. Only be strong and very courageous, being certain to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you. Do not turn away from it to the right or to the left, that you may have success wherever you go.

In view of the history of the Lord's prevailing move among us, we bear witness that no opposer or dissenter was able to defeat Brother Lee's ministry in all the years he ministered, from 1933 to 1997. As the Lord was with Brother Nee, so also He was with Brother Lee. The Lord never failed or forsook him; instead, our brother was empowered in the Lord's grace to bring many of His children into the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ as the good and spacious land (2 Tim. 2:1; Col. 1:12; 2:6-7; Josh. 14:1; Phil. 1:19; Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:12; 2:6-7; Heb. 4:8-9; Matt. 11:28-29; cf. Deut. 8:7-10). Wherever he went for the Lord's ministry, he had success. Just as Joseph was "a fruitful bough" whose "branches run over the wall" (Gen. 49:22), so also Brother Lee was an exceedingly fruitful bough whose branches spread Christ over every wall of restriction raised up by the opposers, magnifying and ministering Him in all circumstances (Phil. 1:19-21; 4:22).

The triumph of Brother Lee's ministry was not only the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to him in Joshua 1:5-7 but also the realization of an extraordinary God-given dream. One night, shortly before he was imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese military police in 1943, he dreamed of a gentleman who was taking a peaceful walk while carrying a cane. Suddenly, he came to a steep downward slope with four crooked steps. He descended the slope step by step with fear and trembling, leaning on his cane. When he reached the bottom, a German shepherd, whose color resembled that of a Japanese military uniform, pounced on him. However, although the gentleman was frightened, the dog did not harm him. After the dog left, he looked ahead and saw "a broad highway very straight and stretching on boundlessly, and the sun had just risen from the east."⁸⁶ As soon as he saw the broad highway, the rising sun, and the boundless, bright horizon, his heart felt free and released, and he "strode fearlessly onward."⁸⁷ Afterward, the Lord gave Brother Lee the understanding to interpret his dream. Brother Lee was the gentleman, and the cane signified the Lord's grace, by which Brother Lee was walking (2 Cor. 1:12; 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10). The four steps referred to the last four years of the Sino-Japanese war, which were a very difficult time for China, and the German shepherd signified the Japanese, who would trouble him but would not be permitted to harm him. This interpretation greatly comforted Brother Lee, for he realized that the Lord would preserve him despite his imprisonment, and that after this hardship the Lord would open for him a broad highway with a boundless future. In 1983 Brother Lee testified that the Lord's rich blessing on his labor in Shanghai in the 1940s, in Taiwan and Southeast Asia in the 1950s, and in the United States in the 1960s and onward proved that his uncommon dream in 1943 was a genuine vision that had been and continued to be fulfilled in the Lord's recovery, and that every day he was "walking on this broad highway, step by step."⁸⁸ Not only did Brother Lee remain in this dream until he passed away, but he also brought many saints to see what he saw and participate with him in the Lord's triumphant

⁸⁶ *A Blessed Human Life*, pp. 69-70

⁸⁷ *A Blessed Human Life*, p. 70

⁸⁸ *A Blessed Human Life*, p. 72; *CWWL*, 1986, vol. 2, p. 534; for detailed accounts of this dream see *A Blessed Human Life*, pp. 69-74; *CWWL*, 1981, vol. 2, pp. 99-103; *CWWL*, 1984, vol. 1, pp. 286-291; and *CWWL*, 1986, vol. 2, pp. 531-534

ministry. We believe that by the Lord's mercy, many of these saints will continue in this dream and walk on this highway until the Body of Christ is built up unto the bright day of the Lord's second coming.

For this reason, long after Brother Lee went to be with the Lord, the Lord's move today in His recovery is still prevailing, and the entire earth is open to the spread of the divine truths in the holy Word presented by the ministry in the Lord's recovery. Although Brother Lee departed to be with the Lord in 1997, his ministry has been continued by a group of his co-workers and propagated by countless saints in the local churches. Both the co-workers and the saints are captives of Christ who have been conquered by Christ through the ministry and are now diffusing the savor of the knowledge of Christ wherever they go. This is the fulfillment of Brother Lee's earnest expectation expressed in 1982 that the young people in the local churches would participate in the new covenant ministry by scattering the incense of Christ in every place:

In my ministry I am not merely a teacher or a preacher—I am one scattering the incense of my Lord. I am beside myself with love for Him, and I desire to scatter His incense. Everyone in the Lord's recovery must be a person scattering the incense of Christ. Wherever we go we should scatter this incense.

Some have wondered why a number of Christians in this country have been willing to receive my ministry. The reason is that I am scattering the incense of Christ. This is my unique occupation, my unique profession. My major in the heavenly university was scattering the incense of Christ. I expect that in the years to come many among us, especially the young people, will rise up to scatter Christ's incense. Young people, your aspiration should be to scatter the incense of Christ.⁸⁹

As Brother Lee gave message after message in conferences and trainings, he not only released points of truth but also scattered the incense of Christ to countless saints, including many young people, thereby imparting the Spirit of Christ as the divine fragrance into them (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11). Consequently, they were gloriously defeated by Christ and likewise became a fragrance of His sweetness. The Lord's recovery has a bright future because of the saints who, under the genuine new covenant ministry, have been made captives in Christ's triumphal procession, participate in His victory, and scatter the aroma of Christ in every place. Such ones will continue to carry out the new covenant ministry on the broad and bright highway until the bride is matured and the Bridegroom returns (Rev. 19:7; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20).

⁸⁹ *Life-study of Second Corinthians*, p. 158

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

After comparing the ministry of the apostle Paul as presented in 2 Corinthians with the ministry of Brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, we must conclude that the ministry in the Lord's recovery is the genuine New Testament ministry. Although the aspects and qualifications of proper ministers covered in these few pages are not exhaustive, they certainly form the core of what constitutes a genuine new covenant minister. If anyone regards himself as having a share in this ministry, we must ask whether he matches the above pattern of the apostle Paul. Does he minister the life-giving Spirit into the believers in order to produce them as letters of Christ? Do the believers under his ministry receive Christ so that they may live and magnify Him as their subjective righteousness? Is the result of his ministry that believers are brought into peace and oneness with God, even to the extent that they continually live in their regenerated spirit as the practical Holy of Holies? Does the minister betroth the believers as a pure virgin to Christ as their unique Husband rather than draw them to himself?

With regard to our brothers Nee and Lee, after careful study and with a pure conscience before God and men, I must give a resounding yes to all these questions. Furthermore, Brother Nee and Brother Lee not only received transcendent revelations in the Bible but were also willing to pass through the intense suffering required for these revelations to be made a rich supply for the saints. As a result, their ministry bore the mark of death and resurrection. As persons who repeatedly and continually experienced the termination of the cross and the God of resurrection, they ministered life to others by dying to themselves. And in resurrection, the ministry of these brothers manifestly abounds with glory. Though they were but earthen vessels, their writings continue to shine forth the divine treasure into thousands of seeking believers to transform them into the New Jerusalem, the city of glory. And until today, their ministry is being spread by the faithful co-workers throughout the earth, diffusing the sweet fragrance of Christ, which year after year compels yet more to join Christ's triumphant procession.

These unmistakable consistencies between the apostle Paul's ministry and that of Brother Nee and Brother Lee indicate that Paul's life and ministry were organically reproduced in our brothers; to a great extent, the intrinsic contents of Paul's autobiography recorded in 2 Corinthians were duplicated in our brothers' history. Indeed, we must ask: since the time of the apostles in the first century, where else have we witnessed a life and ministry that so closely matches the pattern of the apostle Paul? Like Paul, Brother Nee and Brother Lee bore the brands of Jesus, their beloved Master, continually living a crucified life in resurrection for the ministering of life to others and remaining obedient to God for the accomplishment of His will at any cost (Gal. 6:17). They were imitators of the apostle Paul, even as he was an imitator of Christ (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1), and their ministry is a faithful reproduction of that of the Lord Jesus, the prototype of a New Testament minister, and of Paul, the foremost pattern given by the Lord (1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Tim. 1:16).

Dear saints, who are we to have been given such a weighty and valuable treasure? Should we not be grateful to the Lord for crowning us with His lovingkindness? It is truly His sovereign mercy that brought us into contact with this precious ministry (Rom. 9:15-23). May the Lord open our eyes to see its true value, and may His mercy continue to keep us in this ministry for the carrying out of God's New Testament economy so that He might gain the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem—the fulfillment of His heart's desire for His eternal corporate expression and counterpart (Rev. 21:2, 9-10).