

Bancroft Mission

Sunday School Lessons:

The Normal Christian Life

Part II

THESE LESSONS HAVE BEEN ADAPTED, WITHOUT PERMISSION, FROM THE BOOK, *"THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE"* BY WATCHMEN NEE.

THESE LESSONS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE SOLD OR GENERATE IN ANY WAY FINANCIAL GAIN FOR BANCROFT MISSION.

STATEMENT: IT HAS BEEN OBSERVED THAT MR. NEE IS VERY REPETITIVE IN HIS TEACHING. HE IS USING A METHOD OF HOMILETICS (METHOD OF SERMON DELIVERY) USED BY CHARLES FINNEY. CHARLES FINNEY WAS A TRAINED ATTORNEY WHEN HE RECEIVED JESUS AS HIS SAVIOR. MR. FINNEY UTILIZED WHAT HE WAS TAUGHT IN LAW SCHOOL WHEN ADDRESSING A JURY: SAYING THE SAME THING OVER SEVERAL TIMES BUT IN DIFFERENT WAYS. PAUL, THE APOSTLE, SAID IN PHILIPPIANS 3:1, "FINALLY, MY BRETHREN, REJOICE IN THE LORD. FOR ME TO WRITE THE SAME THINGS TO YOU IS NOT TEDIOUS, BUT FOR YOU IT IS SAFE."

Lessons 1 and 2 (More if necessary)

The Holy Spirit

Introduction:

We have spoken of the eternal purpose of God as the motive and explanation of all His dealings with us. Now, before we return to our study of the phases of Christian experience as set forth in Romans, we must digress yet again in order to consider something which lies at the heart of all our experience as the **vitalizing power of effective life and service. I refer to the personal presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit of God.** And here, too, let us take as our starting point two verses from Romans, one from each of our sections. "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us" (Romans 5:5). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9)

I. Two Aspects.

A. The Spirit outpoured.

B. Spirit indwelling.

C. Outward and the inward manifestation of His working.

1. Old Testament saints.

a. In their day it was a gift given only to the few.

b. Chiefly to priests, judges, kings, and prophets.

2. Now, it is the portion of every child of God.

a. Receiving the gift of the outpoured Holy Spirit we join the ranks of God's chosen servants of the Old Testament dispensation.

b. The value of this gift of God..

c. Realize our deep need.

We shall immediately ask, "How can I receive the Holy Spirit in this way, to equip me with spiritual gifts and to empower me for God's service?"

II. The Spirit Outpoured.

A. Acts 2: 32-36, "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: '*The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*'" 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

1. Consider verses 33 and 36 together.
2. Peter states that the Lord Jesus was exalted "at the right hand of God."
 - a. The result.
 - b. Received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost.
 - c. The result of His exaltation was---"this, which you see and hear."

What, then, was the basis upon which the Spirit was first given to the Lord Jesus to be poured out upon His people? It was His exaltation to Heaven. This passage makes it absolutely clear that the Holy Spirit was poured out because the Lord Jesus was exalted. The outpouring of the Spirit has no relation to your merits or mine, but only to the merits of the Lord Jesus. The question of what we are does not come into consideration at all here, but only what He is. He is glorified; therefore the Spirit is poured out.

- B. Because the Lord Jesus died on the cross, I have received forgiveness of sins.
- C. Because the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, I have received new life.
- D. Because the Lord Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father, I have received the outpoured Spirit.

All is Because of Him! The Holy Spirit has not been poured out on us to prove how great we are, but to prove the greatness of the Son of God.

- E. Now look at verse 36.
 1. There is a word here which demands our careful attention: the word "therefore."
 2. How is the word generally used?
 - a. Not to introduce a statement.
 - b. But to follow a statement that has already been made.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 125, "Its use always implies that something has been mentioned before. Now what has preceded this particular 'therefore'? With what is it connected? It cannot reasonably be connected with either verse 34 or verse 35, but it quite obviously relates back to verse 33. Peter has just referred to the outpouring of the Spirit upon the disciples "which ye see and hear", and he says: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified". Peter says, in effect, to his audience: 'This outpouring of the Spirit, which you have witnessed with your own eyes and ears, proves that Jesus of Nazareth whom

ye crucified is now both Lord and Christ'. The Holy Spirit was poured out on earth to prove what had taken place in Heaven—the exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth to the right hand of God. The purpose of Pentecost is to prove the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”

c. Genesis 45:21-28, “Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. 22 He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver and five changes of garments. 23 And he sent to his father these *things*: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. 24 So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, “See that you do not become troubled along the way.” 25 Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. 26 And they told him, saying, “Joseph *is* still alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt.” And Jacob’s heart stood still, because he did not believe them. **27 But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.** 28 Then Israel said, “*It is* enough. Joseph my son *is* still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 126, “What do the chariots represent here? They surely typify here the Holy Spirit, sent both to be the evidence that God’s Son is in glory and to convey us there. How do we know that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified by wicked men nearly two thousand years ago, did not just die a martyr’s death but is at the Father’s right hand in glory? How can we know for a surety that He is Lord of lords and King of kings? We can know it beyond dispute because He has poured out His Spirit upon us. Hallelujah! Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Christ! Jesus of Nazareth is both Lord and Christ!”

It was a revelation of what the Lord had done for the world that brought to an end our efforts to secure forgiveness of sins, and it is a revelation of what the Lord has done for His Church that will bring to an end our efforts to secure the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We work because we have not seen the work of Christ. But when once we have seen that, faith will spring up in our hearts, and as we believe, experience will follow.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 128 and 129, “Some time ago a young man, who had only been a Christian for five weeks and who had formerly been violently opposed to the gospel, attended a series of meetings which I was addressing in Shanghai. At the close of one in which I was speaking along the above lines, he went home and began to pray earnestly, ‘Lord, I do want the power of the Holy Spirit. Seeing Thou hast now been glorified, wilt Thou not now pour out Thy Spirit upon me?’ Then he corrected himself: ‘Oh no, Lord, that’s all wrong!’ and began to pray again: ‘Lord Jesus, we are in a life-partnership, Thou and I, and the Father has promised us two things—glory for Thee, and the Spirit for me. Thou, Lord, hast received the glory; therefore it is unthinkable that I have not received the Spirit. Lord, I praise Thee! Thou hast already received the glory, and I have already received the Spirit.’ From that day the power of the Spirit was consciously upon him.”

III. Faith is Again the Key.

A. As soon as we see the Lord Jesus on the Cross, we know our sins are forgiven.

B. As soon as we see the Lord Jesus on the Throne, we know the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us.

The basis upon which we receive the endowment of the Holy Spirit is not our praying and fasting and waiting, but the exaltation of Christ.

Example from Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 129 and 130, "Suppose an unbeliever expresses the desire to be saved, and you explain to him the way of salvation and pray with him. Suppose then he prays after this fashion: 'Lord Jesus, I believe Thou hast died for me, and that Thou canst blot out all my sins. I truly believe Thou wilt forgive me.' Have you any confidence that that man is saved? When will you rest assured that he has really been born again? Not when he prays: 'Lord, I believe Thou wilt forgive my sins', but when he says: 'Lord, I praise Thee that Thou hast forgiven my sins. Thou hast died for me; therefore my sins are blotted out.'"

1. When we cease to plead with the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon us.
2. When instead we trustfully praise Him that the Spirit *has been* poured out because the Lord Jesus *has been* glorified.
3. We will find that the problem is solved.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 139, "Praise God! no single child of His need agonize, nor even wait, for the Spirit to be given. Jesus is not going to be made Lord; He is Lord. Therefore I am not going to receive the Spirit; I have received the Spirit. It is all a question of the faith which comes by revelation. When our eyes are opened to see that the Spirit has already been poured out because Jesus has already been glorified, then prayer turns to praise in our hearts.

IV. Example from Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 132, "Suppose I went into a bookshop, selected a two-volume book, priced at ten shillings, and, having put down a ten-shilling note, walked out of the shop, carelessly leaving one volume on the counter. When I reached home and discovered the oversight, what do you think I should do? I should go straight back to the shop to get the forgotten book, but I should not dream of paying anything for it. I should simply explain to the shopkeeper that both volumes were duly paid for, and ask him if he would therefore kindly let me have the second one; and without any further payment I should march happily out of the shop with my possession under my arm. Would you not do the same under the same circumstances?"

- A. We are under the same circumstances.
1. We have already taken the one.
 2. Why not just come and take the other now?
 3. Say to the Lord, "Lord, I have complied with the condition for receiving remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost, but I have foolishly taken only the former. Now at length I have come back to you to take the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to praise you for it.

THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: 1. DO WE KNOW EVERYTHING? 2. IS THERE MORE REVELATION? 3. DO WE WANT TRUTH OR TO BE PROVED RIGHT?

- B. The diversity of the experience.

From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 133, “But you ask: ‘How shall I know that the Holy Spirit is come upon me?’ I cannot tell how you will know, but you will know. No description has been given us of the personal sensations and emotions of the disciples at Pentecost. We do not know exactly how they felt, but we do know that their feelings and behaviour were somewhat abnormal, because people seeing them said they were intoxicated. When the Holy Spirit falls upon God’s people there will be some things which the world cannot account for. There will be supernatural accompaniments of some kind, though it be no more than an overwhelming sense of the Divine Presence. We cannot and we must not stipulate what particular form such outward expressions will take in any given case, but one thing is sure, that each one upon whom the Spirit of God falls will know it.”

1. “But you ask: ‘How shall I know that the Holy Spirit is come upon me?’ I cannot tell how you will know, but you will know. No description has been given us of the personal sensations and emotions of the disciples at Pentecost. We do not know exactly how they felt, but we do know that their feelings and behaviour were somewhat abnormal, because people seeing them said they were intoxicated. When the Holy Spirit falls upon God’s people there will be some things which the world cannot account for.”

2. “There will be supernatural accompaniments of some kind, though it be no more than an overwhelming sense of the Divine Presence.”

3. One of the main experiences is a heightened sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, especially in His leading to fulfill His task.

“We cannot and we must not stipulate what particular form such outward expressions will take in any given case, but one thing is sure, that each one upon whom the Spirit of God falls will know it.”

C. When the Holy Spirit falls upon believers, some will prophesy, some will dream dreams, and others will see visions. This is what God has stated through the prophet Joel.”

1. In Joel 2:28&29, “And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. 29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.” Yet, these evidences were apparently lacking at Pentecost.

a. What is the explanation of this mystery?

b. Note carefully that Peter did not say: “What you see and hear fulfills what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

c. What he said was: “This is that which has been spoken by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16).

d. It was not a case of fulfillment, but of an experience *of the same order*.

A MUST READ FOR ALL

The following are wonderful examples of men of whom we are familiar: (From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, “What happened to R.A. Torrey when the Holy Spirit came upon him after he had been a minister for years? Let him tell it in his own words: ‘I recall the exact spot where I was kneeling in prayer in my study... It was very quiet moment, one of the most quiet moments I ever knew... Then God

simply said to me, not in any audible voice, but in my heart. "It's yours. Now go and preach." He had already said it to me in His Word in 1 John 5:14, 15; but I did not then know my Bible as I know it now, and God had pity on my ignorance and said it directly to my soul... I went and preached, and I have been a new minister from that day to this... Some time after this experience (I do not recall just how long after), while sitting in my room one day... suddenly... I found myself shouting (I was not brought up to shout and I am not of a shouting temperament, but I shouted like the loudest shouting Methodist), "Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God", and I could not stop. ... But that was not when I was baptized with the Holy Spirit. I was baptized with the Holy Spirit when I took Him by simple faith in The Word of God.' 10 The outward manifestations in Torrey's case were not the same as those described by Joel or by Peter, but "this is that". It is not a facsimile, yet it is the same thing. And how did D.L. Moody feel and act when the Spirit came upon him? 'I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York—oh, what a day! —I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world - it would be as the small dust of the balance.' The outward manifestation that accompanied Moody's experience did not tally exactly with Joel's description, or Peter's, or Torrey's, but who could doubt that "this" which Moody experienced was "that" experienced by the disciples at Pentecost? It was not the same in manifestation, but it was the very same in essence. 10 The Holy Spirit, who He is and what He does, by R.A. Torrey, D.D., pp. 198-9. The Life of Dwight L. Moody, by his son, W.R. Moody, p. 149. 80 The Diversity Of The Experience experienced was "that" experienced by the disciples at Pentecost? It was not the same in manifestation, but it was the very same in essence. And what was the experience of the great Charles Finney when the power of the Holy Ghost came upon him? 'I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me body and soul. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love.'" "Finney's experience was not a duplicate of Pentecost, nor of Torrey's experience, nor of Moody's; but "this" certainly was "that". When the Holy Spirit is poured out upon God's people their experiences will differ widely. Some will receive new vision, others will know a new liberty in soul-winning, others will proclaim the Word of God with power, and yet others will be filled with heavenly joy or overflowing praise. "This... and this... and this... is that!"

2. We must not, by our prejudices and preconceptions, make watertight compartments for the working of His Spirit, either in our own lives or in the lives of others.

3. **We must leave God free to work as He wills, and to give what evidence He pleases of the work He does. He is Lord, and it is not for us to legislate for Him.**

V. The Spirit Indwelling.

A. The second aspect of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1. "If so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you..." (Romans 8:9).

2. “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you...” (Romans 8:11).

B. As with Spirit outpoured, so with the Spirit indwelling.

As with the Spirit outpoured, so with the Spirit indwelling, if we are to know in experience that which is ours in fact, our first need is of Divine revelation. When we see Christ as Lord objectively—that is, as exalted to the throne in Heaven—then we shall experience the power of the Spirit upon us. When we see Christ as Lord subjectively—that is, as effective Ruler within our lives—then we shall know the power of the Spirit within us.

C. A revelation of the indwelling Spirit was the remedy Paul offered the Corinthian Christians for their unspirituality.

1. It is important to note that the Christians in Corinth had become preoccupied with the visible signs of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring and were making much of ‘tongues’ and miracles, while at the same time their lives were full of contradictions and were a reproach to the Lord’s Name.

2. In his letter to them Paul wrote: “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). For others he prayed for enlightenment of heart, “...that ye may know” (Ephesians 1:18).

D. It is no less the need of Christians today.

1. WE need the eyes of our understanding opened to know that God Himself, through the Holy Spirit, has taken up His abode in our hearts.

2. Thus if the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts we have the Father and the Son abiding in us.

3. That is no mere theory or doctrine, but a blessed reality.

4. The Spirit who dwells within us is no mere influence, but a living person; He is very God—He is not an “it.”

5. We are only earthen vessels (2nd Corinthians 4:7), but in these earthen vessels we carry a treasure of unspeakable worth, even the Lord of Glory.

VI. The Absolute Lordship of Christ.

“Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

A. This verse now takes us a stage further.

1. When we see that we are the dwelling place of God, then a full surrender of ourselves to God must follow.

2. Consecration will follow revelation.

The difference between victorious Christians and defeated ones is not that some have the Spirit while others have not, but that some know His indwelling and others do not, and that consequently some recognize the Divine ownership of their lives while others are still their own masters.

B. Revelation is the first step to holiness, and consecration is the second.

1. A day must come in our lives, as definite as the day of our conversion, when we give up all right to ourselves and submit to the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ.

2. Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 144 and 145, "There may be a practical issue raised by God to test the reality of our consecration, but whether that be so or not, there must be a day when, without reservation, we surrender everything to Him—ourselves, our families, our possessions, our business and our time. All we are and have become is His, to be held henceforth entirely at His disposal. From that day we are no longer our own masters, but only stewards. Not until the Lordship of Jesus Christ is a settled thing in our hearts can the Spirit really operate effectively in us. He cannot direct our lives effectually until all control of them is committed to Him. If we do not give Him absolute authority in our lives, He can be present, but He cannot be powerful. The power of the Spirit is stayed."

C. Are living for the Lord or for ourselves?

1. Is there anything God is asking us that we are withholding from Him?

2. Not something we are struggling with: ego, pride, business—something that we are living with.

3. Is there any point of contention between us and Him?

Not till every controversy is settled and the Holy Spirit is given full sway can He reproduce the life of Christ in the heart of any believer.

Not until we take the place of a servant can He take His place as Lord. He is not calling us to devote ourselves to His cause: He is asking us to yield ourselves unconditionally to His will. Are we willing for anything He wills?

Lessons 4 and 5 (or more)

The Path of Progress: Walking in the Spirit

STATEMENT: MR. NEE ATTRIBUTES TO ADAM WHAT SHOULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE FLESH. ALL OF ADAM DIED ON THE CROSS. ADAM STRUGGLED WITH THE FLESH BEFORE THE FALL. JAMES 1:14, "BUT EACH ONE IS TEMPTED WHEN HE IS DRAWN AWAY BY HIS OWN DESIRES AND ENTICED." THE DEVIL PUTS IN FRONT OF US WHAT THE FLESH DESIRES.

Introduction: "Coming now to Romans 8 we may first summarize the argument of our second section of the letter from chapter 5:12 to chapter 8:39 in two phrases, each containing a contrast and each marking an aspect of Christian experience. They are: Romans 5:12 to 6:23: 'In Adam' and 'in Christ'. Romans 7:1 to 8:39: 'In the flesh' and 'in the Spirit'.

"We need to understand the relationship of these four things. The former two are 'objective' and set forth our position, firstly as we were by nature and secondly as we now are by faith in the redemptive work of Christ. The latter two are 'subjective' and relate to our walk as a matter of practical experience. Scripture makes it clear that the first two give us only a part of the picture and that the second two are required to complete it. We think it enough to be "in Christ", but we learn now that we must also walk "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9). The frequent occurrence of "the Spirit" in the early part of Romans 8 serves to emphasize this further important lesson of the Christian life."

I. The Flesh and the Spirit.

A. Ask ourselves, "Am I living in the flesh or in the Spirit?"

1. To live in the flesh is to do something "out from" myself.
2. It is to derive strength from the natural source of life. 1st Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

B. To enjoy in experience what is true of me as in Him.

1. It is a historic fact that in Christ my old man was crucified.
2. It is a present fact that we are blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:30).

But if I do not live in the Spirit, then my life may be quite a contradiction of the fact that I am in Christ, for what is true of me in Him is not expressed in me. I may recognize that I am in Christ, but I may also have to face the fact that my flesh is very much in evidence. What is the trouble? It is that I am holding the truth merely objectively, whereas what is true objectively must be made true subjectively; and that is brought about as I live in the Spirit.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 179 and 180, "Not only am I in Christ, but Christ is in me. And just as physically a man cannot live and work in water but only in air, so spiritually Christ dwells

and manifests Himself not in ‘flesh’ but in ‘spirit’. Therefore if I live “after the flesh” I find that what is mine in Christ is, so to say, held in suspense in me. Though in fact I am in Christ, yet if I live in the flesh—that is, in my own strength and under my own direction—then in experience I find to my dismay that it is what is in Adam that manifests itself in me. If I would know in experience all that is in Christ, then I must learn to live in the Spirit.”

“Living in the Spirit means that I trust the Holy Spirit to do in me what I cannot do myself. This life is completely different from the life I would naturally live of myself. Each time I am faced with a new demand from the Lord, I look to Him to do in me what He requires of me. It is not a case of trying but of trusting; not of struggling but of resting in Him. If I have a hasty temper, impure thoughts, a quick tongue or a critical spirit, I shall not set out with a determined effort to change myself, but, reckoning myself dead in Christ to these things, I shall look to the Spirit of God to produce in me the needed purity or humility or meekness. This is what it means to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you” (Exod. 14:13).”

“Some of you have no doubt had an experience something like the following. You have been asked to go and see a friend, and you knew the friend was not very friendly, but you trusted the Lord to see you through. You told Him before you set out that in yourself you could not but fail, and you asked Him for all that was needed. Then, to your surprise, you did not feel at all irritated, though your friend was far from gracious. On your return you thought over the experience and marveled that you kept so calm, and you wondered if you would be just as calm next time. You were amazed at yourself and sought an explanation. This is the explanation: *the Holy Spirit carried you through.*”

“It is not a case of clenching our teeth and thinking that thus we have controlled ourselves beautifully and have had a glorious victory. No, where there is a real victory there is no fleshly effort. We are gloriously carried through by the Lord.”

- C. Not only am I in Christ, but Christ is in me.
- D. Living in the Spirit means that I trust the Holy Spirit to do in me what I cannot do myself.
 - 1. Each time I am faced with a new demand from the Lord, I look to Him to do in me what He requires of me.
 - 2. It is not a case of trying but of trusting; not of struggling but of resting in Him.
 - 3. This is the explanation: *the Holy Spirit carried you through.*
 - a. The divine way of victory does not therefore permit of our doing anything at all—anything, that is to say, outside of Christ.
 - b. Our natural inclinations carry us in the wrong directions.
 - 4. Turn now to Galatians 5:17, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” This tells us where the real tussle takes place. The fight with the flesh is not ours but the Holy Spirit’s.
 - 5. If we overcome on our own we can “pat ourselves on the back.”

6. The command is a positive one: "Walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Our victory lies in hiding in Christ, and in counting on simple trust upon His Holy Spirit to overcome in us our fleshly lusts with His own new desires. **The Cross has been given to procure salvation for us; the Spirit has been given to produce salvation in us. Christ risen and ascended is the basis of our salvation; Christ in our hearts by the Spirit is its power.**

II. Christ Our Life.

"I thank God through Jesus Christ"! That exclamation of Paul's is fundamentally the same as his other words in Galatians 2:20 which we have taken as the key to our study: "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ". We saw how prominent is the word 'I' throughout his argument in Romans 7, culminating in the agonized cry: "O wretched man that I am!" Then follows the shout of deliverance: "Thank God... Jesus Christ"! and it is clear that the discovery Paul has made is this, that the life we live is the life of Christ alone. **We think of the Christian life as a 'changed life', a 'substituted life', and Christ is our Substitute within.** "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me." This life is not something which we ourselves have to produce. It is Christ's own life reproduced in us.

A. Reproduction, in this sense, as something more than regeneration.

1. Regeneration means that the life of Christ is planted in us by the Holy Spirit at our new birth.

2. Reproduction goes further.

a. It means that the new life grows and becomes manifest progressively in us.

b. Until the very likeness of Christ begins to be reproduced in our lives. 2nd Corinthians 3:18 NET, "And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

VERY IMPORTANT:

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 184 and 185, "Let me illustrate with another story. I once arrived in America in the home of a saved couple who requested me to pray for them. I inquired the case of their trouble. 'Oh, Mr. Nee, we have been in a bad way lately', they confessed. 'We are so easily irritated by the children, and during the past few weeks we have both lost our tempers several times a day. We are really dishonoring the Lord. Will you ask Him to give us patience?' 'That is the one thing I cannot do', I said. 'What do you mean?' they asked. 'I mean that one thing is certain', I answered, 'and that is that God is not going to answer your prayer.' At that they said in amazement, 'Do you mean to tell us we have gone so far that God is not willing to hear us when we ask Him to make us patient?' 'No, I do not mean quite that, but I would like to ask you if you have ever prayed in this respect. You have. But did God answer? No! Do you know why? Because you have no need of patience.' Then the eyes of the wife blazed up. She said, 'What do you mean? We do not need patience, and yet we get irritated the whole day long! What do you mean?' 'It is not patience you have need of', I answered, 'it is Christ.'

“And this is the truth. God will not give me humility or patience or holiness or love as separate gifts of His grace. He is not a retailer dispensing grace to us in doses, measuring out some patience to the impatient, some love to the unloving, some meekness to the proud, in quantities that we take and work on as a kind of capital. He has given only one gift to meet all our need—His Son Christ Jesus, and as I look to Him to live out His life in me, He will be humble and patient and loving and everything else I need—in my stead. Remember the word in the first Epistle of John: “God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life” (1 John 5:11, 12). The life of 108 Christ Our Life God is not given us as a separate item; the life of God is given us in the Son. It is “eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Our relationship to the Son is our relationship to the life.”

B. The common conception of sanctification is that every item of the life should be holy; but that is not holiness, it is the fruit of holiness. **HOLINESS IS CHRIST.**

1. It is the Lord Jesus being made over to us to *be* that.

2. **So you can put in anything there: love, humility, power, self-control. Today there is a call for patience: He is our patience! Tomorrow the call may be for purity: He is our purity!. He is the answer to every need. That is why Paul speaks of “the fruit of the Spirit” as one (Galatians 5:22).**

a. Not of “fruits” as separate items.

b. God has given us His Holy Spirit, and when love is needed the fruit of the Spirit is love: when joy is needed the fruit of the Spirit is joy. It is always true.

It does not matter what your personal deficiency, or whether it is a hundred and one different things, God has one sufficient answer—His Son Jesus Christ, and He is the answer to every human need.

C. **How can we know more of Christ in the way?**

1. Only by way of an increasing awareness of need.
2. Some are afraid to discover deficiency in themselves, and so they never grow.
3. Growth in grace is the only sense in which we can grow.
4. Grace is God doing something for us.

We all have the same Christ dwelling within, but revelation of some new need will lead us spontaneously to trust Him to live out His life in us in that particular. Greater capacity means greater enjoyment of God’s supply. Another letting go, a fresh trusting in Christ, and another stretch of land is conquered. ‘Christ my life’ is the secret of enlargement.

D. Trying and Trusting, and the difference between the two.

1. “Lord, I cannot do it, therefore I will no longer try to do it.”

2. “Lord, I cannot; therefore I will take my hands off: from now on I trust You for that.”

Then we enter fully and joyfully into the action He initiates. It is not passivity; it is a most active life, trusting the Lord like that; drawing life from Him, taking Him to be my very life, letting Him live His life in us as we go forth in His Name.

III. The Law of the Spirit of Life.

A. In chapter 8 Paul presents to us in detail the positive side of life in the Spirit.

1. “There is therefore now no condemnation.”

2. This statement may at first seem out of place here. Surely condemnation was met by the Blood, through which we found peace with God and salvation from wrath (Romans 5:1,9).

B. There are two kinds of condemnation.

1. That before God and that before myself.

2. When we see that the Blood of Christ has satisfied God, then I know my sins are forgiven.

3. There is for us no more condemnation before God,

4. Yet we may still be knowing defeat, and the sense of inward condemnation.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 188, **“But if I have learned to live by Christ as my life, then I have learned the secret of victory, and, praise God! “there is therefore now no condemnation”. “The mind of the spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6), and this becomes my experience as I learn to walk in the Spirit. With peace in my heart I have no time to feel condemned, but only to praise Him who leads me on from victory to victory. But what lay behind my sense of condemnation? Was it not the experience of defeat and the sense of helplessness to do anything about it? Before I saw that Christ is my life, I labored under a constant sense of handicap; limitation dogged my steps; I felt disabled at every turn. I was always crying out: ‘I cannot do this! I cannot do that!’ Try as I would, I found that I “cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). But there is no ‘I cannot’ in Christ. Now it is: “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).”**

5. On what ground does he declare that he is now free from limitation and “can do all things”? Here is the answer: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death” (Romans 8:2).

a. A law called “the law of the Spirit of life” has proved stronger than another law called “the law of sin of death.”

b. What is a law?

Strictly speaking, a law is a generalization examined until it is proved that there is no exception. We might define it more simply as something which happens over and over again. Each time the thing happens it happens in the same way. We can illustrate this both from statutory and from natural law. For example, in this land, if I drive a car on the right hand side of the road the traffic police will stop me. 110

The Law Of This Spirit Of Life Why? Because it is against the law of the land. If you do it you will be stopped too. Why? For the same reason that I would be stopped: it is against the law and the law makes no exceptions. It is something which happens repeatedly and unfailingly. Or again, we all know what is meant by gravity. If I drop my handkerchief in London it falls to the ground. That is the effect of gravity. But the same is true if I drop it in New York or Hong Kong. No matter where I let it go, gravity operates, and it always produces the same results. Whenever the same conditions prevail the same effects are seen. There is thus a 'law' of gravity.

C. How can we be set free from the law of sin and death?

1. We need deliverance from sin.
2. We need deliverance from death.
3. Most of all we need deliverance from the law of sin and of death.
4. How can we be delivered from the constant repetition of weakness and failure?

The solution: From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 192, "The law of sin and death is there all the time, but God has put another law into operation - the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and that law is strong enough to deliver us from the law of sin and death. You see, it is a law of life in Christ Jesus—the resurrection life that in Him has met death in all its forms and triumphed over it (Eph. 1:19, 20). The Lord Jesus dwells in our hearts in the person of His Holy Spirit, and if we let Him have a clear way and commit ourselves to Him we shall find that He will keep us from the old law. We shall learn what it is to be kept, not by our own power, but "by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5)."

IV. The Manifestation of the Law of Life.

A. Our will in relation to the things of God.

1. Many Christians endeavor to drive themselves by willpower, and then think the Christian life a most exhausting and bitter one.
2. Some even force themselves to do Christian things because others do them.
3. If we have to exert so much effort in our Christian living, it simply says that we are not really like that at all.
4. We only have to exert willpower in order to do things we do not do naturally.

We may do them for a time, but the law of sin and death wins in the end.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 194, "You ask, Why do men use will-power to try to please God? There may be two reasons. They may of course never have experienced the new birth, in which case they have no new life to draw upon; or they may have been born again and the life be there, but they have not learned to trust in that life. It is this lack of understanding that results in habitual failure and sinning, bringing them to the place where they almost cease to believe in the possibility of anything better."

B. Romans 8:2 speaks not of a new gift, but of the life already referred to in Roman 6:23.

1. In other words, it is *a new revelation of what we already have*.
2. It is not something fresh from God's hand but a new unveiling of what He has already given.
3. The words "made me free" are in the past tense.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 194 and 195, "If I really see this and put my faith in Him, there is no absolute necessity for Romans 7 to be repeated in me—either the experience or the conduct, and certainly not the tremendous display of will-power. The Manifestation Of The Law Of Life.

If we will let go our own wills and trust Him, we shall not fall to the ground and break, but we shall fall into a different law, the law of the Spirit of life. For He has given us not only life but a law of life. And just as the law of gravity is a natural law and not the result of human legislation, so the law of life is a 'natural' law, similar in principle to the law that keeps our heart beating or that controls the movement of our eyelids. There is no need for us to think about our eyes, or to decide that we must blink every so often to keep them cleansed; and still less do we bring our will to bear upon our heart. Indeed to do so might rather harm than help it. No, so long as it has life it works spontaneously. Our wills only interfere with the law of life. I discovered that fact once in the following way."

- C. It manifests itself in love from the unlovely.
 1. For the brother whom on natural grounds we would not like and certainly could not love.
 2. The basis of what the Lord sees of possibility in that brother.

"Lord, You see he is lovable and You love him. Love him, now, through me!"

IV. The Fourth Step: "Walk...After the Spirit."

- A. Two things presented here.
 1. First, they are what the Lord Jesus has done for us.
 2. Second, what the Holy Spirit will do in us.

Remember, it is again here a question not of salvation but of pleasing God.

- B. What does it mean to walk after the Spirit?
 1. First it is not a work; it is a walk.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 200 and 201, "Praise God, the burdensome and fruitless effort I involved myself in when I sought 'in the flesh' to please God gives place to a blessed and restful dependence on "his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:29). That is why Paul contrasts the "works" of the flesh with the "fruit" of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19, 22).

2. Second, to "walk after" implies subjection.

- a. Walking after the flesh brings me into conflict with God.
- b. To walk after the Spirit is to be subject to the Spirit.

Only as I yield myself to obey Him shall I find the “law of the Spirit of life” in full operation and the “ordinance of the law” (all that I have been trying to do to please God) being fulfilled—no longer by me but in me. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

C. 2nd Corinthians 13:14, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”

- 1. The love of God is the source of all spiritual blessings.
- 2. The grace of the Lord Jesus has made it possible for that spiritual wealth to become ours.
- 3. The communion of the Holy Ghost is the means whereby it is imparted to us.
 - Love is something hidden in the heart of God.
 - Grace is that love expressed and made available in the Son.
 - Communion is the impartation of that grace by the Spirit.
 - What the Father has devised concerning us, the Son has accomplished for us, and now the Holy Spirit communicates it to us.

When therefore we discover something fresh that the Lord Jesus has procured for us in His Cross, let us, for its realization, look in the direction that God has indicated, and, by our steadfast attitude of subjection and obedience to the Holy Spirit, keep wide open the way for Him to impart it to us. That is His ministry. He has come for that very purpose—that He may make real in us all that is ours in Christ.

Lesson 7

One Body in Christ

I. A Gate and A Path.

Introduction: Recognizing a number of such phases in the life and experience of a believer, we note now a further fact, namely that, though these phases do not necessarily occur always in a fixed and precise order, they seem to be marked by certain recurring steps or features.

What are these steps?

A. First there is revelation.

1. This always precedes faith and experience.
2. Through His Word God opens our eyes to the truth of some fact concerning His Son, and then only, as in faith we accept that fact for ourselves, does it become actual an experience in our lives.

3. Thus we have:

- a. Revelation (objective).
- b. Experience (subjective).

B. Revelation is always the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. Count upon Him.
2. When such difficulties as lack of understanding or lack of faith confront us, address those difficulties directly to the Lord.

“Lord, open my eyes. Lord, make this new thing clear to me. Lord, help my unbelief!” He will not let such prayers go unheeded.

II. The Fourfold Work of Christ in His Cross.

- A. Consider how great a range is compassed by the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Four aspects of God’s redemption.

It is essential to keep in mind that the Cross of Christ is *one divine work*, and not many. Once in Judaea two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus died and rose again, and He is now “by the right hand of God exalted” (Acts 2:33). The work is finished and need never be repeated, nor can it be added to.

1. The Blood of Christ to deal with sins and guilt.
2. The Cross of Christ to deal with sin, the flesh, and the natural man.
3. The Life of Christ made available to indwell, re-create, and empower man.

4. The Working of Death in the natural man that the indwelling Life may be progressively manifest.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 211 and 212, "Before, however, we pass on to the fourth aspect, which I shall call 'bearing the cross', we must say a little more about this third side, namely, the release of the life of Christ in resurrection for man's indwelling and empowering for service.

We have spoken already of the purpose of God in creation and have said that it embraced far more than Adam ever came to enjoy. What was that purpose? God wanted to have a race of men whose members were gifted with a spirit whereby communion would be possible with Himself, who is Spirit. That race, possessing God's own life, was to co-operate in securing His purposed end by defeating every possible uprising of the enemy and undoing his evil works. That was the great plan. How will it now be effected? The answer is again to be found in the death of the Lord Jesus. It is a mighty death. It is something positive and purposive, going far beyond the recovery of a lost position; for by it, not only are sin and the old man dealt with and their effects annulled, but something more, something infinitely greater is introduced."

C. Redemption.

1. Interruption, and "emergency" measure, made necessary by a catastrophic break in the straight line of the purpose of God.

2. God is saying that we should not make redemption to be everything, *as though man were created to be redeemed*.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 216 and 217, "The Fall is indeed a tragic dip downwards in that line of purpose, and the atonement a blessed recovery whereby our sins are blotted out and we are restored; but when it is accomplished there yet remains a work to be done to bring us into possession of that which Adam never possessed, and to give God that which His heart desires. For God has never forsaken the purpose which is represented by that straight line. Adam was never in possession of the life of God as presented in the tree of life. But because of the one work of the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection (and we must emphasize again that it is all one work) His life was released to become ours by faith, and we have received more than Adam ever possessed. The very purpose of God is brought within reach of fulfillment by our receiving Christ as our life."

3. God has a Son who is known to be the only begotten, and God is seeking that the only begotten Son should have brethren.

4. From the position of only begotten He will become the first begotten, and instead of the Son alone God will have many sons.

5. One grain of wheat has died and many grains will spring up.

a. The first grain was once the only grain; now it is changed to be the first grain of many.

b. The Lord Jesus laid down His life, and that life emerged in many lives. **The outcome of the Cross is a single person: a Bride for the Son. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it.**

III. One Living Sacrifice.

A. Redemption leads us back into God's original purpose.

In [chapter 8](#), Paul speaks to us of Christ as the firstborn Son among many Spirit-led "sons of God" ([Rom. 8:14](#)). "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" ([Rom. 8:29, 30](#)).

B. Justification is seen to lead on to glory.

1. A glory that is expressed not in one or more individuals but in a plurality.
2. In many who manifest the image of One.

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 219, "After the first eight chapters of Romans, which we have been studying, there follows a parenthesis in which God's sovereign dealings with Israel are taken up and dealt with, before the theme of the first chapters is resumed. Thus, for our present purpose, the argument of [chapter 12](#) follows that of [chapter 8](#) and not of [chapter 11](#). We might very simply summarize these chapters thus: Our sins are forgiven ([ch. 5](#)), we are dead with Christ ([ch. 6](#)), we are by nature utterly helpless ([ch. 7](#)), therefore we rely upon the indwelling Spirit ([ch. 8](#)). After this, and as a consequence of it: "We... are one body in Christ" ([ch. 12](#)). It is as though this were the logical outcome of all that has gone before, and the thing to which it has all been leading."

C. Paul's appeal "to every man that is among" (Romans 12:3) is in light of this new divine fact, that "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another."

The vessel through which the Lord Jesus can reveal Himself in this generation is not the individual but the Body. "God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith" ([12:3](#)), but alone in isolation man can never fulfill God's purpose. It requires a complete Body to attain to the stature of Christ and to display His glory. Oh that we might really see this!

1. So Romans 12:3-6 draws from the figure of the human body the lesson of our interdependence. **Individual Christians are not the Body.**
2. They are its members, and in a human body "all the members have not the same office."

What I know, I know; and what I don't know, I don't know, and can do quite well without.' But in Christ, the things we do not know others do, and we may know them and enter into the enjoyment of them through others.

3. We cannot get along without one another.
 - a. That is why fellowship in prayer is so important.

b. Prayer together brings in the help of the Body, as must be clear from Matthew 18:19&20.

4. We must learn to pray “**Our** Father...” on the basis of oneness with the Body.

5. In the sphere of service this is even more apparent.

a. Alone I cannot serve the Lord effectively.

b. **For the Life of Christ is the life of the Body, and His gifts are given to us for work that builds up the Body.**

D. The Bible does not just say that the Church is *like* a body, but that it *is* Body of Christ.

1. We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.

2. All the members together *are* one body, for all share His Life.

Conclusion. **PLEASE READ.**

Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 222-224, “I was once with a group of Chinese believers who found it very hard to understand how the Body could be one when they were all separate individual men and women who made it up. One Sunday I was about to break the bread at the Lord’s table and I asked them to look very carefully at the loaf before I broke it. Then, after it had been distributed and eaten, I pointed out that though it was inside all of them it was still one loaf—not many. The loaf was divided, but Christ is not divided even in the sense in which that loaf was. He is still one Spirit in us, and we are all one in Him.

This is the very opposite of man’s condition by nature. In Adam I have the life of Adam, but that is essentially individual. There is no union, no fellowship in sin, but only self-interest and distrust of others. As I go on with the Lord I soon discover, not only that the problem of sin and of my natural strength has to be dealt with, but that there is also a further problem created by my ‘individual’ life, the life that is sufficient in itself and does not recognize its need for and union in the Body. I may have got over the problems of sin and the flesh, and yet still be a confirmed individualist. I want holiness and victory and fruitfulness for myself personally and apart, albeit from the purest motives. but such an attitude ignores the Body, and so cannot provide God with satisfaction. he must deal with me therefore in this matter also, or I shall remain in conflict with His ends. God does not blame me for being an individual, but for my individualism. His greatest problem is not the outward divisions and denominations that divide His Church but our own individualistic hearts.

Yes, the Cross must do its work here, reminding me that in Christ I have died to that old life of independence which I inherited from Adam, and that in resurrection I have become not just an individual believer in Christ but a member of His Body. There is a vast difference between the two. When I see this, I shall at once have done with independence and shall seek fellowship. The life of Christ in me will gravitate to the life of Christ in others. I can no longer take an individual line. Jealousy will go. Competition will go. Private work will go. My interests, my ambitions, my preferences, all will go. It will no longer matter which of us does the work. All that will matter will be that the Body grows.

I said: 'When I *see* this...' That is the great need: to *see* the Body of Christ as another great Divine fact; to have it break in upon our spirits by heavenly revelation that "we, who are many, *are* one body in Christ". Only the Holy Spirit can bring this home to us in all its meaning, but when He does it will revolutionize our life and work."