

Bancroft Mission

Sunday School Lessons:

The Normal Christian Life

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.

Lessons 1,2, and 3

The Blood of Christ

Introduction:

What is the normal Christian life? We do well at the outset to ponder this question. The object of these lessons is to show that it is very different from the life of the average Christian. Indeed a consideration of the written Word of God—of the Sermon on the Mount for example—should lead us to ask whether such a life has ever in fact been lived upon the earth, *save only by the Son of God himself*. But in that last saving clause lies immediately the answer to our question.

Paul, the apostle, gives us his own definition of Christian life in 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.” Here he is not stating something special or peculiar—a high level of Christianity. He is, we believe, presenting God’s normal life for a Christian, which can be summarized in the words: “I live no longer, but Christ lives His life in me and through me.”

God makes it quite clear in His Word that He has only one answer to every human need—His Son, Jesus Christ. In all His dealings with us He works by taking us out of the way and substituting Christ in our place. The Son of God died instead of us for our forgiveness: He lives instead of us for our deliverance. So we can speak of two substitutions—a Substitute on the Cross who secures our forgiveness and a Substitute within who secures our victory. **It will help us greatly, and save us from much confusion, if we keep constantly before us this fact, that God will answer all our questions in one way and one way only, namely, by showing us more of His Son.**

I. Our Dual Problem: Sins and Sin.

A. The book of Romans in two parts.

1. The first four and 1/2 chapters form 1:1 to 5:11 form the first half of this unit.

2. The three and 1/2 chapters from 5:12 to 8:39 form the second half of this unit.

a. The first section it is a question of the sins I have committed before God, which are many and can be enumerated.

b. The second is a question of sin as a principle working in me.

No matter how many sins I commit, it is always the one sin-principle that leads to them. I need forgiveness for my sins, but I need deliverance from the power of sin. The former touches my conscience, the latter my life. I may receive forgiveness for all my sins, but because of my sin I have, even then, no abiding peace of mind.

B. When God’s light first shines into my heart my one cry is for forgiveness.

1. A new discovery, namely, the discovery of sin.

2. Not only that I have committed sins before God but that there is something wrong within.

3. I appreciate the blessed fact of God's forgiveness, but I want something more than that.

I want deliverance! I need forgiveness for what I have done, but I need also deliverance from what I am.

II. God's Dual Remedy: The Blood and the Cross.

A. In the first eight chapters of Romans two aspects of salvation are present to us.

1. Firstly, the forgiveness of our sins.
2. Secondly, our deliverance from sin.

B. In the first part of Romans 1 to 8, we twice have reference to the Blood of the Lord Jesus.

1. In chapter 3:25 and in chapter 5:9.
2. In the second, a new idea is introduced in chapter 6:6, where we are said to have been "crucified" with Christ.

We shall see that the Blood deals with what we have done, whereas the Cross deals with what we are. The Blood removes our sins, while the Cross strikes at the root of our capacity for sin.

C. The Problem of Our Sins.

Introduction: We begin, then, with the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and its value to us in dealing with our sins and justifying us in the sight of God. This is set forth for us in the following passages:

1. Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
2. Romans 5:8&9, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."
3. Romans 3:24-26, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

When sin came in it found expression in an act of disobedience to God (Romans 5:19). Now we must remember that whenever this occurs the thing that immediately follows is guilt.

4. Sin enters to create first of all a separation between God and man.
 - a. It is first of all God who says, "They are all under sin" (Romans 3:9).
 - b. Secondly, that sin in man, which henceforth constitutes a barrier to his fellowship with God, gives rise in him to a sense of guilt.

c. Sin also provides Satan with his ground of accusation before God (Revelation 12:10).

To redeem us, therefore, and to bring us back to the purpose of God the Lord Jesus had to do something about these three questions of sin and of guilt and of Satan's charge against us. Our sins had first to be dealt with, and this was effected by the precious Blood of Christ. **Our guilt has to be dealt with and our guilty conscience set at rest by showing us the value of that Blood.** And finally, the attack of the enemy has to be met, and his accusations answered. In the Scriptures the Blood of Christ is shown to operate effectually in these three ways: Godward, manward, and Satanward.

D. There is thus an absolute need for us to appropriate these values of the Blood.

1. The fact of the death of the Lord Jesus as our Substitute upon the Cross, and
2. A clear apprehension of the success of His Blood for our sins.
3. Without this we cannot be said to have started upon our road.

III. The Blood is Primarily for God.

A. The Blood is for atonement and has to do first with our standing before God.

1. Sins are forgiven.
2. NOT because God overlooks what we have done but because He sees the Blood.
3. The Blood is therefore not primarily for us but for God.

If I want to understand the value of the Blood I must accept God's valuation of it, and if I do not know something of the value set upon the Blood by God, I shall never know what its value is for me.

B. The first aspect of the Blood is Godward.

1. Throughout the Old and New Testaments the word "blood" is used in connection with the idea of atonement.
2. The NKJV mentions the atonement 99 times, and throughout it is something for God.

VERY IMPORTANT

In the Old Testament calendar there is one day that has a great bearing on the matter of our sins and that day is the Day of Atonement. Nothing explains this question of sins so clearly as the description of that day. In Leviticus 16 we find that on the Day of Atonement the blood was taken from the sin offering and brought into the Most Holy Place and there sprinkled before the Lord seven times. We must be very clear about this. On that day the sin offering was offered publicly in the court of the tabernacle. Everything was there in full view and could be seen by all. But the Lord commanded that no man should enter the tabernacle itself except the high priest. It was he alone who took the blood and, going into the Most Holy Place, sprinkled it on the mercy seat to make atonement before the Lord. Why? Because **the high priest was a type of the Lord Jesus in His redemptive work (Hebrews 9:12)**, and so, in figure, he was the one who did the work. None but he could even draw near to enter in. Moreover, connected with

his going in there was but one act, namely, the presenting of the blood to God as something He had accepted, something in which He could find satisfaction. It was a transaction between the high priest and God in the Sanctuary, away from the eyes of the men who were to benefit by it. The Lord required that.

The Blood is therefore in the first place for Him.

Earlier even than this there is described in Exodus 12:13 the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt for Israel's redemption. This is again, I think, one of the best types in the Old Testament of our redemption. The blood was put on the lintel and on the doorposts, whereas the meat, the flesh of the lamb, was eaten inside the house; and God said: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you". Here we have another illustration of the fact that the blood was not meant to be presented to man but to God, for the blood was put on the lintel and on the doorposts, where those feasting inside the house would not see it.

C. God is Satisfied.

1. It is God's holiness, God's righteousness, which demand that a sinless life should be given for man.

2. There is life in the Blood.

3. Blood has to be poured out for us, for our sins.

God is the One who demands that the Blood be presented, in order to satisfy His own righteousness, and it is He who says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." **The Blood of Christ wholly satisfies God.**

4. The sense of sin and guilt can become so great, so terrible, as almost to cripple us, by causing us to lose sight of the true effectiveness of the Blood.

5. The Blood is first for God to see. We then have to accept God's valuation of it.

6. It is a matter of faith in God's Word. We must believe that the Blood is precious to God because He says it is so (1st Peter 1:18&19). If God can accept the Blood as a payment for our sins and as the price of our redemption, **then we can rest assured that the debt has been paid.** If God is satisfied with the Blood, then the Blood must be acceptable.

a. Our valuation of it is only according to His valuation.

b. Neither more nor less.

c. It cannot, of course, be more, but it must not be less.

Let us remember that He is holy and He is righteous, and that a holy and righteous God has the to say that the Blood is acceptable in His eyes and has fully satisfied Him.

IV. The Believers Access to God.

The Blood has satisfied God; it must satisfy us also. It has therefore a second value that is manward, in the cleansing of our conscience.

A. We are to have "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:22).

B. A misunderstanding of the sphere in which the Blood operates is to pray, “Lord, cleanse my heart from sin by Your Blood.”

C. He must do something more fundamental than cleanse it: **He must give us a new one.**

D. Ezekiel 36:26 says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

1. “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” What is the meaning of this?

2. It means that there was something intervening between myself and God.

3. As a result of which we had an evil conscience whenever we sought to approach Him.

4. But now, through the operation of the precious Blood, something new has been effected before God which has removed that barrier, and God has made that fact known to men in His Word. When that has been believed in and accepted, our conscience is at once cleared and our sense of guilt removed, and we have no more an evil conscience towards God.

5. The Blood never loses its efficacy as our ground of access if we will but lay hold upon it.

But I want to ask myself, am I really seeking the way into the Presence of God by the Blood or by something else? What do I mean when I say, ‘by the Blood’? I mean simply that I recognize my sins, that I confess that I have need of cleansing and of atonement, and that I come to God on the basis of the finished work of the Lord Jesus. I **approach God through His merit alone**, and never on the basis of my attainment; never, for example, on the ground that I have been extra kind or patient today, or that I have done something for the Lord this morning. I have to come by way of the Blood every time. The temptation to so many of us when we try to approach God is to think that because God has been dealing with us—because He has been taking steps to bring us into something more of Himself and has been teaching us deeper lessons of the Cross—He has thereby set before us new standards, and that only by attaining to these can we have a clear conscience before Him. No! **A clear conscience is never based upon our attainment; it can only be based on the work of the Lord Jesus in the shedding of His Blood.**

E. The Blood has Never Changed and Never Will.

1. Our approach to God is therefore always in boldness.

2. That boldness is ours through the Blood and never through our personal attainment.

3. Our basis of approach is always the same—the Blood of Christ.

F. This Matter of Access to God has Two Phases, an Initial and a Progressive One.

1. The former is presented to us in Ephesians 2.

2. The latter in Hebrews 10.

3. Initially, our standing with God was secured by the Blood, for we are “made nigh in the Blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

4. But thereafter our ground of continual access is still by the Blood, for the apostle exhorts us: “Having therefore...boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near” (Hebrews 10:19, 22).

To begin with we were made nigh by the Blood, and to continue in that new relationship we come through the Blood every time. It is not that we were saved on one basis and that we now maintain our fellowship on another.

5. This does not mean at all that we should live a careless life.

MAKE THIS CONFESSION: “Lord, I do not know fully what the value of the Blood is, but I know that the Blood has satisfied You; so the Blood is enough for me, and it is my only plea. I see now that whether I have really progressed, whether I have really attained to something or not, is not the point. Whenever I come before You, it is always on the ground of the precious Blood.”

Then our conscience is really clear before God. No conscience could ever be clear apart from the Blood. It is the Blood that gives us boldness

V. Overcoming the Accuser.

Introduction: In view of what we have said we can now turn to face the enemy, for there is a further aspect of the Blood which is satanward.

A. Satan’s most strategic activity in this day is as the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10) and it is as this that our Lord confronts him with His special ministry as High Priest “through his own blood” (Hebrews 9:12)

B. How then does the Blood operate against satan?

1. It does so by putting God on the side of man against him.
2. The fall brought about a state of affairs in man which gave satan a footing within him.
3. With the result that God was compelled to withdraw Himself.
4. Man is now outside the garden—beyond reach of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).
5. Because he is inwardly estranged from God.

Because of what man has done, there is something in him which, until it is removed, renders God morally unable to defend him. But **the Blood removes that barrier and restores man to God and God to man**. Man is in favor now, and because God is on his side he can face satan without fear.

C. “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from **every** sin.”

1. It is not exactly “all sin” in the general sense, but **every** sin, every item.

2. God is light, and as we walk in the light with Him everything is exposed and open to the light, so that God can see it all.

3. **The Blood is able to cleanse from every sin.**

What a cleansing! It is not that we have not a profound knowledge of ourselves, nor that God has not a perfect knowledge of us. It is not that we try to hide something nor that God tries to overlook something. No, it is that He is in the light, and we too are in the light, and that there the precious Blood cleanses us from every sin. The Blood is enough for that!

D. Some of us, oppressed by our own weakness, may at times have been tempted to think that there are sins which are almost unforgivable.

1. Let us remember the Word, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from **every sin.**"

2. Big sins, small sins, sins which may be very evil and sins which appear to be not so evil, sins which we think can be forgiven and sins which seem unforgivable.

3. YES, ALL SINS.

4. "The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from every sin" and it does so because in the first place it satisfies God.

E. Since God, seeing all our sins in the light, and forgives them on the basis of the Blood, what ground of accusation has satan!

1. "If God is for us, who is against us" (Romans 8:31)?

2. God points him to the Blood of His dear Son.

3. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies; who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:33&34).

THUS GOD ANSWERS EVERY CHALLENGE.

F. So here again our need is to recognize the absolute sufficiency of the precious Blood. "Christ having come a high priest... through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11, 12).

1. He was Redeemer once.

2. He has been High Priest and Advocate for over two thousand years.

3. He sits there in the presence of God, and "he is the propitiation for our sins" (1st John 2:2).

NOTE THE WORD OF HEBREWS 9:14, "HOW MUCH MORE SHALL THE BLOOD OF CHRIST...CLEANS YOUR CONSCIENCE." THEY UNDERLINE THE SUFFICIENCY OF HIS MINISTRY. **IT IS ENOUGH FOR GOD.**

CONCLUSION: OUR FAITH IN THE PRECIOUS BLOOD AND OUR REFUSAL TO BE MOVED FROM THAT POSITION CAN ALONE SILENCE HIS CHARGES AND PUT HIM TO FLIGHT (ROMANS 8:33, 34); AND SO IT WILL BE, RIGHT ON TO THE END (REVELATION 12:11). **OH, WHAT AN EMANCIPATION IT WOULD BE IF WE SAW MORE OF THE VALUE IN GOD'S EYES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF HIS DEAR SON!**

Lesson 4

The Cross of Christ

Introduction: We have seen that Romans 1 to 8 fall into two sections, in the first of which we are shown that the Blood deals with what we have done, while in the second we shall see that the Cross deals with what we are. **We need the Blood for forgiveness; we need also the Cross for deliverance.** We have dealt briefly with the first of these two and we shall move on now to the second; but before we do so we will look for a moment at a few more features of this passage which serve to emphasize the difference in subject matter and argument between the two halves.

I. Some Further Distinctions.

A. Two aspects of the resurrection are mentioned in the two sections, in chapters 4 and 6.

1. In Romans 4:24&25 the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is mentioned in relation to our justification.

a. "Jesus our Lord...was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification."

b. Here the matter in view is that of our standing before God.

2. In Romans 6:4 the resurrection is spoken of as imparting to us new life with a view to a holy walk.

a. "That like as Christ was raised from the dead...so we also might walk in newness of life."

b. Here the matter before us is behavior.

B. Peace is spoken of in both sections, in the fifth and eighth chapters.

1. Romans 5 tells of peace with God which is the effect of justification by faith in His Blood.

a. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

b. **This means that, now that I have forgiveness of sins, God will no longer be a cause of dread to me.**

c. We, who were an enemy to God, have been "reconciled...through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

There is peace with God, but here is no peace with ourselves. There is in fact civil war between our "born again" spirit and our flesh. This condition is well depicted in Romans 7 where the flesh and the spirit are seen to be in deadly conflict within us. But from this the argument leads into Chapter 8 to the inward peace of a walk in the Spirit. "The mind of the flesh is death, because it is 'enmity against God,' but 'the mind of the Spirit is life and peace' (Romans 8:6&6).

2. Romans 8:1&2, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

C. When we know the precious truth of justification by faith, we still know only half the story.

1. WE still have only solved the problem of our standing before God.

2. As we go on, God has something more to offer us, namely, the solution of the problem of our conduct.

3. If we know only the first, then we are still leading a sub-normal Christian life.

How then can we live a normal Christian life? How do we enter in? Well, of course, initially we must have forgiveness of sins, we must have justification, we must have peace with God: these are our indispensable foundation.

The Blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my 'old man'. It needs the Cross to crucify me. The Blood deals with the sins, but the Cross must deal with the sinner.

D. A sinner is said to be a sinner because he is born a sinner; not because he has committed sins. The distinction is important.

1. The teaching of Romans is not that we are sinners because we commit sins, *but that we sin because we are sinner.*

2. One who sins is a sinner, but it is equally true that one who does not sin (if that was possible), if he is of Adam's race, is a sinner too, and in need of redemption.

3. It is birth that counts.

4. It is a matter not of my behavior but of my heredity, my parentage.

The root trouble is the sinner; he must be dealt with. Our sins are dealt with by the blood, but we ourselves are dealt with by the cross. The blood procures our pardon for what we have done; the cross procures our deliverance from what we are.

II. Man's State By Nature.

A. Romans 5:12-21.

1. Grace is brought into contrast with sin and the obedience of Christ is set against the disobedience of Adam.

2. Verse 19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."

At the beginning of our Christian life we are concerned with our doing, not with our being; we are distressed rather by what we have done than by what we are. We think that if only we could rectify certain things we should be *good* Christians, and we set out therefore to change our actions. But the result is not what we expected. We discover to our dismay that it is something more than just a case of

trouble on the outside—that there is in fact more serious trouble on the inside. We try to please the Lord, but find something within that does not want to please Him. We try to be humble, but there is something in our very being that refuses to be humble. We try to be loving, but inside we feel most unloving. We smile and try to look very gracious and forgiving, but inwardly we feel decidedly ungracious and unforgiving. The more we try to rectify matters on the outside the more we realize how deep-seated the trouble is within. Then we come to the Lord and say, “Lord, I see it now! Not only what I have done is wrong; I am wrong.”

B. 1st Corinthians 15:57, “But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. Unless we can change our parentage there is no deliverance for us.

2. **But it is in this very direction that we shall find the solution of our problem, for that is exactly how God has dealt with it.**

III. As in Adam So in Christ.

A. In Romans 5:12-21 we are not only told something about Adam; we are told also something about the Lord Jesus.

1. “As through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.”

2. In Adam we receive everything that is of Adam; in Christ we receive everything that is of Christ.

B. The terms “in Adam” and “in Christ.”

From Watchmen Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 32-34, “This illustration is to be found in the letter to the Hebrews. Do you remember that in the earlier part of the letter the writer is trying to show that Melchizedek is greater than Levi? You recall that the point to be proved is that the priesthood of Christ is greater than the priesthood of Aaron who was of the tribe of Levi. Now in order to prove that, he has first to prove that the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than the priesthood of Levi, for the simple reason that the priesthood of Christ is “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:14-17), while that of Aaron is, of course, after the order of Levi. If the writer can demonstrate to us that Melchizedek is greater than Levi, then he has made his point. That is the issue, and he proves it in a remarkable way. He tells us in Hebrews chapter 7 that one day Abraham, returning from the battle of the kings (Genesis 14), offered a tithe of his spoils to Melchizedek and received from him a blessing. Inasmuch as Abraham did so, Levi is therefore of less account than Melchizedek. Why? Because of the fact that Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek. But if that is true, then Jacob also ‘in Abraham’ offered to Melchizedek, which in turn means that Levi ‘in Abraham’ offered to Melchizedek. It is evident that the lesser offers to the greater (Hebrews 7:7). So Levi is less in standing than Melchizedek, and therefore the priesthood of Aaron is inferior to that of the Lord Jesus. Levi at the time of the battle of the kings was not yet even thought of. Yet he was “in the loins of his father” Abraham, and, “so to say, through Abraham”, he offered (Hebrews 7:9, 10). Now this is the exact meaning of ‘in Christ’. Abraham, as the head of the family of faith, includes the whole family in himself. When he offered to Melchizedek, the whole family offered in him to Melchizedek. They did not offer separately as individuals, but they were in him, and

therefore in making his offering he included with himself all his seed. So we are presented with a new possibility. In Adam all was lost. Through the disobedience of one man we were all constituted sinners. By him sin entered and death through sin, and throughout the race sin has reigned unto death from that day on. But now a ray of light is cast upon the scene. Through the obedience of Another we may be constituted righteous."

1. Where sin abounded grace did much more abound.
2. Romans 5:19-21—our despair is in Adam; our hope is in Christ.

IV. The Divine Way of Deliverance.

A. God clearly intends that this consideration should lead to our practical deliverance from sin.

1. Chapter 6 of his letter opens with the question: "Shall we continue in Sin?" "God forbid."
2. God has surely therefore made adequate provision that we should be set free from sin's dominion.

B. Seeing that we were born in Adam, how can we get out of Adam?

1. The Blood cannot take us out of Adam.
2. **Since we came in by birth we must go out by death.**
3. Bondage to sin came by birth; deliverance from sin comes by death—and it is just this way of escape that God has provided.
4. Death is the secret of emancipation. "We...died to sin" (Romans 6:2).

BUT HOW CAN WE DIE? SOME OF US HAVE TRIED VERY HARD TO GET RID OF THIS SINFUL LIFE, BUT WE HAVE FOUND IT MOST TENACIOUS. WHAT IS THE WAY OUT? IT IS NOT BY TRYING TO KILL OURSELVES, BUT BY RECOGNIZING THAT GOD HAS DEALT WITH US IN CHRIST. THIS IS SUMMED UP IN THE APOSTLE'S NEXT STATEMENT: "ALL WE WHO WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH" (ROMANS 6:3).

C. How are we to "get into" Christ?

1. We need not try to get in, for *we are* in.
2. What we could not do for ourselves, God has done for us.
3. He has put us into Christ.
4. 1st Corinthians 1:30, "...you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."
5. God has planned it; and He has not only planned it but He has also performed it.
6. "Of Him are you in Christ."

We are in; therefore we need not try to get in. It is a divine act, and it is accomplished,
“it is finished.”

When the Lord Jesus was on the Cross all of us died—not individually, for we had not yet been born—but, being in Him, we died in Him. “One died for all, therefore all died” (2 Cor. 5:14).

When He was crucified all of us were crucified there with Him.

Example from Watchmen Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 36 & 37, “Many a time when preaching in the villages of China one has to use very simple illustrations for deep Divine truth. I remember once I took up a small book and put a piece of paper into it, and I said to those very simple ones, ‘Now look carefully. I take a piece of paper. It has an identity of its own, quite separate from this book. Having no special purpose for it at the moment I put it into the book. Now I do something with the book. I post it to Shanghai. I do not post the paper, but the paper has been put into the book. Then where is the paper? Can the book go to Shanghai and the paper remain here? Can the paper have a separate destiny from the book? No! Where the book goes the paper goes. If I drop the book in the river the paper goes too, and if I quickly take it out again, I recover the paper also. Whatever experience the book goes through the paper goes through with it, for it is in the book.’”

E. “of Him are you in Christ Jesus.”

1. The Lord God Himself has put us in Christ, and in His dealing with Christ, God has dealt with the whole race. Our destiny is bound up with His. What He has gone through we have gone through.

2. To be “in Christ” is to have been identified with Him in both His death and resurrection.

3. He was crucified: then what about us? Must we ask God to crucify us? Never!

4. When Christ was crucified, we were crucified.

We were crucified when He was crucified, for God put us there in Him. That we have died in Christ is not merely a doctrinal position, it is an eternal fact.

V. His Death and Resurrection Representative and Inclusive.

A. The scripture has never told us that we shed our Blood with Christ.

1. In His atoning work before God He acted alone; no other could have a part.

2. But the Lord did not die only to shed His Blood.

3. He died that we might die.

4. He died as our Representative.

5. In His death He included *you and me*.

B. Objective and Subjective (this will be dealt with in later lessons).

1. Objectively, the entire human race was in Christ when He died and God raised Him from the dead.

2. Subjectively, it is not ours until we receive it by faith.

a. Ephesians 2:8&9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast."

b. John 1:10-13, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Conclusion: The Cross is this the mighty act of God which translates us from Adam to Christ.

Lesson 5

The Path of Progress: Knowing

Introduction: Our old history ends with the Cross; our new history begins with the resurrection. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). The Cross terminates the first creation, and out of death there is brought a new creation in Christ, the second Man. If we are 'in Adam' all that is in Adam necessarily transfers to us; it becomes ours involuntarily, for we have to do nothing to get it. There is no need to make up our minds to lose our temper or to commit some other sin; it comes to us freely and despite ourselves. In a similar way, if we are 'in Christ' all that is in Christ comes to us by free grace, without effort on our part but on the ground of simple faith. But to say that all we need comes to us in Christ by free grace, though true enough, may seem unpractical. **How does it work out in practice? How does it become real in our experience?** As we study chapters 6, 7 and 8 of Romans we shall discover that the conditions of living the normal Christian life are fourfold. They are: (a) Knowing. (b) Reckoning. (c) Presenting ourselves to God, and (d) Walking in the Spirit, and they are set forth in that order. **If we would live that life we shall have to take all four of these steps; not one nor two nor three, but all four.** As we study each of them we shall trust the Lord by His Holy Spirit to illumine our understanding; and we shall seek His help now to take the first big step forward.

I. Our Death With Christ A Historic Fact.

A. In His death we all died, that is, our old man in Adam.

None of us can progress spiritually without seeing this. Just as we cannot have justification if we have not seen Him bearing our sins on the Cross, so we cannot have sanctification if we have not seen Him bearing us on the Cross.

B. Not only have our sins been laid on Him but **we ourselves have been put into Him.**

How did we receive forgiveness? We realized that the Lord Jesus died as our Substitute and bore our sins upon Himself, and that His Blood was shed to cleanse away our defilement. When we saw our sins all taken away on the Cross what did we do? Did we say, 'Lord Jesus, please come and die for my sins'? No, we simply received by faith. we did not beseech Him to come and die for us, for we realized that He had already done it.

C. But what is true of our forgiveness is also true of our deliverance.

1. The work is done.

2. There is no need to pray, but only to praise.

3. All that is left for us to do is praise the Lord that when Christ died we died also; we died with Him. Praise Him for it, and live in the sight of it. **"Then believed they his words; they sang his praise" (Psalm 106:12).**

4. The same Holy Scripture that says He died for us says also that we died with Him.

a. "Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

b. That is the first statement and that is clear enough; but is this any less clear?

- “Our old man was crucified with him” (Romans 6:6).
- “We died with Christ” (Romans 6:8).

So also in historic fact we can say, reverently but with equal accuracy, “I was crucified when Christ was crucified” or “Christ was crucified when I was crucified.” Can His be past and ours present or future.?

Why do you believe that the Lord Jesus died? What is your ground for that belief? Is it that you feel He has died? No, you have never felt it. You believe it because the Word of God tells you so. When the Lord was crucified, two thieves were crucified at the same time. You do not doubt that they were crucified with Him, either, because the Scripture says so quite plainly. They were crucified at the same time as the Lord but on different crosses, whereas you were crucified on the selfsame cross as He, for you were in Him when He died. How can you know? You can know for the one sufficient reason that God has said so.

D. Our crucifixion can never be made effective by will or by effort, but only by accepting what the Lord Jesus did on the Cross.

For God’s way of deliverance is altogether different from man’s way. Man’s way is to try to suppress sin by seeking to overcome it; God’s way is to remove the sinner.

1. God’s means of delivering us from sin is not by making us stronger and stronger, but by making us weaker and weaker.

2. **God sets us free from the dominion of sin, not by strengthening our old man but by crucifying him.**

3. God way is not rehabilitation or behavior modification but crucifixion.

II. The First Step: “Knowing This...”

Introduction: The normal Christian life must begin with a very definite ‘knowing’, which is not just knowing something about the truth nor understanding some important doctrine. It is not intellectual knowledge at all, but an opening of the eyes of the heart to see what we have in Christ.

A. How do we know our sins are forgiven?

1. Of course, the fact of forgiveness of sins is in the Bible.

2. For the written Word of God to become a living Word from God to us. He had to give us “a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (Ephesian 1:7).

3. When once the light of God dawns upon our heart we **see** ourselves in Christ.

B. “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin” (Romans 6:6).

III. Divine Revelation Essential to Knowledge.

Example for Watchmen Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 49 & 50, “When Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, entered into the normal Christian life it was thus that he did so. You remember how he tells of his long-standing problem of how to live ‘in Christ’, how to draw the sap out of the Vine into himself. For he knew that he must have the life of Christ flowing out through him and yet

felt that he had not got it, and he saw clearly enough that his need was to be found in Christ. 'I knew', he said, writing to his sister from Chinkiang in 1869, 'that if only I could abide in Christ, all would be well, but I could not.' The more he tried to get in the more he found himself slipping out, so to speak, until one day light dawned, revelation came and he saw. 'Here, I feel, is the secret: not asking how I am to get sap out of the Vine into myself, but remembering that Jesus is the Vine—the root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit, all indeed.' Then, in words of a friend that had helped him: 'I have not got to make myself a branch. The Lord Jesus tells me I am a branch. I am part of Him and I have just to believe it and act upon it. I have seen it long enough in the Bible, but I believe it now as a living reality.' It was as though something which had indeed been true all the time had now suddenly become true in a new way to him personally, and he writes to his sister again: 'I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful—and yet, all is new! In a word, "whereas once I was blind, now I see" ... I am dead and buried with Christ—aye, and risen too and ascended... God reckons me so, and tells me to reckon myself so. He knows best... Oh, the joy of seeing this truth—I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.'

Example number 2 from, *The Normal Christian Life*, by Watchmen Nee pages 52 & 53, "Just then a third brother, much used of the Lord, came in and joined us. There was a thermos flask on the table, and this brother picked it up and said, 'What is this?' 'A thermos flask.' 'Well, you just imagine for a moment that this thermos flask can pray, and that it starts praying something like this: "Lord, I want very much to be a thermos flask. Wilt Thou make me to be a thermos flask? Lord, give me grace to become a thermos flask. Do please make me one!" What will you say?' 'I do not think even a thermos flask would be so silly,' our friend replied. 'It would be nonsense to pray like that; it is a thermos flask!' Then my brother said, 'You are doing the same thing. God in times past has already included you in Christ. When He died, you died; when He lived, you lived. Now today you cannot say, "I want to die; I want to be crucified; I want to have resurrection life." The Lord simply looks at you and says, "You are dead! You have new life!" All your praying is just as absurd as that of the thermos flask. You do not need to pray to the Lord for anything; you merely need your eyes opened to see that He has done it all.' That is the point. We need not work to die, we need not wait to die, we are dead. We only need to recognize what the Lord has already done and to praise Him for it. Light dawned for that man. With tears in his eyes he said, 'Lord, I praise Thee that Thou hast already included me in Christ. All that is His is mine!' Revelation had come and faith had something to lay hold of; and if you could have met that brother later on, what a change you would have found!

Lessons 6 & 7

The Path of Progress: KNOWING and RECKONING

I. Knowing.

Romans 6:6, “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

- A. This is the beginning.
- B. Verb tense.
 - 1. “Knowing”—Present tense.
 - 2. “Is Crucified”—Past tense.

We have been crucified with Christ and that death is in us now!

- C. We are not trying to die: We, all that we were in Adam, is dead.
- D. We still contend with the flesh. Which will be in a later lesson.

I do not mean to say that we need not work that out. Yes, there is an outworking of the death which we are going to see presently, but this, first of all, is the basis of it. I have been crucified: it has been done.

II. The Second Step—Reckoning.

A. Romans 6:11, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- B. This is the natural sequel to verse 6.
- C. Read them together: “*Knowing* that our old man was crucified... *reckon* yourselves to be dead.”
- D. That is the order. When we know that our old man has been crucified with Christ, then the next step is to reckon it so.

- 1. What does “reckoning” mean.
 - a. “Reckoning” in the Greek means doing accounts, bookkeeping.

From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 59, “Accounting is the only thing in the world we human beings can do correctly. An artist paints a landscape. Can he do it with perfect accuracy? Can the historian vouch for the absolute accuracy of any record, or the mapmaker for the perfect correctness of any map? They can make, at best, fair approximations. Even in everyday speech, when we try to tell some incident with the best intention to be honest and truthful, we cannot speak with complete accuracy. It is mostly a case of exaggeration or understatement, of one word too much or too little. What then can a man do that is utterly reliable? Arithmetic! There is no scope for error there. One chair plus one chair equals two chairs. That is true in London and it is true in Cape Town. If you travel west to New York or east to Singapore it is still the same. All the world over and for all time, one plus one equals two.

One plus one is two in heaven and earth and hell.”

- b. Why does God say we are to reckon ourselves dead? Because we ARE dead.
- c. Accounting is the reckoning of facts, no fancies.
- d. Even so, it is because we are really dead that God tells us to account it so.
- e. God could not ask us to put down in our account book what was not true.

2. From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 60, "Reckoning is not a form of make-believe. It does not mean that, having found that I have only twelve shillings in my pocket, I hope that by entering fifteen shillings incorrectly in my account-book such 'reckoning' will somehow remedy the deficiency. It won't. If I have only twelve shillings, yet try to reckon to myself: 'I have fifteen shillings; I have fifteen shillings; I have fifteen shillings', do you think that the mental effort involved will in any way affect the sum that is in my pocket? Not a bit of it! Reckoning will not make twelve shillings into fifteen shillings, nor will it make what is untrue true. But if, on the other hand, it is a fact that I have fifteen shillings in my pocket, then with great ease and assurance I can enter fifteen shillings in my account-book."

3. God tells us to reckon ourselves dead, not that by the process we may become dead, but because we are dead.

4. He never told us to reckon what was not a fact.

5. There is a definite attitude to be taken.

6. God asks us to do the account: to put down "I have died" and then to abide by it.

WHY? BECAUSE IT IS A FACT. WHEN THE LORD JESUS WAS ON THE CROSS, I WAS THERE IN HIM. THEREFORE I RECKON IT TO BE TRUE. I RECKON AND DECLARE THAT I HAVE DIED IN HIM. PAUL SAID, "RECKON YE ALSO YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD." HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? "IN CHRIST JESUS." NEVER FORGET THAT IT IS ALWAYS AND ONLY TRUE IN CHRIST. IF YOU LOOK AT YOURSELF YOU WILL THINK DEATH IS NOT THERE, BUT IT IS A QUESTION OF FAITH NOT IN YOURSELF BUT IN HIM. YOU LOOK TO THE LORD, AND KNOW WHAT HE HAS DONE. 'LORD, I BELIEVE IN THEE. I RECKON UPON THE FACT IN THEE.' STAND THERE ALL THE DAY.

BECAUSE I AM DEAD—BECAUSE I SEE NOW WHAT GOD HAS DONE WITH ME IN CHRIST—THEREFORE I RECKON MYSELF TO BE DEAD.

III. The Reckoning of Faith.

The first four-and-a-half chapters of Romans speak of faith and faith and faith. We are justified by faith in Him (Rom. 3:28; 5:1). Righteousness, the forgiveness of our sins, and peace with God are all ours by faith, and without faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ none can possess them. But in the second section of Romans we do not find the same repeated mention of faith, and it might at first appear that

the emphasis is therefore different. It is not really so, however, for where the words 'faith' and 'believe' drop out the work 'reckon' takes their place. Reckoning and faith are here practically the same thing.

A. What is Faith?

1. Faith is my acceptance of God's fact.
2. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1).
3. Faith is the underlying ingredient that makes hope come to pass.
4. The Darby translation says, "Now faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

a. How do we "substantiate" something?

The difference between substance and "substantiating": A substance is an object, something in front of me. "Substantiating" something means that I have a certain power of faculty that **makes that substance to be real to me.**

From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, page 68, "If I am blind I cannot distinguish colour, or if I lack the faculty of hearing I cannot enjoy music. Yet music and colour are in fact real things, and their reality is unaffected by whether or not I am able to appreciate them. Now we are considering here the things which, though they are not seen, are eternal and therefore real. Of course we cannot substantiate Divine things with any of our natural senses; but there is one faculty which can substantiate the "things hoped for", the things of Christ, and that is faith. **Faith makes the real things to become real in my experience.**"

b. We are dealing here not with promises but with facts. The promises of God are revealed to us by His Spirit that we may lay hold of them.

c. Facts are facts, and they remain facts whether we believe them or not.

d. If we do not believe the facts of the Cross they still remain as real as ever, but they are valueless to us. **It does not need faith to make these real in themselves, but faith can "substantiate" them and make them real in our experience.**

e. Whether we feel it or not, we are dead with Christ. How can we be sure? Because Christ has died: and since "one died for all, therefore all died" (2nd Corinthians 5:14).

f. Believing the Bible is a choice. Not believing the Bible does not change the Bible, but it changes us.

If we resort to our senses to discover the truth, we shall find Satan's lies are often enough true to our experience; but if we refuse to accept as binding anything that contradicts God's Word and maintain an attitude of faith in Him alone, we shall find instead that Satan's lies begin to dissolve and that our experience is coming progressively to tally with that Word.

III. Temptation and Failure, the Challenge to Faith.

A. For us, then, the two greatest facts in history are these: that all our sins are dealt with by the blood, and that we ourselves are dealt with by the Cross.

1. But what now of the matter of temptation?

2. What is to be our attitude when, after we have seen and believed these facts, we discover the old desires rising up again?

3. Worse still, what if we fall once more into known sin?

B. We are three parts. 1st Thessalonians 5:23, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. Spirit.

a. This is the part of us that has become a "new creation" in Christ.

b. 2nd Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

2. Body (we will come back to "soul").

a. Our bodies are continually aging.

b. The Bible promises us a new body: 2nd Corinthians 5:1 NLT, "For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands."

3. Soul.

a. Our soul is our mind, will, and emotions.

b. Our soul is the part of us that is tempted.

c. The Bible teaches that Jesus never sinned in word, thought, or deed. Yet, He was tempted.

e. James 1:13 & 14, "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

- The devil cannot be blamed, or rewarded, when we are tempted.

- We are tempted in our souls: mind, will, and emotions.

f. **Our soul, or mind, needs to be transformed.** Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

C. Deliverance from sin' is a more scriptural idea than 'victory over sin'. The expressions "freed from sin" and "dead unto sin" in Romans 6:7 and 11 imply deliverance from a power that is still very present and very real -- not from something that no longer exists.

D. "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin ... he cannot sin" (1 John 3:9).

He is saying that to sin is not the nature of that which is born of God.

1. The life of Christ has been planted in us by new birth and its nature is not to commit sin.
2. The power of His resurrection is on our side, and the whole might of God is at work in our salvation.
3. But the matter still rests upon our making real in history what is true in divine fact.

IV. Abiding in Him.

A. We are dead not in ourselves but in Christ.

1. We were crucified with Him because we were in Him.
2. John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you."
3. We have never to struggle to get into Christ.
4. We are not told to get there, because we are already there.
5. **But we are told to stay where we have been placed. It was God's own act that put us in Christ and we are to abide in Him by faith.**

B. It is the history of Christ which is to become the experience of the Christian.

1. We have no spiritual experience apart from Him.

The Scriptures tell us that we were crucified "with Him", that we were quickened, raised, and set by God in the heavenlies "in Him", and that we are complete "in Him" (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 2:5,6; Col. 2:10). It is not just something that is still to be effected in us (though it is that, of course). It is something that has already been effected, in association with Him.

2. In the scriptures we find that no Christian experience exists as such.
3. What God has done in His gracious purpose is to include us in Christ.
4. In dealing with Christ God has dealt with the Christian.
5. In dealing with the Head He has dealt with all the members.

It is altogether wrong for us to think that we can experience anything of the spiritual life in ourselves merely, and apart from Him. God does not intend that we should acquire something exclusively personal in our experience, and He is not willing to effect anything like that for you and me. All the spiritual

experience of the Christian is already true in Christ. It has already been experienced by Christ. **What we call 'our' experience is only our entering into His history and His experience.**

From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 74 & 75, "It would be odd if one branch of a vine tried to bear grapes with a reddish skin, and another branch tried to bear grapes with a green skin, and yet another branch grapes with a very dark purple skin, each branch trying to produce something of its own without reference to the vine. It is impossible, unthinkable. The character of the branches is determined by the vine. Yet certain Christians are seeking experiences as experiences. They think of crucifixion as something, of resurrections as something, of ascension as something, and they never stop to think that the whole is related to a Person. **No, only as the Lord opens our eyes to see the Person do we have any true experience.** Every true spiritual experience means that we have discovered a certain fact in Christ and have entered into that; anything that is not from Him in this way is an experience that is going to evaporate very soon. 'I have discovered that in Christ; then, Praise the Lord, it is mine! I possess it, Lord, because it is in Thee.' Oh it is a great thing to know the facts of Christ as the foundation for our experience."

C. How do we abide?

Never look at yourself as though you were not in Christ. Look at Christ and see yourself in Him. Abide in Him. Rest in the fact that God has put you in His Son, and live in the expectation that He will complete His work in you.

Lesson 8

Power of Water Baptism

Introduction:

The kingdom of this world is not this kingdom of God. God had in His heart a world system - a universe of His creating -- which should be headed up in Christ His Son (Col. 1:16,17). But Satan, working through man's flesh, has set up instead a rival system known in Scripture as "this world" -- a system in which we are involved and which he himself dominates. He has in fact become "the prince of this world" (John 12:31).

I. Two Creations.

A. God is bringing in a new creation.

1. A new kingdom and a new world.
2. Nothing of the old creation, the old kingdom, or the old world can be transferred to the new.

It is a question now of these two rival realms, and of which realm we belong to.

B. Paul leaves us in no doubt as to which of these two realms is now in fact ours.

1. God, in redemption, "delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:12&13).
2. Our citizenship henceforth is there.

C. But in order to bring us into his new kingdom, God must do something new in us.

1. He must make of us new creatures.
2. Unless we are created anew we can never fit into the new realm.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh"; and, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:50). **However educated, however cultured, however improved it is, flesh is still flesh.** Our fitness for the new kingdom is determined by the creation to which we belong. Do we belong to the old creation or the new? Are we born of the flesh or of the Spirit? Our ultimate suitability for the new realm hinges on the question of origin.

3. The question is not "good or bad?" but "flesh or spirit?"
4. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and it will never be anything else.
5. That which is born of the old creation can never pass over into the new.

Once we really understand what God is seeking, namely, something altogether new for Himself, then we shall see clearly that we can never bring any contribution from the old realm into that new thing. **God wanted to have us for Himself, but He could not bring us as we were into that which He had purposed; so He first did away with us by the Cross of Christ, and then by resurrection provided a new life for us.**

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (mg. 'there is a new creation'): the old things are passed

away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Being now new creatures with a new nature and a new set of faculties, we have entered the new kingdom and the new world.

D. The Cross and the Resurrection.

1. The Cross was the means God used to bring to and end "the old things" by setting aside altogether our "old man."

2. The Resurrection was the mean He employed to impart to us all that was necessary for our life in that new world.

3. We were buried therefore with Him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

E. The greatest negative in the universe is the Cross, for with it God wiped our everything that was not of Himself.

F. The greatest positive in the universe is the Resurrection, for through it God brought into being all He will have in the new sphere.

So the resurrection stands at the threshold of the new creation. It is a blessed thing to see that the Cross ends all that belongs to the first regime, and that the resurrection introduces all that pertains to the second. Everything that had its beginning before resurrection must be wiped out. Resurrection is God's new starting point. We have now two worlds before us, the old and the new.

G. God gathered up in the Person of His Son all that was of Adam and crucified him.

II. Water Baptism. Romans 6:3&4, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

A. What is the significance of these two words?

1. In the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, says Paul, "The world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

2. Peter says, 1st Peter 3:21, "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

In other words, by that aspect of the Cross which is figured in baptism you are delivered from this present evil world, and, **by your baptism in water, you confirm this**. It is baptism "into his death", ending one creation; but it is also baptism "into Christ Jesus", having in view a new one (Rom. 6:3). You go down into the water and your world, in figure, goes down with you. you come up in Christ.

3. Acts 16:31-34, "So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he

and all his *family* were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”

a. In doing so, he and those with him testified before God, his people, and the spiritual powers that they were indeed saved from a world under judgment.

b. As a result, we read, they rejoiced greatly, “having believed in God.”

B. Water Baptism in the early church.

1. In the first two hundred years believers experienced severe persecution.

2. To proclaim to be followers of Jesus resulted in possible death and/or torture for their entire family.

3. Water Baptism was making this proclamation, **“I am a follower of Jesus. I believe that He was the Messiah and I say this to the world by water baptism.”**

C. Burial means and end.

1. “The answer of a good conscience toward God” (1st Peter 3:21).
2. We cannot answer without being spoken to.
3. If God had said nothing, we should have no need to answer.
4. But He has spoken; He has spoken to us by the Cross.

By it He has told of His judgment of us, of the world, of the old creation and of the old kingdom. The Cross is not only Christ's personally -- an individual' Cross. It is an all-inclusive Cross, a 'corporate' Cross, a Cross that includes you and me. God has put us all into His Son, and crucified us in Him. **In the last Adam He has wiped out all that was of the first Adam.**

5. Our answer to God's verdict on the old creation:

- a. We answer by asking for water baptism.
- b. Why? In Romans 6:4 Paul explains that baptism means burial: “We were buried therefore with Him through baptism.”

Baptism is of course connected with both death and resurrection, though in itself it is neither death nor resurrection: it is burial. But who qualifies for burial? Only the dead! So if we ask for baptism we proclaim ourselves dead and fit only for the grave.

From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 87 and 88, “Alas, some have been taught to look on burial as a means to death; they try to die by getting themselves buried! Let me say emphatically that, unless our eyes have been opened by God to see that we have died in Christ and been buried with Him, we have no right to be baptized. The reason we step down into the water is that we have recognized that in God's sight we have already died. It is to that that we testify. God's question is clear and simple. ‘Christ has died, and I have included you there. Now, what are you going to say to that?’ What is my answer? ‘Lord, I believe You have done the crucifying. I say Yes to the death and to the burial

to which You have committed me.' He has consigned me to death and the grave; by my request for baptism I give public assent to that fact."

"In China a woman lost her husband, but, becoming deranged by her loss, she flatly refused to have him buried. Day after day for a fortnight he lay in the house. 'No', she said, 'he is not dead; I talk with him every night.' She was unwilling to have him buried because, poor woman, she did not believe him to be dead. When are we willing to bury our dear ones? Only when we are absolutely sure that they have passed away. While there is the tiniest hope that they are alive we will never bury them. So when will I ask for baptism? When I see that God's way is perfect and that I deserved to die, and when I truly believe that God has already crucified me. Once I am fully persuaded that, before God, I am quite dead, then I apply for baptism. I say, 'Praise God, I am dead! Lord, You have slain me; now get me buried!'"

D. Baptism confirms God's sentence, passed upon me in the Cross of His Son.

1. It affirms that I am cut off from the old world and belong now to the new.
2. Baptism is not small thing. **It means for me a definite conscious break with the old way of life.**

In Romans 6:5, still writing to those who "were baptized" (verse 3), Paul speaks of our being "united with him by the likeness of his death". For by baptism we acknowledge in a figure that God has wrought an intimate union between ourselves and Christ in this matter of death and resurrection. What, in fact does this union imply? The real meaning behind baptism is that in the Cross we were 'baptized' into the historic death of Christ, so that His death became ours. Our death and His became then so closely identified that it is impossible to divide between them. It is to this historic 'baptism' -- this God-wrought union with Him -- that we assent when we go down into the water. Our public testimony in baptism today is our admission that the death of Christ two thousand years ago was a mighty all-inclusive death, mighty enough and all-inclusive enough to carry away in it and end everything in us that is not of God.

E. Resurrection unto newness of life.

Romans 6:5," For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

Now with resurrection the figure is different because something new is introduced. we are "baptized into his death", but we do not enter in quite the same way into His resurrection, for, Praise the Lord! His resurrection enters into us, imparting to us a new life. In the death of the Lord the emphasis is solely upon 'I in Christ'. With the resurrection, while the same thing is true, there is now a new emphasis upon 'Christ in me'. How is it possible for Christ to communicate His resurrection life to us? How do I receive this new life? Paul suggest, a very good illustration with these very same words: "united with him". For the word 'united' (A.V. 'planted together') may carry in the Greek the sense of 'grafted'[6] and it gives us a very beautiful picture of the life of Christ which is imparted to us through resurrection.

1. If a man can graft a branch of one tree into another, cannot God take of the life of His Son and, so to speak, graft it into us?

2. John 3:8, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." We cannot tell how God has done His work in us, but it is done.

3. There is only one fruitful life in the world and that has been grafted into millions of other lives.

Conclusion: We call this the 'new birth'. New birth is the reception of a life which we did not possess before. It is not that our natural life has been changed at all; it is that another life, a life altogether new, altogether Divine, has become our life. God has cut off the old creation by the Cross of His Son in order to bring in a new creation in Christ by resurrection. He has shut the door to that old kingdom of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. Our glorying is in the fact that it has been done -- that, through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, that old world has " been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). **Our baptism is my public testimony to that fact.**

Lesson 9

The Path of Progress: Presenting Ourselves to God

Introduction:

Our study has now brought us to the point where we are able to consider the true nature of consecration. We have before us the second half of Romans 6 from verse 12 to the end. In Romans 6:12&13 we read: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The operative word here is "present" and this occurs five times, in verses 13, 16 and 19.

I. Present.

A. It is not the consecration of our 'old man' with his instincts and resources -- our natural wisdom, strength and other gifts -- to the Lord for Him to use.

1. Verse 13, note there the clause "as alive from the dead."

This defines for us the point at which consecration begins. For what is here referred to is not the consecration of anything belonging to the old creation, but only of that which has passed through death to resurrection. **The 'presenting' spoken of is the outcome of my knowing my old man to be crucified.**

Knowing, reckoning, presenting to God: that is the Divine order.

B. When I really **know** I am crucified with Him, then spontaneously I **reckon** myself dead (verses 6 and 11); and when I know that I am raised with Him from the dead, then likewise I reckon myself **"alive unto God in Christ Jesus"** (verse 9 and 11).

For both the death and the resurrection side of the Cross are to be accepted by faith.

C. In resurrection He is the source of my life—indeed He is my life; so I cannot but present everything to Him.

1. For all is His.
2. Without passing through death I have nothing to consecrate.
3. Nor is there anything God can accept.
4. He has condemned all that is of the old creation to the Cross.
5. Death has cut off all that cannot be consecrated to Him, and resurrection alone has made consecration possible.

Presenting myself to God means that henceforth I consider my whole life as belonging to Him.

D. Present Yourself.

1. "Present yourselves...and your members."
2. "Present your members" (Romans 6:13,19).

3. God requires of me that I now regard all my members, all my faculties, as belonging wholly to Him.

From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 97 and 98, "It is a great thing when I discover I am no longer my own but His. If the ten shillings in my pocket belong to me, then I have full authority over them. But if they belong to another who has committed them to me in trust, then I cannot buy what I please with them, and I dare not lose them. Real Christian life begins with knowing this. How many of us know that, because Christ is risen, we are therefore alive "unto God" and not unto ourselves? How many of us dare not use our time or money or talents as we would, because we realize they are the Lord's not ours? —**THIS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN MANIFESTATION.**

II. Separated unto the Lord.

A. What is holiness?

1. We become holy by being separated unto God.

2. In Old Testament times, it was when a man was chosen by God to be altogether His that he was publicly anointed with oil and was then said to be "sanctified."

a. Thereafter he was regarded as *set apart* to God.

A lamb, or the gold of the temple -- could be sanctified, not by the eradication of anything evil in them, but by being thus reserved exclusively to the Lord. "Holiness" in the Hebrew sense meant something thus set apart, and all true holiness is holiness "to the Lord" (Exodus 28:36).

b. We give ourselves over wholly to Christ: that is holiness.

B. Presenting ourselves to God implies a recognition that we are altogether His.

1. This does not mean that we consecrate ourselves to be a preacher or a missionary.

2. Then to what are we to be consecrated? Not to Christian work, ***to the will of God, to be and to do whatever He requires.***

3. **It is our wills that are in question here.**

III. Servant or Bondslave?

A. If we give ourselves unreservedly to God, many adjustments may have to be made: in family, or business, or church relationships, or in the matter of our personal views.

B. Hebrews 12:26-29, "Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire."

In the book, *Rees Howells, Intercessor*, Mr. Howells often speaks of God telling him to do a certain thing or to change something in his life. Many times, says Mr. Howells, he would not want to do it. He would step out in obedience in faith. After a season of struggle, he would come to a place in which he called, “gaining the place.” What he meant was, this task or change would become as easy and pleasant to him as anything in his life.

We too will “gain the place” as we step out in faith to the will of God.

C. How good it is to have the consciousness that we belong to the Lord and are not our own! There is nothing more precious in the world.

1. It is that which brings the awareness of His continual presence.
2. We must first have the sense of God’s possession of me before we can have the sense of His presence with me.
3. Romans 6:16, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”
 - a. The word here rendered “servant” really signifies a bondservant.
 - b. How did I become the slave of the Lord? **On His part He bought me, and on my part I presented myself to Him.**

Conclusion:

From Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, pages 103 and 104, “I am the Lord's and now no longer reckon myself to be my own but acknowledge in everything His ownership and authority. That it the attitude God requires, and to maintain it is true consecration. I do not consecrate myself to be a missionary or a preacher; I consecrate myself to God to do His will where I am, be it in school, office or kitchen, counting **whatever He ordains for me to be the very best, for nothing but good can come to those who are wholly His.**

May we always be possessed by the consciousness that we are not our own.”

Lessons 10 and 11

Firstborn Among Many Brethren

I. God's Purpose In Creation.

A. Summed up in two phrases.

1. The glory of God—Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
2. The glory of the children of God—Romans 8:21, "Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

In Romans 3:23 we read: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God". God's purpose for man was glory, but sin thwarted that purpose by causing man to miss God's glory. When we think of sin we instinctively think of the judgment it brings; we invariably associate it with condemnation and hell. Man's thought is always of the punishment that will come to him if he sins, but **God's thought is always of the glory man will miss if he sins.** The result of sin is that we forfeit God's glory: the result of redemption is that we are qualified again for glory. God's purpose in redemption is glory, glory, glory.

B. Firstborn among many brethren.

1. Romans chapter 8, where the topic is developed in verses 16-18.
2. And again in verses 29 and 30.
3. God's objective.
 - a. That His Son Jesus Christ might be the firstborn among many brethren, all of whom should be conformed to His image.
 - b. How did God realize that objective? "Whom He justified, them he also glorified.

God's purpose, then, in creation and redemption was to make Christ the firstborn Son among many glorified sons.

C. Looking into it more carefully.

1. In John 1:14 we are told that the Lord Jesus was God's only begotten son: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father)."
2. God was not satisfied that Christ should remain the only begotten Son; He wanted also to make Him His first begotten.

From *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee, page 107, "How could an only begotten Son become a first begotten? The answer is simple: by the Father having more children. If you have but one son then his is the only begotten, but if thereafter you have other children then the only begotten becomes the first begotten."

D. The Divine purpose in creation and redemption was that God should have many children.

1. Prodigal son.
 - a. Most people are impressed with all the troubles the prodigal meets.
 - b. That is not the point of the parable.

From *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee, page 108, "My son ... was lost, and is found" -- there is the heart of the story. It is not a question of what the son suffers but of what the Father loses. He is the sufferer; He is the loser. A sheep is lost: whose is the loss? The shepherd's. A coin is lost: whose is the loss? The woman's. A son is lost: whose is the loss? The Father's. That is the lesson of Luke chapter 15."

2. The Lord Jesus was the only begotten Son, and as the only begotten He has no brothers.

3. But the Father sent the Son in order that the only begotten might also be the first begotten.

There you have the whole story of the Incarnation and the Cross; and there you have at the last the purpose of God fulfilled in His "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10). In Romans 8:29 we read of "many brethren"; in Hebrews 2:10 of "many sons". **From the point of view of the Lord Jesus it is "brethren"; from the point of view of God the Father it is "sons".** Both words in this context convey the idea of maturity.

4. God wants them in His home; He wants them to share His glory.

That is the explanation of Romans 8:30: "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." Sonship -- the full expression of His Son -- is God's goal in the many sons. How could He bring that about? **By justifying them and then by glorifying them.**

II. The Grain of Wheat.

A. How could God's only begotten Son become His first begotten?

1. John 12 :24, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

2. Who was that grain? **It was the Lord Jesus.**

3. In the whole universe God put His one grain of wheat into the ground and it died, and in resurrection the only begotten grain became the first begotten grain, and from the one grain there have sprung many grains.

B. We who are born of the Spirit are made thereby **"partakers of the diving nature"** (2nd Peter 1:4).

From *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee, page 110, "Though not, mark you, as of ourselves but only, as we shall see in a moment, in dependence upon God and by virtue of our being 'in Christ'. We have "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness

with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:5,16). It was by way of the Incarnation and the Cross that the Lord Jesus made this possible. Therein was the Father-heart of God satisfied, for in the Son's obedience unto death the Father has secured His many sons."

C. The first and twentieth chapters of John are in this respect most precious.

1. In the beginning of his Gospel John tells us that Jesus was "the only begotten from the Father."

2. At the end of his Gospel he tells us how, after He had died and risen again, Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and **your Father**, and My God and your God" (John 20:17).

Hitherto in this Gospel the Lord had spoken often of "the Father" or of "my Father." Now, in resurrection, He adds, "... and your Father." It is the eldest Son, the first begotten, speaking. By His death and resurrection many brethren have been brought into God's family, and so, in the same verse He uses this very name for them: "My brethren". "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11).

III. The Choice that Confronted Adam.

A. Adam was, so to speak, created morally neutral—neither sinful nor holy, but innocent.

1. God put those two trees there so that he might exercise free choice.

2. He could choose the tree of life, or he could choose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

B. Judgment of right and wrong resides not in him but in God.

1. Adam's only course when faced with any question is to refer it to Jehovah God.

2. A life in the garden which is totally dependent on God.

These two trees, then, typify two deep principles; they represent two planes of life, the Divine and the human. The "tree of life" is God Himself, for God is life. He is the highest form of life, and He is also the source and goal of life. And the fruit: what is that? It is our Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot eat the tree but you can eat the fruit. No one is able to receive God as God, but we can receive the Lord Jesus. The fruit is

the edible part, the receivable part of the tree. So -- may I say it reverently? -- **the Lord Jesus is**

really God in a receivable form. God in Christ we can receive.

a. There you would have God's life in union with man: a race of men having the life of God in them and *living in constant dependence upon God for that life*.

b. But if instead Adam should turn the other way, and take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then he would develop his own manhood along natural lines apart from God.

c. A self-sufficient being, he would possess in himself the power to form independent judgment, *but he would have no life from God*.

From *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee, page 113, "So this was the alternative that lay before him. Choosing the way of the Spirit, the way of obedience, he could become a 'son' of God, living in dependence upon God for his life; or, taking the natural course, he could put the finishing touch to himself, as it were, by becoming a self-dependent being, judging and acting apart from God. The history of humanity is the outcome of the choice he made."

- C. Adam's choice is the reason for the cross.
 - 1. He could decide for himself.
 - 2. The consequences for him was death rather than life.
 - 3. Two planes of life had been set before Adam: that of divine life in dependence upon God, and that of human life with its "independent" resources.
 - 4. But the end was death, because he had not in him the divine life necessary to realize God's purpose in his being.
 - 5. Thus in Adam we all become sinners.
 - a. Equally subject to the law of sin and death.
 - b. Equally deserving of the wrath of God.

From this we see the Divine reason for the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We see too the Divine reason for true consecration -- for reckoning ourselves to be dead unto sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus, and for presenting ourselves unto Him as alive from the dead. We must all go to the Cross, because what is in us by nature is a self-life, subject to the law of sin. Adam chose a self-life rather than a Divine life; so **God had to gather up all that was in Adam and do away with it. Our 'old man' has been crucified. God has put us all in Christ and crucified Him as the last Adam, and thus all that is of Adam has passed away.**

From *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee, pages 114 and 115, "Then Christ arose in new form; with a body still, but 'in the Spirit', no longer 'in the flesh'. 'The last Adam became a life-giving spirit' (1 Cor. 15:45). The Lord Jesus now has a resurrected body, a spiritual body, a glorious body, and **since He is no longer in the flesh He can now be received by all.** 'He that eateth me, he also shall live because of me', said Jesus (John 6:57). The Jews revolted at the thought of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, but of course they could not receive Him then because He was still literally in the flesh. Now that He is in the Spirit every one of us can receive Him, and it is by partaking of His resurrection life that we are constituted children of God. 'As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God ... which were born ... of God.' (John 1:12,13). **God is not out to reform our life.** It is not His thought to bring it to a certain stage of refinement, for it is on a totally wrong plane. On that plane He cannot now bring man to glory. He must have a new man; one born anew, born of God. Regeneration and justification go together."

- IV. He that hath the Son hath the Life.
 - A. We cannot bridge the gulf that divides us from the plane above or the plane below.
 - B. **What we today possess in Christ is more than Adam lost.**

1. Adam was only a developed man. He remained on that plane, and never possessed the life of God.

2. But when we receive the Son of God, not only do we receive the forgiveness of sins; we receive also the divine life which was represented in the garden by the tree of life.

3. By the new birth we possess what Adam missed, for we receive a life he never had.

C. They are all of one.

1. God's desire is for sons who shall be joint heirs with Christ in glory.

2. That is His goal; but how can He bring that about?

Hebrews 2:10&11, "For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

3. The Lord Jesus as Man derived His life from God, and (in another sense, but just as truly) we derive our new life from God. He was "begotten...of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:20), and we were "born of...the Spirit," born...of God" (John 3:5, 1:13).

Do you realize that we have the same life today that God has? The life which He has in Heaven is the life which He has imparted to us here on the earth. That is the precious "gift of God" (Rom. 6:23). It is for that reason that we can live a life of holiness, **for it is not our own life that has been changed, but the life of God that has been imparted to us.**