THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE MAJOR ITEMS OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY TODAY

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five
The Eternal Life

MC *Hymns*: 602

Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:13-14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Rev. 22:1-2

Matt 7:13 Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it.

Matt 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

I. The way of the Lord's recovery is the way of the eternal, divine life; we need to know the intrinsic essence of life in the Lord's recovery—Psa. 16:11; Jer. 21:8; John 1:4; 10:10b; 14:6; 1 Cor. 15:45b:

Psa 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; / In Your presence is fullness of joy; / At Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Jer 21:8 And to this people you shall say, Thus says Jehovah, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 10:10b … I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

1 Cor 15:45b … the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

A. The intrinsic essence of the Triune God is the eternal, divine life—God the Father is the source of life (John 5:26), God the Son is the embodiment of life (1:4), and God the Spirit is the flow of life (4:14b; 7:38-39a).

John 5:26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son to also have life in Himself;

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 4:14b … but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.

John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

John 7:39a But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; …

B. The intrinsic essence of the New Jerusalem is the eternal, divine life—God the Father is the light of life (Rev. 21:23; 22:5), God the Son is the tree of life (v. 2), and God the Spirit is the river of water of life (v. 1).

Rev 21:23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Rev 22:5 And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

C. God builds the church to prepare the bride of Christ for the building of the New Jerusalem by the eternal, divine life, the resurrection life—the flowing, transforming, and building life— Gen. 2:22; John 19:34; Psa. 36:8-9.

Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.

Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.

II. The eternal life, the life of the Triune God, is dispensed into the tripartite man to save the believers subjectively in this life through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification—Rom. 5:10b; 8:2, 10, 6, 11:

Rom 5:10b … much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

A. First, this life was the divine life in the Spirit—v. 2.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

B. Second, it became the life in our spirit through regeneration—v. 10.

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

C. Then from our spirit it saturates our mind for the transformation of our soul, to which our mind belongs, and becomes the life in our soul—v. 6.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

D. Eventually, it will permeate our body, ultimately issuing in the transfiguration of our body, that is, the redemption of our body—vv. 11, 23; Phil. 3:21.

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rom 8:23 And not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body.

Phil 3:21 Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.

III. The unique way for the daily life of God's people and for their fellowship with God and with one another is the divine life flowing in the divine nature—Rev. 21:21b; 22:1-2; 1 John 1:3:

Rev 21:21b … And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

A. The street of the holy city is pure gold, symbolizing the divine nature, and the river of water of life proceeds in the middle of the street—Rev. 21:21b; 22:1.

Rev 21:21b … And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

B. Where the divine life flows, there the divine nature is as the holy way by which God's people walk; and where the holy way of the divine nature is, there the divine life is flowing—2 Pet. 1:4; John 7:38-39a.

2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

John 7:39a But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; …

C. The street connected to and coming out of the throne is a "fellowship street"; the divine fellowship brings God to all His redeemed people in order to bring them back to Himself as their throne for His golden administration within them—Rev. 21:18b; 22:1-2; 21:21b; cf. Ezek. 1:22, 26; 1 Kings 10:18.

Rev 21:18b … and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Rev 21:21b … And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Ezek 1:22 And over the heads of the living creature there was the likeness of an expanse, like the sight of awesome crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.

1 Kings 10:18 And the king made a large ivory throne and overlaid it with the finest gold.

D. When we walk and move in the divine nature of God, we are brought under God's golden administration to enjoy the flow of life and the supply of life—Rev. 22:1-2.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

IV. We should live according to the principle of the tree of life, the principle of dependence, not according to the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the principle of independence—Gen. 2:9, 17; Rom. 8:6:

Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

A. That God is our food, signified by the tree of life, means that we must depend on God continually; the tree of knowledge indicates independence.

B. Knowledge or religion means to be good and to do good, to worship God or to work for God, without having the living presence of God—John 5:39-40; 15:5b.

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me.

John 5:40 Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

John 15:5b … He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

C. In the eyes of God, the greatest sin is independence; independence is a spiritual insulation, disconnecting us from the life of God—Eph. 4:18.

Eph 4:18 Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

D. We must learn to depend on the Lord continually, living constantly in direct contact with God—2 Cor. 1:12; Heb. 11:8; Matt. 6:28; cf. 1 Kings 7:17-19; S. S. 8:5a; cf. 2 Chron. 16:12; Isa. 50:10-11.

2 Cor 1:12 For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in singleness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you.

Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Matt 6:28 And why are you anxious concerning clothing? Consider well the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, neither do they spin thread.

1 Kings 7:17 There were nets of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals that were at the top of the pillars, seven for the one capital, and seven for the second capital.

1 Kings 7:18 So he made the pillars; and there were two rows of pomegranates around the one network, to cover the capitals that were at the top of the pomegranates. And he did the same for the second capital.

1 Kings 7:19 And the capitals that were at the top of the pillars in the portico were of lily work, four cubits in diameter.

S.S. 8:5a Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, / Leaning on her beloved? / I awakened you under the apple tree: …

2 Chron 16:12 And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet; his disease was very severe, yet even in his disease he pursued not Jehovah but the physicians.

Isa 50:10 Who among you fears Jehovah; / Who hears the voice of His servant; / Who walks in darkness / And has no light? / Let him trust in the name of Jehovah, / And rely on his God.

Isa 50:11 Indeed, all of you who kindle a fire, / Who surround yourselves with firebrands, / Walk into the light of your fire / And into the firebrands which you have lit. / You will have this from My hand: / You will lie down in torment.

V. In our service to the Lord, we must reject our natural enthusiasm, natural strength, and natural ability; our service must be life flowing out of us as a ministry of life to others—John 7:38; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 John 5:16a:

John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

1 John 5:16a If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. …

A. We must be burning in spirit with the fire of God's life; we should not serve with strange fire, signifying the natural enthusiasm not dealt with by the cross and not in resurrection—Exo. 3:2; Luke 12:49-50; Rom. 12:11; Lev. 10:1:

Exo 3:2 And the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a thornbush. And when he looked, there was the thornbush, burning with fire; but the thornbush was not consumed.

Luke 12:49 I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled!

Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!

Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in them and laid incense on it, and they presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.

1. Strange fire in the priestly service, a sin of presumption, causes death before God—9:24; 10:1-2.

Lev 9:24 Then fire came forth from before Jehovah and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they gave a ringing shout and fell on their faces.

Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in them and laid incense on it, and they presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.

Lev 10:2 And fire came out from before Jehovah and consumed them, and they died before Jehovah.

2. The offering of strange fire might have been related to the drinking of wine; drinking wine signifies the overenjoyment of the worldly, natural, or physical, material things—vv. 8-9.

Lev 10:8 Then Jehovah spoke to Aaron, saying,

Lev 10:9 Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations,

3. When the priests are drunk, they lose the discernment of holiness and are unable to teach God's people—vv. 10-11.

Lev 10:10 Both to make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean;

Lev 10:11 And to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah has spoken to them through Moses.

B. Our natural strength and ability need to be dealt with by the cross to become useful in resurrection for our service to the Lord—Phil. 3:3:

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,

1. After being put aside by God for forty years, Moses learned to serve God according to His leading and to trust in Him—Exo. 2:14-15; Acts 7:22-36; Heb. 11:28.

Exo 2:14 And he said, Who appointed you a ruler and a judge over us? Are you thinking to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? And Moses became frightened and said, Surely the matter is known.

Exo 2:15 Now when Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh to dwell in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

Acts 7:22 And Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in his words and works.

Acts 7:23 But when he was approaching forty years of age, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel.

Acts 7:24 And when he saw one of them being wronged, he defended him, and he avenged him who was being oppressed by striking the Egyptian dead.

Acts 7:25 And he supposed that his brothers understood that God through his hand was giving salvation to them; but they did not understand.

Acts 7:26 And on the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, Men, you are brothers. Why are you wronging one another?

Acts 7:27 But the one who was wronging his neighbor pushed him away, saying, "Who appointed you a ruler and a judge over us?

Acts 7:28 Do you want to do away with me the same way you did away with the Egyptian yesterday?"

Acts 7:29 And Moses fled at this word and became a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he begot two sons.

Acts 7:30 And when forty years had been fulfilled, an Angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in the flame of a thornbush fire.

Acts 7:31 And when Moses saw it, he marveled at the vision; and as he approached to examine it, there came the voice of the Lord:

Acts 7:32 "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." And Moses trembled and dared not examine it.

Acts 7:33 And the Lord said to him, "Untie the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.
Acts 7:34 I have surely seen the ill-treatment of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to rescue them. And now, come, I will send you into Egypt."
Acts 7:35 This Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who appointed you a ruler and a judge? this one God has sent as both a ruler and a redeemer, along with the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the thornbush.
Acts 7:36 This man led them out, doing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.
Heb 11:28 By faith he instituted the Passover and the pouring out of the blood so that the one destroying the firstborn would not touch them.

2. After becoming a complete failure, Peter learned to serve the brothers by faith and with humility—Luke 22:32-33; John 18:15-18, 25-27; Matt. 26:69-75; 1 Pet. 5:5-6.

Luke 22:32 But I have made petition concerning you that your faith would not fail; and you, once you have turned again, establish your brothers.
Luke 22:33 And he said to Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death.
John 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, as well as another disciple. And that disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest;
John 18:16 But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the maid who kept the door and brought Peter in.
John 18:17 Then the maid who kept the door said to Peter, Are you not also one of this man's disciples? He said, I am not.
John 18:18 Now the slaves and the attendants were standing there, having made a fire of coals, for it was cold, and they were warming themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.
John 18:25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. Then they said to him, Are you not also one of His disciples? He denied and said, I am not.
John 18:26 One of the slaves of the high priest, who was a relative of him whose ear Peter had cut off, said, Did I not see you in the garden with Him?
John 18:27 Then Peter denied again, and immediately a rooster crowed.
Matt 26:69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him and said, You also were with Jesus the Galilean.
Matt 26:70 But he denied it before all, saying, I do not know what you are talking about!
Matt 26:71 And after he had gone out to the porch, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.
Matt 26:72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man!
Matt 26:73 And after a little while those who were standing there came to Peter and said, Surely you also are one of them, for your speech also makes it clear that you are.
Matt 26:74 Then he began to curse and to swear: I do not know the man! And immediately a rooster crowed.
Matt 26:75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.
1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
1 Pet 5:6 Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time,

VI. In the decree of the kingdom's constitution, Christ displayed the two possible ways of people's life and work before God—Matt. 7:13-14, 21-27:

Matt 7:13 Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it.
Matt 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

Matt 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens.
Matt 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, was it not in Your name that we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power?
Matt 7:23 And then I will declare to them: I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.
Matt 7:24 Everyone therefore who hears these words of Mine and does them shall be likened to a prudent man who built his house upon the rock.
Matt 7:25 And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and they beat against that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.
Matt 7:26 And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand.
Matt 7:27 And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and they dashed against that house; and it fell, and its fall was great.

A. The broad way leading to destruction is according to the worldly systems, satisfying the natural tastes, to get the crowd, to maintain a career of man, and to achieve man's enterprise—13:31-33; Rev. 2:13, 20; 17:4-5.

Matt 13:31 Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,
Matt 13:32 And which is smaller than all the seeds; but when it has grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches.
Matt 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.
Rev 2:13 I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
Rev 2:20 But I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices.
Rev 17:4 And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication.
Rev 17:5 And on her forehead there was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

B. The constricted way leading to life is according to the divine regulations, fulfilling the spiritual requests to bring in God's elect and to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ, carrying out God's economy for the building up of the Body of Christ—Rom. 1:9; Heb. 11:5-6; Rev. 1:1-2, 9-10.

Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God.
Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His slaves the things that must quickly take place; and He made it known by signs, sending it by His angel to His slave John,
Rev 1:2 Who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw.
Rev 1:9 I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.
Rev 1:10 I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

C. The way that leads to a living reward in life is the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22)—the way of the truth, the straight way, the way of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:2, 15, 21), the way

of peace (Luke 1:79; Rom. 3:17), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), the way of God (Matt. 22:16; Acts 18:26), and the way of the Lord (John 1:23; Acts 18:25); it is slandered as the way of heresy (24:14).

Acts 9:2 And asked for letters from him to Damascus for the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 19:9 But when some were hardened and would not be persuaded, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Acts 19:23 And about that time no small disturbance took place concerning the Way.

Acts 22:4 And I persecuted this Way unto death, binding and delivering to prisons both men and women,

Acts 24:22 But Felix, knowing more accurately the things concerning the Way, deferred them, saying, When Lysias the commander comes down, I will determine your affairs.

2 Pet 2:2 And many will follow their licentiousness, because of whom the way of the truth will be reviled.

2 Pet 2:15 Forsaking the straight way, they have gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness

2 Pet 2:21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Luke 1:79 To shine upon those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Rom 3:17 And the way of peace they have not known.

Acts 16:17 This woman followed after Paul and us and cried out, saying, These men are slaves of the Most High God, who announce to you a way of salvation.

Matt 22:16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that You are true and that You teach the way of God in truth and do not fear anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.

Acts 18:26 And this man began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to themselves and expounded the way of God to him more accurately.

John 1:23 He said, I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord!" as Isaiah the prophet said.

Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Acts 24:14 But I confess this to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, so I serve the God of our fathers, believing all the things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets;

D. The God-ordained way is to have a living and working that are always narrow and constricted, according to the pattern of the Lord’s indescribable life and ministry—John 5:19; 4:34; 17:4; 14:10, 24; 5:30; 7:6, 18:

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

John 4:34 Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.

John 17:4 I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do.

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

John 14:24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

John 5:30 I can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 7:6 Jesus therefore said to them, My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

John 7:18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.

1. We in the Lord's recovery must walk in our spirit; walking in spirit restricts us, causing us to live a normal, Christian life and making us vital, healthy believers—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 22-23; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.

Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
Gal 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
Gal 5:23 Meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
1 Thes 5:16 Always rejoice,
1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,
1 Thes 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

2. The Lord Jesus sowed Himself as a seed of life and fell into the ground as a grain of wheat so that the life within Him could be released to bring forth many grains; we need to serve Him and follow Him in this way—Matt. 13:3; John 12:23-26; 10:11; 1 John 3:16.

Matt 13:3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.
John 12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.
John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
1 John 3:16 In this we know love, that He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers.

3. The work that the Lord needs to produce and increase the church is the overflow and outflow of the inner life, not the endeavor of outward activity—John 7:37-39; 4:10, 14:

John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.
John 4:14 But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.

   a. The important thing regarding our work is not its quantity but its quality; gold, silver, and precious stones are always small in quantity but high in quality, whereas wood, grass, and stubble are always high in quantity but low in quality—1 Cor. 3:12-15:

1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,
1 Cor 3:13 The work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is.
1 Cor 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward;

1 Cor 3:15 If anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

1) Gold symbolizes God in His divine nature, silver symbolizes Christ in His redemptive work, and precious stones symbolize the Spirit in His transforming work.
2) Wood signifies the human nature, grass signifies man in the flesh, and stubble signifies lifelessness.

b. We will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ not according to the quantity but according to the quality of our work, "of what sort it is"—v. 13.

1 Cor 3:13 The work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is.

c. "Because Watchman Nee was not interested in the outward work, the life-issue of his ministry has flowed throughout the whole earth…In my whole life, he is the only person I have known who paid more attention to life than to work" (*Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, by Witness Lee, p. 87).

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE DECREE OF THE KINGDOM'S CONSTITUTION FOR REGULATING GOD'S PEOPLE'S LIFE AND WORK

In this message we want to fellowship about the narrow gate and the constricted way. In Matthew 7:13-14 the Lord said, "Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it." The human thought is that we first walk the way and then enter through the gate. But the divine way, God's way, is to enter in through the gate and then walk on the way.

This word is in the Lord's decree of the kingdom's constitution recorded in Matthew 5—7. Nearly all the Christian teachers refer to this as "the Sermon on the Mount." But I do not like the word *sermon.* The Lord was not a professor, giving the people a sermon or a lecture. He is the King. The New Testament opens by presenting to us the kingdom. It is not just the kingdom of God but the kingdom of the heavens.

After a long period of time in the Old Testament through thirty-nine books, the New Testament came to present us the first item on the heart of God. This first item is the kingdom, not just the kingdom of God but the kingdom of the heavens. Regretfully, many Christian teachers do not know how to discern between these two aspects of the kingdom. The first aspect of the kingdom is the kingdom of God. That is somewhat general. But the second aspect is the kingdom of the heavens. This is neglected and nearly missed by most Bible teachers. If you go to them and ask them what the difference is between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the heavens, they will say that they are the same. But if you know the book of Matthew, you can see that Matthew stresses the aspect of the kingdom of the heavens to the uttermost. *Kingdom of the heavens* is a term used exclusively by Matthew, indicating that the kingdom of the heavens differs from the kingdom of God. Matthew mentions the kingdom of God only four times (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). But all the way through the twenty-eight chapters of Matthew, the *kingdom of the heavens* is mentioned repeatedly (see note 34 on Matthew 5:3 in the Recovery Version for the denotation of the *kingdom of the heavens*).

The four Gospels present to us a Savior of four sides. He is a "square" Savior. The New Jerusalem is not round but square (Rev. 21:16), and our Savior is also square. If you are a "round" man, you are crafty. We all need to be square like our Savior. Even the universe has four directions: north, south, east, and west. Christ has only four sides. In Matthew He is the King; in Mark He is the Slave; in Luke He is the Man; and in John He is God.

Matthew presents to us the first aspect of Christ. Chapters one through four of Matthew are an introduction. After this introduction the King came. He went to the mountain and in chapters five through seven gave the decree of the constitution of the kingdom which He was going to establish. Matthew 7:13-14 is a little part of this constitution decreed by our King in His kingdom.

Some of us may wonder why I am sharing this in our vital group training. We need to see that the decree of the kingdom's constitution is altogether a matter of regulating God's people's life and work. When I use the word *life*, I mean *living*, and when I use the word *work*, I mean *working*. I am not referring to just our life within but to our living without, our daily living. God's people's living and working should be something organic according to the divine regulations fulfilling the spiritual requests. This is fully revealed in the decree of our King in His kingdom's constitution.

BEING REGULATED ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES OF LIFE IN ORDER TO BE HEALTHY, NORMAL, VITAL BELIEVERS

Our vital groups are not wild or reckless. We should be well regulated. If we are not well regulated, we can never be living and vital. If you ask a healthy person why he is healthy, he will tell you that it is because he takes care of the principles of life. A healthy person, for example, will not work at night but during the day. George Müller said that he would not even travel at night. He said that if you travel in the day, that is healthy; but if you travel in the night, that is unhealthy. To sleep at night from 10 P.M. to 6 A.M. is very healthy. But to sleep during the day is unhealthy. This is a life principle.

God made the heavens and the earth, and He also ordained the night and the day. The night is very important, so it came first. The evening and the morning are one day in Genesis 1 (v. 5). For your health, the night is important. If you take care of your night in a wise way, you will be healthy. Still there are a number of jobs in our society which require people to be on duty at night. We have to thank the nurses and the policemen who do their duty at night, sacrificing themselves for others. But according to the God-ordained principle, the night is for us to sleep, and the day is for our living and working.

Healthy people will tell you that they are regulated according to the principles of life. Each one of these principles regulates us. If we eat too fast, we will suffer. Neither should we eat too slow. That is not healthy eating. Healthy eating must be moderate, neither too fast nor too slow, in order to satisfy the inner feeling of our body. When we take care of the principles of life in the human realm, this makes us vital physically.

We are being trained to be vital. But in our concept, we think that to be vital is to be like Samson. Samson, however, was not vital. He did not live long. He even had to commit a kind of suicide by sacrificing himself in order to kill others (Judg. 16:30). On the other hand, Boaz was very vital. He was a regular person. In the past summer training, we pointed out that we cannot see anything of life in Judges. But the book of Ruth, a book of four chapters, is a book of life. I believe that if that book were written today, the writer could get a Nobel Prize. That is a marvelous short novel full of life. Boaz was a healthy person; he was vital. Some powerful Pentecostal preachers were immoral, and yet they were powerful. They were like Samson.

Do you want to be like Samson or like Boaz? We surely want to be like Boaz, a person who was regulated according to the life principles. He was a vital person. Who brought Christ to you? Samson is not in the lineage of Christ. But Boaz is a most important link in the lineage of Christ (Matt. 1:5). Christ could come to us because of Boaz. This is what it means to be vital.

When I was looking to the Lord for this message, the Lord impressed me, "Tell the saints who love Me and who want to be vital something about the narrow gate and the constricted way." To be vital should not be a miracle. The trees do not grow in a miraculous way. We planted many small trees around the meeting hall in Anaheim seventeen years ago, but today they are all big. Their growth was according to the principles of life. God ordained these principles.

We are being trained in the God-ordained way revealed in the Bible. The God-ordained way is to

have a living and a working which are always narrowed and constricted. The gate is narrow and the way is constricted that leads to life. But the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction. In the spiritual field, there is no broad way. The way in the spiritual field is always constricted. On this way our freedom is always restricted.

Every tree is restricted. If all the trees grew without restriction, that would be a calamity. But all the trees grow and spread in the way of constriction. The trees need the God-ordained constriction plus the human cutting, the human trimming. The trimming is human. The constriction is God-ordained. Even though the trees are constricted according to God's ordination, they still need the human hands to trim them.

In the spiritual realm, we also need the trimming. A miracle is not mentioned in John 15 concerning the bearing of fruit, but trimming is strongly referred to by the Lord. Are you going to bring forth fruit? You need to be trimmed, pruned (v. 2). To be trimmed is to be constricted. We should not spread too much. We should not be wild but constricted.

We may wonder why we cannot see much bearing of fruit among us. The fruit of life does not come by means of a miracle. We need to see that the more we are constricted, the more we are regulated. The more we are regulated, the more we are healthy. Then we are ready to bear fruit. Fruit comes out of our health. A sick tree cannot bear fruit. Living things that are sick cannot produce. God's ordination is for living things such as the trees to grow vitally. We Christians should also be growing vitally. To be vital means to be healthy. We need to be healthy and normal. We should not expect to get many persons saved. We should always be prepared to bear one remaining fruit a year. We should pray, "Lord, give me one fruit per year, remaining fruit, healthy fruit, fruit that is healthy just as I am."

We might think that the apostle Paul would bring thousands to the Lord, but we can see in Paul's history that this was not the case. In Colossians 1:28-29 Paul said that he labored to announce Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that he might present every man full-grown in Christ. He desired to admonish every man, teach every man, and present every man. The "every man" work could never be a miracle. Paul was the biggest gift, so we may think he would do everything miraculously. But the Bible tells us that Paul was not able to do that many miracles. Paul was not one who depended upon miracles. He was one who labored all the time.

In Acts 20 we see that he was with the saints in Ephesus for three years. He said that he served the Lord and admonished each one of the saints with tears (vv. 19, 31). Tears indicate much hardship and difficulty. He said that he admonished the saints "night and day" (v. 31). He taught publicly in the meetings and from house to house (v. 20). He taught publicly, but his work was much more in the "every man" way. He was not just giving lectures. Paul tutored each one of the saints.

A person who is always soaring in the air cannot bear remaining fruit. Perhaps he will say that he gained three last week and two more this week, but after a year he will not gain one as remaining fruit. He may say, "Well, last week I got two. Eventually, I realized they were not so good, so I gave them up. Now I have found some better ones." Eventually, however, not one is better, and everyone has to be discarded. The mothers are not like this. Every mother loves her child regardless of the child's appearance or behavior.

T. Austin-Sparks knew this quite well. He came to visit us in Taiwan for the first time in 1955. He said, "Every mother loves her child. If you are wise, don't say anything bad about her child. Otherwise, you will offend her." Once a mother brought her child to him, and this child was not so attractive. But he dared not to say that before the mother. The mother handed over the child to him, and he felt he had to say something. He said, "Oh, what a child!" This was a neutral saying, but this caused the mother to think, "My, what a child I have." To a mother, all her children are good. We need such a mother's heart (1 Thes. 2:7). Concerning a new one, we should not say, "He is not good material; I am sure he could never be like the apostle Paul." If we have such an attitude, we will not be able to bear remaining fruit.

We should not work on that many people. Instead, we should always keep just three or four under our hand. We must learn to restrict ourselves in our labor. The Lord's constitution in Matthew tells us we have to enter. Then we have to walk. We should not think that we do not need to work too much, since we should not contact too many. This would mean that we have stopped entering the narrow gate and walking on the constricted way. This is against the kingdom constitution to the uttermost. The Lord's constitution of His kingdom is that we have to enter and then walk. We have to work.

When I say that we should not spread too much, I do not mean that we should not work. Rather, we have to work every day. A good student prepares his lessons every day and does a little bit every day. The problem with us is that we do not work regularly. After being in the training concerning the vital groups, we still may not have started the vital work. We may say that we do not feel that we are vital and that we will work when we become vital. But this is wrong. If we do not work, we can never be vital. If we would work, then we would be vital.

What is it to be vital? To be vital is to be common. We Christians should be common in a living way. We should always contact the Lord, trying our best to remain in our spirit, doing everything according to the spirit, and praying unceasingly. This makes us a common believer, a vital believer. I can testify that without a certain amount of prayer, I cannot give a message. The message comes out of my common prayer. If we do not have a time to be with the Lord in the morning to have some prayer, we will become weak and down. The only way to rise up is to pray, "Lord, forgive me and cleanse me. Lord, anoint me." Taking care of the life principles makes us vital.

We should carry out what God has ordained. God ordained that we should bear fruit. God ordained that we should contact people for His kingdom's sake. This is God's ordination, and we have to carry it out. If we do not carry out God's ordination, we can never be common. Instead, we will be abnormal Christians. Physically speaking, we must breathe, eat, sleep, and exercise properly if we want to be normal and healthy. If we do not take care of these things, it is impossible for us to be healthy. To be vital simply means to be healthy, and to be healthy we need to breathe, to pray. We have to eat and drink the Lord. We also need to exercise to do something. At least we need to go out twice a week to contact people. This is God's ordination, and we have to carry it out. We also need to rest. To sleep means to rest in the Lord. Do not think that to be vital is a miracle. To be vital is just to be common, to be normal.

Over thirty years ago, a brother told me that every time he saw me, I was so fresh. He wondered how I could be like this. If I do not pray and touch the Lord in my spirit, I can never be fresh. Instead, I will be stale. The key to my being fresh is that I contact the Lord. This causes me to lead a normal Christian life, to become vital. Often I pray for the churches around the globe. If I do not pray, I feel abnormal. Vitality comes from our being normal, common.

Now that we have had some training in the vital groups, we must take action. We should not wait. We must do our duty to carry out God's ordination. If we do this, be assured that we will bear at least one remaining fruit yearly. All the life principles are implied in John 15. Bearing fruit is a normal situation of a branch of the vine tree.

We need to practice what we have seen in a common way. Then we will be vital, and we will see the Lord's blessing following us. In these days I am so grateful to the Lord that His blessing has been following me for so many years. From my hometown, Chefoo, I went to Shanghai. From Shanghai I traveled through the provinces of China. Eventually, I was sent to Taiwan. From Taiwan I went to the Philippines and to southeastern Asia. Then I came to the United States. For more than sixty years, I have seen the Lord's blessing following me. If the Lord's blessing can be with me, it surely can be with all of us. If the Lord's blessing is not with us, we are abnormal; we are not vital. We must learn to enter through the narrow gate and then to walk on the constricted way. Thank the Lord for His constriction.

We should not expect to be flourishing and spreading in an unrestricted way. Our going to Russia was not our kind of flourishing. It was the Lord's doing. We have seen the Lord's constriction even in

our going to Russia. When we drive on the highway, we have to drive within the lines. That is constriction. If we do not drive in this way, we will damage ourselves and others.

Do not expect to be big. You need to be restricted. The environment in the church life narrows us down and restricts us. We have to enter through the narrow gate and walk on the constricted way. Do not expect to do a big work and to become a great person. Just live normally, commonly, always entering through the narrow gate and walking on the constricted way. Then be assured that you will bear remaining fruit each year. Also, many saints will be helped by you to pass through the narrow gate and walk on the constricted way.

I have been working for the Lord for over sixty years. Nearly every day I am learning to enter through the narrow gate and to walk on the constricted way. I want to be constricted. I do not want to maintain a career of man to achieve man's enterprise. Instead, I want to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ to carry out God's economy. We should live a normal, common Christian life, seeking after the Lord and pursuing Him all the time. Always exercise to enter through the narrow gate and to walk on the constricted way. (*The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups*, pp. 139-147)