

# Ministry Reading Time--Sat Afternoon

## 1. HAVING A PROPER CONSECRATION

**2 Corinthians 4:7**—But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

**Galatians 2:20a**—I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me;

**Acts 5:32**—And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

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### Consecration being to give ourselves as vessels to the Lord

What is a proper consecration? Consecration means that we offer ourselves as vessels to the Lord to let Him fill us, occupy us, and be expressed through us. As a result, we are not the ones making decisions. If the Lord says that our attitude to our parents is not good, we should respond by asking Him to forgive us and cleanse us with His blood. The Lord may say that we offended a younger brother, and we should respond by asking Him to forgive us for offending this brother. This is the result of genuine consecration. Consecration does not mean that we should give up studying and eating, leave the world, and retreat to the mountains. That is a religious concept of consecration.

When we touch and gain the Lord, we realize that we are vessels created by the Lord, and we are willing to give ourselves to Him and receive Him as our Lord. We let Him speak and do everything. As a result, we do what He wants us to do. If the Lord says that we should get rid of something, we get rid of it, and if the Lord says that we should keep something, we keep it. Whatever the Lord does not want, we should not want, and whatever the Lord desires, we also should desire. This is consecration. When the young people give testimonies concerning their consecration, they say that they want to do this or that for the Lord. Actually, the Lord does not want you to do anything for Him. He only wants you to be an empty vessel.

### Consecration being to let the Lord be our person

The Bible says that we are a vessel (Rom. 9:20-21, 23) and that we have a treasure in our earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7). An earthen vessel is meaningless without a treasure. We are merely vessels in need of content. A car without a driver as its content is meaningless. Just as a car is a vessel in need of a person who can drive, we are vessels in need of Christ as our person.

To consecrate ourselves to the Lord is to receive the Lord into us to be our person. A car does not have a person; it is just a machine. A car can merely receive commands; it cannot receive me as its person. Likewise, we often consecrate ourselves to the Lord merely to receive His commands but not to receive Him as our person. Hence, the Lord is still not our person. At the most He is able to give us commands. We go when the Lord tells us to go, or we get a job when He tells us to do so. This is the consecration of a religious person. It is an old consecration.

The Bible shows that this is not the kind of consecration that the Lord wants. The consecration that the Lord desires is for us to give ourselves to Him as vessels and let Him be our person. If there is anything that frustrates Him from being our person, we should say, "Lord, remove the hindrances! Remove whatever occupies me. If there is anything unclean in me, remove it." When we allow the Lord to cleanse and empty us, He will be enlarged in our being. The Lord desires to be our person.

Once the Lord comes in to be our person, we are no longer the person. This means that if the Lord wants to study, we follow Him to study. It is not we who decide; the Lord decides. It is not that I no longer have any opinions but that I am no longer the person who makes the decisions. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "*I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.*" The self, that is, me as the person, is crucified. Hence, I am no longer the person; the Lord is now my person. I am a vessel to let the Lord come in and be my person. When I take the Lord as my person, I make room for Him. I do not want anything to occupy me. I will let the Lord take away anything that is a hindrance to Him so that I can take Him as my person.

### Cooperating with the Lord so that He can fill us

God created us in His own image so that we would be His expression (Gen. 1:26). We are God's vessels to contain Him so that He may be expressed through us (Rom. 9:23). God chose us and predestinated us before the foundation of the world so that we would be conformed to the image of His Son (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:29).

After being saved, the filling of the Holy Spirit involves the Lord's filling every part of our being. Since we are vessels of God, the Lord desires to fill us completely. On the day that we first called on His name, the day we were saved, His desire was to enter into us in order to fill us completely. However, we were not ready for such a complete filling, because there were many other things that filled us. The Lord Jesus, however, is very accommodating. He will fill whatever space we are willing to give to Him. He will occupy whatever part of our being that we give to Him. If we do not want to open to Him, there is not much that He can do, because He depends on us. His desire is to occupy us, but we are reluctant to cooperate with Him. It therefore takes a long time for Him to fill every part of our being. He desires to enter into us and occupy our whole being; hence, we were created to be His vessels. However, this requires our cooperation. This cooperation is our consecration.

Without our cooperation, the Lord has no way to occupy us, because there are too many things within us. Once we believe in the Lord, we are saved, and the Lord enters into us. However, the Lord has not yet filled our inner being because of these three layers of things within us. The first layer consists of sins, the second layer consists of things other than the Lord, and the third layer is the self. In other words, these things fill us up; we are filled with sins, the world, and the self. Consecration is our willingness to give ourselves to the Lord and tell Him that we are willing to cooperate with Him to deal with our sins, to remove the things of the world, and to deal with our self, that is, that we want Him to be our person. This will enable the Lord to fill us.

### **Obeying the Lord's speaking to be filled with Him**

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to let the Lord occupy our whole being. It is also to fully open to the Lord. As a result, we are not the person; He is our person. The Lord is living in us; hence, He can touch something unclean in us. When He does, we should ask for His blood to cleanse us. We should say Amen to whatever He touches, even if it is not unclean. This is the way the Lord fills us. Sometimes, however, we are not obedient, and as a result, we do not experience the Lord's filling. At other times we do not want to hear the Lord's speaking. When He says that something is unclean, we are slow to obey, and we pretend that we have not heard Him.

This can be compared to a child who pretends that he does not hear what his mother is saying, because he does not want to obey her. We may even have a "spiritual" reason for not obeying the Lord. For example, rather than obeying Him to clear up a matter, we tell the Lord that we need to preach the gospel or pray.

When the Lord touches something, we should not question Him. We often question Him when we do not want to cooperate with Him. When He says that something is unclean, it is unclean. Nevertheless, we still ask Him why it is unclean. In reality, our asking is only our purposeful delaying.

The Lord touches what He wants to deal with. When He says that something is unclean and we say Amen, He can deal with the matter and fill us. When we say Amen, the Lord will fill us.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be completely occupied by the Lord. This kind of infilling is lasting and proper, because it is normal. If we have a genuine consecration and are thus filled with the Holy Spirit, the church where we are will be blessed. We will not be a problem in the churches; rather, they will receive the supply of life from us. This is the normal experience of life. By the Lord's mercy, may we have this kind of consecration. We may not be so clear in our consecration, but the Lord will gain us step by step. It is not a matter of what we should or should not do but of what the Lord wants.

## **2. CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD**

*...for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him; — Rom. 10:12b*

What is the meaning of calling on the name of the Lord? The Hebrew word for call means to call out to, to cry unto, to cry out. The Greek word for call means to invoke a person, to call a person by name. In other words, it is to call a person by naming him audibly. Although prayer may be silent, calling must be audible.

Two Old Testament prophets help us to see what is meant by calling on the Lord. Jeremiah tells us that to call on the Lord means to cry to Him and to experience spiritual breathing. *"I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, from the lowest pit. You have heard my voice; do not hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry"* (Lam. 3:55-56). Isaiah also tells us that our calling on the Lord is our crying to Him. *"God is now my salvation; I will trust and not dread; for Jah Jehovah is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation, and you will say in that day, Praise Jehovah; call upon His name!...Sing to Jehovah....Cry out and give a ringing*

*shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel*" (Isa. 12:2-6). How may God become our salvation, our strength, and our song? How can we draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation? The way is to call on His name, to praise the Lord, to sing a hymn, and to cry out and shout. All of these match the calling mentioned in verse 4!

Not only did the Old Testament saints call on the Lord, they even prophesied that others would call on His name (Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9). Although many are familiar with Joel's prophecy regarding the Holy Spirit, not many have paid attention to the fact that receiving the outpoured Holy Spirit requires our calling on the name of the Lord. On the one hand, Joel prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit; on the other hand, he prophesied that people would call on the name of the Lord. This prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17a, 21). God's outpouring needs the cooperation of our calling on Him. The best and easiest way to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit has already been poured out. We simply need to receive Him by calling on the Lord.

### **Practiced by New Testament believers**

Calling on the name of the Lord was practiced by the New Testament believers beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:21). While Stephen was being stoned to death, he was calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 7:59). Saul of Tarsus received authority from the chief priests to bind all that called on the name of the Lord (Acts 9:14). This indicates that all the early believers were Jesus-callers. Their calling on the name of the Lord was a sign, a mark, that they were Christians. If we become those who call on the name of the Lord, our calling will mark us out as Christians.

Paul the apostle stressed the matter of calling when he wrote the book of Romans. He said, "*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him; for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Rom. 10:12-13). The way to enjoy the riches of the Lord is to call upon Him. We may call on His name at any time and in any place. When we call on Him, He comes to us as the Spirit, and we enjoy His riches. Paul also spoke of calling on the Lord in 1 Corinthians when he wrote the words, "*With all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours*" (1 Cor. 1:2). Furthermore, in 2 Timothy he told Timothy to pursue spiritual things with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2:22). By all of these verses we can see that in the first century the Christians practiced calling on the name of the Lord very much. Therefore, throughout the Old Testament as well as in the early days of the Christian age, the believers called on the Lord's name.

### **The purpose of calling**

Why do we need to call on the name of the Lord? Men need to call on the name of the Lord in order to be saved (Rom. 10:13). The way of praying quietly does help people to be saved, but not so richly. The way of calling loudly helps people to be saved in a richer and more thorough way. Thus, we need to encourage people to open themselves and to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Psalm 116 tells us that we may partake of the Lord's salvation by calling on Him: "*I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord*" (v. 13). As we have seen earlier, the way to draw water from the springs of salvation is to call upon the name of the Lord (Isa. 12:2-4). "*Call upon His name! ...Cry out and give a ringing shout*" (Isa. 12:4, 6). Try shouting before Him. If you have never shouted about what the Lord is to you, try it. The more you shout, "O Lord Jesus, You are so good to me!" the more you will be released from your self and filled with the Lord. Thousands of believers have been released and enriched through calling on the name of the Lord.

Another reason for calling on the Lord is to be rescued from distress (Psa. 18:6; 118:5), from trouble (Psa. 50:15; 86:7; 81:7), and from sorrow and pain (Psa. 116:3-4). People who have argued against calling on the Lord have found themselves calling on Him when they were subject to a certain trouble or illness. When our lives are free from trouble, we may argue against calling on the Lord. However, when trouble comes, no one will need to tell us to call on Him; we will call spontaneously.

Isaiah 55:1 says, "*Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and you who have no money; come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*" What is the way to eat and drink the Lord? Isaiah gives us the way in verse 6 of the same chapter: "*Seek Jehovah while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.*" Thus, the way to eat the spiritual food for our satisfaction is to seek the Lord and to call upon His name.

First Corinthians is a book on the enjoyment of Christ. In chapter twelve, Paul tells us how to enjoy Him. The way to enjoy the Lord is to call on His name (12:3; 1:2). Whenever we call "Lord Jesus," He comes as the Spirit, and we drink of Him (12:13), the life-giving Spirit. If I call a person's name, and if he is real, living, and present, that person will come to me. The Lord Jesus is real, living, and present! He is always available. Whenever we call on Him, He comes. Do you want to enjoy the Lord's presence with all His riches? The best way to experience His presence with all His riches is to call on His name. Call on Him while you are driving on the freeway or while you are at work. Anywhere and anytime you may call. The Lord is near and rich to you.

Also, by calling on the name of the Lord, we can stir ourselves up. Isaiah 64:7 says, “*And there is no one who calls upon Your name, who stirs himself up to lay hold of You.*” When we feel that we are down or low, we can lift and stir ourselves up by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus.

### **The way to call**

How should we call on the Lord? We must call on Him out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22). Our heart, which is the source of our calling, must be pure, seeking nothing except the Lord Himself. Also, we must call with a pure lip (Zeph. 3:9). We need to watch our speech, for nothing contaminates our lips more than loose talk. If our lips are impure due to loose talk, it will be difficult for us to call on the Lord. Along with a pure heart and pure lips, we need to have an open mouth (Psa. 81:10). We need to open our mouth wide to call on the Lord. Furthermore, we need to call on the Lord corporately. Second Timothy 2:22 says, “*But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*” We need to come together for the purpose of calling on the name of the Lord. Psalm 88:9 says, “*Lord, I have called daily upon thee.*” Hence, we should call daily upon His name. Furthermore, Psalm 116:2 says, “*Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.*” As long as we live, we should call on the name of the Lord.

### **The need of practice**

Calling on the name of the Lord is not merely a doctrine. It is very practical. We need to practice it daily and hourly. We should never stop our spiritual breathing. We hope that many more of the Lord’s people, especially new believers, will begin the practice of calling on the Lord. Today, many Christians have found that they can know Him, that they can be brought into the power of His resurrection, that they can experience His spontaneous salvation, and that they can walk in oneness with Him by calling on His name. In any situation, at any time, call: “Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus!” If you practice calling on His name, you will see that it is a wonderful way to enjoy the Lord’s riches.

## **3. CONFESSING OUR SINS**

**1 John 1:9**—*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

**Acts 24:16**—*Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

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### **The Practice of Confessing Our Sins**

When we live in the divine light, we are under its enlightenment, and it exposes, according to God’s divine nature and through God’s nature in us, all our sins, trespasses, failures, and defects, which contradict His pure light, perfect love, absolute holiness, and excelling righteousness. At such a time we sense in our enlightened conscience the need of the cleansing of the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus, and it cleanses us in our conscience from all sins that our fellowship with God and with one another may be maintained. Our relationship with God is unbreakable, yet our fellowship with Him can be interrupted. The former is of life, whereas the latter is based on our living, though it also is of life. One is unconditional; the other is conditional. Our fellowship, which is conditional, needs to be maintained by the constant cleansing of the Lord’s blood.

There is a cycle in our spiritual life, a cycle formed of four crucial things—the eternal life, the fellowship of the eternal life, the divine light, and the blood of Jesus the Son of God. Eternal life issues in its fellowship, the fellowship of eternal life brings in the divine light, and the divine light increases the need for the blood of Jesus the Son of God that we may have more eternal life. The more we have of eternal life, the more of its fellowship it brings to us. The more fellowship of the divine life we enjoy, the more divine light we receive. The more divine light we receive, the more we participate in the cleansing of the blood of Jesus. Such a cycle brings us onward in the growth of the divine life until we reach the maturity of life.

God is faithful in His word (1 John v. 10) and righteous in the blood of Jesus His Son (v. 7). His word is the word of the truth of the gospel (Eph. 1:13), which tells us that He will forgive us our sins because of Christ (Acts 10:43); and the blood of Christ has fulfilled His righteous requirements that He might forgive us our sins (Matt. 26:28). If we confess our sins, He, according to His word and based on the redemption through the blood of Jesus, forgives us because He must be faithful in His word and righteous in the blood of Jesus; otherwise, He would be unfaithful and unrighteous. Our confession

is needed for His forgiveness. Such forgiveness of God, which is for the restoration of our fellowship with Him, is conditional; it depends on our confession.

You must have a start by going to the Lord until He enlightens you, until He shines on you. Then you will fully realize where you are and what you are. Spontaneously, you will begin to repent by saying, “Lord, I am dead.” While you are saying you are dead, the Lord will say, “You are dead because you are sinful. You are dead because you are dirty and filthy.” The Lord will shine on you and show you that you are like a person buried under the earth with layer upon layer of dirt. You have to get out of that by making a thorough and detailed confession to the Lord so that you can be forgiven, washed, released to emerge from the depths of your fall. This thorough repentance and thorough confession will bring you an intimate fellowship with the Lord.

I say again that you must have a time to go to the Lord. You must go to the Lord again and again until you get enlightenment and are exposed in His light. If you come to Him, He will expose you, and you will repent and confess. Then you will be brought into His intimate fellowship. Only one thing counts—for you to contact the Lord by yourself. To do it with anyone else will be a frustration to you. You must go to Him directly by yourself.

## **The Two Aspects of Confession**

### ***Confession to God***

There are two aspects of confession: one is confessing our sins to God and the other is confessing our sins to man. To confess our sins to God is to come before God and confess everything we have done that offends God. Any sin we have committed offends God, no matter whether in our eyes the sin is against God or against man. David killed Uriah and usurped his wife. Perhaps to our view, David only sinned against man and offended man. But David said that he had sinned against God and God alone (see Psalms 51:1-17). Therefore, he confessed that sin to God. When confessing sins to God, you cannot be general and confess only in principle that you are sinful and so wicked. You must be specific and sincerely confess your sins in detail, one by one. You cannot just bring a big bag of sins, throw it down before God and forget it. You must open the bag before God and confess each sin, just as someone once said: we must open the bag and thoroughly confess each sin one by one.

We need to confess our outward sins and inward evils to the Lord, asking for His forgiveness. We may be able to count out outward sins, but it is hard for us to enumerate our inward evils. Our inward evils are countless. If we are under the Lord’s enlightening, we will realize that our thinking, our intention, and our desire are all evil. Our good intentions are not pure. Our motive is not pure. Even our laughing is not pure, but with a hidden motive. We have to be enlightened and dealt with by the Lord to such an extent.

### ***Confession to Man***

Most of the sins we commit are against people, so we should confess our sins not only to God but also to man. We confess our sins to God because every sin we commit offends God. But the sins we commit not only offend God but also offend man. If we offend God, He immediately forgives us when we confess our sins to Him. But God cannot forgive us in place of those whom we have offended. Therefore, we still must confess our sins to man. For example, you commit a sin and offend your neighbor. Once you are aware of it, you confess it to God. God most certainly forgives you, but your neighbor cannot forgive you. You still need to go confess to your neighbor and beg for forgiveness. Otherwise, you will still be condemned in your neighbor’s eyes and bound in his heart. In order to gain his release and forgiveness so that you can be prosper before him, you simply must confess that sin to him. Therefore, the word “*confesses*” in Proverbs 28:13b must also include confessing our sins to man.

## **The Result of Confession**

When David would not confess his sin to God, he was miserable. But when he acknowledged his sin and did not cover his iniquity, when he confessed his transgression to God, God forgave him and surrounded him with the ringing shouts of deliverance, causing him to be full of joy. Thus, if we want to have the joy of salvation, we must confess our sins before God. Many people have repented and been saved, but they have never thoroughly confessed their sins before God. If they want to richly taste the joy of the Lord’s salvation, they must come before the Lord and thoroughly confess their sins. If they want to have spiritual hunger, thirst, pursuit and growth, they must also come before God and confess their sins one by one.

Thus, if we want to have the joy of salvation, or to remove the barriers between ourselves and God, restoring and maintaining our fellowship with God, or if we want to receive God’s mercy and obtain His blessing, in each case we must confess our sins to God.

If you go to Him again and again, He will shine upon you. He will enlighten you. He will bring you into the light. He will expose you to the uttermost. Then you will repent to the uttermost and even weep before the Lord. You will tell the Lord, “Lord, I am so dirty and sinful. I am rotten and corrupted.” Spontaneously, you will make a thorough confession to the

Lord. You may confess to such an extent that you would forget to eat. While you are driving to your office, you may still be repenting to the Lord with tears. I wonder how many of us have passed through this stage.

Furthermore, confessing our sins to others can also cause our spirit to be released and thereby to be revived, strengthened, and enlivened. The spirits of many brothers and sisters are not free and appear to be in a dry, weak, and deadened condition, because they have offended others and are not willing to confess their sins to man. Sin deadens our spirit. This is especially true of sins that offend others. They cause the conscience in our spirit to have offense before man, so they particularly make our spirit unable to rise up before others and cause it to be deadened and low. Thus, if we want our spirit to be free and strong before men, we must confess our sins to men to remove from our conscience the sense of having offended men.

#### 4. KEEPING OUR LOVE FOR THE LORD FRESH

**Mark 12:30**—*And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength.*

**Revelation 2:2a, 4**—*I know your works and your labor and your endurance... But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.*

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In the whole Gospel of John there are only two requirements: the first is to believe in the Lord and the second is to love Him. To believe in Him is to receive Him, and to love Him is to enjoy Him. We all have believed in Him. This means that we all have received Him. But the problem today is whether we love Him or not. Although you have received the Lord Jesus and He is now within you, you may not love Him. We need to be a lover of the Lord Jesus all day long. We all must love Him. His presence is always related to our love toward Him. The more we love Him, the more we enjoy His presence. What is His presence? It is simply the enjoyment of Himself. As long as we have His presence, we enjoy Him. The more we love Him, the more we shall have His presence. The more we are in His presence, the more we shall enjoy all that He is to us. How we all need to love Him! No one is as lovely as He is. Song of Songs says that He is altogether lovely (5:16).

#### Pursuing Christ for Satisfaction

God created us for the accomplishment of His eternal economy. For this purpose He created us with a spirit to receive Him. God also created us with a seeking heart for Himself so that He could be our satisfaction. However, man fell away from God, and sin through Satan came in to frustrate man from receiving God for his satisfaction. Yet the desire for God, the seeking for God, still remains in man's heart. History tells us that over the past six thousand years many wise, great, philosophical, and thoughtful men have given the same testimony that nothing can fully satisfy man. Regardless of what they could get from the world, what they could attain, or what they could obtain, nothing can satisfy them because within them there is a seeking heart for God (Eccl. 3:11). This is why the wise King Solomon, after his many human experiences, concluded, "*Vanity of vanities; all is vanity*" (1:2). Everything under the sun is vanity of vanities if one does not have God. God created purposely within man a desire for Himself. God has given man a heart that is seeking after Him for satisfaction.

Song of Songs is a book in the Bible that tells us how we can be satisfied properly with God. There is no other way except by pursuing after Christ. He is the reality of God. He is God in reality, God's embodiment, coming to earth to give people the opportunity to receive Him for satisfaction.

Peter may be counted as the first one among the apostles and Paul was a later one. They were seekers of God, but initially they took the wrong way. Eventually, both Peter, a fisherman, and Paul, a learned scholar, found the way to seek Christ for satisfaction. Paul told us in Philippians 3 that we have to pursue Christ to gain Him (vv. 12-14) because He is the most excellent way. All things other than Christ are refuse (v. 8). Only Christ is excellent. Paul's desire was to gain Christ, and he instructed us how to gain Christ as he did.

In this message our point is that we have to pursue Christ for satisfaction. Song of Songs opens in this way: "*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!*" (1:2a). The seeker longs for kisses, not just one kiss. The most impressive thing about weddings in the Western world is the time of kissing. The bridegroom opens the bride's veil to kiss her with his own mouth. He does not kiss the ears or the nose of the bride but her mouth. This is the most personal and affectionate thing. Here is a book in the Bible that opens in such a way: "*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.*" This is what it means to pursue Christ.

According to the New Testament, God's ordained way for man to receive Him in this kind of personal and affectionate way is first to believe in Him. To believe in Him is to receive Him as the divine life into us that we may have an organic union with God in the divine life. Regretfully, very few Christians know what believing in Christ means. They know

that they need to take Him as Savior and Redeemer, but they do not know that to believe in Christ is to receive Him as the divine life into us so that we can have an organic union with God in His divine life. This is the first step.

Now that we have received Christ into us, what does God want us to do? Many say that after one has believed in Christ, he should do many things. This is wrong. According to the New Testament, after we believe in Christ, after we receive Him as the divine life into us, we have to love Him. Paul told us that the Lord's grace superabounded to him with faith and love in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 1:14). Faith is to receive Christ, and love is to pursue Christ.

*"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth."* This word indicates that to some extent the seeker has obtained a part of Christ's love, but now she wants something more intimate. She wants to be kissed not just with one kiss but with the kisses of His mouth. Someone who is affectionate with another may kiss him on the cheek, but this expression of affection is not the first category of love. On the wedding day who would want to see the bridegroom kiss his bride on the cheek? He is expected to kiss his bride on the mouth as the expression of his utmost affection.

In her desire to be kissed with the kisses of His mouth, the seeker goes on to say, *"For your love is better than wine"* (1:2b). She does not say that His love is as good as wine but that it is better than wine. Wine cheers but Christ's love cheers us in an unrivaled way. No wine can compare with His unrivaled love. Nothing is so cheering as Christ's love. Verse 3 says, *"Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; Your name is like ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you."* Christ's name signifies Christ's person, His being. If someone says your name, you respond because you are the person of that name. Christ's charming name, His person, is the all-inclusive Spirit. His love is attracting, His name is charming, and His person is captivating. He has drawn and captivated millions of His lovers to pursue after Him and is still doing the same today. Therefore, all His lovers would run after Him for their satisfaction. This is why the seeker prays, *"Draw me; we will run after you"* (S.S. 1:4a).

### **The Need for a Personal and Affectionate Relationship with Christ**

In this message I want to impress you with something particular. After you have received Christ as your life, you must have a very personal seeking after Christ. No one can represent you or do anything for you in this matter. It must be personal. Every believer's relationship with Christ must be personal and affectionate. God works in a personal and affectionate way, not in the way of a movement. A person can be moved to join a movement and not have any personal contact with the Lord. What we need is the personal and affectionate experience of Christ.

In Song of Songs, the seeker said, *"Draw me."* She did not say, *"Draw us."* Draw me is personal. We want a drawing from the Lord that is His personal and affectionate doing. We want Him to be with us in a personal and affectionate way. Regardless of how great, sovereign, almighty, and majestic God is, when He wanted to build up His relationship with man He took the personal, affectionate way. He took the way of becoming a man. If the Lord Jesus had come to Peter in a majestic way, Peter would have felt threatened. But He did not come to Peter as the majestic, untouchable God. Instead, He came to Peter as his countryman. Peter was a Galilean, and Jesus was also a Galilean. This is personal and affectionate.

The Lord Jesus lived among men for thirty-three and a half years. This was the way in which God came to build up His relationship with man. This is the personal, affectionate way recorded in the New Testament from the incarnation to the day of resurrection. On the morning of His resurrection, the Lord's empty tomb was discovered by three sisters (Mark 16:1). When they entered into the tomb, an angel gave them a message from the Lord, saying, *"Go, tell His disciples and Peter..."* (v. 7). Peter's name mentioned in this way is personal and affectionate. Peter's intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus was particular, so it was stressed even by the angel. At the beginning of his contact with the Lord, Peter's response was not too personal, but gradually Peter's transaction with the Lord became personal and affectionate.

Dear brothers and sisters, you have to start seeking the Lord in a personal and affectionate way. I want to stress these two words: personal and affectionate. The very God whom we pursue is personal and affectionate. We all need this kind of personal, affectionate, intimate contact with the Lord every day, and we need to build up such a relationship with Him that is so personal and affectionate.