

THE FOUR GREAT PILLARS IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Nine

The Fourth Great Pillar—the Gospel

(2)

The Center of Paul's Gospel

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:1, 3-4, 9, 15-16; 2:16; 8:2-3, 9-11, 28-30; 16:25

I. The book of Galatians presents the basic truth of the gospel—2:5, 14:

- A. The first aspect of the truth of the gospel is that fallen man cannot be justified out of works of law—v. 16a.
- B. Under God's New Testament economy, we are justified out of faith in Christ—v. 16b:
 - 1. Through believing, we are joined to Christ and become one with Him—John 3:15.
 - 2. Faith in Christ denotes an organic union with Him through believing; the term *in Christ* refers to this organic union—Gal. 2:17; 3:14, 28; 5:6.
 - 3. Justification is not merely a matter of position; it is also an organic matter, a matter in life.
 - 4. It is by means of our organic union with Christ that God can reckon Christ as our righteousness; only in this way can we be justified by God—1 Cor. 1:30.

II. Paul's gospel is the unique gospel, the complete gospel—Rom. 16:25:

- A. Paul's gospel includes all the aspects of the gospel in the four Gospels:
 - 1. In Matthew the goal of the gospel of the kingdom is to bring people into God to make them citizens of the kingdom of the heavens—28:19; 24:14; Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:21.
 - 2. In Mark the preaching of the gospel is to bring part of the old creation into the new creation—16:15-16; Rom. 8:20-21; Gal. 6:15.
 - 3. In Luke we have the gospel of forgiveness to bring redeemed people back to the God-ordained blessing—24:46-47; 1:77-79; 2:30-32; Eph. 1:3, 7; Gal. 3:14.
 - 4. In John we have the eternal life so that we may bear fruit for the building up of the Body of Christ, which is Christ's increase—20:31; 15:16; Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; 12:4-5; Gal. 3:28; 4:19; 6:10, 16.
- B. Paul's gospel is the center of the New Testament revelation—Rom. 1:1, 9:
 - 1. Paul's gospel is a revelation of the Triune God, processed to become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 3:2, 5, 14.
 - 2. Paul's gospel is centered on the Triune God being our life in order to be one with us and to make us one with Him, that we may be the Body of Christ to express Christ in a corporate way—Rom. 8:11; 12:4-5; Eph. 1:22-23.

III. Paul's gospel includes the entire book of Romans—2:16; 16:25:

- A. The gospel of God, as the subject of the book of Romans, concerns Christ as the Spirit living within the believers after His resurrection—8:10-11:

1. This is higher and more subjective than what was presented in the Gospels, which mainly concern Christ in the flesh as He lived among His disciples after His incarnation but before His death and resurrection—John 1:14; 14:17.
 2. The Epistle to the Romans reveals that Christ has resurrected and has become the life-giving Spirit, and as such, He is no longer merely the Christ outside the believers, but He is now the Christ within them—8:9-11.
 3. The gospel in the book of Romans is the gospel of the One who is now indwelling His believers as their subjective Savior—1:3-4, 15-16; 8:10.
- B. The entire book of Romans, from chapter 1 on the person of Jesus Christ the God-man and on the righteousness of God to chapter 16 on the local churches as the expression of the Body of Christ, is the gospel of God in its completeness—1:1, 3-4, 9, 16-17; 12:4-5; 16:1, 4, 16.
- C. As revealed in Romans, Paul's gospel is a gospel of sonship—8:14, 29; Gal. 3:26; 4:7:
1. The central concept of the gospel of God is related to the Son of God, and God's intention is to bring many sons into glory—Rom. 1:3-4; 8:3, 29; Heb. 2:10.
 2. God predestinated us unto sonship; the choosing of God's people to be holy is for the purpose of their being made sons of God, participating in the divine sonship—Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:28-30.
- D. We need to preach the gospel in Romans in a way that will cause people to realize the following:
1. That once they believe in the Lord, their sins will be forgiven, and they will be redeemed and justified by God, reconciled to God, and accepted by God—3:20, 23-28; 5:1-2, 8, 10, 17.
 2. That they will be regenerated in the spirit, have God's life and nature, and have God dwelling in them to renew and transform them so that they may be conformed to the image of God's Son and eventually reach the maturity in life and be fully glorified as sons of God—8:2, 9-11, 16, 29-30.
 3. That although they are sinners, they will become sons of God and members of Christ, coordinating together to constitute the Body of Christ, which is the testimony and the expression of Christ expressed practically on earth as the local churches—12:1-2, 4-5, 11; 16:1, 4, 16.

IV. The center of Paul's gospel is Romans 8, which concerns the dispensing of the Triune God as life into the tripartite man—vv. 2, 6, 10-11:

- A. The Bible reveals the mystery of God, the mystery of the universe, the mystery of man, the mystery of the church, and the mystery of the future; within the Bible, Romans 8 is the mystery of all mysteries, for it particularly unveils and explains these five mysteries—vv. 1-2, 4, 6, 9-11, 17-25, 28-30.
- B. Romans 8 reveals the focal point of God's economy—that in eternity past God purposed to enter into His chosen and redeemed people so that He could be their life and they could be His corporate expression—vv. 10-11, 28-30.
- C. Romans 8, an experiential chapter, speaks about the Triune God in the experience of the Christian life—vv. 2, 10-11.

- D. The law of the Spirit of life is uniquely revealed in Romans 8; the law of the Spirit of life is the Triune God in motion; when the Triune God moves within us, He is the law of the Spirit of life—vv. 2, 10-11.
- E. Romans 8 concerns the wonderful, all-inclusive life-giving Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the Triune God; this Spirit will make us exactly the same as Christ is in life, nature, and expression—vv. 2, 9, 11, 13-14, 16, 23.
- F. The purpose of the all-inclusive Spirit being life to our spirit, mind, and body is that we would be conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son; this conformation is the goal of the working of the divine life within us—vv. 2, 6, 10-11, 29.
- G. Romans 8 is central because it concerns God's goal and our destiny—conformation to the image of the firstborn Son of God; eventually, we will be fully conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son for the eternal, corporate expression of the Triune God—v. 29; 12:4-5; Rev. 21:10-11.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PAUL'S GOSPEL INCLUDING THE ENTIRE BOOK OF ROMANS

The book of Romans has four stations. Chapters one through four are the first station, which is justification. Chapters five through eight are the second station, the station of sanctification. Chapters nine through twelve are the third station, the station of the Body of Christ, because chapter twelve says that as members the believers are becoming one Body. Chapters thirteen through sixteen are the last station, the station of the church life, because chapter sixteen mentions the local churches in different places, such as the church in Cenchrea, the church in the home of Priscilla and Aquila, and the churches of the Gentiles.

In the past nineteen centuries many people have studied Romans, but none of them was able to say that the last station of this book is on the local churches. The book of Romans is concerning the gospel of God (1:1-4). As sinners, we need justification and then sanctification. Sanctification is transformation, which constitutes us into the Body of Christ. This Body is expressed as churches in different localities. This is the subject of Romans. The *Life-study of Romans* takes this line as its center and speaks of numerous truths in a clear way. Now a life-study of the entire New Testament has been accomplished. We have to encourage the churches in every place to study the life-studies carefully, because the life-studies are full of diamonds.

For example, although we all have read Romans 8, we may not be clear concerning what it talks about. Now the *Life-study of Romans* tells us clearly that the subject of Romans 8 is that the Triune God is dispensing Himself into the tripartite man. If you could ask Martin Luther about the subject of Romans, he would tell you that Romans speaks about justification. His explanation would stop at only the first station. Hence, we all have to diligently learn the truth. This is what is meant by the Chinese saying, "Reading is always beneficial." As long as we open the life-study messages and study them every day, regardless of what chapters or verses they cover, we will profit from them.

Today the reason that the gospel of the Lord cannot be spread is that we do not know the truth. The truth is the gospel. If we speak the truth in every place, we are in fact preaching the gospel in every place. The entire Bible is the gospel of God, but it seems that we do not understand this. Now we have to turn this situation around so that all the saints among us will know how to speak the truth and preach the gospel. This will provide the Lord a broad way to fulfill His desire. (*Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—the Four Great Pillars in the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 100-101)

THE COMPLETE AND FULL GOSPEL OF GOD

The four pillars in the Lord's recovery are the truth, life, the church, and the gospel. The truth brings us life, life produces the church, and the church is responsible for the preaching of the gospel.

Christians today have a very superficial view of the gospel. They think that the gospel tells people that they are sinners and will perish after death but that God loved the world and gave His only begotten Son to save them—He was crucified to bear the sin of the world—so that if they repent and believe in Him, they will not perish but will have eternal life and enjoy peace in the future, and they will also enjoy prosperity and peace in this age. We cannot say that this kind of a gospel is wrong, but it is superficial and very poor.

The book of Romans, written by the apostle Paul, consists of sixteen chapters, and each chapter contains the gospel. In 1:14-15 Paul says that he is a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish, and that, for his part, he is ready to announce the gospel to the Gentiles. In the gospel Paul preached, which is the whole book of Romans, there is no mention of perdition, heaven, or prosperity and peace. Instead, Paul first speaks of justification, then sanctification, then the Body of Christ, and last of the local churches in every place. This means that even the local churches are a part of the gospel.

We must see that if what we preach is merely about escaping perdition and going to "heaven," then we are preaching the poorest gospel. We must preach the gospel in a way that allows people to clearly see that once they believe in the Lord, their sins will be forgiven, and they will be redeemed and justified by God, reconciled to God, and accepted by God. They should also see that at the same time they will be regenerated in their spirit, have God's life and nature, and have God dwelling in their spirit to renew them day by day and transform them moment by moment. This is so that they may be conformed to the image of His Son and eventually reach the maturity in life and be fully glorified as the sons of God. Furthermore, they should see that although they are sinners, they will become sons of God. At the same time, they are members of Christ, coordinating together to constitute the Body of Christ, which is the testimony, the riches, and the expression of Christ expressed practically on the earth as the local churches. This is the gospel in Romans.

In the New Testament there are not only the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John but also the gospels of Acts and Romans. In Romans 1 Paul tells us that he preached this book as the gospel to the Romans, the Gentiles. This book is concerning the complete gospel of God, beginning with forgiveness of sins, passing through sanctification, transformation, and the constitution of the Body of Christ, and eventually arriving at the living of the church life in the churches.

Romans 8 is the center of Paul's gospel, which is concerning the Triune God dispensing Himself into the tripartite man. Hence, in this chapter Paul mentions the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (vv. 9-11). God is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—for the purpose of dispensing Himself into man. We human beings are tripartite, having a spirit, soul, and body. Our mind occupies a great part of our soul. Romans 8 tells us that the Triune God first enters into our spirit (v. 10), then saturates our mind from our spirit, that is, enters into our soul (v. 6), and then enters into our body, giving life to our mortal bodies (v. 11). In this way, our tripartite being—our spirit, soul, and body—is filled with God. This is the center of Romans 8 and of the entire book of Romans as well. This is the gospel of God.

Do not think that the gospel is one thing and that the truth is another thing. The truth is the gospel, and our preaching of the truth is the preaching of the gospel. To preach the gospel is not to tell people about escaping perdition and going to heaven nor to tell them about prosperity and peace. It is to tell people about God, about Christ Jesus, and about the church. In

other words, to preach the gospel is to tell people that God wants to enter into man and make sinners sons of God, that these sons of God are living members of Christ for the constitution of the church, and that these ones are in the church, which is expressed in different localities, so that they can live the church life in the local churches. (*Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—the Four Great Pillars in the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 121-123)

CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE FIRSTBORN SON OF GOD

Fourth, the life of God continuously renews and transforms us so that eventually we who are transformed by Him may be conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29). The Lord Jesus originally was God's only begotten Son; at that time, within Him there was only divinity, with no humanity. It was not until He became the Son of Man, putting on the flesh, that He had humanity. But this part, His humanity, was still not the Son of God. When He was crucified on the cross, His humanity was brought to death, passed through resurrection, and was uplifted to be brought into divinity. Through this, the part that was His humanity also became the Son of God. Now, He is the firstborn Son of God, having both divinity and humanity. Moreover, we who believed in Him and were regenerated became God's many sons (Rom. 8:19). He is the Firstborn, with divinity plus humanity; we are the many sons, with humanity plus divinity. He and we, we and He, both have the divine and human natures.

Before we were saved, we were persons living merely in our humanity. Some people do things by their reasoning, and they are able to suppress themselves in not getting angry, nor talking loosely; they are proper and ethical people. There are also some whose will is not that strong, who do things foolishly, who always make mistakes and get upset. Regardless of whether we are proper or not, ethical or not, we have only humanity, and no divinity. But one day we believed in Jesus; the Son of God as the life-giving Spirit came into us. As soon as He came in, we who believed in Jesus, regardless of whether we were good or evil, had divinity added into our humanity. Therefore, in actuality, we Christians all have a double character. The first character is our original nature, our human nature; the second character is the added nature of God. If we pray and contact the Lord adequately, the divine nature within will increase, and we will be able to live out a superior living.

We all have this experience. Once this Jesus has entered into us, He will by no means go out. You may not want Him, but He still wants you; you may not like Him, but He still likes you. Within us He is full of grace, desiring to work on us in every way in order to sanctify, renew, and transform us step by step so that eventually we will be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, so that we will be exactly like Christ. Christ the firstborn Son was simply divinity living in humanity expressing the divine attributes. It is the same with us, with humanity mingled with divinity; it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. Also, we live out this Christ from within us. The living of us the many sons is identical with that of Christ the Firstborn; our humanity lives by divinity so that the divine attributes may be expressed in the human virtues to the extent that we are full of the glory and beauty of divinity. In this way, Christ the Son of God can be the Firstborn among God's many sons so that God may obtain the corporate expression of His firstborn Son with the many sons for the accomplishing of His original purpose of creation.

We were created in His image by the Triune God. Now through the redemption and salvation of the Triune God, every one of us one day will be conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son. Thus, God's firstborn Son with the many sons will constitute God's corporate expression. This also accomplishes God's original purpose of creation, that is, that man may have God's image and, by God's life, live Him out to express Him. Moreover, He desires those who are saved by His life to express the glory and beauty of His divine attributes in their human virtues. When we who died with Christ and live with Him express the glory and

beauty of the divine attributes, such as love, light, holiness, righteousness, patience, and humility, in our human virtues, God will obtain an unsurpassing glory through this. In this way, we are corporately conformed to the image of the firstborn Son. (*Conformation to the Image of the Son of God*, pp. 20-22)