

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

(Thursday—Evening Session)

Message Three

The Supreme Preciousness of the All-inclusive Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:7, 19; 2:4, 6-7; 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:1, 4; Phil. 3:8-9

I. The believers in Christ should have a change in their concept of value— Matt. 23:16-26; 1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 16:15; 9:54-56; 1 Pet. 3:4:

- A. The proper concept of value for the believers can be seen in their estimation and assessment of the following aspects of Christ and His full salvation:
1. Their valuation of the Lord Jesus—Psa. 118:22; 1 Pet. 2:7.
 2. Their valuation of the word of the cross—1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18.
 3. Their valuation of God's kingdom and righteousness in comparison to a man's daily necessities—Matt. 6:32-33; 2 Pet. 1:1, 11; 2:5; 3:13.
 4. Their valuation of the Lord Jesus in comparison to their relatives—Matt. 10:37-38; Luke 18:26-30; 1 Pet. 1:1, 17; 2:11a.
 5. Their valuation of a man's soul in comparison to the whole world—Matt. 16:26; 4:8-11; Rev. 18:13; 1 Pet. 4:19.
 6. Their valuation of their body in comparison to the seriousness and consequence of sin—Matt. 18:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:10-13.
 7. Their valuation of hierarchical position in comparison to being slaves of the Lord and to one another—Matt. 20:25-27; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 1:1.
 8. Their valuation of Christ as the treasure of justice in comparison to earthly treasure—Job 22:23-28; Matt. 12:18-21; Isa. 42:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:18-20.
 9. Their valuation of the enjoyment of sin in comparison to the unseen reward—Heb. 11:24-27; 1 Pet. 1:8-12; 2 Pet. 1:8-11; 2:20-22.
 10. Their valuation of the knowledge of Christ in comparison to all things—Phil. 3:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:2-3, 8; 2:20; 3:18.
- B. We need to ask the Lord to grant us the light to have a thorough change in our concept of value so that we will continually choose Christ and all that He is as our super-excelling portion—Mark 9:7-8; 2 Cor. 2:10; 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:8.
- C. "If you bring out the precious from the worthless, / You will be as My mouth"—Jer. 15:19; cf. v. 16:
1. We must treasure the Lord's words more than our apportioned food, tasting the Lord in His word as the reality of the good land flowing with nourishing milk and fresh honey for us to dispense to God's people for their full salvation—Job 23:12; 1 Pet. 2:2-5; Psa. 119:103; Exo. 3:8; Deut. 8:8; S. S. 4:11a.
 2. We must treasure the Lord's words more than all earthly riches so that we can speak oracles of God to dispense the unsearchable riches of Christ as the varied grace of God—Psa. 119:72, 9-16; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:10-11.

II. Christ Himself is the preciousness to His believers—2:7; Phil. 3:8-9:

- A. Peter was charmed (attracted and captivated) by the Lord to such an extent

that even though he was rebuked by the Lord many times and failed miserably, he still followed the Lord as his Shepherd unto his martyrdom—Luke 5:8-11; Mark 14:67-72; 16:7; John 21:15-22; 2 Pet. 1:14-15.

- B. Peter realized that he, James, and John had been admitted into the highest degree of initiation at the Lord's transfiguration, admitted to be the initiated spectators of His majesty—vv. 16-18; cf. 1 Pet. 5:1.
- C. In His ascension Christ is "the Majestic" (Isa. 33:21)—He is our God and Savior (2 Pet. 1:1) and the Lord of all (1 Pet. 3:22; Acts 2:36) as our Judge, our Law-maker, and our King in God's government (Isa. 33:22) in order to dispense Himself into us to be our enjoyment for our full salvation (Rev. 22:1).

III. The precious stone for God's building is Christ Himself—1 Pet. 2:4, 6-8:

- A. In God's New Testament economy, Christ as God's chosen and precious cornerstone saves us to make us living stones and transforms us for the building up of God's spiritual house, His dwelling place—Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 2:20-22.
- B. As the all-inclusive living and precious stone, Christ is the centrality and universality of God's move for the building up of His eternal habitation—Matt. 21:42, 44; Acts 4:10-12; Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:19-22; Zech. 3:9; 4:6-7; Dan. 2:34-35.

IV. The precious blood of Christ has redeemed us from our vain manner of life—1 Pet. 1:15, 18-19:

- A. Christ's redeeming blood is the blood of the covenant that ushers us into God's presence, into God Himself, and into the full of enjoyment of God in His holy nature so that we might be holy in all our manner of life to become His holy priesthood and holy city—vv. 2, 15-17; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 21:2, 16.
- B. If we see that we have been redeemed, bought, purchased, with the high price of Christ's precious blood, this realization will cause us to have a holy manner of life with a holy fear—1 Pet. 1:15-19; Acts 20:28; cf. Isa. 11:2.

V. The precious and exceedingly great promises have been granted to us by our God and Savior, Jesus Christ—2 Pet. 1:1, 4; cf. Isa. 42:6; Heb. 8:8-12:

- A. By calling on the precious name of the Lord, we drink of Him as the cup of salvation, enjoying Him as the reality of all the precious and exceedingly great promises of God for the goal of God's building—Acts 4:10-12; Psa. 116:12-13.
- B. These precious promises are embodied in the word of God; by pray-reading the promises, we partake of and enjoy the divine nature so that we may grow and develop in life unto the maturity of life to enjoy a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—2 Pet. 1:4-11.

VI. God has allotted to all the believers equally precious faith—v. 1:

- A. Just as the children of Israel were allotted a piece of the good land, God has allotted Christ as faith to us, making our regenerated spirit, the hidden man of our heart, a spirit of faith—Josh. 13:6; Col. 1:12; 1 Pet. 3:4; 2 Cor. 4:13.
- B. We all have the same precious faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we have depends upon how much we contact the living God so that we may have Him increased in us—Rom. 12:3; Heb. 11:1, 5-6, 27; Col. 2:19.

VII. The precious proving of our faith is by various trials that come through sufferings—1 Pet. 1:7:

- A. We need to pay the price to gain more of Christ as the golden faith through the fiery trials so that the proving of our faith may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of the Lord—v. 7; Rev. 3:18a.
- B. The believers who live an overcoming life by faith will be found by Christ at His return as the treasures ready to receive the salvation of their souls as the end (result) of their faith—1 Pet. 1:8-9.

VIII. We must redeem the time to enjoy the all-inclusive Christ as the supreme preciousness of God so that we can be constituted with Him to be men of preciousness as His personal treasure; as we live in His precious presence, enjoying Him as our portion, even as He enjoys us as His treasure, He builds Himself into us to make us His spiritual house and His holy and royal priesthood for the accomplishment of His heart's desire—2:7; 3:4; Dan. 9:23; 10:11, 19; 2 Cor. 2:10; Psa. 16:5; Exo. 19:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:1-9; 2 Pet. 3:8, 11-12.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

A CHANGE OF CONCEPT CONCERNING VALUE

A person often measures the value of something according to the amount of knowledge he has of it. In Matthew 23:16-26 we find some people whose eyes were on the splendor of the temple and how it was built mostly with gold. They considered the temple to be most valuable. Some saw the altar and compared it with the oxen, lambs, and turtle doves offered on it. They reckoned the altar to be of little value but the oxen and lambs and turtle doves to be of much value. Some offered a tenth of the mint, anise, and cummin, yet they neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Some were very careful about everything. They strained out the gnat, but they swallowed the camel. Some were in a hurry to use the cup and the dish. They cleansed the outside of them, but inwardly there was filth. We can ask a new believer, “How would you evaluate these different kinds of people if you met them? What do you think of their concept of value?” In Matthew 23:16-26 the Lord Jesus called these people fools, blind men, and hypocrites because they did not know the true concept of value. Their concept of value was all wrong.

**A GENUINE BELIEVER HAVING A CHANGE
IN HIS CONCEPT OF VALUE**

Before a person believes in the Lord, his concept of value is perverted. But once a person is saved, his concept of value changes. He no longer cherishes what he once cherished, and he treasures what he once despised. This is a change in his concept of value. Anyone who has not witnessed such a change in concept is not a genuine Christian.

THE CHANGE IN CONCEPT OF VALUE IN A BELIEVER

The Bible has much to say concerning a change in one's concept of value. Such passages on this change can shed light to the new believers. These passages show us the *proper* concept of value for a Christian. Let us consider a few examples to prove our point.

The Valuation of the Lord Jesus

Psalm 118:22 says, “The stone which the builders rejected / Has become the head of the

corner.” This is a change in valuation. In the eyes of the builders, they rejected what they considered to be a useless stone. In the eyes of the Jewish leaders, Christ was something redundant, and they wanted to get rid of Him. Yet this rejected stone was chosen to be the cornerstone of the newly enacted salvation. A cornerstone must be flat on at least two or three sides. Actually it should be flat on all six sides. God treasured the cornerstone that was rejected by the Jewish builders and used it for the building of His salvation. How different are these two kinds of valuation! We have to bring new believers to such a change in valuation. We have to ask how they viewed Christ before and how they view Christ now. We have to show them that what was once worthless is now priceless. What was once untrustworthy is now trustworthy. Others have rejected Christ, but we treasure Him.

Concerning the Word of the Cross

First Corinthians 1:18 says, “For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” The cross is despised by those who are perishing; it is considered foolishness by them. Yet it is held precious by the saved ones and received by them as the power of God. This speaks of the great change in valuation of the cross, from the time before a person is saved to the time after he is saved. Before a person is saved, he considers the cross useless. After he is saved, he sees it as the power of God, something precious and valuable. Once a person believes in the Lord, his concept of value changes immediately. The salvation of the cross becomes something very precious.

The Contrast between God’s Kingdom and Righteousness and a Man’s Daily Necessities

Matthew 6:32-33 says, “For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Before a person believes in the Lord (this is especially true with poor people), the daily thoughts that plague him are for his daily necessities. Things pertaining to food and clothing are the greatest concerns of the human life. No unbeliever is an exception to this. But as soon as a person believes in the Lord, he turns to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. As believers, we have to realize that nothing in this life is more precious than the kingdom of God. Matthew 13:44 says that the kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field. When a man finds it, he hides it and in his joy sells all that he has to buy that field. This refers to the Lord’s discovering the treasure of the kingdom of the heavens and giving up Himself and all He has to buy the treasure. The Lord considers the kingdom of the heavens as something precious. Yet man does not treasure it. Only a believer with the Lord’s view knows the preciousness of the kingdom of the heavens.

Before a man believes in the Lord, he may not find it too hard to take care of his daily physical needs even though he may be poor. Since his life has nothing to do with the kingdom of God, he can lie or resort to other unrighteous means to meet the needs of his livelihood. After he believes in the Lord, he enters a new realm. If he still lies to secure his daily needs, he may find his job secured, but he will lose the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If he refuses to lie, he may gain God’s kingdom and righteousness at the expense of his job. Which way should he choose? An unbeliever has little scruples about lying because clothing and goods are the most important things to him. But a believer is different. He should first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Under such circumstances the workers should help the new believers in a definite way to make the right choice for that which is truly precious. We have to make it clear to them that food and clothing are for the body, but the body exists for the kingdom of God and His righteousness. As believers, we must first seek God’s kingdom and His righteousness.

Between the Lord and One's Relatives

Matthew 10:37-38 says, "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me; and he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." A father, mother, wife, and children are the most precious things to a man. They are the most important things a man has in this life. When these are not compared with the Lord, there is nothing wrong in loving them. But when a situation arises where we have to choose between the two, which one will we choose? A man always chooses what is more precious to him, but which of the two is more precious? We have to help the brothers and sisters know the real precious thing. We can ask new believers, "Whom will you choose?" If they are not clear about this, they will be lost when they face temptations in the future. The responsibility of providing proper guidance is on our shoulders. We have to tell the new believers, "If, for the Lord's sake, you have to draw a separation line between yourself and your parents, wife, and children, will you choose Him? For His sake, that is, for the sake of the Lord who died for us, we should choose to be His disciples and follow Him." Our own kin are precious, but they are no comparison to the Lord. Our Lord is more precious than any of our kin.

Between Man's Soul and the World

Matthew 16:26 says, "For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life?" Here a comparison is made between man's soul and the whole world. Is the soul more precious or the world more precious? Many people see the preciousness of the world, but they do not see the preciousness of the soul. Today Satan is trying to buy man's soul, but many people are giving away their soul for free. This is because they do not believe their soul is worth anything. The prodigal son in Luke 15 did not leave his father's house because of the enticement of a grand feast; he succumbed to mere carob pods. How worthless is the soul in the eyes of an unbeliever! Yet the Lord says that the whole world put together cannot be exchanged for a soul. Satan offered a high price when he took the Lord to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. In exchange for His worship, the Lord would have been given all these things by Satan. This is the only instance in the Bible where Satan offered a high price for man's soul. Of course, he did not succeed. Suppose Satan did the same thing again and offered the whole world to any man who would worship him. What would anyone choose? This is altogether a matter of valuation. Should a man give up his soul to gain the world, or should he give up the world to gain his soul? Today Satan is not offering to exchange the whole world for our soul. He does not think that our life is worth that much. He is enticing us with small benefits and small gains. Many children of God would lie for the sake of five cattles of rice. They would forsake the Lord's way for just a little gain. This is like Balaam who degraded himself for profit to curse God's people. We have to show the new ones that honesty is worth more than gold, rice, or the whole world. In order to preserve the purity of our soul, we should be willing to forsake anything. We should teach the new ones properly at the very beginning of their Christian walk. We should help them to have a change in their concept of value. We should bring them to the proper pathway. This is very important, and the responsibility is on us.

Between the Body and Sin

Matthew 18:8-9 says, "If your hand or your foot stumbles you, cut it off and cast it from you; it is better for you to enter into life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. And if your eye stumbles you, pluck it out and cast it from you; it is better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be cast into the Gehenna of fire." Here we see another contrast in valuation. A man can relinquish the

love for the world, but he may not be able to relinquish the love for his body. Job 2:3 and 10 show how Job was able to maintain his integrity when he was first tempted by Satan. When Satan came to him the second time, he attacked Job's body, and Job began to curse the day he was born. He failed. This shows us that a man loves his body very much. In Matthew 18 the Lord shows us a solution with regard to the body. If preserving the body means preserving sin, we have to realize that it is better to give up the body than to sin. This means it is more serious to stumble than to sacrifice the body. A believer must have a change in his concept of value. He must see the seriousness of stumbling. Before a person believes in the Lord, he can commit many sins and set his eyes on many filthy things. After he believes in the Lord, his hands and eyes must be restricted. He must be shown the grave consequence of sin from the first day. Cutting off the hand and plucking out the eyes are only illustrations. The real significance is that one should sever sin even if this means enduring as much pain as the severing of hands, feet, or eyes. A Christian has to realize the seriousness of sin. He should deal with sin as drastically as severing the parts of his body. This preserves his own sanctity and purity.

Concerning Position

Matthew 20:25-27 says, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave." The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them. This is something that is practiced among the unbelievers. Among believers, however, this practice should not be allowed. Whoever wants to become great should be a servant, and whoever wants to be first should be a slave. This is a change in valuation, a change in one's view concerning position. Before a person believes in the Lord, he has high esteem for rulers, and he considers the great ones the heroes. But after he believes in the Lord, he has to consider a servant as a great one, and a slave as a preeminent one. He should despise the position of lords and masters. We should have a change in our concept of position. We should treasure servants and slaves. The concept of value that the Lord put in us is one that exalts and magnifies those who serve the most. The reason there are squabbles for recognition in the church is that worldly concepts have crept in. If everyone in the church regards servants and slaves as great and noble, many of the problems in the church will go away, and the church will be blessed. This does not mean that we want all the new believers to become servants and slaves, but it does mean that a man's concept of value must change when he is saved. He must be willing to be a servant and a slave. He has to be shown clearly that only servants and slaves are great and prominent. The central theme of the Christian faith involves a change in valuation. If every new believer can experience this change in concept, the church will have a free way to go on.

Concerning the Value of Justice

Job 22:23-28 says, "If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up. / If you put injustice far away from your tents, / And place your gold nuggets in the dust / And your gold of Ophir in the stones of the brooks, / Then the Almighty will be your gold nuggets / And precious silver to you. / For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty, / And you will lift up your countenance to God. / You will pray to Him, and He will hear you; / And you will repay your vows. / You will also decree something, and it will be established for you; / And light will shine on your ways." Everything from verse 24 on is based on verse 23. The gold nuggets, the gold of Ophir, and the precious silver are all related to the injustice spoken of in verse 23. A man places gold nuggets, the gold of Ophir, and precious silver in the dust and

in the stones of the brooks for the sake of dealing with injustice and for the sake of delighting oneself in the Almighty. Here again we have a change in valuation. If we are tested at such a critical juncture, and we are asked to choose between gold nuggets, the gold of Ophir, the precious silver, and Jehovah, which one will we choose? Such a choice will separate those who are God's from those who are not His. All those who belong to God will surely choose Jehovah as their delight. They will be able to lift up their countenance to God and will be blessed by God in three things. First, their prayers will be heard. Those who prefer gold nuggets, gold of Ophir, and precious silver will find that their prayers are not heard. Second, whatever they decree will be established for them because the Lord Jehovah will delight in their choice and decisions. Third, light will shine on their ways. Every step of their way will be filled with light. This is the result of a change in the concept of value with those who turn to God. Sooner or later we have to help a new believer get out of his old realm; we have to rescue him out of his own concepts. When a situation arises, we have to ask him, "What would you choose?" We have to help him to choose God's justice and to reject the gold nuggets, the gold of Ophir, and the precious silver. The value of justice is more than any treasure.

Between the Enjoyment of Sin and the Unseen Reward

Hebrews 11:24-26 speaks of a change in concept of enjoyment and suffering. Moses saw the difference. He saw that all the enjoyment of Egypt was but enjoyment of sin. He considered it great riches to suffer together with the people of God. He was well qualified to have the enjoyment of sin because he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter, the richest and most powerful person on earth. Yet he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, considering the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Moses was very clear about this change in valuation. He was willing to suffer all reproaches and hardships because he saw the significance of that unseen, great reward.

Between the Knowledge of Christ and All Things

Philippians 3:7-8 says, "But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ. But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ." Here we see that Paul also had a change in his concept of value. What things were gains to him, these he counted as loss on account of Christ. Why was Paul able to reject the things that were gains to him? He was able to consider them as loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Paul reckoned the Christ whom God had anointed as Lord, as King, and as the most excellent One. For His sake he suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse. This is the kind of change in valuation that happens to a Christian.

BRINGING OUT THE PRECIOUS FROM THE WORTHLESS TO BE AS GOD'S MOUTH

Finally, we want to conclude with the words of Jeremiah 15:19 which tell us that if we bring out the precious from the worthless, we will be as God's mouth. If we cannot tell the proper value of things, God will reject us and cast us aside. He requires that we bring out the precious from the worthless so that we can be His mouth. We have to see the importance of such a change in concept of value. May the Lord grant us the light to have a thorough change in our concept of value so that we will know to choose the most excellent portion. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 60, pp. 387-395)