

THE EXPERIENCE, GROWTH, AND MINISTRY OF LIFE FOR THE BODY

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

Dealing with the Natural Constitution in Order to Be in Resurrection

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 2:14; Phil. 3:3-11; John 12:24-26

I. A crucial aspect of the experience of life is dealing with the natural constitution—1 Cor. 2:14; Phil. 3:3-9:

- A. We need to realize the impotence, the insufficiency, of our natural being in the things of God—2 Cor. 3:5-6:
 - 1. We may be sufficient in other things, but in our natural being we do not have any sufficiency, competence, or power in the things of God—Eph. 2:1, 5a; 4:17-18; 1 Cor. 2:14; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 6:6; 7:24; 8:7-8; Matt. 16:24.
 - 2. We should not have any trust in our natural being in the things of God; rather, we must learn to reject our natural being and exercise our spirit in everything—Phil. 3:3; Rom. 8:4.
 - 3. In the Lord's recovery there is no place for our natural being; the churches in the Lord's recovery, as parts of the living Body of Christ, will spontaneously reject anything that is natural—1 Cor. 12:12-13.
 - 4. In the building of the church every natural thing in us must be broken before we can be joined together; we can be built only after we have been broken in our natural being—*Hymns*, #837, stanzas 6 and 7.
- B. In the expression *natural constitution* the word *constitution* denotes the aggregate of our physical and mental powers—1 Thes. 5:23:
 - 1. The natural constitution is an outstanding characteristic of the soulish man and is a prominent expression of the living out of the old man—1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 6:6.
 - 2. The natural constitution is the expression of the living out of the old man, which has to do with human ability, capability, wisdom, cleverness, schemes, and skills; Jacob is the best representative character of the natural constitution—v. 6; Gen. 28:20-22.
 - 3. God cannot use one who is merely naturally capable; natural ability, unless broken, is a hindrance to God—32:22-32.
- C. We need to understand the process of the experience of dealing with the natural constitution:
 - 1. We need to see that our old man has been crucified with Christ—Rom. 6:6.
 - 2. We need to realize that the natural constitution is a very strong expression of the old man.
 - 3. We should spontaneously receive the crucifixion of Christ upon our natural constitution, applying the cross of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit upon our natural constitution:
 - a. When we receive and apply Christ's crucifixion, all our natural ability will be stamped with the mark of death and gradually become withered—Matt. 16:24.

- b. This receiving is a great spiritual crisis in our life; it may become our Penuel, where our natural ability and capability are touched by God—Gen. 32:22-32.
- 4. We apply the experience of dealing with our natural constitution in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and by letting the Holy Spirit execute the crucifixion of Christ upon every area of our natural life as it is discovered—2 Cor. 13:14; Rom. 8:13.

II. The more our natural constitution is dealt with, the more we will be in resurrection—Phil. 3:3-11:

- A. All the aspects of our natural constitution are derived from the natural life and do not spring from the resurrection life of Christ; the opposite of being natural is being in resurrection—v. 11.
- B. Our dealing with the natural constitution is so that our inherent ability, capability, and wisdom may pass through the death of the cross, become resurrected, and thereby become acceptable and useful to God—John 12:24-26.
- C. Our natural ability must be brought into resurrection so that it may become useful to the Lord—Phil. 3:3-11:
 - 1. Natural ability is selfish, and its schemes and devices are for the sake of self; resurrected ability has been broken and is not for self and has no element of self.
 - 2. Natural ability is mixed with the elements of flesh and temper; resurrected ability is devoid of the flesh.
 - 3. Natural ability involves craftiness and maneuvering; resurrected ability does not scheme.
 - 4. Natural ability contains pride and makes oneself feel capable, thereby resulting in boasting and self-glorification; resurrected ability is not proud and does not boast in itself.
 - 5. Natural ability is not under the control of the Holy Spirit and is extremely daring in doing anything; resurrected ability is controlled by the Spirit and does not dare act according to one's wishes.
 - 6. Natural ability has no regard for the will of God, acting entirely according to self-will; resurrected ability is for the will of God.
 - 7. Natural ability does not rely upon God but relies wholly upon self; resurrected ability relies upon God and does not dare act according to self.
- D. God is working through the cross to terminate us, to bring us to an end, so that we will no longer trust in ourselves but in the God of resurrection—2 Cor. 1:9.
- E. To “attain to the out-resurrection from the dead” indicates that our entire being has been gradually and continually resurrected; this should be the goal and destination of the Christian life—Phil. 3:11.
- F. As we experience Christ in His resurrection, we are transferred mysteriously into the tribe of “Naphtali” and become spiritual “Naphtalites”; a portion of the personal history of every Christian should be mysterious, and in this mysterious portion we are transferred into the tribe of Naphtali to live by the resurrected Christ—2 Chron. 2:14; 1 Kings 7:14; Gen. 49:21; Psa. 22, title.

- G. If we allow our natural capacity, ability, and virtues to be brought to the cross and die, we will be resurrected—Rom. 8:13; John 12:24:
 - 1. Then in resurrection our capacity, ability, and virtues will be many times greater than they were in the natural life.
 - 2. These things are still ours, but having passed through death and burial, they are now in resurrection:
 - a. This means that our capacity, ability, and virtues have entered into resurrection—Phil. 3:11.
 - b. We continue to exist, but we with our natural capacity, ability, and virtues have entered into the realm of resurrection—John 12:25-26.
- H. The reality of resurrection is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God; therefore, resurrection is the consummated Triune God—1 Cor. 15:45b; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14:
 - 1. Our natural capacity, ability, and virtues need to be transferred from our natural life into the Triune God through death and burial.
 - 2. In ourselves we are natural, but when we are transferred out of ourselves into the Triune God, who is resurrection, we enter into resurrection—John 11:25; 2 Cor. 1:9.
- I. It is never a loss to sow the “seed” of our natural ability into the ground, for when we sow this seed, we lose it temporarily, but eventually there will be a harvest in resurrection—John 12:24-26.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

REJECTING THE NATURAL STRENGTH AND ABILITY

In our service we must do everything in the principle of incarnation. The principle of incarnation is that the divine nature is wrought into humanity. When the Lord Jesus was on this earth, He did everything in His humanity full of the divine element. He did not do anything by the natural strength or the natural ability. He said that He could not do anything apart from the Father (John 5:19). The Father was within Him and one with Him in all His deeds, in all His words, and in all His works (14:10; 10:30). Whatever He did, whatever He said, and whatever He worked was altogether with the Father as the divine element. We need to consider whether the strength and ability we use for the Lord’s service are natural or divine. We have to learn the lesson of rejecting our natural strength and ability, and we have to help all the saints to learn this lesson.

**The Natural Strength and Ability Acting on Their Own,
Not according to God’s Will**

When both Moses and Peter were younger, they acted on their own, not according to God’s will. Today it is possible that we may act and do some service for the Lord on our own according to our natural strength and ability, but not according to God’s will. Because we have the strength and the ability, we feel we do not need to pray, to wait on the Lord, to seek the Lord’s will, or to look for the Lord’s leading. This was exactly what happened to Moses. When he slew an Egyptian to protect his fellow Hebrew, he did this on his own and not according to the Lord’s will (Exo.

2:11-12). The sad situation in today's Christianity is that people work for the Lord mostly on their own by their natural strength and ability. They do not pray for the Lord's leading. They may pray only for the Lord to bestow His blessing upon what they do. They do not pray that much for the Lord's will, because they trust in their natural strength and ability.

The Natural Strength and Ability Seeking Their Own Glory and Satisfying Their Own Desire

When we work in our natural strength and ability, the goal is to seek our own glory and the motive is to satisfy our own desire. If we see this vision, it will kill our self-seeking and impure motive. Actually, in the Lord's work, we should not have our own desire, and we should not have our own goal for our glory, for our boast. We should do things simply because the Lord leads us to do them. We should not do them because we have something to achieve for our goal. That is wrong. The goal must be the Lord's.

To kill our desire and our goal means to kill our strength and ability. Our own desire and our own goal for our glory are one with our natural strength and natural ability. The people of the world and even many Christians do things by their strength and ability for their desire and glory, but we have to condemn and reject this.

The Natural Strength and Ability Needing to Be Dealt with by the Cross

The natural strength and ability need to be dealt with by the cross. To overcome and deal with sin is not as hard as this. To overcome our natural strength and ability is a great, subjective lesson; it is more subjective than dealing with sin. In a certain sense, our natural strength and ability equal our self, our natural constitution. Our natural strength and natural ability are the embodiment of our self. This is why after the denial of the self we need a lesson on rejecting the natural strength and ability and dealing with them by the cross.

The Natural Strength and Ability Becoming Useful in Resurrection for Our Service to the Lord

The natural strength and ability are useful if they are dealt with by the cross. After being dealt with by the cross, they are in resurrection. Some brothers speak in their natural eloquence, but other brothers speak with an eloquence dealt with by the cross. This is the eloquence in resurrection. Some who are short of experience may ask what the difference is between the natural eloquence and the eloquence in resurrection. It is hard to explain, but if you have the experience, it is easy to discern. Only those with the experience can discern the difference between the undealt with, natural strength and ability and the strength and ability in resurrection through the dealing of the cross.

In resurrection something divine has been wrought into our strength and ability. Even some divine element has been wrought into our eloquence. When we speak, we need to have our eloquence dealt with by the cross. The cross always works the divine element into the person it deals with, bringing God into him. If you have never been dealt with by the cross in your eloquence, that is the natural eloquence

with nothing divine. But if your eloquence has been dealt with, that kind of eloquence is in resurrection and is full of the divine element. In the natural eloquence, there is no God. But the “dealt with” eloquence in resurrection is full of God. After being dealt with, our strength and ability become useful in resurrection for our service to the Lord. (*Basic Lessons on Service*, pp. 154-156)

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NATURAL CONSTITUTION AND RESURRECTION LIFE

We have defined the natural constitution as that which pertains to human ability, capability, wisdom, and cleverness, because all these are derived from our natural life and not from the resurrection life of God. They are acquired naturally; they do not spring from resurrection by passing through the breaking in Christ. The difference between the natural constitution and resurrection life is indeed great. Our dealing with the natural constitution is so that our inherent ability, capability, wisdom, and cleverness may pass through the death of the cross, become resurrected, and thereby become acceptable and useful to God.

When some people hear about dealing with the natural constitution, they think that God does not want our ability and capability. This concept is wrong. In order to be useful to God, we definitely need our ability and capability.

From the revelation of the Bible, we clearly see that the work of God on this earth requires man’s cooperation. It is impossible for man to cooperate with God without possessing any ability and capability. Just as wood and stone cannot cooperate with God, so also foolish and incapable persons cannot cooperate with God. We always say that a clever man is useless before God, but a stupid one is even worse. We also say that a capable man is useless before God, but that the incapable ones are worse. Actually, all those who are useless in this world are also useless in the hand of God. Throughout the generations, all those who have been used of God have been the capable ones gained from this world. We have to admit that Moses was a capable man with ability, foresight, wisdom, and cleverness; therefore, God could use him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. Moreover, through him the most important books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, were written. We must also admit that Paul was a capable man who had great learning and was rich in thinking; therefore, he was able to receive revelation from God, which enabled him to write the deep and lofty truths in the New Testament. Though Peter and John were but fishers of Galilee, we can presume that they were among the best of the fishers and by no means ordinary men.

The greatest principle in spiritual service is that of man cooperating with God. Although God does all things, yet in all things God needs man to cooperate with Him. It can never be that those who do not know how to do anything and are incapable and unwilling to do anything can be used by God. We often hear brothers and sisters say, “I believe that God can do it,” yet they themselves make no effort to cooperate. This kind of faith is vain. No doubt, God can do it, but it is also necessary that man be able to do it. If man cannot do it, though God can, He will not do it. God must seek those who are able and willing to cooperate with Him. God works as far as man is capable. God works according to the degree of man’s cooperation.

Therefore, we must be able and capable, and learn to be a useful man in every aspect; then we are fit for His use.

However, God still cannot use one who is merely naturally capable. Natural capability, unless broken, is a hindrance to God. It must be broken; it must pass through death and be resurrected so that it may be used by God. Natural ability is similar to raw iron, which, because it is too hard and brittle, is not suitable for use and is easily broken. Resurrected ability is like wrought steel, firm but malleable, suitable for use and not easily cracked. Therefore, God cannot use one who is incapable; neither can He use one who is capable, yet has not been broken. Those who are usable in the hand of God are those who are capable, yet whose capability has been broken. If we examine all those who have been used by God throughout the generations, almost all were very capable, rich in soul-power, having foresight and cleverness, while at the same time they were broken by God.

The most outstanding example in the Bible is Jacob, of whom we have already spoken. Naturally speaking, he was capable and crafty. But one day he was broken by God and became Israel; then he lost his capability and craftiness. Yet when we observe him at the time he blessed the two sons of Joseph, he was by no means confused. He was exceedingly clear and had foresight. Moreover, the blessings that he commanded upon his children (Gen. 49) are great prophecies in the Bible. Those words are truly great and wonderful. If Jacob had been one who was insensible and stupid, how could he have uttered such words? On the other hand, if Jacob merely depended upon his natural mind, natural thought, or natural capability, he could not have uttered those words either. His natural mind, natural thought, and natural ability, having been broken by God, became resurrected and spiritual; thus, he could be used by God to speak forth those great prophecies.

The same principle applies to our understanding of God's will. God is an extremely wise and intelligent God. Therefore, in order to understand His will, human wisdom and intelligence are required. A stupid person can never understand the will of God. However, neither can a person who depends only upon his own wisdom and intelligence understand the will of God. What is necessary is that man have intelligence, wisdom, and clear thinking, and that he put all these beneath the cross, allowing the cross to put the stamp of death upon them. This kind of person has his own mind, wisdom, and thoughts, yet he does not do things according to himself, for himself, or depending upon himself; he is used only according to God, for God, and depending upon God. He does not have his own aim or elements of his own self, much less his own scheming hand. He relies only upon the mercy of God; he waits for His visitation and seeks His revelation. Only this kind of people can understand the will of God and be clear concerning His guidance.

From this we learn that natural ability and capability do not come to naught after having been dealt with. The brokenness and putting to death by the cross is not the final step. The real death of the cross always brings in resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth was put to death on the cross, yet Christ was resurrected. After Genesis 35, Jacob was completely dealt with and finished, yet a matured Israel came forth. Therefore, the dealing of the cross always brings in resurrection. The more

one's capabilities are dealt with by the cross, the more capable one becomes. The more one's wisdom is dealt with by the cross, the wiser one becomes. Furthermore, this capability and wisdom are in resurrection.

For this reason, on one hand, we encourage people to read and study the Bible, to exercise their mind and foresight, and to learn how to behave as human beings, how to handle things, and how to work, to the end that they may be capable. On the other hand, we always tell people that education as well as capability are useless. When we say this, we mean that these must be broken and become resurrected. These two aspects apparently contradict each other, but for us they are practical and absolutely necessary.

How can we differentiate natural ability from resurrected ability? How can we tell which is an inherent ability and which is the ability that has been broken? There are seven points of comparison. We shall look first at natural ability:

First, all natural ability is selfish, and all its schemes and devices are for the sake of self. Second, all natural ability is mingled with the elements of flesh and temper; therefore, when it is disapproved, it becomes provoked. Third, all natural ability involves craftiness and maneuvering. Fourth, all natural ability contains pride and makes oneself feel capable, thereby resulting in boasting and self-glorification. Fifth, all natural ability is not under the control of the Holy Spirit and is extremely daring in doing anything. Sixth, all natural ability has no regard for the will of God; it acts entirely according to self-will. Seventh, natural ability does not rely on God and does not have to rely on God but relies wholly upon self.

Resurrected ability is exactly the opposite. First, all ability that has been broken and resurrected is not for self, neither does it contain any element of self. Second, all resurrected ability is devoid of the flesh. Third, resurrected ability does not scheme. Fourth, resurrected ability is not proud, nor does it boast in itself. Fifth, resurrected ability is controlled by the Holy Spirit and does not dare to act according to its wishes. Sixth, resurrected ability is for the will of God. Seventh, resurrected ability relies upon God and does not dare to act according to self, though truly able and capable.

Since we are clear now concerning the difference between natural and resurrected ability, we should examine ourselves in our experience. When we exercise our ability, is it for self or for God? Am I making decisions on my own and acting individually and egocentrically, or am I able to stand the criticism of others and suffer their opposition? Do I employ schemes, or do I look to the grace of God? Do I give glory to God, or do I boast and glory in myself? Am I controlled by the Holy Spirit, or am I acting as I wish? Do I fulfill my own desires, or do I care for the will of God? Do I attempt to achieve the goal by any means, or do I commit all things into the hand of God, trusting Him for the outcome? Am I depending solely on my own resources, or am I relying upon God with fear and trembling? If we examine ourselves strictly, we will discover that in our living and service, many areas are still in the natural constitution and of the old creation; therefore, we cannot bring forth fruit of resurrection. Hence, dealing with the natural constitution is the deliverance that we need most. (*The Experience of Life*, pp. 246-250)