

VITAL FACTORS FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH LIFE

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

The Factor of Dealing with Our Natural Disposition for Our Growth in Life and Our Usefulness in Service

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:22-26; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 2:15; 3:3-6; 4:5; 5:20; Eph. 6:20

I. We must deal with our natural disposition for our growth in life and our usefulness in service:

- A. Our natural disposition denotes what we are in our makeup by birth, and our character is the outward expression of our natural disposition; natural disposition is what we are within, and character is what we express without.
- B. The inward natural disposition and the outward character are the extract, the essence, of our being; the self within is our natural disposition, and the self expressed is our character.
- C. The thing that most damages our usefulness in the Christian life and church life is our living according to our natural disposition; it is the real enemy of our growth in the divine life and the major factor that spoils our usefulness in the hand of the Lord.
- D. We must learn to take care of the “burl” in our makeup, our natural disposition; if we deal with this “burl,” we will grow quickly without any hindrances to our growth in life, and we will also become more useful to the Lord.
- E. Disposition is implied in the terms used in Matthew 16:23-26—*mind, himself, and soul-life*; disposition includes all these elements; actually, we may say that our natural disposition is our self.
- F. To deal with our natural disposition means to deal with our self, our soul-life (vv. 22-26), our old man (Rom. 6:6), and the “I” (Gal. 2:20); how useful you will be to the Lord or how much trouble you will make to the church depends upon how much your natural disposition is killed; the way to deal with our natural disposition is to realize and remember that we are crucified persons and remain under that realization and reality throughout the day (v. 20; 5:24-25; Rom. 6:6; 8:13b).
- G. Our natural disposition is our self; it is in us, and it is us; practically speaking, to deny the self is simply to deny our natural disposition; as Christians, we have to live Christ by continually exercising our spirit to reject our self and live by another life, the crucified and resurrected Christ, signified by the tree of life—Gen. 2:9; Phil. 1:21a; Rev. 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Tim. 4:7-8.

II. We should not be limited by our natural disposition in the Lord’s work; instead, we should learn to live a life of opposing ourselves, our disposition; whatever we have and whatever comes out of us cannot be brought into the Lord’s service—Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:3-6; 4:5:

- A. The natural disposition of some brothers reflects a strong self-confidence; their self-confidence must be overthrown by continually rejecting their self and by relying on the resurrecting Triune God—1:8-9.
- B. The less a man is enlightened by God, the more he thinks that he will have no trouble obeying God; the quicker a man makes loud claims, the more it proves that he has never paid any price; those whose words pretend intimacy with God are probably farthest away from Him—Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14; Phil. 3:3.

- C. The natural disposition of some brothers is one of refusing to work as long as the circumstances are not perfect or the conditions are not adequate; we must reject the natural disposition that requires a particular environment before we can work—1 Pet. 4:1; 1 Cor. 9:23-27.
- D. We need to work together with God by a life that is able to fit all situations, that is able to endure any kind of treatment, that is able to accept any kind of environment, that is able to work in any kind of condition, and that is able to take any kind of opportunity, for the carrying out of the ministry; we must learn the secret of experiencing Christ in everything and in every place—2 Cor. 6:1-2; Phil. 4:5-9, 11-13.
- E. One type of natural disposition is that of the “hero”; this type must do everything in an impressive, perfect, and complete way; another type of natural disposition is that of the “non-hero”; the non-hero does not do anything in a thorough or complete way.
- F. Some responsible brothers have a strong element in their natural disposition that hinders them from coordinating and cooperating with others; these ones usually are very capable, and they can also easily stir up trouble in the church life; their disposition can even be one with a dominating attitude, a suppressing spirit, critical speaking, and a legalistic and unforgiving spirit.
- G. Other responsible brothers may have a natural disposition that wants everyone to like them and does not want to offend anyone; this limits their effectiveness in the Lord’s work, because when the Lord wants to speak an honest or frank word of admonishment or warning to the saints through them, they will not do it—cf. Col. 1:27-29; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 10:5-13; Heb. 3:7-19; 12:25:
 1. Furthermore, those with such a disposition can express the “strange fire” of natural affection toward the saints, even to such a degree that causes them to be lacking the proper discernment and the proper oversight in their care for the church, the saints, and the work—Lev. 2:11; 10:1-2; Num. 6:6-7; Phil. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:2; Heb. 13:17.
 2. A major part of the Nazarite vow is to separate ourselves from the deadness that comes through natural affection (Num. 6:6-7); also, the meal offering being without honey means that in Christ there is no natural affection or natural goodness (Lev. 2:11; Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 10:18).
- H. The source of any rebellion among us was the natural disposition of the persons involved; ambition for position (which comes from Satan) is the primary element of every fallen person’s natural disposition; the root of dissent is the self, the natural disposition—Isa. 14:12-13; Num. 12:1-2; 16:1-3; 1 Sam. 15:10-12; Matt. 18:1-4; 20:20-28; Luke 22:25-27; 2 Cor. 10:4-5.
- I. Second Kings 4:8-10 gives the account of the Shunammite woman’s reception of Elisha by providing a meal for him whenever he passed by; he did not give one message or perform one miracle, but the woman identified him as “a holy man of God” by the way he took his meal; this was the impression that Elisha gave to others, so we have to ask ourselves, “What is the impression that we give to others?”—cf. 2 Cor. 2:15; 5:20; Eph. 6:20.
- J. If the Lord breaks our outer man with our natural disposition, we will no longer present others with our strong self when we touch them; instead, our spirit will flow out whenever we touch men; it is impossible for us to break through the problems of our natural disposition, but it is possible for the Lord to do it—John 7:37-38; Luke 18:24-27; 19:2.

III. The Spirit deals with our outer man, our self, our natural disposition, by the killing element of the cross in the compound Spirit, by the discipline of the Spirit, by the shining of Christ as the Spirit, and by the church life, fruit-bearing, and lamb-feeding:

- A. In order to deal with our natural disposition, we must deny the self and apply the killing power of the cross; we need to see and realize in our experience that the compound, all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit includes the precious death of Christ and the sweetness and effectiveness of Christ's death, which can kill our natural disposition—Exo. 30:23-25; Phil. 1:19; Rom. 8:13:
1. Christ as the compound Spirit is our medication to heal us, enliven us, and kill all the negative things within us; when we take Him as our medication, we enjoy “the putting to death of Jesus,” or the killing of Jesus—2 Cor. 4:10-11.
 2. In the Spirit there is the killing element of the cross; when we reject ourselves in the morning to receive God into us, we have the sense during the day that a killing process is going on within us.
- B. The goal of the discipline of the Holy Spirit is for us to be a broken man; God has to put us in a place of total inability and total helplessness before He can have a way in us; the purpose of the trials through which we pass is so that we can receive the benefit of knowing God for Him to be expressed—1:8-9; 12:9-10; Isa. 40:28-31; Hosea 6:1-3:
1. The breaking of the outer man is the breaking of our natural disposition; our natural disposition makes it hard for us to release our spirit; a person who is not broken by God cannot be entrusted with the Lord's work; what we are originally, including our natural appearance and taste, does not match God and is not compatible with God—Jer. 48:11.
 2. Whatever we are by birth, whether good or bad, whether useful or not, is natural and altogether a hindrance to the Holy Spirit in constituting the divine life into our being; for this reason our natural strength, natural wisdom, natural cleverness, natural disposition, natural shortcomings, natural virtues, plus our character and habits, must all be torn down in order that the Holy Spirit may form in us a new disposition, new character, new habits, new virtues, and new attributes.
 3. In order to accomplish the work of reconstitution, the Holy Spirit of God moves within us to enlighten, inspire, lead, and saturate us with the divine life; He also works in our environment to arrange every detail, person, matter, and thing in our situation to tear down all aspects of our natural being in order that He might conform us to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:28-29.
 4. Everything in our environment has been measured to us by our God; He orders everything around us, the only purpose of which is to break our conspicuous, obtuse, and hard spots—Psa. 39:9; Matt. 10:29-30; Luke 12:6.
 5. If the outer man is not broken, the inner man will not be released; the earthen vessel has to be broken before the treasure can be released (2 Cor. 4:7); as long as the ointment is in the alabaster box, the fragrance will not be released (John 12:3).
 6. A person who is not broken cannot submit to others; only those who have experienced Christ as their life of submission know the rebelliousness of their natural disposition—Phil. 2:5-8.
 7. Anyone who is boastful has not been broken, anyone who blames others has not been broken, anyone who thinks he is something when he is nothing has not been broken, and anyone who competes with others has not been broken—3:3; 1 Cor. 6:7; Gal. 5:25-26; 6:3.
 8. Someone who has never been pressed, mistreated, depreciated, or wronged by others is raw, wild, and useless to God; we should not have the mistaken concept that all the saints will admire and respect us because we have been sent by God, called by God, and entrusted with His work; one who respects us today may deride and trample us

under his feet tomorrow; this is the way of one who serves the Lord—John 2:23-25; Acts 14:11-13, 18-21; Mark 11:8-10; cf. 15:9-15.

- C. Deliverance from our natural disposition also comes from the inner shining of Christ as a great light; this shining is seeing what God sees—Prov. 4:18; 20:27; Psa. 18:28-29; Matt. 4:16; Luke 11:34-36; Acts 9:3-5; 22:6-10; 26:13-19; Eph. 5:13; Phil. 2:15-16:
1. The greatest thing in the Christian experience is the killing that comes from the shining of the divine light; the shining is the saving, and the seeing is the deliverance; everyone who truly sees a vision of the Lord in His glory is enlightened in his conscience regarding his uncleanness—Isa. 6:1-8.
 2. The Lord grants us much light to expose us and to humble us; only this kind of shining will remove our pride, and only this light will stop our fleshly activities and break our outer shell with our natural disposition; the more we see God, know God, and love God, the more we abhor ourselves and the more we deny ourselves—Job 42:5-6; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:26.
 3. We should not try to be magnanimous or forbearing by the effort of our self, our natural disposition; rather, we should learn to prostrate ourselves in God's light, receive His breaking, and allow the environment to break us and tear us down.
- D. If we are not useful in the Lord's hand for taking care of people, it is due to our natural disposition; the church life, fruit-bearing, and lamb-feeding are three matters that kill our natural disposition; to deal with our natural disposition, we must love God by contacting God to be infused with Him as grace, and we must love people by contacting them to infuse them with God as grace—John 21:15-17; Eph. 3:2; 4:29; 1 Pet. 4:10.

IV. God's dealing with Jacob is a full picture of the Holy Spirit's discipline and His transforming work in the New Testament believers to deal with their natural disposition so that Christ may be formed in them, fully grown in them, unto maturity; this is God's blessing us and making us a blessing to others that they may be supplied with the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity—Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1a; Gen. 12:1-3; Ezek. 34:26; Num. 6:22-27:

- A. Jacob's life shows that a natural person must pass through breaking in order to become Israel, a prince of God; what God tears down through our environment is our worthless self, our natural disposition; however, what God builds into us is Himself, the peerless, supereminent, and infinite One—1 Cor. 3:12.
- B. God destined Jacob to live a struggling life all his days; He sovereignly arranged every circumstance, situation, and person in Jacob's life and caused them all to work together for Jacob's good so that He could transform Jacob, a supplanter and a heel holder, into Israel, a prince of God—Gen. 25:26; 32:24-32.
- C. The strongest manifestation of Jacob's maturity in life (the last stage of transformation) is the fact that Jacob blessed everyone; his supplanting hands became blessing hands; blessing is the overflow of God as life to others through the maturity in life—47:7, 10; 48:14-16; 49:1-28.