

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2024**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE TRUTH IN PAUL'S EPISTLES—
SECOND CORINTHIANS**

Message Three

**Incense-bearers to Scatter the Fragrance of Christ
as the Ambassadors of Christ**

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 2:12-15; 5:20

I. The ministers of the new covenant are incense-bearers to scatter the fragrance of Christ—2 Cor. 2:12-15:

- A. As captives of Christ in Christ's triumphal procession, we are simultaneously incense-bearers; through us God manifests the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place (v. 14); actually, to scatter the incense of Christ is to live Christ (Phil. 1:19-21a).
- B. Because we have been captured, subdued, possessed, and gained by Christ, He has the liberty to saturate us to make us a fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15); in order to be a fragrance of Christ, we must be His captives in a practical way, realizing that our only true triumphs are Christ's triumphs over us and that His defeats of us are our only true victories (vv. 12-15; cf. 10:5).
- C. The loving seeker in the Song of Songs eventually becomes a private garden to Christ, full of the fragrance of Christ—4:12, 15:
 1. Because we are Christ's private garden, we enjoy Christ for the enjoyment and satisfaction of Christ; the Lord is everything to us so that He can enjoy everything out of us—1:12-14; 4:12-14; 5:1:
 - a. As soon as the seeker gives an invitation to the Lord to come into His garden, the Lord responds; although we belong to the Lord, after we have consecrated ourselves to Him, it is a constant consecration that brings the Lord into our garden—4:16b; 5:1.
 - b. Experienced believers often find that the latter consecration is harder than the first consecration, yet it is more glorious than the first; only this consecration will give the Lord the fruit of His labor—Gen. 12:7-8; Lev. 6:12-13.
 2. As Christ's private garden, the loving seeker of Christ prays in this way—"Awake, O north wind; / And come, O south wind! / Blow upon my garden: / Let its spices flow forth"—S. S. 4:16a:
 - a. The north wind (cold, harsh, and bitter) and south wind (warm, gentle, and refreshing) are two different environments that the Lord uses to train the believers to enjoy Him as their secret of sufficiency—Phil. 4:11-13, 6-7; 1:20.
 - b. The Lord's seeker realizes that all problems come from within and not from without; she knows that as long as she is filled with the Spirit as the presence of the Triune God, she can happily live and express Christ in any environment.
 - c. The ministers of Christ, the lovers of Christ, are prepared to give forth Christ's fragrance in all circumstances; if there is a fragrance inside, outward circumstances will only serve to bring out the smell of the fragrance—4:11-12.

- D. The apostles' move in their ministry for Christ was a celebration of Christ's victory, a triumphal procession going from one place to another under God's leading; in this triumphal procession, Paul testified that God was the One who "manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place"—2 Cor. 2:14:
 - 1. In Christ's triumphal procession the fragrance of Christ offered up to God was an aroma of life resulting in life to some in the way of salvation and an aroma of death resulting in death to others in the way of perdition—v. 15.
 - 2. "According to the Greek usage, *savor* and *knowledge* are in apposition, so that the knowledge of Christ is symbolized as an odor communicating its nature and efficacy through the apostle's work" (Vincent) —v. 14, footnote 4.
 - 3. Those who scatter the fragrance of Christ speak in Christ, and Christ speaks in them for the building up of the Body of Christ—vv. 16-17; 13:3.
- E. As incense-bearers scattering the fragrance of Christ, we are the ambassadors of Christ with the following qualifications—5:20:
 - 1. We do not live by what we are or can do but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—v. 4.
 - 2. We are determined to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Christ—v. 9.
 - 3. We are constrained by the love of Christ—v. 14.
 - 4. We know others according to Christ in the spirit—v. 16; S. S. 7:4.

II. The burnt offering was "a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah" (Lev. 1:9); the Hebrew words translated "satisfying fragrance" literally mean "savor of rest or satisfaction"; a satisfying fragrance is a savor that brings satisfaction, peace, and rest as an enjoyment to God (Num. 28:2; cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-15):

- A. The burnt offering (Lev. 1:1-17) typifies Christ in two ways: (1) In His living a life that is absolutely for God and for God's satisfaction (vv. 3-4a, 9; John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:18; 8:29; 14:24), and (2) In His being the life that enables God's people to have such a living (Eph. 5:2; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:19-20).
- B. The only life that is pleasing to God is the life that is a repetition of the life Christ lived on the earth; this is a life that experiences Christ in His experiences as the burnt offering—Lev. 1:9; John 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 4:20-21.
- C. The ram of the burnt offering signifies the strong Christ as our burnt offering for the assuming of our New Testament priesthood (Lev. 8:18); this offering, the ram of consecration (v. 22; 7:37 and footnote 1), reminds us that, as serving ones, we must be absolute for God, yet we are not; thus, we need to take Christ daily as our burnt offering for our priestly service (6:12; cf. Heb. 10:5-10).
- D. The laying on of hands on the head of the burnt offering signifies our identification, our union, with Christ; by laying our hands on Christ as our offering, we are joined to Him, and He and we become one—Lev. 1:4a.
- E. In such a union all our weaknesses, defects, and faults are taken on by Him, and all His virtues become ours; this requires us to exercise our spirit through the proper prayer so that we may be one with Him in an experiential way—1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:20a.
- F. When we lay our hands on Christ through the proper prayer, the life-giving Spirit, who is the very Christ on whom we lay our hands (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17), will immediately move and work within us to live in us a life that is a repetition of the life that Christ lived on earth, the life of the burnt offering (Gal. 6:17).
- G. We need to take Christ as our burnt offering daily (Num. 28:3-4; Lev. 1:2-4; 6:12-13; cf. 2 Tim. 1:6) so that we may experience Christ in His experiences as the burnt offering, not

imitating Christ outwardly but living Him in our daily life (2 Cor. 5:14-15; Phil. 1:19-21; Acts 27:22-25; 28:3-9; 1 Cor. 1:9).

III. The loving function in the Body life, the vital-group church life, is represented by Mary, who loved the Lord to the uttermost and poured out what she held most precious upon the Lord; she had an alabaster flask filled with a pound of ointment of very valuable pure nard; when she broke the flask and poured it on the Lord's head, "the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment"—John 12:2-3; Mark 14:3; cf. S. S. 1:12:

- A. Mary's estimate of the Lord was that He was more valuable and lovable than anything else; anointing the Lord with our best love and releasing the fragrance of that love in our meeting life is the main expression, aspect, and characteristic of the church life.
- B. The church in John 12:1-11 is likened to a house that is filled with the preciousness, the sweetness, and the pleasantness of the aroma of the ointment poured upon the Lord Jesus.
- C. The disciples considered Mary's love offering to the Lord a waste, but to those who love Him in such a way, He is altogether lovely and worthy of their offering—Matt. 26:8-13; John 12:4-6.
- D. Throughout the past centuries thousands of precious lives, heart treasures, high positions, and golden futures have been "wasted" upon the Lord Jesus; what they have poured upon Him is not a waste but a fragrant testimony of His sweetness.
- E. The alabaster flask signifies our outer man, which needs to be broken so that the inner man can break forth; the Lord works in us and on us in so many different ways for the purpose of breaking the earthen vessel, the alabaster flask, the outer shell—2 Cor. 4:7; John 12:3, 24.
- F. God orders an environment for us that tears down our outer man, causing all persons, all matters, and all things to "work together for good" (Rom. 8:28); the "good" here refers to our gaining more of Christ, to our having Him wrought into our being, that we may be transformed metabolically and may eventually be conformed to His image, the image of the Son of God, to bring us into the full sonship (v. 29).
- G. The discipline of the Holy Spirit destroys our natural disposition and habits and brings in the constitution of the Holy Spirit in maturity and sweetness:
 - 1. 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 to make us a fragrance of Christ.
 - 2. For this reason our natural strength, natural wisdom, natural cleverness, natural disposition, natural shortcomings, natural virtues, and natural attributes, 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 this 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 what we are naturally so that He may conform us to the image of Christ—v. 28.

IV. We need to realize that everything through which we pass has only one purpose—that God's life would be released through us and expressed in us; may our outer man be broken to such an extent that the inner man can be released and expressed; this is precious, and this is the way of the servants of the Lord. (See important quotes on the following page.)

**Fellowship concerning
the Breaking of the Outer Man for the Release of the Spirit
and the Expression of God**

We have to know why God has put us in the world. He has put us in the world so that our presence would create a hunger and thirst for righteousness in sinners, believers, and the world. In our work, we have to create a hunger within others. There must be an enigmatic freshness, power, nourishment, and supply within us that will drive others to seek after God by our presence. Others should have a desire to seek after God as a result of meeting us and speaking to us. If we always see others and communicate with them without creating a desire within them for God, it means that we have failed. If our reading of the Bible, prayer, service, and gospel preaching do not produce such a powerful hunger within man, our work has failed. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 42, p. 238)

Second Kings 4 gives us the account of the Shunammite woman's reception of Elisha. The Bible says that "one day Elisha was passing through Shunem; and there was a wealthy woman there, who compelled him to have a meal. So whenever he passed through, he would turn aside and have a meal there. And she said to her husband, Now I know that this man who continually passes through unto us is a holy man of God" (vv. 8-9). Elisha passed through Shunem. He did not give one message or perform one miracle. Every time he passed through, he turned aside and had a meal there. The woman identified him as a man of God by the way he took his meal. This was the impression that Elisha gave to others.

Today we have to ask ourselves, "What is the impression that we give to others? What is the thing that comes out of us?" We have spoken repeatedly that the outer man must be broken. If the outer man is not broken, the impression that others receive from us will be nothing but the outer man. Every time we contact others, we may give them an unpleasant feeling that we are self-loving, stubborn, and proud. Or we may give them an impression that we are clever and extremely eloquent. Perhaps we give others a so-called good impression. But does this impression satisfy God? Does it meet the church's need? God is not satisfied, and the church has no need of our so-called good impressions.

...If the outer man is not broken, our spirit will not be released, and the impression we give to others will not be an impression of the spirit.

...What generates an impression in others is the strongest spots we have in ourselves. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 54, "The Breaking of the Outer Man and the Release of the Spirit," pp. 238, 237)