

# International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

September 2025

## GENERAL SUBJECT: CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF MATTHEW 5 THROUGH 7 (Thursday—First Morning Session)

### Message One

### **The Blessedness of Being Poor in Spirit and Pure in Heart That We May Be under Christ's Heavenly Ruling as Our New King and That We May See God to Express Him in His Life and Represent Him with His Authority**

MC Hymns: 743, 744

Scripture Reading: Matt. 5:3, 8

Matt 5:3      Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.  
Matt 5:8      Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

#### **I. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens”— Matt. 5:3:**

- A. To be poor in spirit is not only to be humble but also to be emptied in our spirit, in the depth of our being, not holding on to the old things of the old dispensation but unloaded to receive the new things, the things of the kingdom of the heavens—cf. Luke 6:20.  
Luke 6:20      And He lifted up His eyes to His disciples and said, Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
- B. We need to be poor, emptied, unloaded, in our human spirit that we may realize and possess the kingdom of the heavens—cf. Matt. 19:13-15.  
Matt 19:13      Then little children were brought to Him that He might lay His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them.  
Matt 19:14      But Jesus said, Allow the little children and do not prevent them from coming to Me, for of such is the kingdom of the heavens.  
Matt 19:15      And after He laid His hands on them, He went on from there.
- C. To be poor in spirit means that we are humble, acknowledging that we have nothing, know nothing, can do nothing, and are nothing—Gal. 6:3; John 15:5b; Isa. 57:15; 66:2:  
Gal 6:3      For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.  
John 15:5b      ... for apart from Me you can do nothing.  
Isa 57:15      For thus says the high and exalted One, / Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: / I will dwell in the high and holy place, / And with the contrite and lowly of spirit, / To revive the spirit of the lowly / And to revive the heart of the contrite.  
Isa 66:2      For all these things My hand has made, / And so all these things have come into being, declares Jehovah. / But to this kind of man will I look, to him who is poor / And of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.
  - 1. Those who are poor in spirit have a willing spirit for the things of the Lord and for the things of the church—Psa. 51:12.  
Psa 51:12      Restore to me the gladness of Your salvation, / And sustain me with a willing spirit.
  - 2. Those who are poor in spirit experience the Spirit of joy and the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of

Jehovah—Heb. 1:9; Rom. 14:17; Isa. 11:2-3.

Heb 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners";

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Isa 11:2 And the Spirit of Jehovah will rest upon Him, / The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, / The Spirit of counsel and might, / The Spirit of the knowledge and fear of Jehovah.

Isa 11:3 He will delight in the fear of Jehovah: / He will neither judge by what His eyes see, / Nor decide by what His ears hear.

D. All spiritual progress depends on man's hunger—Luke 1:53; Psa. 81:10:

Luke 1:53 The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

Psa 81:10 I am Jehovah your God, / Who brought you up out of the land of Egypt; / Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

1. We should be afraid of self-contentment, self-satisfaction, and satisfaction with the things of the past—Phil. 3:13.

Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,

2. Spiritual stagnation is the result of indifference to one's own spiritual lack; all failure and decadence are the result of self-complacency—cf. Deut. 4:25.

Deut 4:25 When you have brought forth children and grandchildren and have languished in the land, and you have spoiled yourselves by making an idol, the form of anything, and have done that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah your God so as to anger Him;

3. Past victory can never be our present strength—cf. Josh. 7:3-4:

Josh 7:3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, Not all the people need go up; let about two or three thousand men go up and strike Ai. Do not make all the people labor there, for the enemies are few.

Josh 7:4 So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but they fled before the men of Ai.

- a. We cannot go on without new knowledge of the Lord and a new vision of Him—cf. Acts 26:16; Phil. 3:8b, 10a.

Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;

Phil 3:8b ... on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:10a To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, ...

- b. Whenever we find ourselves crying, "I cannot make it," our progress has begun; then God is easily able to create a desire for Him in us—cf. 2 Chron. 20:12.

2 Chron 20:12 O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no strength before this great multitude that is coming against us, and we do not know what to do; but our eyes are upon You.

- c. We should remember that God gives difficulties to us in order to dig more deeply in us so that He can fill us more with Himself—cf. Rom. 8:28-29.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

4. Whenever we become empty, the Lord will fill us up; spiritual progress is a matter of being continually emptied out and continually filled up—cf. 2 Kings 4:1-6.

2 Kings 4:1 Now a certain woman from among the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared Jehovah. And the creditor has come to take my two

- children to himself as servants.
- 2 Kings 4:2 And Elisha said to her, What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in your house? And she said, Your servant has nothing at all in the house, except a jar of oil.
- 2 Kings 4:3 And he said, Go and borrow vessels outside, from all your neighbors, empty vessels, and not just a few.
- 2 Kings 4:4 Then go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all those vessels; and each one you fill set aside.
- 2 Kings 4:5 So she went away from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons; and they brought the vessels to her, and she poured out into them.
- 2 Kings 4:6 And when she had filled the vessels, she said to her son, Bring me another vessel. But he said to her, There is no other vessel. And the oil stopped.
- E. “Truly I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall by no means enter into it”—Luke 18:17:
1. A little child, not filled with and occupied by old concepts, can easily receive a new thought—cf. Psalms 139:17.  
Psalms 139:17 And how precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! / How great is the sum of them!
  2. People need to be like little children and, with an unoccupied heart, receive the kingdom of God as a new thing.

## II. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”—Matthew 5:8:

- A. To have a pure heart means that our heart is single, seeking nothing but the Lord Himself, so that Christ may grow in us without frustration—Matthew 13:19-23.
- Matthew 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown beside the way.
- Matthew 13:20 And the one sown on the rocky places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
- Matthew 13:21 Yet he does not have root in himself but lasts only for a time, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he is stumbled.
- Matthew 13:22 And the one sown in the thorns, this is he who hears the word, and the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches utterly choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
- Matthew 13:23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.
- B. If we are pure in heart in seeking God, our reward is that we will see God.
- C. In God’s appearing to him, Job saw God, gaining God in his personal experience and abhorring himself—Job 38:1-3; 42:1-6.
- Job 38:1 Then Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,
- Job 38:2 Who is this who darkens counsel / By words without knowledge?
- Job 38:3 Gird up now your loins like a mighty man; / For I will ask of you, and you shall inform Me.
- Job 42:1 Then Job answered Jehovah and said,
- Job 42:2 I know that You can do all things / And that no purpose of Yours can be restrained.
- Job 42:3 Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge? / Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, / Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
- Job 42:4 Hear now, and I will speak; / I will ask of You, and You shall inform me.
- Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You;
- Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes.
- D. Today our God is the all-inclusive Spirit as the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God; the God whom we look at today is the consummated Spirit, and we can look at Him in our spirit—2 Corinthians 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:22.
- 2 Corinthians 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;
- 2 Timothy 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

- E. We see God so that we may be constituted with God; seeing God transforms us, and seeing God equals gaining God so that we may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead—2 Cor. 3:16, 18; Matt. 5:8; Rev. 22:4.
- 2 Cor 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
- 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
- Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- Rev 22:4 And they will see His face, and His name will be on their forehead.
- F. The more we see God and love God, the more we deny ourselves and abhor ourselves—Job 42:5-6; Isa. 6:5; Luke 14:26.
- Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You;
- Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes.
- Isa 6:5 Then I said, Woe is me, for I am finished! / For I am a man of unclean lips, / And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell; / Yet my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.
- Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he cannot be My disciple.
- G. If we see the Lord, we will see that the things and objects of this world are trash—Phil. 3:7-8; cf. Jer. 15:19.
- Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
- Phil 3:8 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
- Jer 15:19 Therefore thus says Jehovah, / If you return, I will restore you; / You will stand before Me; / And if you bring out the precious from the worthless, / You will be as My mouth; / They will turn to you, / But you will not turn to them.
- H. Spiritual progress is the increase of the element of God in us and the decrease of things within us that usurp God's place—1 Tim. 4:15; Col. 2:19.
- 1 Tim 4:15 Practice these things; be in them, that your progress may be manifest to all.
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- I. As long as there is one thing, one event, or one person that takes possession of us, there is something in our heart usurping the place of God; an idol is anything within us that we love more than the Lord or that replaces the Lord in our life—Prov. 4:23; Ezek. 14:3.
- Prov 4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, / For from it are the issues of life.
- Ezek 14:3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I be inquired of at all by them?
- J. We must be pure; our heart should not be occupied by anything other than God—Matt. 13:19-23.
- Matt 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown beside the way.
- Matt 13:20 And the one sown on the rocky places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
- Matt 13:21 Yet he does not have root in himself but lasts only for a time, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he is stumbled.
- Matt 13:22 And the one sown in the thorns, this is he who hears the word, and the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches utterly choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
- Matt 13:23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.
- K. Our spiritual progress depends on the degree to which our heart is turned toward God—4:17; 2 Cor. 3:16; cf. 2 Kings 23:25.
- Matt 4:17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of the

- heavens has drawn near.  
 2 Cor 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.  
 2 Kings 23:25 And before him there was no king like him who turned to Jehovah with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might according to all the law of Moses, and after him no one has risen up like him.
- L. The more a person is in the word of God, the purer he becomes—Psa. 12:6; 119:140; John 17:17.  
 Psa 12:6 The words of Jehovah are pure words, / Silver refined in a furnace on the earth, / Purified seven times.  
 Psa 119:140 Your word is very pure, / And Your servant loves it.  
 John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

### III. We should aspire to have an enlarged heart—Psa. 119:32:

- Psa 119:32 I run the way of Your commandments, / For You enlarge my heart.
- A. Solomon was competent to oversee God's people because he had wisdom and a large heart, which are two aspects of one thing:
- Although he asked only for the wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in among God's people (1 Kings 3:5-9; 2 Chron. 1:10), God gave him "largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore" (1 Kings 4:29).  
 1 Kings 3:5 In Gibeon Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, Ask what I should give you.  
 1 Kings 3:6 And Solomon said, You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth and righteousness and in uprightness of heart with You; and You have kept for him this great lovingkindness and have given him a son to sit upon his throne, as it is this day.  
 1 Kings 3:7 And now, O Jehovah my God, You have made Your servant king in the place of David my father, though I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.  
 1 Kings 3:8 And Your servant is in the midst of Your people, whom You have chosen, a vast people that cannot be numbered or counted for multitude.  
 1 Kings 3:9 Give therefore to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?  
 2 Chron 1:10 Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?  
 1 Kings 4:29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and very much understanding and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore.
  - The seashore encloses the sea, God having "set the sand as a boundary for the sea" (Jer. 5:22); this shows that Solomon's heart was larger than the sea.  
 Jer 5:22 Do you not fear Me, declares Jehovah; / Do you not tremble at My presence; / Who have set the sand as a boundary for the sea / By an eternal statute, so it cannot pass over it? / Although its waves toss, they cannot prevail; / Although they roar, they cannot pass over it.
- B. We must be genuine ministers of the new covenant, having an enlarged heart with the intimate concern of the ministering life, which is a fruitful life—2 Cor. 7:2-3:  
 2 Cor 7:2 Make room for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.  
 2 Cor 7:3 I do not say this to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts for our dying together and our living together.
- With an enlarged heart the apostles were able to embrace all believers regardless of their condition, and with an opened mouth they were able to speak to all believers frankly concerning the real situation into which they had been misled—6:11.  
 2 Cor 6:11 Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians; our heart is enlarged.
  - This kind of openness and enlargement is needed to reconcile, to bring back, the misled or distracted believers to God.

### IV. In order to maintain the newness of our heart and our spirit, we need to be

**renewed day by day with the fresh supply of the resurrection life to become as new as the New Jerusalem—4:16-18:**

- 2 Cor 4:16    Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
- 2 Cor 4:17    For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory,
- 2 Cor 4:18    Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- A.    Newness is God; the believers should be renewed to be as new as the New Jerusalem since they all are becoming the New Jerusalem by walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:4) and building the New Jerusalem by serving in newness of spirit (7:6).
- Rom 6:4      We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.
- Rom 7:6      But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.
- B.    While we are in the midst of suffering, we need to receive the renewing; otherwise, the suffering that we pass through means nothing to us; within us there is a refuge—our spirit—Psa. 91:1.
- Psa 91:1      He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High / Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
- C.    In order to be renewed day by day, we need to be revived every morning—Matt. 13:43; Luke 1:78-79; Prov. 4:18; Judg. 5:31; 2 Cor. 4:16.
- Matt 13:43    Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
- Luke 1:78    Because of the merciful compassions of our God, in which the rising sun will visit us from on high,
- Luke 1:79    To shine upon those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
- Prov 4:18    But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, / Which shines brighter and brighter until the full day.
- Judg 5:31    May all Your enemies so perish, O Jehovah. / But may those who love Him be like the sun / When it rises in its might. And the land had rest forty years.
- 2 Cor 4:16    Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
- D.    We need to come to the Lord's table in newness (Matt. 26:29); we can be renewed by learning to say, "I'm sorry; forgive me."
- Matt 26:29    But I say to you, I shall by no means drink of this product of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father.
- E.    We are renewed day by day through four items: the cross (2 Cor. 4:10-12, 16-18); the Holy Spirit, by which we are reconditioned, remade, and remodeled with the divine life (Titus 3:5); our mingled spirit (Eph. 4:23); and the holy Word of God (5:26).
- 2 Cor 4:10    Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 2 Cor 4:11    For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 2 Cor 4:12    So then death operates in us, but life in you.
- 2 Cor 4:16    Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
- 2 Cor 4:17    For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory,
- 2 Cor 4:18    Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- Titus 3:5    Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,



- Eph 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind  
 Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
- F. Our mingled spirit needs to spread into our mind in order to subdue, take over, and occupy our mind, thus becoming the spirit of our mind; the more the mingled spirit penetrates, saturates, and possesses our mind, the more we let Christ's mind become our mind—Phil. 2:5; Eph. 4:23; 1 Cor. 2:16; Rom. 12:2.
- Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,  
 Eph 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind  
 1 Cor 2:16 For who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.  
 Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
- G. We should not live according to the vanity of the mind but according to the spirit of the mind; this is the key to the daily living of the corporate one new man, the secret to having a church life filled with the character of God, the aroma of Christ, and the oneness of the Spirit—Eph. 4:3-4, 17-18, 23.
- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:  
 Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;  
 Eph 4:17 This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk in the vanity of their mind,  
 Eph 4:18 Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;  
 Eph 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind
- H. Our loving the Lord and our exercising our spirit in prayer and in reading the Word day by day change and renew our mind; this is to get rid of all the old concepts concerning the things of the human life and be made new again by the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the enlightening of the Holy Spirit—Psa. 119:105, 130; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Deut. 17:18-20.
- Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet / And a light to my path.  
 Psa 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple.  
 2 Tim 3:15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.  
 2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,  
 2 Tim 3:17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.  
 Deut 17:18 And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write out for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the Levitical priests.  
 Deut 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, in order that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them,  
 Deut 17:20 So that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers and he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left; that he and his sons may extend their days over their kingdom in the midst of Israel.

**V. The Lord's recovery depends upon our renewed, purified heart and our renewed, strengthened spirit; when our heart is fully possessed by Christ and our spirit is habitually exercised to touch the Lord, God will have a way, and the recovery will be prevailing:**

- A. This consummates God's intention in making the believers the new man as the new creation to consummate in the New Jerusalem; as a result of our being renewed, we are made a new creation, which is the new man in Christ—Col. 3:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15-17; Eph. 2:10, 15.
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,  
 Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian,

- Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- 2 Cor 5:17 So then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new.
- Gal 6:15 For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters.
- Gal 6:16 And as many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, even upon the Israel of God.
- Gal 6:17 Henceforth let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the brands of Jesus.
- Eph 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.
- Eph 2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace,
- B. God's goal is to have the one new man, which ultimately will consummate in the New Jerusalem, the final consummation of the one new man.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### THE NEED TO BE POOR IN SPIRIT AND PURE IN HEART TO EXPERIENCE THE TREE OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 36:26-27; Matt. 5:3, 8; Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 1 Pet. 3:4; Mark 12:30; 4:14-20; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; Psalms 51:6; Heb. 10:22

#### THE HEART AND THE SPIRIT

We want to see how we have to deal with our heart and our spirit in order to experience the tree of life. The heart and the spirit are referred to many times in both the Old and New Testaments. We need to be clear about the position and function of the heart and about the difference between the heart and the spirit. We need to come back to the pure Word to see the difference between the heart and the spirit.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 shows us that the heart is different from the spirit. *Heart* and *spirit* are not synonyms but are two different things. These verses say, "I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you...And I will put My Spirit within you." The new spirit mentioned here is not the Holy Spirit, because in verse 27 there is another Spirit which will be put into us, into our spirit. The human heart is different from the human spirit. Both of these organs of our human being have to be renewed.

Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The spirit referred to here is our human spirit, not the Holy Spirit. To be poor in spirit does not mean that one has a poor spirit. To be poor in spirit is to have the best spirit. It is not only to have a humble spirit but also to be emptied in our spirit, in the depth of our being, not holding on to the old things of the old dispensation but unloaded to receive the new things, the things of the kingdom of the heavens. Our spirit has to be emptied of many things. Human beings are filled with many things in their spirit. Now that we have turned to the Lord, we have to evacuate our spirit to be poor in spirit. Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." If the heart were synonymous with the human spirit, there would have been no need for the Lord to give these two different blessings in Matthew 5. Our heart has to be pure, and our spirit has to be emptied. A pure heart and an empty spirit are the two main conditions for the nine blessings spoken by the Lord in Matthew 5.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "The word of God is living and operative and sharper than any twoedged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The soul and the spirit are two different entities just as the joints and marrow are. The heart is also another item. With the heart are the thoughts and intentions. Again we see that there is a distinction between the heart and the spirit. Our spirit is the organ for us to contact God (John 4:24), and our heart is the organ for us to love God (Mark 12:30). Our spirit contacts, receives, contains, and experiences God. However, it requires our heart to love God



first. In our heart is the mind with the thoughts and the will with the intentions.

Romans 1:9 says, “God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son.” Romans 7:6 tells us that we should serve as slaves in “newness of spirit.” To serve the Lord is something in the spirit. To love the Lord is something in the heart. The heart is for loving, and the spirit is for serving. We need to serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.

### **THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART**

First Peter 3:4 speaks of “the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God.” In our heart there is a hidden man. The hidden man of the heart is the meek and quiet spirit. If a man is hidden in a house, it is obvious that the man and the house are distinct entities. The spirit is hidden in the heart and is the hidden man of the heart. The wives’ adornment before God should be their inner being—the hidden man of their heart, which is their spirit, in meekness and quietness. This is the incorruptible adornment in contrast with the corruptible hair, gold, and garments (3:3). This spiritual adornment is costly in the sight of God. A person may dress in nice clothing, which is the adornment of the outward man, yet this person may have a proud spirit. Outwardly this person is adorned, but inwardly there is no spiritual adornment. Peter charged the sisters not to pay much attention to their outward adornment but to take care of the hidden man of the heart, which is a meek and quiet spirit. Our spirit should be adorned with meekness and with quietness.

### **LOVING THE LORD WITH ALL OUR HEART**

Mark 12:30 says, “You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength.” The function of the heart is to love. The heart is a loving organ, and we are told to love the Lord our God from our whole heart.

### **DEALING WITH THE HEART SO THAT CHRIST CAN GROW WITHIN US**

The parable of the sower in Mark 4 focuses attention on the human heart. The human heart is the soil for the seed sown by the Slave-Savior. Mark 4:14 says, “The sower sows the word.” The Sower is Christ, and the word is also Christ. This means that the Lord Jesus came to sow Himself into us. He Himself is both the Sower and the seed of life. Verse 15 says, “These are the ones beside the way, where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.” “Beside the way” is the place close to the way. It is hardened by the traffic of the way, and it is difficult for the seeds to penetrate it. This typifies a preoccupied heart, hardened by worldly traffic and not open to understand, to comprehend, the word of the kingdom. The soil should not be preoccupied by anything and must be absolutely open for the seed of life, but the wayside has been trodden too much by worldly traffic. This is the heart that has been preoccupied by many other things, thus becoming hardened. The wayside signifies a preoccupied heart.

Verses 16 and 17 say, “Likewise, these are the ones being sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. Yet they have no root in themselves, but last only for a time; then when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately they are stumbled.” The rocky places do not have much earth. This signifies a stony heart. There is some ground good for the seed, but this ground is too shallow. Underneath this ground are rocks. It is rather hard for the seed to root deeply into a stony heart. Many times we may be willing to receive the word, but we only receive it superficially because there are some rocks in our heart. Thus, it is hard for Christ as the seed of life to root deeply in us.

Verses 18 and 19 say, “Others are the ones being sown into the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the anxieties of the age and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts for other things enter in and utterly choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” Our lusts for other things can choke the word. You may not think that the anxieties of the age or the deceitfulness of riches trouble you, but what about the lusts for other things? Some may be desirous of a high position or a high degree. The anxieties of the age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts for other things choke the

word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Verse 20 says, “These are the ones sown on the good earth: those who hear the word and receive it and bear fruit, one thirtyfold, and one sixtyfold, and one a hundredfold.” The good ground, the good heart, is a heart that is not hardened by worldly traffic, without hidden sins, without the anxieties of the age and the deceitfulness of riches, and without the lusts for other things. Such a heart is pure, good, and right.

The Triune God, who is the tree of life, has imparted Himself into us to be our enjoyment. He is the seed of life sown into our heart. Our heart is like the soil, the earth. If the soil of our heart is the wayside, trodden by the world and preoccupied by many things, it becomes hardened. Our heart must be released from any preoccupation for the seed of life to be sown in it. Our heart may not be preoccupied, but there may be hidden rocks in our heart. The rocks are hidden sins, personal desires, self-seeking, and self-pity, which frustrate the seed from gaining root in the depth of the earth. We may seemingly be a good brother or a good sister, and yet we are superficial with the Lord because of the rocks in our heart. Thus, it is impossible for the Lord as the seed of life to grow within us deeply. It is also possible for our heart to be full of thorns, which are the anxieties of the age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts for other things. Some people have their heart set on a better car. Even this desire can hinder and choke the word from becoming fruitful. The thorns frustrate and choke the growth of the seed.

If we are going to have the Lord as the seed of life grow within us to be our full enjoyment, we have to deal with our heart. We have to ask the Lord to be merciful to us. By His mercy we have to deal with all these negative things in our heart. We have to deal with the things preoccupying us, with the hidden rocks, with the anxieties of the age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts for other things. Then our heart will be good, right, proper, released, and prepared for Christ as the seed of life to grow within us.

### **TURNING OUR HEART TO THE LORD**

Second Corinthians 3:16-18 says, “Whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.” We may talk about the Lord as the life-giving Spirit, but our enjoying and experiencing the Lord as such a living Spirit depends upon our heart being turned to Him. When our heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Actually, our turned-away heart is the veil. To turn our heart to the Lord is to take away the veil. Our heart is the crucial factor in our enjoyment of the Lord as the life-giving Spirit and in our being transformed into the Lord’s image. If we are going to enjoy the Lord as the living Spirit and be transformed by Him, we have to deal with our heart. Our heart has to be turned to the Lord.

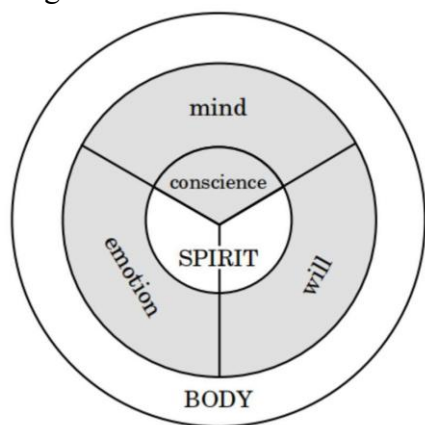
### **THE PARTS OF MAN**

First Thessalonians 5:23 strongly indicates that man is of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. There are many other passages in the Scriptures showing us that man is a tripartite being (see *The Parts of Man* published by Living Stream Ministry). The three parts of the soul are the mind, the knowing part (Psa. 13:2; 139:14); the emotion, the loving part (1 Sam. 18:1; S. S. 1:7); and the will, the deciding part (Job 7:15; 6:7). The mind is for us to think, to know, and to consider; the emotion is for us to love, to hate, to be happy, or to be sorrowful; and the will is for us to decide or to choose. The soul is the very person of a man.

The spirit also has three parts. These are the conscience (Rom. 9:1; cf. 8:16), fellowship (John 4:24; Rom. 1:9), and intuition (1 Cor. 2:11). The conscience is for us to discern right from wrong and either justifies or condemns us. The fellowship is for us to contact God and to commune with God. The intuition means to have a direct sense or feeling in our spirit, regardless of reason or circumstance. The intuition can directly sense the mind, the will, the heart of God. Many times this direct sense is against

the knowledge of the mind and the emotion or the feeling in the soul.

The heart is a composition of all the parts of the soul plus one part of the spirit, the conscience. Thus, the heart is made up of the mind, the will, the emotion, and the conscience. Hebrews 4:12 talks about the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The thoughts are in the mind, and the intentions relate to the will. Hebrews 10:22 tells us that our hearts need to be sprinkled from an evil conscience, and we have seen that we need to love the Lord from our whole heart. The shaded area in the following diagram illustrates the parts composing the heart.



The above diagram shows us that the spirit is enclosed in the heart as the hidden man of the heart. Proverbs 4:23 tells us, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, / For from it are the issues of life.” The heart is the gateway, the entrance and the exit, of the spirit. When the heart is closed, the spirit is imprisoned. When the heart is open, the spirit will be released.

Jeremiah 31:33 says, “This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will put My law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” We need to compare this verse with Hebrews 8:10. Hebrews 8:10 says, “I will impart My laws into their mind.” In Jeremiah 31:33 *inward parts* is used for *mind*. This proves that the mind is one of the inward parts. It is also an interpretation of the term *inward parts*. The inward parts include not only the mind but also the emotion and will, which are the composition of the heart. In Jeremiah 31:33 the Lord said that He will put His law in our inward parts. But in Hebrews 8:10 the word *laws* is used. Eventually, the one law becomes many laws. By imparting His divine life into us, God puts the law of life into our spirit, from whence it spreads into our inward parts, such as our mind, emotion, and will, and becomes several laws. The law of life becomes a law of the mind, a law of the emotion, and a law of the will.

Psalms 51:6 says, “Behold, You delight in truth in the inward parts; / And in the hidden part You would make known wisdom to me.” Again, the inward parts are the mind, the emotion, and the will. Truth is something in the inward parts, and wisdom is something in the hidden part. Wisdom is deeper than truth. God desires that we would have truth in our mind, emotion, and will. In our spirit, which is the hidden part, the hidden man of the heart, He makes wisdom known to us.

### **OPENING OUR HEART TO THE LORD BY REPENTING AND CONFESSING**

We have seen that the Lord’s intention is to sow Himself as the seed of life into us. We are the living earth, the living soil, the living ground. The spirit is enclosed by the heart, so if the Lord is going to come into us, our heart has to be opened. We can open our heart to the Lord by repenting and confessing. The word *repent* in the Greek language means to have a change of mind or a turn of mind. Our mind was originally not toward the Lord but toward something else, and our mind was fixed. Now we have to repent, which means that we have to have a change of mind, and we have to turn our mind. This means that the mind is open to the Lord. Following our repentance, we will always confess. We need to confess all our failures, sins, and shortcomings to the Lord. Confession is the exercise of the conscience. When we repent by turning our mind, we will immediately confess by exercising our

conscience. Then there is an opening of the heart. When we mean business to repent to the Lord and confess all our failures before God, our emotion will immediately be moved and touched. We will tell the Lord, "Lord Jesus, I love You." When our emotion is moved, our will makes a decision for the Lord. We will say, "Lord, from today I want nothing besides You. I want You to be my aim, my goal, and my one desire. I only want to seek after You." The mind of the heart turns, the conscience of the heart is opened, and the emotion and will of the heart follow. Thus, the whole heart is open to the Lord, and the Lord has a way to come into our heart. It is by repenting and confessing that we open our heart to the Lord. This is revealed in the Scriptures and proven by our experience.

The sad thing is that with many of us, soon after the Lord came into us, we became closed to Him. Then the Lord was imprisoned in our spirit and had no way to make His home in our heart. After we got saved, it may have been that gradually our emotion became closed to Him, our will became closed to Him, our mind became closed to Him, and our conscience became closed to Him. Thus, the Lord was imprisoned in our spirit. This is why both in the Old and New Testaments the Lord always calls us to repent. In the seven epistles to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord tells the saints again and again to repent. Day by day and morning and evening we have to repent. To repent means to turn our mind to the Lord, to open our mind. Following this, our conscience will be exercised in a thorough confession of our sins. Then our emotion will follow to love the Lord, and our will will follow to choose the Lord. The result will be that our heart will be fully opened to the Lord, and the Lord will have a way to fill us with Himself. This is the way to deal with our heart to make it the good ground for the Lord as the seed of life to grow in.

If we deal with the Lord in this way, all our preoccupations will be rid from our being. The rocks and the thorns in our heart will be dealt with. Then our heart will be good and pure. The enemy is always looking for opportunities to make our heart the wayside. Many times we allow things to tread on the soil of our heart which make our heart hardened. We may be preoccupied by our wife, our children, or our parents. Sometimes we may be in a meeting listening to the word of God, but God's word cannot penetrate us. This is because our heart is preoccupied. Our heart can be preoccupied with earthly things, with things other than Christ Himself. We may feel that a brother or sister is really for the Lord, but we may not realize that their heart contains some hidden rocks, thus making it impossible for the seed of life to take root within them. Also, the thorns, which are the anxieties of the age, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts for other things, can grow together with the seed and choke the growth. The Lord is ready and available, but our heart is not so available. Our heart is not pure. This is why we have to deal with our heart. The heart has to be purified.

Hebrews 10:22 tells us that our hearts need to be sprinkled from an evil conscience. We must have a conscience without any accusation or offense. Our conscience has to be cleansed and purged. Then our heart will be released from every preoccupying thing to be the good soil for the Lord Himself. All four parts of our heart have to be dealt with. The mind must be always turned to the Lord. The emotion must be always loving the Lord and fervent, zealous, for the Lord. The will must be submissive and pliable yet strong. Finally, the conscience must be purged and must be without any offense. Then we will have a proper heart. We must try to learn these lessons in life and help the children of God learn all these lessons. These are the necessary lessons for us to enjoy the Lord.

### **DEALING WITH THE LORD TO BE POOR IN SPIRIT**

Besides dealing with the Lord to be pure in heart, we need to go on even deeper to be those who are poor in spirit. It may be that our spirit is not empty for something more of the Lord to be deposited into us. According to Matthew 5, we have to deal with our spirit first. The first condition for the nine blessings in Matthew 5 is to be poor in spirit. We need to pray, "O Lord, empty me. Evacuate and empty my spirit of anything other than Yourself. Even empty my spirit of the old experiences of Yourself." We should not be filled up with our old experiences of Christ. Our old experiences of Christ can hinder us from experiencing Christ in a new, fresh, and up-to-date way. Our spirit has to be emptied. This is the real humility. It is possible for a person to be humble outwardly yet still be so

proud in his spirit. The real humility is a matter in the spirit. This is why Peter tells us that there is the need for a meek and quiet spirit. The real meekness is in the spirit. A person may be quiet outwardly but may be full of opinions inwardly.

Day by day we have to learn the lesson to deal with the Lord to be poor in spirit by emptying our spirit of many old things such as old knowledge and old experience. If our heart is not open, the Lord has no possibility to dispense Himself into us. If our spirit is full, the Lord also has no way to impart something fresh of Himself into our being. We have to be poor in spirit and pure in heart. We need to ask the Lord to empty our spirit and clear up our heart. Then the Lord will have the free way in us and the adequate room in our being to fill us.

### **A PROPER HEART AND A PROPER SPIRIT TO EXPERIENCE AND ENJOY CHRIST AS THE TREE OF LIFE**

The heart acts in cooperation with the spirit, but the spirit is the organ for us to directly receive and contact the Lord. If we are going to contact the Lord, we must exercise our spirit. If we are going to serve the Lord, we must exercise our spirit. If we are going to receive the Lord, to take the Lord in, we must exercise our spirit. But the exercise of our spirit depends on the condition of the heart. If the condition of our heart is wrong, it is hard for us to exercise our spirit. One thing we should never do with the saints in the church is to play politics. We should not have two faces, pretending to be one way to a brother's face but undermining him behind his back. Our heart must be honest and sincere for us to experience the Lord. We have to be faithful, honest, and frank. If we feel that something needs to be said, we should say it faithfully, honestly, and properly. We are the children of God, the children in light. Our heart must be honest and pure. Our conscience must be purged. If our heart is condemning us, how can we pray in a proper way?

We all need to look to the Lord that we would learn the lesson of dealing with all these negative things in our being. We need to ask the Lord to grant us a pure heart with a mind that always turns to Him and that is set upon Him. We need to ask the Lord to grant us a conscience that is always exercised to confess our failures and our sins before Him. Then the Lord will have the way to make our emotion so fervent and zealous for Him with a will that is submissive, pliable, and strong. May we also deal with the Lord to be poor in spirit. We need to be hungry and thirsty for more fresh, new, and up-to-date experiences of the Lord. We should not be settled or fixed but be emptied in our spirit all the time. Then we will experience and enjoy Christ, and He will have the opportunity, the capacity, and the space to grow within us. May the Lord grant us a proper heart and a proper spirit for us to experience and enjoy Him as the tree of life. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1965*, vol. 2, "The Tree of Life," pp. 183-193)