

The Mystery of the Ages
Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

John So

Preface

The messages contained in this book were given by John So in 2008 during the December Conference in the church in Singapore. They clearly portray a wonderful Christ before our eyes and create a deep longing in us to know Him in a living and real way.

Based on notes taken in the meetings, the essence of the original spoken messages has been preserved as much as possible in order to give the reader a clearer impression of the Lord's burden in His word. May the Lord Jesus use this book to awaken a desire inside the reader to experientially know the mystery of the ages – Christ in you, the hope of glory.

This book has not been reviewed by the speaker.

Copyright 2009
VERLAG DER STROM
Filderhauptstr. 61 C
70599 Stuttgart
www.VerlagDerStrom.de

The Mystery of the Ages

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

We should turn our conference into a prayer meeting, because I feel that we often speak too much, and we listen too much, but we pray very little.

Prayer: Lord, we turn our hearts to you tonight. We pray that you will shine upon us. May your Holy Spirit anoint the whole meeting. Do give us revelation. Show us this wonderful mystery, which is Christ in us the hope of glory. Do bless our fellowship tonight. Amen.

Paul says that there is a mystery of the ages, which is, Christ in you, the hope of glory. It's a wonderful mystery. It's a mystery, because first of all, it was hidden; and secondly, it is a mystery because it's not according to our concept. It has something to do with God's eternal plan and purpose. Our God is a wonderful God, and He has a wonderful plan, especially with us human beings. God has a marvelous purpose. We shouldn't think that it's so simple. Nothing is simple, especially God's plan is not so simple. But I really hope that all the saints would consider this matter before the Lord, because without prayer, I don't think we can fully grasp the importance of this point. Let us read the Word.

"Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Col. 1:25-29).

Christ, the reality of all spiritual things

What was in Paul's heart was this mystery, and for Paul, the whole mystery was Christ. To know Christ is not a simple matter, because this Christ is great – He is so big. Remember that Paul spoke about the unsearchable riches of Christ. Actually, the whole Bible is talking about Christ, from Genesis all the way to Revelation. I want to remind the brothers and sisters what the Lord said at the end of the gospel, that the whole Bible talks about Him, the books of Moses, the Psalms – actually, the entire Psalms talk about Him. If one day, the Lord would open our eyes and we read the book of Psalms, we will see that this is a wonderful book concerning Christ, especially regarding the sufferings of Christ. So many various aspects of Christ are revealed in the various Psalms. Even the prophets spoke about Christ. If you read this Bible, and you miss the focus which is Christ, then it is really a pity! Many read the Bible, and they dig out a lot of strange things, they interpret the Bible, they research the background, theology, etc. but they miss Christ. God gave us this book with the sole purpose of revealing Christ. If the Lord opens your eyes, you will see that Christ is everything. The entire experience of God's people, being saved out of Egypt and brought into the good land, their experience was Christ. The Passover lamb, the unleavened bread, even the herbs were Christ. Even crossing the Red Sea was Christ. The baptism is a baptism into Christ. The Manna was Christ. The Rock was Christ. The piece of wood that cured the bitter water was Christ. Everything was Christ! If you have not seen Christ in the history of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, you missed it all! All the offerings are Christ. The burnt offering is Christ, the meal offering, the trespass offering, the peace offering, even that tabernacle and all the things inside were all Christ. Tell me, what is not Christ? Even the light is Christ. In Genesis, it says: *Let there be light*. Did not the Lord say: I am the light of life? Tell me, what is not Christ in this book? Everything is a picture of Christ. Even Adam was a figure of Him who is to come. What about the tree of life? What about the 3rd day, the resurrection? What is life? Christ is life. So, if you take away Christ, what do you have in this book? Without Christ, you have nothing! So may the Lord open our eyes to see that all we need to gain in the church life is Christ. No wonder Paul wrote in Philippians: Oh, that I may know Him!

Our desire to know Him

I hope you all have one prayer daily: Lord, I want to know you. I don't want to know so many things and doctrines in the Bible. All I want to know is Christ. This must be your prayer. If this is not your prayer, I am afraid you won't know Him that well.

Today I must testify to you, I don't want to know so many things. I only want to know this living God, because I realize after knowing so many things, those things are not profitable. I need to know this living Christ, and this Christ is in me. He is in you! Remember one brother shared this morning concerning John 5 in his prayer. The Lord Jesus quoted John 5 and told the Jews: "*You search the scriptures yet you will not come to me that you may have life*" (John 5:39). You will not come to Christ, because the real life is this living Christ. No matter how good the doctrines and teachings are, they can't replace this Christ. May the Lord really open our eyes about this matter.

If we really want to go into Colossians, we need to see this point. That is why Paul said, the mystery which was hidden throughout the ages, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Sometimes we think, since this Christ is so great, it depends on Him and not on me. It sounds right, but it's not completely true, because although Christ is in you, it depends on whether you would let Him rule in your heart or not. Still it depends on your seeking heart, whether you are seeking Him or not. It is very strange: He lives in you, yet you still have to seek Him. Isn't it strange? You don't have to seek Him because He lives in you? No, you still have to seek Him in everything! Remember what it says in Colossians: Whatever you say and do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That means whatever you say or do, whatever you plan to do, you have to ask Him! Yes, He is in you, but if you don't ask Him, He can't do anything without you asking Him and seeking Him. Check with your own experience. You may choose to ignore the Lord. Yes, young people, when you play your computer games, you ignore the Lord. Christ is in you, but you don't listen to Him. When He says stop, you don't listen to Him. That's what the young people are doing. What about us old folks? You have your own ideas, your own character, your

own ways, your own minds, and you put the Lord aside! This Christ in you is not a small matter.

Bringing us into glory

What is Christ in you for? He wants to bring you into glory. What does that mean? First of all, He wants to change our being into something that expresses God. That is His purpose in creating man. After man fell, he doesn't need God anymore and is independent of God. Sometimes, not only the atheists say that they don't need God, but you don't want God either. That is why you use a lot of our own means and ways to do God's work. That is why we are in a big mess after 2000 years. I am not talking about others. If I don't live Christ, my life is a big mess. What about your marriage? Don't talk about the church life. What about at home? If you don't live Christ, and it's not Christ in you living the marriage life, then I tell you, the wife will be a suffering wife. If the wife is not living Christ, the husband suffers. Sometimes, both are not living Christ, so both are suffering. Christ is in you, but if you don't live Him out, where is the glory? If you don't let Him live, there will be no glory!

I hope to wake you up tonight. I know you all are very tired. Before you go to bed tonight you really have to consider this – is Christ in you really your hope of glory? Are you really a person who wants to express Christ? Do you want to live out this Christ? I want to enter into glory.

One brother asked me what “glory” means? Does that mean something spectacular? Something like the mount of transfiguration? Maybe for many of you, that is glory. But you don't see Christ like that every day, right? The disciples didn't see Christ like that everyday like on the mount. John said: *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory”* (1:14). What did he see? Was Christ shining like a light every day? Was He every day like He was on the mount of transfiguration? No, he was very normal. That is, in the human living of Christ, they touched the living God – His purity, His humility, His righteousness, His mercy, yet also His judgment. They experienced so much of this divine life in the daily living of our Lord Jesus. They discovered a man who did not live His own, but lived according to the will of the Father. He was a man who

was not hypocritical, a man full of glory. This was what the apostle John and the disciples saw in the Lord each day. This is Christ in us the hope of glory and only this Christ can bring us into glory.

So I really hope that the Lord could touch our hearts. You really need to pray to Him: Lord, I desire to know you. Say this prayer: Lord, appear to me, speak to me. I desire to know you. If you don't pray like this, I don't think you really have a desire to know Him. We all need to have such a desire to know this Christ. That is why in this book of Colossians, Paul mentioned Christ in a very brief but special way, to show you how great, how immense and immeasurable this Christ is. I hope that in these few days of fellowship, the Lord would show us something, that the Lord would anoint our eyes to see how great this Christ is.

Apostle Paul's prayer (Col. 1:9-14)

But in order to see this, we need to get into Paul's prayer. Anyone who really wants to know Christ must be a man of prayer. You don't need to pray for so many other things. Paul's prayer was very specific. I know there are many things to pray for – that the saints would be healthy, your job, your needs, your children. But you notice that Paul's prayer was always focused on God's mystery, God's purpose. For example, if you read his prayer in the book of Ephesians, he prayed that the saints would have a spirit of wisdom and revelation, and they would know the living God, and to see the inheritance they have in the saints, and this wonderful body, and the ascended Christ. Let me ask you: Have you prayed this for the young people all the time that they would see this? But this was always in God's heart, that the saints would have a spirit of wisdom and revelation that they would know Christ. He was just concerned that the saints would know Christ.

How are you going to help the young people? Many times, for the sake of the saints, we ourselves must enter into the reality; otherwise, you cannot help others. Paul was a person who pursued Christ. In all his epistles, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, even in the book of Hebrews, he compared Christ to many things. He showed the Hebrews that nothing can compare to this Christ – not the angels, not Aaron, not

all the blood of the sheep and offerings, but Christ is above everything. If you read the entire New Testament, what is the focus? Let me ask you: What is your focus? We really need to pray.

Let's see, what was Paul's prayer? Let us read Colossians 1. Paul prayed, and I hope you all have such a prayer for the saints in Singapore every day. Don't learn so many strange things. Learn from Paul. His prayer was: *"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"* (v. 9). God's salvation is so great - from being saved all the way to being partakers of his kingdom. *"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church"* (v. 24). Even the sufferings of Christ were part of the riches of Christ. I don't think many of us are willing to suffer in the church life. I don't think many are willing to suffer for the body of Christ, but Paul said here in verse 28: *"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."* In Christ - nothing apart from Christ, nothing outside of Christ. It's not a doctrine, but it's in Christ, for Christ and with Christ. In verse 29, he says: *"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."*

Let me assure you again tonight. If your work today is a heavenly work, then it is very futile if you use earthly means. Believe me, it won't work. Only Christ - God will not allow you and me to use any other means to build up His church.

Look at this universe, how was it created? It's by Christ. It is even created in Christ. I can't even explain what it means that everything was created in Him, with Him and through Him. If that's the case with the old creation, how much more with the new creation? Is the new creation not comparable to the old creation? The old creation was fully created by Christ and what about the new creation?

The need of spiritual wisdom and understanding

That's why Paul said here that we may be filled with the full knowledge of Him in all spiritual understanding. My natural understanding can't grasp this - we need heavenly wisdom. Where are we going to get it from? It's in Him, so if you don't go to Him, how are you going to get it? So may the Lord help us. Many times I tell the Lord that I am too stupid. How can this mind grasp heavenly things which I cannot see? How are you going to get them? By reading some books? We need to come to Him, and we need to pray like Paul prayed. I guarantee you, if you pray like Paul prayed from the bottom of your heart, God would definitely answer your prayer. Many times we don't have spiritual wisdom to truly grasp spiritual things. Many times I cannot explain what I have seen. It's impossible to explain it in words to the saints. So may the Lord give us some spiritual wisdom and understanding. Don't think that we are so capable, especially regarding spiritual things. Remember Job? The Lord said: Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Perhaps you know more than I do - I wasn't there. Were you there?

We don't know many things. How do you explain God to someone? We are not so capable, that's why we need to pray. That is also why Paul prayed like this. I believe it was also difficult for Paul to explain so many things - perhaps that is not necessary. If the Lord would give us spiritual knowledge and understanding, you don't need to explain so many things. Paul not only wants them to understand God's will, but that they would also walk worthy of the Lord. Which is worse? If you don't know the Lord's will or if you know the Lord's will and yet you don't walk in it? The Lord said that the servant who knew the Master's will and did not do it, he will receive more stripes than the ones who did not know. Don't think that the Lord would not punish us; otherwise what the Lord said in Luke 12 is a lie! It's dangerous to know the Lord's will and not do it. That's why Paul had such a prayer. May the Lord speak to you. It's better than my speaking to you.

Message 2

I believe we are all touched by the matter of prayer, because without prayer it is not possible for us to know the will of God or enter into the reality of Christ. I have not known anyone who does not pray and yet experiences Christ. Try to live one day without prayer and see how your life would be.

My sister told me that if she did not spend time with the Lord in the morning, her whole day would be different. It is not possible to live Christ and not be in constant fellowship with Him. So we need to be exercised in prayer to experience Him.

Understanding God's will

I appreciate Paul's prayer: First of all, we need to understand God's will. God's will is not simple, so without spiritual wisdom and understanding, it is not possible, because God's will is mysterious. That is why there are so many different views and opinions about what God's will is today. One would say, His will is for us to go to heaven one day, and others say it's for us to do good, or some say, you don't need to know so many things, just love Him, and that is good enough. Everybody has a concept about what God's will is. If I were to ask you today, I don't think you can tell me, because you are not clear. God's will is not simple. If I ask you what your job is, you would tell me immediately that you are doing this and that. What is your job, brother? – Oh, I am retired! You are very clear. But if I ask you what is God's will this morning? I think you would have a hard time, because you have not seriously sought and prayed to God. Even when it comes to salvation – how many aspects of salvation are in your daily living? God's salvation is not just to save us from eternal condemnation. That's just the initial salvation. What about being saved day by day by His life? What about being saved to the uttermost? Including transformation? What about being saved from the world, and from the traditions of our Fathers. That's what Peter said in 1 Peter 1. What about being saved from this perverse generation? What about being saved from yourself? There are so many aspects concerning salvation! What about being saved from your old habits? From your flesh? Some say: Oh, I am just the way I am. You need to be saved! There are so many aspects of sal-

vation. Do you know how great salvation is? There are so many aspects for us to find out but you don't care and say: Oh, I am saved. I would ask you: Saved from what? We always like to ask people: Are you really saved? I have to ask myself – am I really saved? Saved to the uttermost? Don't you need spiritual wisdom and understanding?

Some say Christ is my life but what does this life look like? If Christ is your life, how come you are still like that? It's not so simple. We need all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Many times we take things for granted. What about the building up of the church? Christ loves the church. How do you build up the church? You need all spiritual wisdom and understanding to build the church. This is a real mystery. It's not so simple. Why are there so many divisions and denominations? Everybody is doing what he likes. There are so many directions. Is that the church? If I don't like you, I go build somewhere else. What is the church? Are you it and I not? I read the Bible, and I pray, how come you are the church and I am not? What would you say? So you need all spiritual and heavenly wisdom and understanding. You have to ask the Lord also. It's strange if one knows the church without asking the Lord. That is not possible. That is why there are so many views about the church today, even in the church. Is everybody right, or who is right? How come no one asks the Lord: Lord, the church is yours, what is your understanding of the church?

That the saints may walk worthy of the Lord

If someone were to ask me what the church is, I would say: Don't ask me, ask the Lord. You may say that the Lord does not answer, but that is your problem, not mine. You have to ask until He answers. If you do not have an honest heart, would He tell you? Do you really want to know? The Lord would ask you: Are you willing to obey me and really build up the church or do you just want to know? That is why Paul continued to pray that we have to walk worthy of the Lord. That is why we need to know the Lord's will. When Jesus was on this earth, the Pharisees and scribes wanted to know a lot and they asked Him a lot of questions, but He did not answer them. We are like this also. We will not answer all questions. If I know you will not do what I say, I wouldn't answer you. Are you like

that, brother? If a person has no intention to do, and he comes to ask you, would you tell him anything? I wouldn't tell him anything. You think our Lord would tell him anything? If you are not one who wants to walk worthy of the Lord Jesus, do you think He would tell you?

That is why Paul prayed in this way. Many times we offend Him and we still think we are doing well. We don't even know we are wrong, and even after knowing it, we do not repent. Do you think this kind of people know the will of God? I don't believe that. Is it so? I know many Christians who would tell all sorts of lies, and yet have no feeling. I told the Lord: Save me from doing so. I am not afraid of them, but I am afraid of myself.

I want to add another point: Paul's prayer was also that the saints would be strengthened with all might. If you do not have strength, how can your walk be worthy of the Lord? Many saints say that they are weak, but why are they weak? Isn't the Lord's grace sufficient for you? Is His grace too little so I can't be strong? Then why are you like that? Actually, you are not weak, but very strong in scolding others and controlling others, strong in scolding your wife! But spiritually, you don't have a bit of strength. So what is Christ doing in you? We need to read the Word of God practically. You need to endure and you need strength to endure. You may be strong in giving a message or singing, but when you go home, you may fight and argue mightily. Are you weak?

Here it also talks about longsuffering with joy. Are you suffering for the church or does the church suffer because of you? Many of us cause suffering to the church and are not suffering for the church. So brothers and sisters, our prayers are very important. Paul's prayer was for the will of God. May we all learn.

Message 3

We have to go on quickly, otherwise we won't be able to finish Colossians. But still, I need to say a few words on the matter of giving thanks to the Father. Paul's understanding of God was very rich. We may say: Lord, Lord, but we lack the experience of the enjoyment of the Father. Paul says here of giving thanks to the Father.

Qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light

The first thing he mentioned was that he qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Don't think we do not need qualifications. The qualifications are to be in Christ, to put on Christ, and to be one with Christ, as mentioned in Galatians 3. Since we are baptized into Christ and we have put on Christ, there are no longer Jews or Greeks, but we are one. Why so? Why is it so important? Because only one is qualified to inherit God's inheritance. Then you may ask, who is this one? Brother, are you the qualified one? You should say no. Then who is? Christ. So for you to be qualified, you have to be baptized into Christ and put on Christ. Don't think you are qualified in your flesh. If you do not live in Christ, you don't have the qualification to enjoy Him. So this is not a simple matter. You see, Paul is so clear regarding God's will. So if we are fighting, arguing, and dissentious, do you think we can inherit God's inheritance? We are not qualified. God is not so loose. So since you are in Christ, your walk has to be worthy of the Lord.

Delivered from the authority of darkness

Secondly, you have to be in the light. No one who lives in darkness can enjoy God's inheritance. This is very important. So Paul's prayer is not easy to apprehend. He truly knew the Father. Now, since we have an inheritance, we need to know how to enjoy it. In the end, you will see that Christ is the inheritance God has given to all the saints. God does not give us many things, but all that God gives us is in Christ.

You and I may be in darkness, and we don't even know. If you are in darkness, you are under the control and dominion of darkness. You may be used by Satan for the destruction of the church, and yet we still don't know about it. Pathetic! Since we don't have such a feeling concerning this, you only care for doctrines and knowledge, and yet you don't know that you are being used by Satan! So the Father has to save us out of the power of darkness. We have to pay attention to this point. Otherwise, the result is undesirable and shameful. In the end, it leads to strife and

division. You do your thing and I do mine. You go your way and I go mine. Then we have really fallen for Satan's ways, and we don't even know it.

Transferred into His kingdom

Paul thanked the Father for delivering us from the authority of darkness. He really knew the Father. Where is the kingdom today? It's the kingdom of the Son of His love. Who is the head of the kingdom? Can you be loose in the kingdom? You should understand it well in Singapore because there are many rules. Those from overseas have to watch out. Don't misbehave – do not litter, do not chew gum, do not spit. There are a lot of fines in Singapore. Singapore is a fine city!

What about in the church? It's strange, you cannot behave loosely in Singapore, then why are you so loose in the kingdom of God? You scold if you want to, you stop serving whenever you want. Who asked you to serve and who asked you to stop? Is it our decision to leave whenever we want? Is this the kingdom of God? But if we say that we are living in the kingdom of the Son of His love, is there love in the church? There is a constitution in every country, and everyone has to do things according to the constitution. Does the kingdom of God not have a constitution? How do you serve? Nobody is in charge of you, and you don't have to give an account to anybody, not even to God? Brothers and sisters, we need the full knowledge of all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Do not take God's kingdom lightly.

So we have to take care of Christ living in us today. If you do not pay special attention to this, you will live loosely. Otherwise, you would be doing whatever you please, and not the Lord. Oftentimes, we do not ask Him.

The pre-eminence of Christ in all of God's creation (1:15-22)

You have to see this. The doctrine is useless. In your daily life, in your church life, you have to experience Christ having the pre-eminence. If you want to go on a cruise, you have to ask the Lord: Do you go? If you go, I will go. If you don't, I don't go. My younger sister always calls me up and says: We are going on a cruise; do you want to go with us? I have to tell her: I need to ask my boss. I have a boss. If my boss says yes, then I will go. If my boss says no, I won't go. Our Lord must have the pre-eminence in all things. This is the will of God.

In this entire universe, God's will is to head up all things in Christ, everything in heaven, and everything on this earth and under the earth. If we don't care about the will of God, we will not know. You will live a very loose life. You know, oftentimes I don't want to come to Singapore. Don't think I love to come. But if my boss says I should come, then I have no other choice. I come not because I love to come. I don't love Singapore that much. But I love the church in Singapore. So every year before I come, I ask the Lord, do you want me to go? If you don't want to go, I don't go. We have to let the Lord have the pre-eminence in all things. I don't want to go to places where He doesn't want to go.

The example of Moses

You all have to learn from Moses. God was angry because the people fell into idolatry. So God told Moses that He will kill them all and have a new beginning with Moses. How would you think? It's a good thing to have a fresh start. But Moses knew to think for the Lord: You did so much to bring the people out of Egypt just to destroy them? Won't the nations laugh at you? God thought about it, and thought that was right. Don't think God didn't think about it. In Moses God had a faithful servant, he would think on God's behalf. Oftentimes, we do things on our own, and God would say: Okay, they are your people, so you bring them into the good land! But Moses said: These are not my people but your people. Don't think that the church is yours. If you think in this way, you don't

know God. God would say: You bring them into the good land. But Moses said: No, if you don't lead them into the good land, we won't move. Besides, you have to go before us and go in with us, and we will follow you. You see, Moses was such a man who knew God.

Today, the church belongs to the Lord, and He needs to have the first place in all things. Otherwise, we will have many problems. Today, many problems arise from our having done too much. We are too capable, more capable than God. We did a lot of things that God didn't want to do, and we don't do what God wants to do.

So in Colossians, Paul says that the Lord has to have the pre-eminence in all creation because Christ is God. He is the image of the invisible God. God created all things in Christ. Nothing was created without Christ. So when Christ came to this earth, He was the image of the invisible God.

Christ – the firstborn of all in the old creation

Many have argued about this point. Many argue that Christ is part of creation, because it says that He is the firstborn of all in the old creation. Even among us, some fight about this. We shouldn't fight about this, because Paul gave a good explanation about it. Paul said: For in Him, through Him, and for Him were all things created. There is a "for" – that explains the firstborn here. You can't understand the "firstborn" according to your own concept, but according to the Scriptures. Paul said: "Because" all things were created in Him, through Him and for Him. Paul used 3 prepositions. All things were created in Him – that means that Christ is the source of all creation.

John 1:3 says: *"Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made."* Tell me, isn't our Christ great? Whatever you see here, its existence came from Christ. It is in Him. We were all created in Him. It's not easy. Then why did Paul say, "in Him" and "through Him?" There is a difference. Christ is so great. Everything was created in Him, so their existence was through Him. If I created this cup, if it was created by me, this cup is this cup and I am me. But if this cup is created in me, I have a relationship with this cup. If I disappear, then the

cup disappears also. But if the cup is created by me, then if I am gone, the cup is still there. If we remove Christ, then nothing is there. How about the church? If Christ is not there, is the church still there? Are you so capable? So you have to see how great Christ is today. That is why the sun is Him, He is the trees, the good land, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He can point to anything and that speaks of Him. Unfortunately, we are so blind, even though He is within us, yet we don't see Him. In your daily living, you ask, where is Christ?

You are sitting on the chair, but Christ is your real rest. If the chair could speak, it would say, you are so stupid. You think I can give you rest, yet Christ is the only one who can give you rest. In the morning, the sun shines. Who is the true light? When you see light, do you think of Christ who is the true light? How come we like to live in darkness, we like to hide and not let people know my true condition? Isn't it so?

Paul mentions here that Christ is the firstborn of all of the old creation, and that He is before all things. He is just too great. Before all things came into being, He was there. Besides, Paul also said, all things subsist in Him. They continue to exist in Him. It is fully dependent on Him that we can still be in order. Have you ever asked why there is sunrise and sunset? It's all because of Him – everything can continue to exist and function because of Christ. Oftentimes, we don't think it is because of Christ. Why does Singapore and Hong Kong still exist? Why did the Tsunami not flood everything? Because Christ is there sustaining what He had created. This is just about the old creation. Now, if the old creation has to rely on Him, what about the new creation? It should be the same, even more so.

Christ – the head of the church, His body

He is also the firstborn from among the dead in the new creation. Don't think you are the firstborn. He is the beginning and He is the end. He is the beginning of the new creation. How wonderful! In the book of Revelation, He is the beginning and the end, He is Alpha and He is the Omega. He is the author and He is the finisher. Don't you see what a Christ we have in the church? If we do not experience Him, what other means are

you going to use to build the church? Some say: You talk about Christ, that is not so practical. Is Christ not practical? If Christ is not practical within you, then something is wrong. The problem is not with Christ, but the problem lies with you. Christ is the beginning of the church. He started the church, and He is the firstborn from the dead. You know, before we were saved, we were all dead. Do you think the dead can build the church? That is why we need to have spiritual wisdom and understanding. We need to tell the Lord that we have exhausted all human ways to build the church, so Lord, now we let you build the church. Don't think we people have the capability to build God's church. 40 years ago I thought I was capable, because I was foolish. But not so today. Today I pray: Lord, we have no way. You are the way. So Paul is telling us this in Colossians: Only Christ is able to build the new creation. When the Lord Jesus created the old creation, it was easy, because the sun would obey Him. The plants don't have brains, so they will listen to Him. The dogs and cows all obey. But you and I - do we obey? You all know, I don't need to elaborate.

Tell me, is it easier to create the new creation or the old creation? You all understand this. Now what? Christ in us. This is the answer. This is the only answer in the universe. This is God's answer. If you still say Christ is not practical, God has no other way. If you have a better solution, go ahead and do it. I will give you another 20 years, if there are 20 years left, try to do it. If we do not wake up, what are you going to do? Do you have any other way to go on in the church in Singapore? We have to listen to Paul.

Just as the old creation was created in Him, through Him and for Him, how much more so with the new creation? If the church was created by a person and through a person and for a person, then you have a problem, because the Lord said that all things were created for Him. There are so many things on this earth. What are cars for? It's for you to come to the meeting and build the church. Why do you have so much money? For your own enjoyment? Why did God create so many things? Of course, it's for your enjoyment, and today, if you are not for Him, all is in vain. Today, if we are living for ourselves, we need to repent. Everything should be for Him.

In the book of Zechariah 7 the Lord told the people that they fast and pray in the fifth month, but what for? For themselves or for the Lord? The Pharisees and scribes were offering sacrifices and praising God, what was that for? It's all self-serving! So in the church today, no matter what you do, first of all, the source must be from Him. Second, it has to be through Him, and third, it must be for Him. If one is lacking, it doesn't work. May the Lord let us taste a bit of how great our Lord is. Amen.

Message 4

Our Christ is definitely bigger than the universe that He has created. In fact, the universe is expanding every day, and it is really very mysterious. We would think that the more it expands, the more it would slow down, and in the end it would stop. But the scientists discovered that the more it expands, the faster the expansion! It really puzzled all the scientists. It actually overthrew the Big Bang theory. I think our God is so wonderful, nobody can explain Him! We really need to see how vast and how immense our Christ is! Paul says, "Immeasurable, unfathomable, unsearchable". You can't measure Him. And how small are we! It's a pity that we, small as we are, we try to replace this great Christ. Today we need to see that we are all incapable. We need Christ to build His church. Paul said He is the beginning of the church. He is the beginning of the new creation; He is the firstborn from the dead. It is not easy to see that this new creation rose from the dead. If something did not rise from the dead, it can't be of the new creation.

The power of His resurrection

A few years ago, while I was reading Philippians, I noticed how Paul said that he wanted to know the power of His resurrection. He didn't want to know the teaching of the resurrection of Christ, but the power of His resurrection. What does that have to do with us? Is His resurrection just resurrection from the dead? Not that simple. The church came into being because Christ was resurrected from the dead. The humanity of Christ was designated to be the Son of God in resurrection. Not only did the Lord resurrect from the dead, but through His resurrection, He has

brought us forth, which is the church. So if we do not know the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we can't build the church. This is a mystery.

That is why I would oftentimes tell the Lord: Lord, I am not able. Are you able to cause a dead person to come alive? If we do not have the power of His resurrection in the church, and all we live out is our old man, then there is no way for us to build the church. The renewal is through the power of His resurrection. You have to bring the old creation through death, and what comes out in resurrection is the new creation. I have no way to explain this. So who then is able to build the church? If you and I are not willing to go through death and resurrection in Christ, then there is no way to build the church, and that is why there are so many problems in the church today. That is why Paul said here that the new creation was brought forth through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If your ability has not gone through death and resurrection, that ability is useless in the building of the church. Not only is that useless, but in the end, it would cause problems – you would become proud to the extent that you are greater than Christ, and people just need to listen to you and that would be enough. We have seen that also. So in the building up of the church, there is the need for the resurrected Christ. That is why here it says that Christ is the firstborn from the dead.

I hope the brothers and sisters would start to seek why we need the power of His resurrection. Without tasting the power of His resurrection, we would not have a renewing within us. We still have a lot of death within us. There is not only sin, but death in us. Our biggest problem is not sin, but death in us. That is why Paul described his body as the flesh of sin and death. That is why in Romans, Paul said that the Christ who dwells in you is the one who resurrected from the dead. If we do not experience this Christ who is resurrected, how can we deal with death? Many believers do not understand what spiritual death is and therefore they spread a lot of death in the church and they don't even know about it. For this reason, Christ had to be the firstborn from the dead.

Christ – the head of all principality and power (Col. 2:10b; Matt. 28:18)

He is not only the head of the old creation, and the new creation, but He is also the head over all principality and power. He is so great. Often-times, I can't comprehend that.

We have a great enemy today. In Ephesians Paul mentions the principalities and powers in the heavens, the demonic spirits. Many of the difficulties in the church come from them. Don't think it is just among ourselves that we are creating problems. Many times, we can't see the cause of all these problems. Don't think the building of the church is so easy. Don't think it's so easy to accomplish the will of God, because there are principalities and powers in the air. What they do is to attack the church and destroy the church. So if our Lord today is not the head over all principality and power, how are we to go on?

If we do not sense such pressure in our spirit, then there is no need to pray. I think the principalities and powers do not care about so many Christian groups today, especially if they are man's organizations. All these denominations don't bother them, they even say: The more the merrier! But today, if you want to build up the body of Christ, and you in Bangkok, if you want to build up the body of Christ, do you think the powers of darkness would allow you to do it so smoothly? Is it that simple? The building of the church is a battle. And if Christ is not the head of the church, it's just fighting and quarrelling among ourselves!

That is why we need to realize that our Lord Jesus is the one with all the authority in the air, and He is able to deal with all the principalities and powers in the air that you cannot see. That is why I beseech all the responsible brothers in the church to fast and pray. If not, there is no way to build the church. Do you think it is so simple just to share a message on the Lord's Day and go home? Of course we should not talk nonsense, but even if it is a good message, do you think it is going to chase the devil away?

You remember the universal woman in Revelation 12? You also see the big red dragon. The red dragon has absolutely no interest in that woman.

He was not afraid of that great universal woman, but what he wanted to devour was the man-child she was about to deliver. So if you say you are the church, I would ask: Is Satan afraid of you, or is he just laughing at you? Maybe we don't have any sense. We are not just here to have a conference. No. I hope that all those who have a heart would be stirred up when we read the book of Colossians. Our Lord Jesus does not only want to be our Savior, but there is a reason for Him to be head over all principalities and powers. If you don't know this Christ, can you overcome them? You may know how to give a good message, but are you able to deal with the powers of darkness? If you do not know the head Christ, you are not able to deal with them. Don't think we are so capable, right?

Christ – the head over all things

Our Lord Jesus is such a great head over all things. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. Ephesians 1 says all things are under His feet. If you don't know this Christ, you can't even overcome your own problems. Can every member in the body of Christ do his or her own thing? If this be the condition of the church, can we still say that Christ is the head of the church? That is why the Christ that God has given to the church is too great. Besides, Hebrews 1:6 tells us that all His angels must worship Him. Do you know such a Christ? Is He great? That is why in Ephesians 1:10, it says that *“in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.”* He is too great. And in the church today, we can have a firsthand enjoyment of Christ as our head. That is why in Colossians it mentions that we have to hold fast to the Head. In Greek, “hold fast” means to hold on to Him tightly and not let Him go. Perhaps Christ as our head is just barely connected to the body. You don't bother with Him, and He drops off lightly. If that is the case, how can the church go on? We have to hold fast *tightly* to the head in the church. Teachings are of no use – the issue is whether or not we hold fast tightly to this head. We really have to know this Christ. So the church is very important. Let's turn to Ephesians 1:22-23: *“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

How would you explain this? God wants to give us such a Christ, and He wants to put all things under His feet and he gave Him to be head over all things to the church. I have no way to explain this. How can you replace Him? Who is qualified to be the head over all things? So if we have such a head in the church, why are there still so many problems? It's because we don't bother with Him. We do not ask Him, we do not obey Him, and we even replace Him. Everyone has to listen to me, and what I say goes! If that is the case, we are afraid of man, but we are not afraid of Christ. I have slowly learned that if there is any problem in the church I turn to the Lord and tell Him: Lord, I am not the head of the church, You are the head. I have no way to deal with it. God has not set me to be the head, but God appointed Christ to be the head over all things to the church. I have learned gradually that He is the head over all things. So I pray: Lord, if you do not take care of this matter, who could do it? If one day, you or I become the problem to the church, who could deal with it? There is one in the church who is above all. Yes, man may not be able to handle you, but don't think that our Christ who is head over all can't deal with you. It's okay if you are not afraid of man, but if you are not afraid of Him, then you have to watch out – one day, when He passes judgment, it will be terrible. So as responsible brothers in the church, you have to learn to tell the Lord: You are the head of the church. That is why I say you have to fast and pray, otherwise how are you going to know this Christ? I hope all brothers and sisters could enter into this experience, to truly enjoy this Christ. Christ is too great!

All the fullness was pleased to dwell in Christ

Some translations say: It pleased the Father for all the fullness to dwell in Christ. But that is not a translation, but that's an explanation. In the original text, it says that all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Christ. Let me ask you, are you really pleased to dwell in Him? Are you happy to dwell in Him? Is it really well pleasing to you to dwell in Him? I am afraid you don't feel so comfortable to dwell in Him. He in you is no problem – He won't jump out. But for you to be in Him, you may jump out. You want your freedom, and I want to go watch a movie. Or you say: I want to do this thing, don't bother me. If I am like that, I'm afraid that I am not

that pleased to dwell in Him. No one dares to say I am happy to dwell in Him. Are you?

So I say, it's not easy to read the Word of God. We need spiritual wisdom and insight, and we need to not only understand, but enter into the Word, because all things were created in Him, through Him and for Him. There should be a relationship with Him. In Ephesians, it says that Christ is resurrected, ascended, and He wants to fill all things. There are a lot of things we do not understand. Perhaps we may not need to understand all of it, but do you know that we are the most important part of creation? God has created so many things, and you are the most important. But we are also the most problematic.

You have to experience Christ. Christ in you is the hope of glory. And Christ wants you to dwell in Him and be fully filled with Him, and be fully joined unto Him. We have been baptized into Him, and we have put on Christ, and we have to dwell in Him. In the end, we see that all the fullness dwells in Him. So we need to say: Hallelujah, we are pleased to dwell in Him. That means, He can't run away, and neither can you. You have to tell the Lord: Lord, hold me fast, do not let me run away. Lord, I know you won't run away, but you need to hold me fast so I won't run away. I want to be fully joined to you to be your glorious expression.

So you see, when our Lord was on the earth, He said many times that He is in the Father, and the Father is in Him. And all that He does, it is not Him but the Father who does it in Him. In John 5 the Lord Jesus said: I do all things to please the Father. Such a beautiful sight – Christ is in the Father, and the Father is in Him.

Today, the Father has put this Christ into us, and He also wants to place you in Christ. So do you want it? If not, why were you baptized? You may ask why one has to be baptized after believing? Baptized into what? Just into the water? No, it is to be baptized into Christ. So as Christians, we need to learn to dwell in Christ. If this is the case, all created things can be reconciled unto God. When Christ was on the cross, He did not only reconcile us unto God, but also all created things were reconciled back to God. Some say that everyone, believer or unbeliever, are all recon-

ciled unto God. It is not so, because the Bible tells us that he who does not believe in Christ would perish eternally.

The whole creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God

When man fell, all creation fell into a state of corruption because sin entered into man. That is because mankind was the head over all of God's creation. So when sin entered into man, all created things fell also. Even worms would bite you, and dogs bite and disobey and even the flies are disobedient and very bothersome. The entire creation has problems. So Romans 8 tells us that the whole creation is waiting for the glorious revelation of the sons of God. Let's read Romans 8:22-23: *"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."*

If you come to Singapore for the first time, you see a lot of beautiful plants, but do you know what all of them are doing? They are groaning! Paul says we know, but we do not know, much less the young people – perhaps not even the elderly ones know. You look at the orchids and marvel at them, but if they could speak, they would tell you: I am groaning here. How can you say that I am beautiful? You should be the beautiful one. It is most beautiful to express Christ. Why are you so slow in expressing Christ? The flowers are groaning. When I went to Shanghai, I stayed with friends that lived close to the zoo. So we went for walks in the mornings. We saw beautiful animals, but they are all groaning. It seems I am looking at them, but actually, they were looking at me. Why are you slow? When can we jump out of this cage? Do you think this is a joke? Romans 8 tells us this is not a joke! The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Praise the Lord, because of the work of His salvation, Christ will restore all creation in the millennial kingdom. Nature would be fully restored, and the Lord would fill all things. In particular, He would fully bring us into full reconciliation with God. He would present them holy, blame-

less, and above reproach in the sight of God. Do you have such a goal? Many do not believe this. I don't know why they call us believers. Many of us do not believe that we could attain this goal. May the Lord have mercy on us, so that we would know such a Christ.

Christ – the image of the invisible God

God's purpose is to create us so that we would have the image of Christ, to transform us into the image of Christ, and then we would be able to attain this hope of glory. What is this hope of glory? It is to be totally like Christ. Do you have such a hope? 1 John 3 says that whoever has this hope purifies himself. Do you have such a hope? Christ in us becomes the hope of glory? That we would be able to be like Christ? To have the image of Christ? Be it in the family or in the office or in the church, or if you are alone or with the saints, are you able to express this Christ? When you work in your office, are people able to see this invisible God through you, just as it was with our Lord Jesus when He was on this earth, expressing God in the midst of the people? John 1 says that no one has ever seen God, but the Lord Jesus was the one who was begotten of the Father, and He expressed God. This is the hope of glory. It is not for us to go to heaven. If we are living in such a way on this earth today, then we would be like what is written in Colossians 3:4: "*When Christ our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.*" Now if you don't care about this today, when the Lord appears in that day, do you think you would be able to appear with Him in glory? I am afraid that when He appears, you would be hiding yourself, because you don't have that glory. Where are you going to hide? That is why today, we have to experience this Christ within us, seek Him, experience Him, and allow Him to fill us in our daily lives.

Message 5

Firstly, the revelation of this Christ is really very great. He is vast and immense. I don't think anyone of us can fully grasp His riches. It takes the entire body of Christ, the church to grasp the riches of Christ. And for this reason we see in chapter 2 that Paul really had a desire, he even

had a struggling in his heart for the saints, not for himself, but even for the saints that he had not seen in Laodicea. Paul had such a heart for the saints, because he realized that we need all the saints together in oneness to comprehend this Christ. Christ being the mystery of God is immeasurable! Yes, I agree, personally you should be seeking after Christ. It is good to do that. But - there is a big BUT - by yourself, how much can you grasp? Look at my two small hands. How much can I grasp: I don't have big muscles like some brothers. How much can I carry? How much capacity do I have? I think I am very limited. Individually, we all are limited. So we need the body, we need the saints.

Paul's struggling for the saints

In his heart, Paul was struggling for the saints. His desire was to see that the saints would all be knitted together in their hearts. We need this. In order to comprehend and fully grasp this Christ, we need the oneness, the real oneness! Without our hearts being knitted together in love, I don't think we can truly apprehend this Christ. That is why we encourage all the saints to give themselves to be one in the church life. Don't let so many little things bother you and cause you to have problems among yourselves. Of course, sinful and grievous matters causing division need to be dealt with. But do not let trivial matters disturb you and disrupt the church life. Unfortunately, we are not perfect, and the enemy would use these small, trivial matters to disrupt the church life. We should not allow the enemy to do that.

So in this chapter, Paul gave us a lot of warnings. The whole chapter is a warning, because Christ is so precious. And the enemy is there to rob you. He will do anything to destroy your fellowship with Christ, and turn your hearts away and even against one another. If we are not careful, we would be led into captivity. That is something very serious. Do not forget there are the principalities and powers. There is a universal thief who wants to rob us of our inheritance. He wants to rob you of your inheritance in Christ, and he would hinder your enjoyment of Christ.

Paul's warnings

If you read chapter 2 by yourself, you would realize that Paul gave us a lot of warnings, because the enemy would use any means and ways to distract you from Christ. That is his job, and Paul's burden is to keep you focused on Christ. So in the church, you should not be easily distracted. Don't let anything lead you astray: Neither some strange doctrines – no matter how good they sound –, nor man's philosophies and the elements of the world should distract you. You know, any doctrine that has nothing to do with Christ, should have nothing to do with you.

For instance, there is the doctrine of ultimate reconciliation which says that ultimately all things including Satan would be reconciled to God. Would that teaching help you? I don't care whether or not Satan would be ultimately reconciled to God. Don't be distracted from Christ. Or doctrines like: You will become God. Would that kind of doctrine help you? Don't let any kind of doctrine lead you astray. Just learn to be a person discovering Christ, enjoying Christ, experiencing Christ in you day by day. And whenever you come together, that is a good opportunity for you to gain more of Christ. This Christ is the mystery of God. He is a wonderful person. There is so much to discover in Him. Today, I don't want to know anything else. Whatever doctrines you have, I am not interested. New terminologies? I don't care about that. We need to focus on this wonderful Christ! It'll take your whole life to discover Him.

The fullness of the Godhead

Do you know how great the fullness of the Godhead is? What is that? If we don't even know that, then why should we bother to know other kinds of teachings? I want to know the Father. I really want to know Him. I want to know Christ and all His human virtues, to discover His divinity. I want to know the Spirit, the anointing, the teaching of the anointing. I want to know and experience the triune God. I want to know the Father. How much do you know the Father? John said that our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, so I hope you all have the desire to know Him. Don't

waste your time, especially at the end of this age, to know doctrines and man's interpretations.

Christ, our wisdom

Colossians shows us that there is only one person worthy of your pursuit, and that is Christ. And it says that in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is a different kind of wisdom; it is a living wisdom. Christ is our wisdom. Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1: God has made Christ to be our wisdom. Is He really your wisdom? If you live Christ, if you enjoy Christ living in you, and in everything, you learn to turn to Him, you will discover that this Christ will show you a lot of things. You know, there is one very precious promise in the Bible in Jeremiah 33: *"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know"* (v. 3). There are so many things I do not know, especially about Christ. We need His revelation. When the Lord was on this earth, all the Jews and chief priests and scribes could not match Him. Nobody could match Him. The Lord knew what they were going to say before they said it. They were created by Him. All things were created by Him. Can you turn water into wine? The Lord can. Can you walk on water? Do you have that wisdom? You don't. You can swim, but you can't walk on water. Can you stop the storm? Can you multiply two pieces of bread into hundreds of pieces to feed ten thousand? Can you speak a word, and the plant there would wither away? Can you say: Let there be light, and there is light? Do you have that wisdom? What wisdom do you have? I can't even raise the dead. We lack the wisdom. We lack that special kind of wisdom. We lack the living wisdom. You don't know what kind of wisdom is hidden in Christ. If you put me to death, that is the end. But if you put Him to death, He will rise again on the 3rd day. Do you have that wisdom? Do you know what will happen tomorrow? Our Lord knows. Do you know what is hidden in the hearts of man? Do you have that wisdom? Sometimes what I say is different than what is in my heart and you can't see through. You don't know what is in my heart. In the church, you may be smiling on your face, but what is in your heart? I can only know doctrines, but there is so much hidden knowledge that I don't know. Why is it that when the Lord was on this earth, many people couldn't see through Judaism? They thought

Judaism was good and wonderful. How are you going to know that the whole religious system is wrong? If you had lived at that time, could you have seen through? But the Lord came and He saw through it all.

Wisdom and knowledge are in Christ

How do you know that we are the church? By what doctrine or by what verse or what book? Are you going to go by Luther, Darby, Nelson, Watchman Nee or Austin Sparks? There are many more. Why don't you ask the living Christ? Don't just read the doctrines. In this Christ is hidden all the wonderful wisdom and knowledge, and it is only by His wisdom and knowledge that you can fulfill God's purpose. So if you don't go to Him, you have no way. How are you going to judge things? You will just do things your own way and say: Oh, let's just love the Lord, and let's all come together. Is that God's way? Do you know this living Christ? So we really need to know Christ. He is the mystery of God.

You may want to try other means – philosophies, practices, or new methods, old methods, new way, old ways, different ways, what are you going to use? You have to know Christ, the mystery of God.

May the Lord have mercy on us, because nothing else would work today. Yes, you may have a very wonderful functioning organization. You have a system working. Everything works just fine. But if that is not Christ, it has no value! Once the shaking comes, it is going to fall apart! Judaism was such a traditional systematic religion, but when the shaking came, when Christ came, it fell apart. The Lord said: Not one stone would remain on top of the other. Everything else would fall apart. So may the Lord use the time at this conference to open our eyes that we will repent and turn our hearts back to Him. Praise the Lord. Amen.

Receiving an inheritance

In reading Colossians, I can't help but realize that Paul was a faithful servant. If we read Acts 26:17-18, you can see that Paul was very faithful to his calling. Actually the whole book of Acts is based on the Lord's commission to him – the Lord told him personally: *“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”*

Paul never forgot this commission from the Lord – not just to be saved and to receive the forgiveness of sins, but also to receive an inheritance. Paul never forgot the matter of the inheritance, because that was a big thing. To receive an inheritance is not a small matter. That is why Paul really thanked the Father in Colossians. He thanked the Father for receiving the inheritance with the saints in the light. I don't know about you, but I believe we are all aware of the forgiveness of sins. But we are not very conscious of the inheritance. I may be wrong. If you preach the gospel, what gospel do you preach? What is more important? Forgiveness of sins or receiving an inheritance? I think most of us would emphasize the forgiveness of sins, but we don't emphasize too much the receiving of inheritance, even after you are saved. Because in our concept, the inheritance is something you get by and by in the heavens. So unconsciously, you feel that the inheritance is for the future. Just like you have a rich father, you have to wait till he dies in order to get the inheritance, right? Unconsciously, in your heart, in the back of your mind, you have this kind of a concept. But this is not according to the Bible. The moment you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, you have received a wonderful inheritance. This Christ is your inheritance. How do you understand that? What kind of inheritance have you received? What kind of an inheritance is Christ to you?

Christ – the lot (inheritance) of the saints (Col. 2:6; 1:12; Acts 20:32; 26:18; Eph. 1:11)

You have to come back to the Scriptures in order to understand that. Paul was thinking about the good land in the Old Testament. The people of Israel were brought out of Egypt; they were brought into the good land as their inheritance. So when they entered into the good land, God divided this wonderful good land into different portions for the different tribes. That good land was a picture of Christ.

Now suppose you receive a piece of land as an inheritance. What are you going to do with it? Sell it? Don't sell it! If you want to sell it, sell it to me! The good land is so precious! Don't sell it to anybody. You can't sell it. Only if you become very poor, you can sell it to your brother, but you will have to redeem it, because the God-given heritage should not be lost! Suppose you received a piece of land, what are you going to do with it? Sit on it? Build? That's good – that's one way. But the land is so big, so how big a house can you build on a big lot? You may just need 7000 sq. ft. to build a house. But you have a few acres given to you. What are you going to do with it? You have to live by it. You have to labor on the good land. Perhaps you plant an orchard. You have to labor on the good land. That means, it is not an inheritance that you don't need to do anything with, and just live and enjoy. It's a very special kind of an inheritance. And you need to understand this by looking back to the Bible to see how the people of Israel received it. If you are a lazy heir and you don't want to do anything with it, then it's just a piece of land. It definitely is a piece of precious property, but if you don't labor on it, you can't just eat dirt. You have to labor on it and plant things on it.

We have a backyard in our home. My wife is so busy when she comes home, she is very busy. There's a mango tree, lychee tree, apple tree, and veggies, tomatoes, and we have a longan tree, and a persimmon tree. So it all depends on what you want to do with it. Or do you just want to build a swimming pool?

Laboring diligently on Christ, our good land

You know, when Christ gave us an inheritance, you have to labor on it, you have to be rooted and grounded in Christ. You have to grow a lot of wonderful fruits – pomegranates, wheat, etc. We also have a fig tree. It all depends on what you do with your inheritance. Don't think that the inheritance God has given us is just wonderful riches that you just sit and eat. God told His people, when they entered into the good land, first of all they had to drive away all the inhabitants of the good land, because otherwise they are going to occupy your inheritance and take it away from you. Who are those inhabitants? One of the biggest inhabitants is your flesh. If you don't know how to deal with the flesh, that Philistine would chase you out. The giants would come and take over. How about your self? So who is dwelling in your inheritance? If you are not careful, if you do not deal with your flesh, your self, your natural man, how are you going to work on the good land? They would come and give you a lot of trouble, and they will come and claim your land, and in the end, you will have nothing. Don't think it is so simple to gain Christ as our inheritance. If you are a person living by the flesh, a person who is fleshly and divisive, and doing a lot of things, Paul said that such a person cannot inherit the kingdom of God. You are going to lose your inheritance. You might not believe that you would lose your inheritance. That is why Paul in Colossians 2:6 told the saints: Since you have received such a wonderful Christ as your inheritance – that is why the “lot” is also the “inheritance” – Paul said you must walk in Him: *“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”*

This means you have to walk in Him, labor on Him. You must grow wheat and barley, and have some cattle, a herd of sheep and you have to have some wonderful fruits. And then you have to harvest. And you have to realize that the Lord said that all the firstfruits must go to Him, and all of the firstborn of the cattle must go to Him. You have to bring all these to the temple and offer them to Him. It is not a simple inheritance. You have a lot of work to do in this inheritance. You have to labor a lot! Christ in you is not a simple thing. What do you do day by day? Do you plant a little bit more? Water whatever you have planted? Remove some of the caterpillars that are eating up the leaves and put some fertilizers, and make sure that you have the right amount of water? Some trees need

more than others. The whole thing is a science. You need to know a lot of things in order to have a fruitful garden.

Growing and harvesting Christ

What are you doing with this Christ in you as your inheritance? Is Christ in you multiplying? Are you enjoying the fine humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ? This is a meal offering in the Bible. In the meal offering, the fine flour comes from the people in the good land laboring on the wheat. You must be a person laboring to enjoy the humanity of Christ - His holiness, His humility, and His virtues, so that you could produce the meal offering to offer up to God. Even in your marriage life, it is a wonderful opportunity to experience Christ. It is not your love, but the love of Christ. How does a husband love the wife and the wife the husband? Do you take that opportunity to grow Christ? The patience of Christ? My patience is so short, perhaps I just have 1 mm of patience - where are you going to get the patience? You must grow this on the good land. Have you heard of the "patience tree"? Are you growing Christ on the good land? Are you taking every opportunity to grow Christ? What about in the church life? What about longsuffering? What about so many other virtues needed to be together with the saints? If we don't grow Christ in the good land, you may have an inheritance, but you may also be quite poor with your inheritance.

I heard so many Christians say: I am so weak, I am just like that, I am just the way I am, I am just a poor Christian. Yes, you have a wonderful inheritance, but you are a poor heir! You know, you may have a nice big backyard, but there is nothing growing there. You have a poor backyard. What is the use of knowing so much doctrine if you are not growing? You have a lot of farming theory, but nothing is growing on your farm. God has not given you an inheritance like a big bank account, and you just use the ATM. Of course, you can use that as an example, but the inheritance that God gave you is a piece of good land. If you don't labor, you have nothing to eat. That is why so many Christians are so poor, because they have not learned to labor on Christ. Nobody has taught them or helped them to labor on Christ. That is why Paul said we have to grow into Christ: *"And not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the*

body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (Col. 2:19).

Sowing the seed of life

In Chinese it says “Grows as God causes it to grow.” But if you read the Greek, it’s “grow with the growth of God.” Are you growing, and how are you growing? It is the life that is placed in us that is growing. It is the substance of Christ that is growing within us. It is not simple. That is why you have the responsibility. You can’t say that I can’t do anything, and I won’t do anything, I will just sit there and let God do it. That is not the way. We must let Christ grow in us. There is a lot of cooperation needed – to sow the seeds, to water and to exercise and practice. Paul says “to learn Christ”, to exercise and even to experience the death of Christ, to experience His resurrection, to grasp every opportunity to experience Christ, to learn to walk in Him, because there is so much to learn, so much to grow. There is so much to expand since the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. So Paul in 1 Corinthians says that the church is God’s farm. What do you plant there? Doctrines? If you plant doctrines, they won’t grow. If you plant something living, that would grow.

If what you have sown is not something living, I guarantee you it won’t grow. Paul says that the letter kills. If all we do and deal with is the letter and if you sow that, do you think anything will grow? The Word of God is living, it’s the kingdom seed. If you sow this seed, it definitely would grow. It’s the seed of life. But when the Pharisees and scribes were talking about doctrines and teachings, nothing would grow. Peter said: You have the word of life, where should we go? If it’s life, it would grow. But if it’s doctrine sown into your head, it would not grow. We have received a very special inheritance that requires your laboring on it. If we have this background and understanding, then we would understand what Paul is saying.

The reality of baptism – the qualification to receive the inheritance

We already mentioned that this inheritance is in Christ. I think it is good for us to read Galatians so that the saints would get an impression. It is a very special qualification. We always like to say we are saved, but that concept is not adequate to understand what it means to be qualified as an heir. Let us read: *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”* (3:26). Do you think faith is important? Yes it is, but Paul goes on in the next verse: *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (v. 27). Why do you think you need to be baptized? Many ask me is it enough to believe and can someone partake of the table without being baptized? The Bible does not have this question. The Bible says believe and be baptized. It can't be separated. That is why Paul said here you are not baptized into water but into Christ. Baptism is not a ritual, but it is to baptize you into the living Christ. You want to believe in Him, but you don't want to enter into Him? You want to take your time! That's strange. There are many strange things today. So to be baptized is to be baptized into Christ and to put on Christ. That is not a small thing. What happens after you are baptized? That means you are terminated. So from the beginning of your Christian life, you need to know that it's no longer I who live, because I am terminated. Why can the church not be built up? Because you are not terminated. To be baptized means that you are terminated. When you are baptized, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (v. 28). So you can see this “one” is so important. If you are not one, then it will be difficult for you to enjoy this inheritance. So Paul says if you are all one in Christ, then: *“And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (v. 29).

There is such a qualification for the enjoyment of this inheritance. We all need to take care of this qualification, because if I live according to my flesh, I won't enjoy anything. If I am just living myself, do what I want to do, say what I want to say, can I enjoy such an inheritance? I enjoy Paul who used the word “who qualified us” – we need this qualification. So if you don't care for the oneness of the church, and you just want to live your flesh and you say: Don't tell me what to do, I can do anything I like – if you have such an attitude and if you are a sectarian person, you can-

not inherit the kingdom. You will find out when the Lord comes back. You will have no part in the millennial kingdom. This is serious. If you don't believe it, that's fine, because when the Lord comes back, you'll find that out. But that would be too late.

In the light

I really enjoyed what Paul said here that we are partakers with the saints in the light. If you are not in the light, that is not good. In the church life, we always need to be in the light. And this inheritance has something to do with the kingdom. If you don't let the Lord have the pre-eminence in your life, if you are not rooted and grounded in Him, if you do not hold fast to Him, you cannot enjoy this inheritance. Don't think God's inheritance is a wishy-washy thing. Even the inheritance in this world, responsibility comes along with it. So if we want to enjoy this wonderful inheritance today, we have to see that we all have our responsibilities, which is to learn to walk in Christ, to be rooted in Christ, to be firmly established in the faith, and to take heed. Do not be cheated. The enemy is very active.

Message 7

Laboring on Christ to gain much fruit

It is not a small matter to see what an inheritance we have received. But I trust the Lord that He will reveal this to us. We have many concepts about the Lord, and many of us believers fail to realize that we have great responsibilities as children of God. There is much to do with this wonderful Christ that God has given us. Even Paul the apostle gave us a very good example, because he saw what a great Christ, what an inheritance we have. So Paul was willing to give himself to labor, even to suffer for the church. And as we have read here, he said in Col. 1:29: *"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."*

Paul was laboring on this Christ. Do you believe that the Lord needs the laboring of Paul? Yes, God needs man to cooperate with Him, to labor with Him together. And Paul even said that he was struggling with all his energy – striving according to His working which works in him mightily. We need that. And Paul was really struggling in a positive way. With this wonderful inheritance, God desires us to constantly work and labor to bring forth more Christ, even to bring forth much fruit. You have to remember, the Lord is expecting a harvest. Even when He came to this earth, He said He was a sower who came to sow, and He said that the seed was the Word; the seed of the kingdom, and the soil is your heart. The Lord expects all of us to bring forth much fruit; some 30-fold, some 60-fold, and some even 100-fold. And in the book of Revelation, when He comes, He comes to harvest. Do you have anything for Him to harvest? Are we really laboring on the good land, so that we can be very fruitful? Even Paul talks about the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians. There are many kinds of fruits. Even in John 15, he talks about the vine with the branches bringing forth much fruit.

Actually, brothers and sisters, we should be those growing all the different aspects of Christ. Sometimes it is really not that simple, it is very hard and difficult to describe. If you look at the picture in the Old Testament, what God has given us is a wonderful piece of land – a fruitful land. When the people of Israel entered into the good land, the first year they ate the fruit of the land. What about the 2nd year? What about the 3rd year? That means you have to begin to labor on the land, so that you can have a harvest each year. I don't think so many Christians have this concept that we have to labor to bring forth the various aspects of Christ.

Giving all diligence

Let's go to 2 Peter 1. I think Peter gave us a very good picture in this chapter: *“As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (v. 3-4). In other words, by His divine power, He has given us a wonderful Christ with divine life, everything with His life and godliness. And He has given

us all the marvelous promises. He has also given us His divine nature. That means whatever you need today is already provided for you – but it is not according to your concept that now I don't have to do anything, everything has been given to me, praise the Lord. It's not like that. But God has given you everything that you need to make it to the kingdom. You lack nothing. Whatever you need is in this wonderful Christ. Paul says in Him you can find the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And he added one sentence: And you lack nothing in Him. That means whatever you need, you can use. Everything has been given to you, but you have to labor! That's why Peter said, „*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge*” (v. 5).

It says, make every effort. That means there is a lot for you to do. And you need to be diligent. If you are lazy, if you don't want to do anything, all the supplies are there, but you have to invest your time, you need to apply them in your daily life, you need to cultivate, and you need to use them! This is the spiritual principle. God has made everything ready for you to partake of His nature, but you still have to apply His nature. If you don't apply it, and you just live yourself, the availability is there, but still you are not expressing His divine nature. We Christians have a very important responsibility to apply Christ in our life. What does it say in v. 5? “*Add to your faith virtue.*” Virtue is not an easy word to understand. Everything was given to you, and you received it by faith. Now you need to activate this faith, if you don't use it, then the faith that you received, although it is very precious, yet it is stagnant in you, because you don't activate it.

Activating and experiencing the living Christ in us

You know, in many of the technical things, you need to activate it. You buy a phone card, but if you don't activate the card, you can't use it. Peter said in v. 1 that we have received a very precious faith. In this faith is everything you need, but you need to be diligent to use it. If you don't learn to activate and use this living faith in you, it would just remain as it is. It doesn't grow. It won't increase, and that is why it says, you need to apply all diligence. You need to add to your faith virtue. That means that something more has to be added, something more would grow out

of that. And virtue is an experience of this life that you need to cultivate. It's amazing. Many Christians, right in the early Christian life, they want knowledge, but what you need first are the virtues. It's the power of life that is in you that you need to experience. You don't need to know so much to experience the power that is in you. For a young Christian at the beginning of his Christian life, the first thing you need to realize is that Christ is living in you. The Spirit is living in you, and this life will operate in you, freeing you from your old habits, causing you to overcome sin, the world, and the flesh. You don't need too much knowledge to experience this power of life that is in you. On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers, that was really powerful. It caused many to repent; it touched the lives of so many and changed them. I believe many Christians could testify to that. When they received the Lord into their lives, many of them stopped smoking, and they were free from certain bondages. Some stopped gambling. Some did many bad things, yet after they believed, they changed. They experienced this life in them. Unfortunately, they were distracted after a while and stopped to experience this power of his life. We should continue to experience the power of His life to activate these virtues. Many experienced the Lord answering their prayers. I know many brothers and sisters like that. We need to encourage young Christians to experience the living Christ in them, and if they continue to labor and experience this power of life, they would receive knowledge. That is why it says you have to add to virtue knowledge.

Diligently seeking after Christ

What kind of knowledge is it? Definitely it includes biblical knowledge, but not only that; it is also the knowledge of the living God. It is very important for believers to increase in the knowledge of God, and not just to deal with the knowledge of doctrines. It will help the new believers to really know the living God, and to know the living God through the Word. It definitely includes reading the Bible, but it also includes the teaching of the anointing in you. If you only have the teachings of the Bible without the teaching of the anointing within, it doesn't work. So you need to labor. If you don't labor and you don't pursue, there is no way for you to

grow. If you just have head knowledge and no teaching of the anointing within, then you have a big head, and it's easy for you to be puffed up.

So Paul says in Colossians 3 that since Christ lives in you, and you have died together with Christ, so you have to set your mind on things above where Christ is. You have to seek, you have to pursue and that means you have to labor, you have to be diligent to pursue. What are you pursuing? Christ. Don't think there are so many things above. Colossians 3 tells you that above is Christ. You need the reality of Christ, you need to be diligent to seek Him.

What did Paul say in Hebrews 11? God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Are you sure? Not only of those who seek Him, but diligently seek Him. If you pray for two days and quit, are you diligent? Matters of life take time. Don't think that the seed you plant today would grow out tomorrow. Don't be influenced by the fairy tale "Jack and the Beanstalk". Spiritual things take time and you need to labor, water and take care, and you even need to protect it. Otherwise, the birds would come and eat it up. If you are not a diligent seeker, you might not be able to get it. Don't tell me: You are trying to make it hard for us. No. Don't be discouraged. I am not here to discourage you. But this is the normal way. This is what the apostle tells us. We like things to fall into our hands: Lord, give me Manna to eat. But that is not the way. You have to wake up early in the morning to pick them, even before the sun comes up, otherwise they will fade away. Don't say I am tired and sleep till 10, there will be no Manna left. Would God drop Manna on your bed? If the Lord does it this way, He is not loving you but damaging you.

Gaining the fruits in diligence

I hope that the brothers and sisters would really change their concepts, otherwise you would not grow properly. All the apostles said that we have to be diligent in seeking. Even the Lord Himself said that you have to seek first the kingdom and His righteousness. So if you are not a seeker, you won't be able to get it. Actually, this is a simple principle: At school, you have to labor. At home, you have to help in the kitchen. Don't say: Oh, I am a brother, I don't need to help in the kitchen. Paul says, if you

don't work, neither should you eat. From our daily life, we see that we need to labor. What are you, an engineer? A teacher? Did you become a teacher by sleeping? You have to study, go to college, and pass many tests. This is normal. How about spiritual life? We should labor.

Peter said in verse 6, *“to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness.”*

There is a fruit called self-control. I know many saints who have no self-control. If you want to lose your temper, you just lose it, and you cannot control your tongue, you cannot stop gossiping. You cannot control your life. How are you going to get this fruit called self-control? If you just let yourself go in your daily life, and you don't tell the Lord: No, Lord, I don't want to be like this. Lord, I want to add to my spiritual life the element of self-control. Do you think if you don't cooperate with the Lord, self-control would just grow in you? You can wait for 20, 45 years, and you won't have self-control. You have to labor. You have to tell the Lord: No, I want you to control my life. If you would cooperate with Him and tell Him you want to grow this element within you, and you cooperate with the Lord, you will get this self-control. Christ will become your self-control.

Then to that, you would add perseverance and then godliness, and to godliness, brotherly love, *“to godliness brotherly love, and to brotherly love, love”* (v. 7). That means you need to labor. If you don't labor in a diligent way, you won't have them, because Peter said here in v. 9: *“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”* Do you have them, or do you want to have them? If you are spiritually lazy and you don't want to be diligent to labor, then you won't have any. It doesn't mean that you automatically would have these things. If anyone does not have them, he is shortsighted and blind. Peter says: *“For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (v. 8).

How wonderful! Peter gave us a very clear way to labor in the good land. If you don't labor, you won't have them. Let's see what Peter says further in v. 10: *“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and*

election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.” How many times did he mention the word ‘diligent’? And he goes on to say, if you do these things, you will never fall. Do you believe that? You should believe—that’s what the Word says. But you don’t get it just by believing. You get it by being diligent, by laboring. What did he say in verse 11? *“For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* You will have a rich entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter is really clear. The apostle gave us a very clear and simple instruction. So we all need to exercise and labor.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit within

Let’s come back to Colossians 3:1-2: *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* You have to seek the things above, not the earthly things. In other words, since such a wonderful Christ has been given to us, we need to learn how to use Him, and how to operate. You know today, everything is very advanced, and there is so much electronics. Sometimes it takes a very long time to learn it and to use it, because if you don’t learn to use it and practice, although it may be a very good program, it’s useless. When I see some of the young people, they can text so quickly, my goodness! If you are not used to it, it’s so difficult! You are so clumsy, but the young people are so quick. They can really use it. But for us old folks, it’s so hard to use. You need to spend time to practice and learn. Do not think that with such a wonderful, great, vast Christ, you don’t have to learn how to use Him. You have to spend your lifetime to learn how to apply Christ in your daily life. If you have such a desire, the anointing within you would teach you.

The Lord has given us the best teacher – that is the Holy Spirit. He would teach you in all things, He would lead you, guide you into all spiritual truths. A lot of people like to ask me: How to do this, how to do that? I would tell them: Don’t ask me. You have an expert in you. You have to ask Him. That is why God sent the Holy Spirit. That is why we call on His name. If you don’t seek for the teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit,

you won't know. Especially the young people should remember: It is not difficult. Anyone who is learning to apply Christ, we really need to rely on the indwelling Spirit. No one else could give you better help.

Before you go ask the brothers for help, turn to your Spirit, because this is the function of the Holy Spirit. God sent the Holy Spirit into you in order to help you, but we don't go ask Him and experience Him. So the Holy Spirit who is indwelling you right now is unemployed. He has nothing to do because nobody asks Him. You like to ask the sister, the brother, you like to look at the books and go to the internet, and you don't go to the best source given by God! I am not saying we don't need fellowship anymore, but I mean that if we want to labor on Christ, we all need the help of the Holy Spirit that is indwelling us, and you should start now. Because if you don't, who are you going to rely on? Please turn to the Holy Spirit within you. Learn to be a Christian who knows the teaching of the anointing. You should tell the Lord, Lord, help me to hear the voice of the Spirit. Help me to sense the leading of the anointing within me. I want to have an ear to hear what the Spirit is speaking to the churches, not just what the Bible says. That includes what the Holy Spirit is speaking within you. This has nothing to do with Pentecostalism, but it has everything to do with the Spirit of life that indwells you. We talk about the triune God, but in experience, you don't have the triune God, because many times we neglect the Holy Spirit who indwells us. May the Lord help us. In order for all of us to labor on the inheritance that we received, we definitely need to experience the indwelling Spirit. This is the only way to walk in Him. So you have to turn to Galatians 5 where Paul says: Walk by the Spirit because the Spirit is the reality of Christ. Without the Spirit, we cannot make it.

Christ – the substance and reality of all shadows (types and figures) in the Old Testament (2:16-17; Heb. 10:1; 1 Cor. 5:7)

Christ is the substance, the reality! There are so many things mentioned in the Old Testament. We have mentioned that in the past meetings. Christ is the reality of everything that is mentioned in the Old Testament. Regarding this point, I just want to mention one thing. Today, in the

New Testament age, we are living in the age of reality. Don't go back to the Old Testament age. That's why in dealing with anything today, you must touch the reality of Christ, because if you don't have the reality, you have nothing. If you only have the doctrine, you are empty. If you only have knowledge and explanation, you may have the exposition of the Bible, and yet you are not touching the reality of Christ, you have nothing. Remember what Paul said: Knowledge puffs up. Yes, you may have the knowledge, yet you don't have the reality of Christ. Eventually, that becomes a problem to you – you just have empty knowledge. That is what happened to the saints in Colosse. They went back to the traditions – practicing circumcision, Sabbath, practicing all those holidays, and a lot of other ordinances, even keeping the law. Paul said, these are only shadows, but the reality is in Christ: *“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ”* (2:16-17).

There are a lot of ordinances regarding eating and drinking. Don't go back to them – those are the shadow of things to come, but the reality is found in Christ. That means the substance is Christ: *“Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind”* (v. 18).

A lot of people practice a lot of outward things, even a lot of doctrines yet they miss the reality. And this is a very great danger today. Christianity has become a religion with just a lot of theology and so many expositions of the Bible. For example, people say: This is the way I look at it, this is the way he looks at it, etc. But there is no reality! Nobody cares for the reality of Christ. It doesn't matter what I think or how you look at something. That is vain. Nobody looks for the appearing of Christ. Christ is so rich, but we just talk about Him, there are a lot of expositions. What is the use of expositions? I want to know Him.

Not doctrines but Christ

You want to be a person who is not satisfied with expositions then you have to want to know Him. There are so many teachings and philoso-

phies – not just worldly philosophies but Christian philosophies. You can open up so many books. You see this is what Darby says, this is what that spiritual man says, but Paul says no! The reality is Christ. The substance is Christ. Don't just let yourself be robbed. Don't just listen or read messages – you must see if you are being led into Christ, do we really have the reality of Christ or not? If not, it's useless! I don't need empty doctrines. This is what Paul said. They were talking about Sabbath, but they had no rest. You may talk about love, but there is no love. You talk about oneness, but there is no oneness. Without the reality of the death of Christ, how can my old I be one with the old you? Could we practice oneness? The fleshly me and the egoistic you, could we practice oneness? We could co-exist, I could tolerate Timothy, and Timothy would say: Oh, that is John. We could tolerate one another, but is that the reality of the oneness? Paul is not talking about the doctrine but about Christ. Paul is concerned that we will not be robbed.

They were practicing circumcision, but the reality is the death of Christ on the cross. Without the reality, what is the use of your circumcision? In principle, it is like me talking about the death of Christ, but I do not experience the death of Christ. I may give a very good message about the death of Christ, but I may not be a man who is willing to be crucified with Christ. So what is the use of such a message? Do you think if such a message from a person who is not willing to be crucified with Christ be effective in you? No, because the one speaking doesn't have the reality and the experience. If I am a proud person, and I am talking about the humility of Christ, what would you say?

In the church life, we all need to go for the real thing. Don't settle for anything less than the reality of Christ. This is what Paul was telling us. If not, we would be distracted and carried away. If you have the reality of Christ, you won't argue with anybody. There is nothing to argue about, because you have the real thing. With the real thing, you don't need to argue with anybody. Paul was so sure because he was experiencing the real Christ.

Today is the age of reality

You will have to tell the Lord: Whatever is written in the Old Testament concerning Christ, I want to experience them all. I want to experience Christ as my burnt offering, my meal offering, my sin offering, my trespass offering. We need to experience Christ in all the different aspects. For Paul, Christ was the reality of the Passover, the unleavened bread. If you are enjoying Christ as the unleavened bread, what does that mean in your experience? You would be a person who would deal with all the malice, the leaven and all the unrighteousness in your life, because Christ is the reality of the feast of the unleavened bread. Otherwise, why are we coming to the Lord's Table every Lord's Day? What are you eating? You must touch the reality. What about the reality of the blessings of the cup? I don't want to go through the motions – celebrating the Lord's Table in an outward way and not to care for the reality of every blessing that is in that cup! Because that is not just a symbol, there is a reality in it. Just like baptism is not just a symbol, but that's the reality of being planted into Christ's death. I don't want just to have a head covering. I really want to experience Christ as my head.

We are dealing in the New Testament times with the reality of Christ. It is the age of reality! Anything less than that is not acceptable. This is what Paul is telling us in the book of Colossians – go for the substance. Don't go for the shadows. The substance and reality is Christ. How rich! So many riches are buried and hidden in this book for you to experience and not just for you to study – it's for you to dig out and experience. I hope all the young people would begin to have this longing in your heart. Amen.

Message 8

I think if the saints could really have a deep impression that we have such a wonderful Christ, that is enough. Remember the main topic: Christ in us the hope of glory. We have to be impressed how Paul the apostle knew Christ in a real way. In the whole Bible, the focus is Christ. Without Him, without the reality of Christ, we have nothing. So at the end of chapter 3, Paul says about Christ being everything in the new man: *“Where there is*

neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (v. 11).

This is too wonderful. For Paul there was nothing else. What is the church life? Christ is all and in all. Christ is everything. Remember, right from the beginning, Christ is the reality of the old creation. In the new creation, He is also everything. Everything is created in Him, through Him and for Him. And all things subsist in Him. He is everything. So the mystery of the ages is what? Christ in you the hope of glory!

Christ being the life and the constituent of the new man

And this very last point, Christ is the life and the constituent of the new man, shows us that there is nothing else. But I think it is very important for us to see one point here. Christ created in Himself a new man. In order to do that, He must firstly get rid of the old man, because the old man is a big problem. We must see this. Without getting rid of the old man, there is no possibility for the new man to be manifested. That is why Paul stressed so much on death and resurrection. It is very important for us to experience dying with Christ. If we don't experience His death, we can know so much, but that doesn't help us.

Remember we are not just talking about doctrines. Christ's death on the cross is very real! Experiencing the death of Christ is the very initial step of our Christian life. This is the most basic experience. Because when you were baptized, that was the beginning of your Christian life. You were baptized into Christ. In Romans 6, Paul shows us that we are baptized into His death. So as Christians, from the very onset, we need to experience the death of Christ. We need to tell all the new believers why we need to be baptized. The Lord doesn't want to save your old man but to remove your old man. Our old man cannot be saved. So if a Christian does not learn to put to death the self from the onset, then your Christian life would not be good.

The need to put off the old man and to put on the new man by the believers (3:5-10, 12-17)

On the one hand, we were crucified with Christ – that is an objective reality – a historical truth 2000 years ago. That is not a problem. But how come you still experience the flesh, and you have so many problems with your flesh? That proves that there is another aspect – the aspect of reality in our living. In chapter 6 of Romans we see that your old man was crucified with Christ, but in Romans 8, you still have to experience the putting to death the deeds of the flesh. If you do not do that, you have no reality of dying with Christ. It's very important to see these two aspects. In all these years, there have been so many problems in the church life, and it's all because we are not willing to put to death our self. We are not willing to deny our self, to put off the old man, to deal with the flesh. If we are not willing to do that then the death of Christ will not be effective in us. It will remain an objective doctrine in your life. But in reality, we can still lie and a lot of things come out of our mouths – slandering, malice, evil speaking, and a lot of fighting. So much of our self is there. There is still a lot of leaven. That is why Paul said put away the old leaven. That proves that there is a subjective aspect of reality.

All of us Christians have to practice and put all these things away. It is very practical. Christ needs the new humanity, the new man. His whole purpose was ultimately to create a new humanity. My old humanity is useless. We all have to realize this. We may think that we are very intelligent and capable in many things. We can do a lot of things. We are very gifted and capable. Yes. But all these things have to go through death. If you have not experienced going through death, then you are of no use for Christ, because the Lord can't use your old man. This is a fact. That's the reason why our natural talent would cause so many problems in the church life. We have a lot of good opinions. We have a lot of good strange thoughts. We have a lot of wonderful methods. There are so many things, and the result is, we damage the church! I have seen this in the last 40 years, especially in myself, and also in many others. If there is anything you need to be afraid of, you need to be afraid of your self, because we have done so many things by ourselves which damaged the work of the Lord. For this reason, we really need to experience that we have died with Christ. We died with Christ. I like what Paul said, that

since we died with Christ, in Col 2:20: *“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations.”*

Through death and resurrection

We need to really treasure this verse. That is why Paul could say: I have been crucified with Christ. Putting to death is not once and for all; I am still doing that today. Don't think that you have done it yesterday, and you don't need to do it today. You need to do it every day. You need to do it in your entire Christian life. There are many thoughts in your head you need to put to death, and there are many activities that you need to put to death. It's best to put them off. That is why Paul said that as long as he was living in this tabernacle, he was groaning and suffering. If you live one day in this tabernacle, you will be suffering for one day. So Paul said he would rather leave this tabernacle. That means, as long as we carry our flesh around, you will have a lot of problems. You need to put it to death every day. You have no other choice. But praise the Lord, there is also the power of resurrection. Now you realize why Paul desired to know the power of His resurrection.

To swallow up death and to bring forth the new man in resurrection, for us to experience the newness of life, you need the power of resurrection. Both death and resurrection have to be experienced by us in our daily life. Without the power of resurrection, like Paul said in Romans 6, you cannot walk in the newness of life, because it is by the power of resurrection that the new man was brought forth in newness of life. We all need the power of resurrection. Don't just learn the doctrine and say: Oh, the new man was brought forth through death and resurrection. I have heard this doctrine so many times in the last 40 years. People were saying: The church is a new man, hallelujah! I have seen them praising the Lord that the church is the new man, but they are living out the old man. Isn't this your experience? We know that the church is the new man, but what we live out is the old man. That is why we see that doctrines are no use. Without putting off the old man, there is no way to put on the new man. There is no way for you to put on the new man on top of the old man without putting off the old man! That would be a laughing matter. Doctrines are easy, but the reality is not that simple.

This time, my fellowship with you is not to share some doctrines. I want to encourage you all and myself also to experience the death and the resurrection of Christ. Don't ask how to put off the old man. If you are willing, Christ in you will help you, because the Christ in you has gone through death. That is why Paul said that he was crucified with Christ. It is not a method, but it is Christ in you. So if a person is willing, you cry to the Lord and tell Him: Lord, I want to put to death this, I don't want this, and I hate this thing! Lord, I want to experience your death. If you cry to the Lord in this way, won't the Christ who is living in you respond? Otherwise, I would tell Him, if you are in me, what are You doing there? Are You sleeping there? If He is sleeping there, you need to wake Him up. What method can I give you? If you don't know the mystery of Christ in you, there is no help for you! God has no way on if Christ in you is not practical.

Christ crucified the commandments with all the ordinances

What method would God have for you to put to death your members? That is why you need to call on the Lord Jesus. You don't just call from your throat, but you are trying to enter into glory. So you need to cry from your depth: Lord, help me! If you do this, Christ in us will really become the hope of glory to us. There is no other way. The death of Christ would be effective in you, and the resurrection power of Christ would bring us into the newness of life. Otherwise, how can we do it? So everything the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished on the cross would become our reality. Otherwise, we just have some teachings and doctrines and shadows, and these won't help us. Why did the Lord crucify all the laws and commandments with all the ordinances? Because He Himself has already come! He doesn't want all these things to replace Him. It doesn't mean that you don't need any ordinances – but if you have them and you don't have Christ, then you are spiritually bankrupt! You know that Christ came to fulfill all the commandments and laws. If He has not fulfilled them, how could He abolish them? Do you still have to kill the lambs? No, because He is the lamb. If He were not killed, then we would still have to slaughter lambs. The reality has come! Colossians 2 tells us that Christ is our circumcision, so we don't need to be circum-

cised. He is the real Sabbath, and He is the unleavened bread. He is all in all! So when the Lord was crucified on the cross, He accomplished many works!

Put on the new man

When you come to remember the Lord, would you cry or rejoice? Why would you praise Him? Because His death is just too marvelous! When the disciples saw the Lord resurrected, did they cry because He had suffered much? No, they were rejoicing! When the Lord ascended, did the angels all weep? He would say, why would you cry? The Lord has overcome death. So how do you remember His death? You will have to see that His death is so wonderful. He was all victorious, and He has accomplished many works. Besides, He has resurrected from the dead, and today we are showing forth to the whole universe these wonderful works of Christ at the table. I can't even describe them. The most glorious thing is that He has created the new man! But the most pathetic thing is that He has created the new man, but we don't put on the new man. We have the new man, but we still love our old man and don't put Him on! O Lord Jesus, may the Lord really change our concept and put everything behind, just like Paul – forgetting the past – let's just put on the new!

Message 9

There's so much to say, but there is only one thing that we really need to keep in our hearts, which is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

God needs mankind to express His glory

At the very conclusion of this book of Colossians, Paul talks about the new man. This is so important, because God needs a new man. God needs humanity. Without such a new humanity, there is no expression of God's glory. God created so many things – the whole creation was so vast and great, and Romans tells us that we can see God's glory in the

creation. But that is not adequate. God created man especially for the expression of His glory. There could be a whole lot of holy monkeys, but they cannot express God's glory. God needs mankind to express His glory. He needs the church to express His glory. That is why today, we need to put on the new man. That's something very special. In fact, that is the most wonderful creation! The new creation! The new man! That is why in all these years, I have been trying to experience the humanity of Christ. Day by day, there are so many opportunities for us to experience the humanity of Christ. The Lord has accomplished so much on the cross: Redemption and forgiveness but that is not the goal. It was a necessity. But that is not what God intended to have. On the cross, He terminated the old man and the old creation, which is good, because the old man is hopeless! Our flesh is hopeless.

Nailing the ordinances to the cross

He also nailed the ordinances to the cross. This point is not easy to understand. The ordinances were temporary, but Judaism just uplifted the old ordinances and rejected Christ. We are the same. We appreciate the good teachings, and we even boast of having the best teachings and knowledge. You may have the best of everything, but if you don't have the reality, you don't have anything! Just like the Jews - they had the best temple, and the best of everything, but when the real temple came, Christ, they didn't want to have Him. The real offering was there, but they preferred the oxen and the sheep. So the Lord had to put them all away and nail them to the cross, because He is the reality. The Lord did not say that He was there to do away with all these things, but He came to fulfill all these. But we love to keep the old. You love the Bible, but you won't come to Him. It's not the Bible in you, but Christ in you. Praise the Lord, He nailed all the ordinances to the cross. And He despoiled (disarmed) all the powers of darkness, and made a show of them openly, that is, He put them to open shame. The Lord was triumphant.

The Lord has removed all the hindrances. So what is hindering you? And He has created in Himself a new man. This is why the Lord has to go through so much. Finally, there is the new man. Do you appreciate that? You appreciate redemption and forgiveness. I know that. You appreciate

the precious blood that cleansed us from all sin. But I don't think you really appreciate the new man. But it is the new man that God is after! And only this new man can fully express the glory of God. A dog cannot express God's glory. A cat cannot express God's glory. None of the animals – no other creature can express God's glory, but you. But not in the old man, since the old man expresses sin and the devil. But the new man, where Christ is all and in all, this new man can express God's glory! And that is why Christ in you is the hope of glory. This is our destiny! The church has to be this new man. And the Lord is the beginning of the new man; He is the firstborn from the dead. That is why we need to know the power of His resurrection – not just to rise up from the dead, but to bring forth the new man. Without the power of resurrection, it is very hard to manifest the new man.

This is very practical. We need to put off the old man – the sinful things, the natural way, even your good side is not good enough. You really have to go through death. Then you need to put to death the members which are on the earth. Remember what Galatians 5:24 says at the end: *“And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* This is very important – this has to be our experience. The power of resurrection is in you. Ephesians 2 says that this power which raised Christ from the dead dwells in you.

The fine humanity of Jesus

And just as you need to put off the former practices of the old man, you need to put on all the virtues of the humanity of Christ. My rough humanity has to be put off! My wild humanity, like Esau – we are all wild men! Don't you realize that sometimes you are a bit wild? We need to put that off and put on the fine humanity of Christ. It's good for us to read Colossians 3:12-14 to see what Paul says: *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”*

For Paul, to put on the new man is to put on all the virtues of the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's very practical. And it's very real in our daily experience with one another. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness or meekness, longsuffering or patience, bearing one another, forgiving one another, and above all, Paul says, to put on love. This is the love of Christ, not our love. It's not our fallen human love, but the love of Christ. And only this love can bind us together in perfect oneness. We need to put on all these. That is why we need the power of His resurrection. To put on the new man is not that simple. To put off the old man, we need His death. To put on the new man, we need the power of His resurrection. If we do this, you will realize that there is a constant renewing in your daily life. This is what Colossians and Ephesians tell us. We have a spirit of our mind. Our mind needs to be renewed, and the Spirit becomes the spirit of our mind. A big problem with us is our mind. But if we experience putting on the new man, you will experience God, and God will become more and more real in your daily living, and we will experience transformation, according to the image of Christ, and we will be righteous, because God is righteous. The humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ is really righteous. Righteousness is a very important factor of the new man. Not according to our righteousness but His. The new man must be right with God, and right with man. Our relationship with God must be right. The husband's relationship with his wife must be correct. Our relationship with one another must be righteous. Righteousness is one of the main factors of the new man. And then Paul mentions holiness. This new man expresses God's glory through righteousness and true holiness. Young people, you need to practice holiness. That is why he said that Christ is made unto us not only redemption, but also our righteousness and sanctification. Don't forget, there is righteousness and true holiness. All this is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The peace of God ruling in our hearts

Then in our relationship to one another, Paul says, let the peace of God rule in our hearts: *"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful"* (Col. 3:15). That means to let the peace of God arbitrate in our hearts. Christ is our peace, especially in the new man. If we are always fighting and we are arguing

with one another, and there is so much trouble with one another, that is not the sign of the new man. Christ is the peace of the new man. If you are a man who lives Christ, you won't fight with others. If others want to quarrel with you, that is their problem. It takes two to fight. You can't fight alone. If the wife wants to quarrel but not the husband, would it happen? If I want to quarrel but my wife doesn't want to, where is the quarrel? That is why Paul says let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts. If we put on the new man, you won't fight with others. Thank the Lord! The peace of Christ can reign in us. This is very practical. The Pharisees wanted to argue with the Lord, but He didn't want to argue with them. So in the end, they wanted to kill the Lord. If someone wants to kill you, then you would kill him first, but the Lord is not like that. The husband says one sentence; the wife says two and so on. That is the condition of the old man. That is why in the new man there is the manifestation of peace.

The Word of Christ dwelling in us richly

Then Paul says: *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Col. 3:16). Not in the head, but the word of Christ should dwell richly in our hearts. You know, the first time you read the Bible, it firstly goes to the head. When you listen to the messages, they firstly go to the head, because the ears and the head are connected. Very few people listened into their hearts right away. Just like the cows – they eat grass into one stomach first. You see when the cows are eating grass it first gets into the first stomach. But it's only when the cow stops eating and rests on the ground, it takes whatever is in the first stomach and chews the cud; then it swallows that into the second stomach and then it goes into digestion. Tell me, why did God create the cow in such a way? It's to teach us. When you read the Bible, it always goes to the head. After reading, we don't bring it to the Lord in prayer. You are so busy the whole day, you don't chew the cud, so in the end, your head gets big. If a cow does not chew the cud, it will fall sick and die, because all the food is stored in the first stomach. So the herdsman would have to insert a tube and pierce into the first stomach so that all the food would flow out. Then the cow could survive.

Isn't it amazing? It's just like us. We read the Bible until our head is so big and bloated and eventually we fight, thinking we are so great and know all things. You need to plug in a pipe to let all the excess flow out! If we are only a hearer of the word, and we do not fellowship with the Lord and pray to experience Him, and seek Him, and slowly digest the Lord's word into our being and not just keep it as knowledge in the head, then that will bring death - it becomes dead letters. Paul says that the letter kills. So it all depends on where the Word of God lands in you. It has to get into your heart and become our life. Praise the Lord.

Doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus and to the Lord (3:17, 23)

What does that mean? It means the Lord and all of His riches need to be experienced by you in all that you do. Whatever you do and think, what is in your heart, you need to do all things in the name of the Lord. That means you need to let the Lord live in you, and you do it for the Lord. When you wash the dishes, don't think that is just a daily chore. Everyone has to wash dishes, right? But when you are washing the dishes, you tell the Lord: Lord, I am washing the dishes for you. Don't think I am joking. If you just quickly wash the dishes, you may just be washing the inside and not the outside. It's okay if the outside is not so clean but if you are washing for the Lord and through the Lord, He would tell you to wash both the inside and the outside. If you do so, you would not be washing dishes in vain.

You may ask me: Is that true? Yes, it is. Paul told the servants: When you work, you don't just work for your boss, otherwise you would start to complain. You would feel bored. Paul said no, when you work, you don't work for the boss but for the Lord. So if you work for the Lord, it's completely different. It is the Lord Christ whom you are serving.

Today there are many opportunities for us to put on the new man. Be it at home, at school, at work, and in the church life, there are many opportunities for us to do it for the Lord. The Lord dwells in you. So whatever you do, He can do it in you, and you can express His glory, and you

have the opportunity to experience Him. In this way, Christ has an opportunity to be your glory.

Many times, we wasted a lot of opportunities to experience Christ. Not just in the meeting or in the prayer meeting, be it in speech or in deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you do this, your kitchen would be very clean, and your kitchen would express the glory of God! You don't believe it? May the Lord have mercy on us.

Continuing earnestly in prayer (4:2-4)

Whatever you do, you can pray. When you are walking or driving you can pray. Remember the brothers and sisters, remember the church. Whatever the matter or difficulty, you can pray at any time. Pray for the young people, pray for the gospel, pray for the building of the church. Pray for your wife, your children, your husband. Otherwise, if you don't pray, what are you thinking about? Your mind would be wandering and thinking about strange things. So if we really want to experience this living Christ, we need to continue in earnest prayer.

In the end, we who are in the new man would walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. Otherwise, to whom are you expressing Christ? If you are expressing Christ and you go to the garden for a walk, all the trees and flowers would be clapping their hands. Romans 8 tells us that the whole creation is waiting and groaning for the revelation of the sons of glory. The people in Singapore need to see the glory of God. Unfortunately, many times we don't even see the glory of God among us. So it is important to put on the new man, it's Christ in us, the hope of glory. Can we say that together?

Paul and his co-workers demonstrating the reality of living the new man (4:7-18)

Paul and his co-workers demonstrated how to live Christ. It is not only to learn the doctrines, but we all need to learn the examples, because the examples speak louder than words. Much of the problem lies in the fact that we learn the doctrines but we don't live it. The church needs the examples of many brothers who live Christ. If we see the life of Paul, we would realize that this man really knew Christ in a real way. For him, the Lord was not a doctrine. He had a real intimate fellowship with the Lord. All the apostles had such a relationship with the Lord. John said: Our fellowship is with the Father. He really knew the Father, and no man knew the Father better than John. He mentioned the Father so many times, both in the Gospel as well as in the epistles. They also knew Christ as life. They all had real fellowship with the Lord. I am afraid that we know a lot of teachings and doctrines, but we have little fellowship with the Lord.

The wisdom of Christ

When you read the book of Colossians, you would realize that Paul really knew the Lord in reality. For him, whatever he wrote was not doctrine, because he had tried to convey this rich Christ to you. Sometimes it is even very difficult for us to grasp such a rich and wonderful Christ. Paul said: In Him dwells all the riches of wisdom and knowledge. Many times I ask myself: What is this wisdom and knowledge Paul was talking about? With our own human wisdom and knowledge, we can't build the church. We are very inadequate. Don't think you are so wise. You have to tell the Lord many times: Lord, I am too stupid, too dumb! To know so many heavenly things – do you know so many heavenly things? Do you grasp the reality of God? Many times I have to tell Him: Lord, I don't know. Do you know the secret of resurrection? Do you know the power of His resurrection? I can't raise the dead! I don't have that wisdom, that power nor that knowledge. I only know that the Lord Jesus rose up on

the 3rd day, but how do you experience that resurrection? I have to tell the Lord: Lord, I don't understand.

How do you help a certain brother? You can exhaust your wisdom and you can't help the brother. If I want to help you, I must say that I don't know what you are thinking inside; I don't know your heart. I don't have the wisdom. But with the Lord, it's quite different. All the riches of wisdom and knowledge dwell in Him. He knows your heart, and He knows all your problems. Nothing is hidden from Him. That is why we are so inadequate in helping anybody. There are so many problems we can't solve. If there is a problem in the church, can you solve it? Who can solve it? Are you that capable? If we are, how come there are so many problems in the church we can't solve? So who can solve them? Only the living Christ! So if you don't know Him, if you don't go to Him, if you don't experience Him day by day, how can we go on? How can the church go on? There is no possibility without Christ.

We are not capable in ourselves

Someone told me: I tried so many times to put off the old man, but it is so difficult! It's not only difficult, it's impossible. Only Christ in you can do it. God has "installed" such a rich Christ in you, why don't you use Him? Why don't you turn to this living Christ? No wonder so many times you can't get out of yourself! If someone thinks he is so capable in the church life, he knows nothing. Paul said if any man thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing. You have to know the living Christ, and Christ has to know you. That is why Paul said, if anyone loves God, he is known of God (1 Cor. 8:3). Sometimes you want to acknowledge Him, but the Lord says He doesn't know you! You may claim to know Him, but He doesn't know you. Don't think He won't do that. Remember Matthew 7 - there were those who said they did so many things for the Lord, yet the Lord didn't know them. That would be tragic. That is why in everything it has to be Christ doing all things; otherwise, what you do would mean nothing.

I want to remind you of Psalm 127: If it is not the Lord who builds the house, those who build do build in vain. Do you believe that? We all need to repent, because we did many things by ourselves and not

through Him. So, Paul's whole burden is to help us to see Christ in you, the hope of glory, that is to say, we really have to live out this Christ. Paul was demonstrating to us how to live Christ. He said: We always thank God when we pray for you to God the Father. We have not ceased to pray for you. I firmly believe that one who knows God would be praying all the time. Or, if your prayers are not answered, you just say "Amen," and you don't care if your prayer is answered? If you do not experience Him in prayer, how would you know Him?

Paul and his co-workers – men of prayer

Paul was a man of prayer – not only he, but all his co-workers. Let us read: *"Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis"* (Col. 4:12-13).

How did he labor and how did he have a great zeal for you? He was laboring, struggling, not for himself. He was struggling and fighting against the principalities and powers – what a brother! We need so many such workers in the church life today. We don't need those who are eloquent, or those who could "pray" – so-called – but those who really pray and fight in spirit. This is not a simple thing. What we desperately need is brothers and sisters who could pray like this. Then you can experience this living Christ in reality. Otherwise, it would be very difficult.

Suffering for Christ's body

Paul says: *"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church"* (Col. 1:24). Paul was suffering for the church. How much do you suffer for the church? I think we are very shy of suffering. Maybe we do not realize that the afflictions are part of His riches that we should experience. Paul said he wanted to be a partaker of the Lord's suffering. He wanted to have fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. Paul meant

here not the sufferings of Christ on the cross for our salvation. That affliction and suffering only Christ was qualified to bear, because He was the sinless Lamb of God. But after Christ rose again, He had physically finished that and is seated on the throne today. He is building the church today, and He is in you and me today, and he wants us to be willing to suffer for His body's sake. Are you willing? Are you willing, sister? Suffering without murmuring? You know, the sufferings, the afflictions for the building of the church are still lacking. You really have to know Christ to be able to suffer affliction for the church, to fill out what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. This is very hard because we don't have that kind of language. We let the church suffer, but we don't want to suffer for the church. Many times, we cause a lot of sufferings to the church. Perhaps you didn't, but I did.

If we don't live Christ, we will prepare a lot of trouble for the church. In the flesh, I would cause a lot of trouble for the church, and I won't be willing to suffer for the church. Paul was a person who really knew Christ. He was willing to suffer for the body. Do you suffer for the body more than the body suffers for you? Does the church suffer you or you suffer for the church? We all know this, right?

Paul was really someone seeking the Lord. In the building of the church, there is a lot of suffering, and I hope that in the church life, there would be many who would be willing to suffer the afflictions of Christ. Don't take it as your suffering, but you need to see it as the sufferings of Christ. If you see this, you are blessed. Otherwise, you see everybody is suffering here. That is not the suffering of Christ, but it is your own suffering. You won't be too happy about it, and you would be complaining about it, and when you go home, you tell it to your wife and give it all to her. You would tell everybody about it. That is not the affliction of Christ. Paul really knew the Lord, and he wanted to share in the afflictions of Christ. We all need such a view, especially the ones serving full-time; you need to be "full-time suffering." It's not easy. You would be reprimanded by others, and people may be envious of you. The Lord was not welcome on this earth. He had much suffering.

Paul was exerting all his strength for the building of the church

Paul says in 1:28: *“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”* Think about this. If Paul did not have that experience, could Paul accomplish such a task? If he was not perfect, could he help others to be perfect? If he did not have the experience, could he help others to experience? I don’t know how to cook, could I help you to cook? What is even stranger is that if I can’t cook, and I were to write a cookbook! But Paul was not like that! What an apostle! He was one who knew Christ. That is why he said in 1:29: *“To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”* He was not lazy. He was praying and experiencing Christ every day for God’s purpose. He was exerting all the energy, the energy of the Lord. To do spiritual work, if you don’t have the power, you can’t do it, because this is something living. If you don’t have that power, you just can’t do it. Why not? Because the enemy is resisting and fighting! It’s a warfare! So if we don’t have the power of the Lord, there is no way.

Paul said: With all of his power – his energy – the might of the Lord which worked in him. Paul was experiencing the living power of Christ, because if there is no power of the Holy Spirit, nothing works. Whatever you speak can’t penetrate the heart of man. We need His power to do such a work.

Paul could encourage the saints, for example, in chapter 2:1: *“For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.”* Again, he was struggling and fighting, there was a warfare. And the purpose of his struggling was so *“that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (2:2).*

Being rooted and grounded in Christ

Paul was struggling that the hearts of the saints may be encouraged and knit together in love. How do you do that? By some teachings? Without the laboring and the working of the Holy Spirit, there's no way. That is if Paul was just working, and the Holy Spirit was not co-laboring with him, it wouldn't work. Paul's whole intention was for them to know Christ. So in 2:6: *"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."* That means you do everything by Him. If you live in Him, you are restricted by Him. You can't do anything apart from Him. Paul was such a one who was willing to be restricted by the Lord. This was what the Lord said when He was on this earth: The Son can do nothing of Himself, but only what He sees the Father do. So living in Christ is not a simple practice. Paul continued to say, you must be *"rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving"* (2:7). That means that some are not rooted in Him! If you are not rooted in Christ, if you don't have deep roots in Him, it's easy for you to be blown away. It is very easy to pull things out without deep roots.

We had a big tree in our backyard, and unfortunately we had to cut it off for some legitimate reason. It was easy to cut it off, but it was not easy to uproot it. The gardener did it three times. We thought it was dead, but after a couple of months, it started to grow again. You can't get rid of it! As Christians, with Christ dwelling in us, we need to know Him, and experience Him in such a way that we have deep roots in Him, otherwise it would be easy for the enemy to lead you away. This is what Paul said in chapter 2: Don't be led away by this and that, by this and that teaching, by the Pentecostal movement. If you are not rooted in Him, you are easily uprooted. You also need to be grounded in Him with a solid foundation. Paul said, we need to know Christ in such a solid way. Otherwise, when bad weather comes along, when an earthquake comes – a spiritual earthquake – when trouble comes, you would be led astray easily. At the end, you would say you won't come anymore, I quit! We need to have deep roots in Christ.

Paul knew what was going on. It's impossible to draw him away. He knew the death of Christ. He knew and experienced what the Lord ac-

complished in His death. He experienced being crucified with Christ. I may say, it's not I that lives today, but tomorrow, it is still I that live. But when Paul said, "it's no longer I that lives", it was really so, because he experienced this. And that is why he could pray this because he pleased the Lord in all things. If Paul did not have such a living, could he have such a prayer? I don't think so.

Paul's relationship with his co-workers

Let us read Col. 4:7: *"Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me."* Paul had such a relationship with his co-workers. You can testify whether you have such a relationship with the co-workers or not. If you labor together and you do not live Christ, you definitely cannot have such a relationship with the other co-workers. Tychicus was a beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. *"I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts"* (4:8). You can see that Paul cared so much for them, and they also had the same care for Paul. This is the condition of people who really experience Christ.

And he was not coming alone, but *"with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here"* (4:9). What a fellowship! He will tell you everything that is happening here! I really like that! Many times, we are just curious but not caring. You would like to know and hear so many stories, but not really caring for what is happening.

Then Paul says: *"Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)"* (4:10). He mentioned Mark, and especially, the cousin of Barnabas. Why did Paul mention that? Remember he had some problems with Barnabas concerning Mark, right? Paul refused to take Mark with him. So who was right? So obviously Barnabas was right. And it was so marvelous for Paul to admit that and to mention here in particular "Mark, the cousin of Barnabas." This meant the problem between Paul and Barnabas was solved, and Mark also became a dear co-worker of Christ. Praise the Lord.

Then Paul continues: *“And Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me”* (4:11). Amen. Sometimes, co-workers give each other a lot of trouble. But Paul said these were co-workers who had comforted him. Praise the Lord. This is very wonderful.

Of course, we mentioned Epaphras just now, and then in v. 14: *“Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.”* Luke was such a brother who followed Paul around. I believe as a doctor, he really had a heart to take care of Paul. The Lord really prepared such a companion to travel with Paul. In all these years, I have seen so many co-workers, but I have not seen such wonderful, intimate, spiritual relationship like this. It’s a relationship in Christ Jesus. It is Christ in them.

Then he mentioned, *“Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house”* (4:15). *“And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it’”* (v. 17). *Paul had such a concern for the brothers, especially those who were serving the Lord. Without such experience of Christ, there would not be such a close fellowship and relationship with the brothers. I do hope that there would be such love and care relationship, real encouragement and trust in one another, and such respect for one another among the brothers. The love and care can only come from Christ – Christ in you, the hope of glory. Amen. Praise the Lord.*

Message 11

Our only desire – to know the living Christ

Praise the Lord. I think all of us have the witness in our hearts that the Lord is coming soon, and I cannot think of anything more important than for us to seek after the Lord. And nothing in this universe is more important than the living God Himself.

As for myself – I can only speak for myself – I realize that in the past we have heard and learned so many things and have so much knowledge. But I realize that at the end of the day, it is not a matter of how much

you know, but whether you know the living God, and how your relationship is with Him. More and more, I am impressed by the fathers and the prophets. They really knew God. Abraham knew God not in a doctrinal way, but it's said that the God of glory appeared to him. Jacob knew God. Noah knew God. Moses knew God. God even spoke to him face to face. Wonderful. Daniel knew God. David knew God in a certain way. They all experienced the living God.

If you read the book of Acts, of course the apostles knew the Lord, because the Lord was on the earth. But in the book of Acts, the saints also knew God. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They experienced God, and the Lord appeared to them. The Lord appeared many times to Paul. Their knowledge of God is so different from my knowledge of God – through books, messages, and many other means. They had so many experiences of the living God.

What about us today? Don't you have the desire to know God? Is our knowledge of God just limited to doctrines and teachings of the Bible and interpretations? You may be satisfied with that, but I am not. We all need to have a desire to know Him. Paul told us in Philippians – I am always impressed with this point: I want to live Him, and I want to know Him. He really knew this wonderful Christ. That is why when he wrote the book of Colossians, he realized that the Christ he knew was such a great Christ. The God who not only created everything, but he said, everything was created in Him, through Him and for Him. Too great! And then he said: Christ in you the hope of glory. That is a tremendous thing, a wonderful mystery!

The hope of glory

This afternoon, we had a little fellowship about this point: What is the hope of glory? What kind of a hope is that? And what is that glory? It is very easy to quote the Bible, but it is another thing to touch the reality of the Bible. Do you really have a hope as a Christian? If you have a hope, that means you also have a goal, right? Why do you go to school? Because you hope to graduate. What do you do? You work hard to achieve that goal. It is not possible to have a goal, and yet you just play around.

If you do that and you tell me you hope to graduate, I don't believe that. You are doing so many other things and you are not studying, I don't think you hope to graduate. Now if you have the hope of glory, do you just sit there and wait for the hope to come? No. If you do that, I don't think you understand what the hope of glory means.

The hope of glory is a very essential part of our Christian living, because it will guide you in your Christian life. Paul had the goal that he wanted to attain. Actually, the hope is our goal, a goal that we want to attain to. In Philippians, Paul said that he has not attained to it yet, that means, he was aiming at that. He was running the race. And that is why Paul used the running of the race as an example in our Christian life. That means, the earlier you attain it, the better you are. If you are slow, you may not reach the goal. Praise the Lord for such an example in the life of Paul. In our Christian life, we need to be very clear: What do you hope for?

Man's destiny – to express God's glory

Now, to just briefly fellowship about it tonight, Paul said there is a hope of glory. What is glory? I think for many believers, glory is something magnificent, awesome and something very bright – something that's just glory. When the Lord Jesus was on the mount of transfiguration, all of a sudden, He became so bright. He was really shining. And in the book of Revelation, John saw the face of the Lord shining as the sun. That was glory. I don't say that there is no other aspect of the glory. When the Lord comes back with all the angels it will be wonderful. I don't think we have the language to describe that. But the glory that the apostle talked about was something else. He talked about the word becoming flesh. He said: We beheld His glory, full of grace and truth – full of grace and reality, expressing the living Father. It is not something similar to the experience on the mount of transfiguration. But really and truly, for the first time, here is a Man – you can't explain it – He is a real man, but He is different. A Man who didn't live Himself. He did not live for Himself, but He lived the Father, He lived out the life of the Father. This is very mysterious. You know, this is a mystery in this universe, because God desires to express Himself through humanity. This is the very reason why God

created us. Man has a very high and marvelous destiny, that is to express God's glory.

Sin and Satan – the expression of the fallen man

When man fell, man became corrupted. Sin entered into man. Instead of expressing God, man expressed sin, even worse, he expressed the devil! When John the Baptist came, some of the Scribes and Pharisees came to be baptized. It shocked me when John the Baptist called them a generation of vipers! The Pharisees and scribes who were serving the Lord were called a generation of vipers, then what about me? Are they only a generation of vipers and I am not? In John 8, they claimed Abraham as their father, and the Lord said: No. What did He say? You are of your father the devil! When you read that verse, how do you feel? Does that shock you? If it were said by Paul or Peter, I would say they were too much. I might not believe it. But it was said by the Lord Jesus Himself, because they were going to kill the Lord, and they were lying left and right. They were hypocritical. They were not sincere but sinful and their hearts were filled with all kinds of corrupt things. So what was their expression? What were they expressing? To say it nicely, it's the flesh. But to say it not so nicely, it's the devil!

When you lose your temper, what are you expressing? Tell me. We all don't dare to say but you don't have that feeling, and that is why you always lose your temper. When you tell a lie, then a second lie and a third lie comes along, and in the end, you believe your own lie. Who are you expressing? If you do not have the feeling that you are expressing the devil, you will continue to do that. What did Paul say in Romans 3? All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Why did Paul add the phrase "Come short of the glory of God?" I would only have said: All have sinned. I don't think I have the feeling or realization that all have come short of the glory of God, because I do not have that realization or consciousness of my coming short of the glory of God. I only realize that I am wrong, but I don't have the realization that I come short of the glory of God.

Christ in us – God’s expression of glory

Why do I share this tonight? Because I want you to fully realize that Christ in you is the hope of glory, otherwise you would feel that Christ in you is good enough. What hope of glory? That means for many of us, Christ in me is good enough! You don’t need to add that phrase: “...the hope of glory.” I know it is difficult, because it is not in our natural concept to be worthy of our calling like Paul said. The One who created us and called us wants us to express His glory. That is why if I don’t live Christ, I don’t care, it doesn’t bother me. I don’t glorify Him and I live myself, it doesn’t bother me. But for Paul, it was different. He said: Walk in Him, live Him, magnify Him. It must be Christ in you. You must be filled with Him. Paul exhausted all the language to describe this matter. And I really hope that the Lord would do something in us to awaken the feeling in us. And that is why this mystery is so important in us, and that is the reason Paul said: Christ in you, because that is the only way you can express God’s glory. It’s not you expressing God’s glory, but it’s you living by this Christ. It is you learning and living and practicing to live by this Christ. This must be the goal in our Christian life.

Message 12

Christ in us, the hope of glory in our daily living

I really praise the Lord for this wonderful time together with the saints. Sometimes when our Lord opens our eyes, we are really speechless. When we were worshipping the Father, in my heart, I really thanked the Father for giving us such a rich Christ. I think it would really be an offense to God if He has given us such a wonderful Christ, and yet we don’t live Him out. I was really amazed at how Paul described Christ as everything: He mentions that He is all and in all, and he also mentioned that this Christ lives in us and He is the hope of glory. This is the mystery hidden in all the ages. This mystery is not a small thing. If this Christ lives in me, and I don’t care for Him, and I neglect Him in my daily living, I don’t think there would be much glory in my life. My wife would look at me and not see glory, but just see me living myself. At work, or even in

the church, we may not see much glory if we live ourselves. So this mystery is really great. Christ in us is the hope of glory. And it starts today in our daily lives.

I was thinking about this verse in chapter 3:4 again: *“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”* Are you sure? Suppose I don’t live Christ today, I just live myself, and I am not rooted and grounded in Christ, and I don’t walk in Christ, and not live according to Him, and I don’t live Him. If I do that, I won’t be expressing Christ in my daily life. For example, if I don’t learn to put off my old man, I’ll give you a lot of problems. Paul not only described Christ, but he also described the old man. In the book of Colossians, I see this great and marvelous Christ, but on the other hand, I only see a terrible old man. We all need to see both. Many times, I like to see Christ and discuss that, but I don’t like to see the old man. We need to see both, because Paul showed us both.

The old man is corrupt and expresses the devil

And in this wonderful marvelous book of Colossians, Paul told us that Christ created a marvelous new man through His death and resurrection. This is indescribable! The Lord has created a new man. Why? Because the old man is absolutely corrupt! He is incapable of expressing God’s glory. Last night, in a few words, we described the old man a little bit. The old man, if it’s only old, it’s not that bad. According to our concept, if somebody is old, it’s still okay. But the Bible says that the old man is not only old. If you have an old car, you can still run it. But this old man is not only old, but it’s totally corrupted, it’s a generation of vipers and expresses the devil. It not only has no glory, but it expresses the devil. When you lie or slander others, don’t you express the devil? Because the devil is the one who blasphemed the Lord. If you are quarreling and arguing, are you not expressing the devil?

We read John 8. These Pharisees and scribes said that Abraham was their father, but the Lord said, no. Your father is who? You are sons of your father, the devil. If you read such a word in the Bible, won’t you be shocked? The father of the old man is the devil. Our fallen old man is

closely related to the devil. Many times I only know that I did something wrong, but I did not know that I expressed the devil. Therefore, we have many problems in the church. Where do these problems come from? I said yesterday: To say it nicely, it's the flesh. To say in not such a nice way, it's the devil. So how is the devil expressed? Through our flesh! We all need to touch the reality of the Lord's word. Many times, it's because we did not see, that's why we are not afraid. There is no fear and trembling, because we don't realize how deep the human flesh has fallen.

Wisdom from above

What about our own human wisdom? Sometimes we thought we are very wise, but when I read what James said about my wisdom, that scared me to death! What did he say? Let' takes a look at James 3:13-16: *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."* If you truly have wisdom, then you would have meekness, otherwise it would be I, me and myself. What kind of wisdom is that? Let us continue to read verses 17-18: *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."*

There is purity. It is not just something smart. We always thought that if we are wise, we are smart. No. If you are a wise man, you will seek after purity. You will realize that we are impure. Firstly, there is purity, and then it is peaceable. Many times, I thought I was wise, yet I caused so much trouble. Have you thought that to be wise is to be gentle? You may think to be wise is to know this and that but that is not wisdom from above. Here it says, it's willing to yield. Are you willing to yield? Submit and let go? If you are not willing to yield, you don't have wisdom. You just want to hold on to everything, and everything has to be done your way, that is not wisdom. That is the opposite of wisdom - at least it is not the wisdom from above. I think it rather is something from below!

However, the wisdom from above is full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Without putting on the new man there is no glory

This is the kind of wisdom we need today. This is the wisdom of Christ. This is the wisdom Christ expressed when He was on the earth. He's the Prince of peace. He's pure and gentle, and willing to yield. It's very difficult to argue with Him. Try to argue with Him. He won't argue with you. But at home between husband and wife, my goodness! If the wife would just say one thing, there's a boom! Or if the husband says one thing, then there is an argument! I don't know what kind of wisdom that is. That is the old man. No peace. If you don't have peace at home, do you think there will be peace in the church? We are not demonstrating the new man, but the old man, and there is no glory. The Lord went through a lot of trouble to create a new man, and you don't want to put Him on. You still love your old man. How do you think the Lord feels? How can we express as the church the glory of the Lord when you don't put on the new man? And how can we put on the new man without putting off the old?

If you buy a new pair of shoes, how are you going to put on the new shoes if you don't put off the old shoes? Do you like to put the new shoes on top of the old shoes? It sounds really strange, right? I think everybody would laugh. But how come we don't want to put off the old man, and yet we talk about putting on the new man? It's impossible to practice the new man with a bunch of old men. A group of old men practicing the life of the new man, that is very difficult. So Paul said: Put off the old man with all its former practices. Old habits – some translations say the “old self” – like I said it's not only old, it's worse than just being old. If I don't have the desire and the practice to put off my old man, I don't think I would have the habit of putting on the new, because anyone who wants to put on the new must practice to put off the old, right? You want to put on new clothes, yet you still don't put off your old, then you have to buy 10 sizes larger, and it would look awful. The Lord said it in a different way: You want to cut off a new piece of cloth to patch the old. For old clothes, it's okay, but if you want to cut up a piece of the new garment

and to mend it on the old garment, is that okay? My old man is just so stupid! We have to laugh at ourselves. I am not joking here.

Our daily exercise to put on the new man

To put on the new man is something very practical, and it requires our practicing, and there is the need to put off the old man, and it's very closely related to the death and resurrection of our Lord. Paul wanted to experience the death of Christ, otherwise, how could the old man be put off? And Paul also wanted to experience the resurrection of Christ, otherwise, how could we be renewed? Paul said that our inner man is renewed daily – it is not in a twinkling of the eye that Christ can become the hope of glory. It's something we need to practice and experience, and to lay hold of every opportunity, whether it is at home, at work or in the church in our coordination. We need to practice this through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ to put off the old, and through the power of Christ's resurrection to put on the new, because the old man is full of death, and it wants to hinder you from putting on the new man. If you do not do that, there will be no glory, and no hope of glory.

Although God has put such a great Christ in us, He still needs you to cooperate with Him, being willing to put off the old man and to put on Christ, and Christ is all and in all in the new man.

Appearing with Him in glory

Thank and praise the Lord. If we do it this way, when Christ appears, there won't be any problems. You will also appear with Him in glory. The glory today is to express Christ in all things you do daily. When the Lord appears, that glory in the future would be indescribable. But today's glory is visible – and it's through your living out to express Christ and express God.

I hope that the Lord would have mercy on us, so that we don't just gain some knowledge here, but that we would exercise and practice daily,

and it's only then that we can say that Christ in us becomes the hope of glory in us. Amen.

