

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Six

Needing to Know the Self and the Old, Natural Being

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:21-26; Luke 9:23-25; John 12:24-26; Gen. 3:1-6

- Matt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.
- Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!
- Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
- Luke 9:23 And He said to *them* all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.
- Luke 9:24 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it.
- Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.
- John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
- Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than every other animal of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?
- Gen 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;
- Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.
- Gen 3:4 And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die!
- Gen 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.
- Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

I. The self is the embodiment of Satan—Matt. 16:21-26; Luke 9:23-25; Gen. 3:1-6:

- Matt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.
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Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?

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Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

Gen 3:4 And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die!

Gen 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.

Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

A. The self is the soul plus the satanic mind, the mind of Satan—Matt. 16:23; Gen. 3:1.

Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than every other animal of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

B. Before Eve took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into her body, the thought, the mind, of Satan was injected into her soul.

C. In the process of man's fall, man failed to use his spirit to contact God, thus bypassing God and putting God aside; instead, he exercised his soul—reasoning with the serpent in his mind, desiring the tree of knowledge in the emotion, and deciding in the will to take the fruit and eat it—vv. 1-6.

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Gen 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

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Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

D. By this time every part of the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will—had been poisoned by Satan.

II. The self is the soul declaring independence from God, and the self is the enemy of the Body:

A. Whenever we do something by ourselves without depending on the Lord, we are in the self; because Peter was independent of the Lord, the Lord turned to Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan!”—Matt. 16:22-23a.

Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!

Matt 16:23a But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! ...

B. We should be dependent not only on the Lord but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters; when we are independent and isolated from the brothers and sisters, we are independent and isolated from the Lord.

C. Having the Lord's presence depends on whether or not we are dependent on the Body and rightly related to the Body; if we are rightly related to the Body, we will have the Lord's presence in every place.

- D. If we are independent of the Lord, we are in the self; if we are dependent on the Lord, we are spontaneously dependent on the Body and are full of peace— cf. Col. 3:15.
 Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.
- E. The world is against the Father (1 John 2:15), the devil is against the Son (3:8), the flesh is against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17), and the self is against the Body (Matt. 16:18, 24; cf. 1 Cor. 12:24-25).
 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him;
 1 John 3:8 He who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.
 Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these oppose each other that you would not do the things that you desire.
 Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
 Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely *members* have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the *member* that lacked,
 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but *that* the members would have the same care for one another.
- F. When we are in the self, we are incorporated with Satan; in this corporation the self is the general manager, and Satan is the president.
- G. The greatest problem, the greatest frustration and opposition, to the Body is the self; the self is the independent “I,” the independent “me.”
- H. If we would be built up in the Body, the self must be condemned, denied, rejected, and renounced; day by day the self must be renounced in all things— Luke 9:23.
 Luke 9:23 And He said to *them* all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.
- I. Only when the self is renounced will we have the Body and be genuine members of the Body.

III. We need to see the distinction between the old man, the “I,” the soul-life, the natural man (natural constitution, natural being), and the self:

- A. The old man refers to our very being, the created and fallen man—Rom. 6:6.
 Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;
- B. “I” is the title that the old man calls himself—Gal. 2:20a.
 Gal 2:20a I am crucified with Christ; and *it is* no longer I *who* live, but *it is* Christ *who* lives in me; ...
- C. The soul-life is the life of the old man—John 12:25.
 John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.
- D. The natural man, the natural constitution, the natural being, is our natural ability, capability, strength, talent, methods, wisdom, and knowledge.
- E. The self denotes the soul-life in its opinions, likes, dislikes, and choices; opinions are a matter of the mind; likes and dislikes, or preferences, are a matter of the emotion; and choices are a matter of our will:
1. When the Lord told His disciples that He would be crucified, Peter’s self was expressed in his opinion—Matt. 16:22.
 Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!
 2. Immediately after Peter expressed his opinion to the Lord, the Lord said, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow

Me”—v. 24.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

3. Eventually, Peter’s preferences and choices would be terminated, and he would be martyred to glorify God—John 21:18-19.

John 21:18 Truly, truly, I say to you, When you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish *to go*.

John 21:19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He said to him, Follow Me.

IV. There is no place in the Lord’s recovery for the self and the old, natural being; in the Lord’s recovery we must crucify, reject, and deny the self with its opinions, preferences, and choices—cf. 1 Cor. 3:12:

1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

- A. We need to realize that God’s economy is altogether a matter of the new creation; our old, natural being must be put aside—Gal. 6:15.

Gal 6:15 For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation *is what matters*.

- B. In the church there is a place for us as regenerated persons who are being sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified, but there is no place for our natural man.

- C. The kingdom of God in this age is the church; the natural man cannot enter into the church, because we must be regenerated to enter into the church— Rom. 14:17; John 3:3, 5.

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

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

- D. In order to enter into the practical Body life, which is the real practice of the church life, we need to be transformed—Rom. 12:2.

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

- E. The will of God is the Body of Christ, and the living of the Body is in the church life—vv. 2-16.

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think more highly *of himself* than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Rom 12:6 And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

Rom 12:7 Or service, *let us be faithful* in that service; or he who teaches, in that teaching;

Rom 12:8 Or he who exhorts, in that exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.

Rom 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Rom 12:10 Love one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another.

Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, *but* be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope; endure in tribulation; persevere in prayer.

Rom 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality.

Rom 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

Rom 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another, not setting your mind on the high things but going along with the lowly; do not be wise in yourselves.

- F. Regeneration is our entry into the church, and transformation is for our remaining and going on in the church life:
 - 1. Regeneration and transformation nullify our old being; they do not give it any ground.
 - 2. When the old being has been dealt with, we can practice the proper church life, which is the new creation.
- G. When we realize that our natural being must be put aside and we deny our self, we see much light in the Scriptures.
- H. Second Corinthians 4:16 says, “Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day”:
 - 2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner *man* is being renewed day by day.
 - 1. The outer man is the old being, the natural man, and includes any natural ability, strength, eloquence, and talent; the inner man is the spiritual being, the new creation—cf. Ezek. 36:26.
 - Ezek 36:26 I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.
 - 2. We must realize that nothing of our old, natural being should remain in the church life.

V. The Lord’s recovery is a matter of taking up the cross, denying the self, losing the soul-life, and living Christ:

- A. If we know what the Lord’s recovery is and see that in the recovery there is no place for the self, we will take up the cross.
- B. To take up the cross means to remain on the cross; we were crucified with Christ, and we need to remain on the cross—Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:13.
 - Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and *it is* no longer I *who* live, but *it is* Christ *who* lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.
- C. Apparently, the Lord was crucified after the three and a half years of His ministry; actually, He was crucified from the very beginning of His ministry, when His baptism, which signifies death and burial, took place—Matt. 3:16-17.
 - Matt 3:16 And having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him.
 - Matt 3:17 And behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight.
- D. Throughout the three and a half years of His ministry, He lived a crucified life, continually denying Himself for the accomplishment of the Father’s will—John 5:30; 4:34; 6:38; 5:19.
 - John 5:30 I can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.
 - John 4:34 Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.
 - John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.
 - John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.
- E. In order to follow the Lord, we must follow His pattern by taking up His cross and denying the self; we need to remain under the killing of the cross by denying our opinions, preferences, and choices.
- F. In order to follow the Lord, we must lose our soul-life; to lose our soul-life is to not live in

our old, natural being—Matt. 16:25; John 12:24-26.

Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

G. We need to see that our old man, our old “I,” has been crucified already; based upon that accomplished termination, we deny the self—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20.

Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and *it is* no longer I *who* live, but *it is* Christ *who* lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

H. Because we are regenerated and are being transformed, our natural man will be terminated not by our own doing but by our living another person, Christ— Phil. 1:19-21a.

Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and *the* bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...

I. We need to see that the death in Romans 6, the crucifixion of our old man (v. 6), can be realized and experienced only by the Spirit in Romans 8 (vv. 2, 4, 6, 10-11, 13).

Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.

J. If we truly see the Lord’s recovery, we will realize that there is no place for whatever we are, have, or can do in our old being; this vision kills our pretense and kills our selfishness, causing us to lose interest in selfish gain and honor.

K. The elders need to see this so that it will become a ruling, controlling, and directing vision to them; the church life is altogether of the new creation— 2 Cor. 5:17.

2 Cor 5:17 So then if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THERE BEING NO PLACE IN THE LORD’S RECOVERY FOR THE SELF OR THE OLD, NATURAL BEING

There is no place in the Lord's recovery for the self. The New Testament leaves no place for any part of our old being. The speaking of the Lord Jesus and the writings of the apostle Paul show that in God's economy nothing of our old being should remain. We need to realize that God's economy is altogether a matter of the new creation. Our old being must be put aside.

Most Christians do not see that our old being must be put aside. Many Christian teachers do not even know the meaning of the self. As a result, many denominations promote, build up, and use the old being. This situation should cause us to mourn. The Lord's recovery is different from denominational Christianity, because in the Lord's recovery there is no place for the old man except the tomb. In order to know the Lord's recovery, we must know that our old being has to be terminated. Although there is no place for our old being in the Lord's recovery, in the sense of the new creation there is a place for us in the church. There is a place for us as regenerated persons who are being sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified, but we need to see that there is no place for our natural man.

The Lord said to Nicodemus, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), and "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (v. 5). The kingdom of God in this age is the church. Therefore, these verses indicate that the natural man cannot enter into the church, because we must be regenerated to enter into the church. Some Christian teachers do not consider the church to be the kingdom of God in this age. They say that the kingdom will exist only in the coming age. However, Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." This verse does not use the future tense verb *will be* but the present tense verb *is*, showing that the kingdom of God is present today. Furthermore, the context in Romans 14 concerns the practical church life in the present age, and Romans 12 deals with the Body life. This proves that the kingdom of God in this age is the church. Since regeneration is the way to enter the kingdom of God, which is the church today, there is no place for the natural man in the church.

Romans reveals that in order to enter into the practical Body life, which is the real practice of the church life, we need to be transformed. Romans 12:2 says, "Be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." The will of God is the Body of Christ, and the living of the Body is in the church life (vv. 3-16). Therefore, we need to be transformed for our living of the practical church life. Regeneration is our entry into the church, and transformation is for our remaining and going on in the church life. In the church life all the old, natural things must be put aside. Regeneration and transformation nullify our old being; they do not give it any ground. When the old being has been dealt with, we can practice the proper church life, which is in the new creation. We need to see this in a practical way.

In order to see the Lord's recovery in life and truth, we must know that there is no place for our self or natural man. Many Christians, including theologians who study the Bible, do not see the truth revealed in God's Word, because their natural being remains untouched and veils them. Our own experience confirms this. When we are natural, we do not see the truth. In our natural being the natural concepts cover our inner eyes. When we realize that our natural being must be put aside, and we deny our self, we see much light in the Scriptures.

NEEDING TO TAKE UP THE CROSS AND DENY THE SELF

The self denotes the soul-life in its opinions, likes, dislikes, and choices. Opinions are a matter of our mind; likes and dislikes, or preferences, are a matter of our emotion; and choices are a matter of our will. When the Lord told His disciples that He would be crucified, Peter rebuked Him, saying, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" (Matt. 16:22). Peter's self was expressed in his opinion. We need to see that the Lord's recovery has no place for our opinions, preferences, or choices. If we mean business with the Lord and have received some vision, we must condemn the self.

Immediately after Peter expressed his opinion to the Lord, the Lord said, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me” (v. 24). Contrary to the understanding of most Christians, taking up the cross does not primarily mean suffering; instead, it means killing. Crucifixion was a historical method of carrying out a death sentence. To crucify a person is not mainly to cause him to suffer but to terminate him. If we know what the Lord’s recovery is, and we see that in the recovery there is no place for the self—our natural being in our opinions, preferences, and choices—we will take up the cross.

To take up the cross means to remain on the cross. We were crucified with Christ, and we need to remain on the cross. Apparently, the Lord was crucified after the three and a half years of His ministry. Actually, He was crucified from the very beginning of His ministry, when His baptism, which signifies death and burial, took place. Throughout the three and a half years of the Lord’s ministry, He bore the cross, living a crucified life. He continually denied the self during His human life on earth for the accomplishment of the Father’s will. The Lord bore the cross from His baptism to His crucifixion.

In order to follow the Lord, we must follow His pattern by taking up the cross and denying the self. We need to remain under the killing of the cross by denying our opinions, preferences, and choices. In John 21:18-19 the Lord told Peter, “When you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go...Follow Me.” Here the Lord indicated that Peter’s preferences would be terminated, and He prophesied that Peter would be martyred. History tells us that this indeed occurred.

We need to see that in the Lord’s recovery we must crucify, reject, and deny the self with its opinions, preferences, and choices. This is a crucial matter. It does not work merely to advise or exhort the saints not to have opinions or to be opinionated. We need a basic dealing with our opinion, which requires a vision that causes us to see that our old man and our old “I” have been crucified already (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). Based upon that accomplished termination, we deny our self.

In the Lord’s recovery there is no place for the self with its natural opinions, preferences, and choices. If these things come in, they will annul the nature of the Lord’s recovery. Christianity has lost the genuine church life through centuries of promoting the self with its opinions, preferences, and choices. In order to remain in the Lord’s recovery, we need the light and the vision to see what the self is and that in the recovery it has no place.

NEEDING TO LOSE THE SOUL-LIFE

The Lord said, “Whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:25). To lose our soul-life is to not live in our old, natural being. In our old being we may be quick or slow, proud or humble, selfish or generous. No matter what kind of person we are in our old being, we should not live that person. This is difficult because we naturally live our old person. If we have the vision, we will see that we still mostly live our old person, our old being. Because we are regenerated and are being transformed, our natural man will be terminated not by our own doing but by our living another person, Christ.

The natural concept concerning the Christian life is often a matter of ethics and morality. According to our natural concept, we may think that if a man has a bad temper, when he is saved, he should improve his behavior and no longer lose his temper. However, according to this concept, if a man is naturally timid, he does not need to change his behavior, because he already has a pleasant natural man. We need to see that transformation is altogether not a matter of ethics or morality. Whether or not we are naturally ethical or moral, we need to be transformed. Whether we are naturally slow or quick, bold or timid, pleasant or short-tempered, we need to be transformed and live Christ. The Lord’s recovery is a matter of taking up the cross, denying the self, losing the soul-life, and living Christ.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: How can we tell real transformation from natural ability in those who are serving in the church?

Answer: With genuine transformation there will be the mark of the cross. When a capable and ethical man is saved and comes into the church life, the leading brothers should recognize that his ability is natural if they see no mark of the cross. If a man who is naturally capable but not ethical is saved and comes into the church, he may become ethical but remain natural. If this is the case, there will still be no mark of the cross. In recent turmoils many forgot about the mark of the cross and were deceived by natural ability. If we know the Lord's recovery, we will know that our old being should be on the cross. Our ability to discern the mark of the cross and natural ability in others also depends on how much of the cross we have experienced ourselves. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 120-125)