

THE CROSS AND THE SOUL

THE CALLING OF THE CROSS

In the four Gospels the Lord Jesus at least four times called His disciples to renounce their soul-life, to put it to death, to follow Him. The Lord knew that renouncing the soul-life is an absolutely indispensable requirement if man is to follow Him, to attain to perfect status, to be like Him in serving men, and to do the will of God. Although the Lord Jesus spoke about the soul-life in all these four callings, He had a special emphasis in each. We know that the soul-life actually has various manifestations. Therefore, the Lord spoke about the soul-life with diverse emphases. Every disciple of the Lord must pay attention to the Lord's own words. The Lord's calling is that man should hand his soul-life over to the cross.

THE CROSS AND THE AFFECTION OF THE SOUL

In Matthew 10:38 and 39 the Lord Jesus said, "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his soul-life shall lose it, and he who loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it."

These verses call us to lose our soul-life for the Lord's sake, to hand this life over to the cross to be dealt with. Prior to these verses, the Lord Jesus spoke of how a man's foes are those of his own household, and how a son, for the Lord's sake, is estranged from his father, the daughter from her mother, and the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law. Because God's will is at variance with the intention of our household, we must for the Lord's sake become estranged from our dearest ones. This is a cross. This is a crucifixion. According to our soul-life, we love those whom we love. We like to obey them, and we are willing to act according to their desire. When our loved ones are happy, are not our hearts happy with them? But here the Lord Jesus called us not to rebel against Him for the sake of loving man. When God's will conflicts with man's wish, although that person is the one whom we love the most and who loves us the most, and although ordinarily we would feel painful and be most reluctant to break his heart, for the Lord's sake we should take up the cross to put our affections to death.

This kind of calling of the Lord Jesus is to rid us of our natural affection. Thus, He said in verse 37, "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me."

In Luke 14:26 and 27 it is written: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Matthew shows the believer the choice he should make concerning his own affection: he should love the Lord more than his household. Luke shows the attitude the believer should hold toward the love originating from his own soul-life: he should hate it. Actually, this means that the believer should not have love toward others simply because they are the ones he would naturally love. It is forbidden that I love others only because they are the ones I naturally love. Even those as dear as parents, brothers, wife, and children are all included in this forbidden list. This kind of natural love is out of the soul-life. This kind of natural love tends to cause one to be "glued" to others, to hold fast to those

whom he loves, as well as to demand their love. The Lord considers this soul-life as something that should be delivered to death. Although we cannot see the Lord now and our hearts still prefer to follow our loved ones and our life demands that we have some loved ones, the Lord desires that we have a loving heart toward Him whom we have not seen. He wants us to reject the love which comes out of our nature. The Lord Jesus wants to rid us of all our direct love toward men. He does not want us to use our own love to love men. He desires us to love men not according to the natural liking in our soul. Such love of the natural man should be stopped. Now if we love others again, it is because we have a new relationship in the Lord. It is only because of the Lord that we love. It is not because of our own love for others that we love. We should, for the Lord's sake, receive from Him His love to love others. In short, our love towards others should be under the regulation of the Lord. If the Lord wants us to, we should love even our enemies. If the Lord does not want us to, we should not love even the dearest one in our household. The Lord does not want our hearts to be attached anywhere; He wants us to serve Him freely.

If this is to be the case, the soul-life must be rejected. This is a cross. Obedience to Christ and disregard of human sentiment cause the believer's natural love to feel grief and pain. Therefore, such grief and pain become the believer's practical cross, enabling him through such a willingness to deny the self, to lose the soul-life related to the activity in the realm of love. Oftentimes, to forsake one's loved one is heart-breaking and soul-hurting. Many tears and sighings and much unspeakable sadness are produced because of the loss of a loved one. All these bring sufferings to our life. How unwilling is our soul to deny our loved ones for the Lord's sake! But it is thus by putting the soul to death—being willing to die—that the believers are able to break away from the soul's power. Such a loss of the soul-life's natural love on the cross enables the soul-life to let the Holy Spirit pour God's love into its heart before God, thus causing all the soul's love to be through God and in God.

Here we need to take note that this soul-life, humanly speaking, is legitimate and natural to possess; it is not filthy like sins. Is not the love that has been mentioned commonly shared by all men? Is it not legitimate to have the affection which loves one's household? However, the Lord's calling is for us to overcome the natural and, for God's sake, to renounce even man's legitimate right and be blended with God. God wants us to love Him more than Abraham loved Isaac. Although the soul-life was given to man by the Lord of creation, God desires that men (if willing) not live according to this life. The worldly man cannot apprehend God's desire. But when a believer advances gradually and loses himself in God's life, he will know God's desire. Who can understand that God, having given Isaac to Abraham, also wanted him to give up Isaac? But those who know the heart of God do not want to stop at God's natural gifts; rather, they desire to rest in the God who gives the gift. God's purpose is that we would be attached only to Him, not to any persons, things, or matters—although these persons, things, or matters may have been given by God Himself.

Christians are very willing to leave the Ur of Chaldea, but they seldom see the importance of offering on Mount Moriah what God has given. This is one of the deeper lessons of faith. This is a lesson of entering into the life of God and being united with God. What God wants from His children is that they should forsake all and become His completely. They must not only remove those things which they themselves realize and consider to be harmful, but they must also deliver their most

legitimate human living, such as affection, to the cross and follow the direction of the Holy Spirit.

What our Lord wants is very meaningful because man's affection is a function which is very difficult to control. Unless the believer hands over this affection to the cross and is willing to lose it in death, he will be greatly hindered in the spiritual life. Since human affairs often change, human affection is also influenced. When the faculty of affection is stimulated, the whole being of the believer very easily loses its spiritual normality. A believer who is soulish in this part will often be disturbed and lose the peace in his spirit. Sorrow, grief, lament, and tears are the usual results of affection. If the Lord cannot have the first place in the matter of affection, it is hard for Him to take charge in other things. This is a test of spirituality as well as a measure of its degree. Therefore, we should hate our own life and not let it have any opportunity for free activity in exercising human love. The Lord's demand and our natural intention are completely opposite. What we love we must now hate. Not only must we hate what we love, but we must also hate that faculty from which the love issues, that is, our soul-life. This then is the way toward spirituality. If we truly take up the cross in such a way, it will prevent the soulish affection from controlling and influencing the spirit and will enable us to love others by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is precisely how the Lord Jesus treated His family when He was on the earth.

THE CROSS AND THE "SELF" OF THE SOUL

In Matthew 16:24-25 the Lord Jesus also spoke about the relationship of the soul-life and the cross: "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. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it." In these verses, our Lord again called His disciples to take up the cross, to be willing to put the soul-life to death so that they might lose their soul-life. What is spoken of here and what was spoken of previously in Matthew 10 are not the same. The part of the soul-life emphasized in Matthew 10 is the affection. The part of the soul-life emphasized here in chapter sixteen is man's "self." If we read the foregoing passage, we will realize that at this time the Lord Jesus told His disciples what kind of suffering He would bear on the cross. Then Peter, because of his desperate love toward the Lord, said, "God be merciful to You, Lord!" Because Peter was setting his mind on the things of man, he was reluctant to see his Master bear any suffering of the cross in the flesh. He did not understand that man ought to completely set his mind on the things of God. Even if it is the suffering of the death of the cross, he still ought to set his mind on the things of God. He did not know that the love of God's will should surpass the love of self. It is as if he were thinking, "You, Lord, are going to the cross to suffer in such a way, although You are doing the will of God, although You are accomplishing the purpose of God, and although You are acting according to the plan of God. But what is this doing to You Yourself? Do You not consider the suffering You will bear because of doing the will of God? Lord, pity Your own self!"

But the Lord indicated to him that such a way of pitying oneself comes from Satan. Then He continued to speak to His disciples as if to say, "Not only will I go to the cross, but those who want to follow Me and be My disciples must also go to the cross. Whatever My path may be, it should also be your path. You should not misunderstand that I am the only one who ought to do the will of God, but you, My disciples, also ought to do the will of God as I do. Just as I do not care for Myself, as

even at the cross I am still doing the will of God unconditionally, you also should not care for your soul-life but be willing to lose it to do what God wants you to do." Peter asked the Lord why He would not be "merciful" to Himself, but the Lord's reply was that one should "deny himself."

There is a price to pay for doing the will of God. The flesh cannot help trembling concerning this. When the soul-life deeply rules within us, we simply cannot take the will of God as His commandment. This is so because the soul-life wants to follow the intention of its own self but does not want to obey the will of God. When we see that God is calling us to the cross to deny our self, to sacrifice, and to lose all things for His sake, unconsciously our soul-life produces a self-pitying heart. Our soul-life often makes us unwilling to pay the price to obey God. Therefore, every time we are willing to choose the narrow way of the cross to suffer for Christ's sake, the soul-life suffers loss. It is only through this way that we lose our soul-life. By this alone can we gain the spiritual life of Christ to rule completely and purely within us, enabling us to do works that are well-pleasing to God for the sake of the world's benefit.

If we pay attention to the situation of the foregoing passage, we will understand the wickedness of the work of the soul-life. Peter spoke this word shortly after he had received the revelation of God, thereby understanding the mystery which man cannot understand. God the Father had personally revealed to him that the lowly Jesus whom the disciples followed was the very Christ of the living God. However, it was also after his receiving of this revelation that he was immediately controlled by the soul-life to advise his Master that He should pity Himself. Therefore, we should know that spiritual revelation or wonderful knowledge cannot insure that we will not be controlled by the soul. On the contrary, the soul-life of those with higher knowledge and more experiences might be more hidden than others and more difficult to eliminate. Without applying the cross to deal with the soul-life, the soul-life will always be preserved in man without being lost.

Herein we see the utter uselessness of the soul-life. At this particular time, Peter's soul-life was aroused not for himself but for the Lord Jesus. He loved the Lord, he pitied the Lord, and he desired that the Lord be happy. He really desired that suffering not come upon the Lord. His heart was not bad, and his intention was very good, but this was merely his "human affection" which issued out of his soul-life. The Lord does not want any caring sympathy from the soul. The soul-life is not allowed even in loving the Lord! Here we see that there is a possibility of being soulish in serving, adoring, and expressing our love toward the Lord. Here we also see that the soul-life is not acceptable even in the matter of loving the Lord and sympathizing with the Lord. The Lord Jesus Himself served God by forsaking His soul. Similarly, therefore, He does not want man to serve Him by his soul. The Lord's call for His disciples to put the soul-life to death is not only because the soul-life can love men but also because it is capable of adoring the Lord. What the Lord asks is not how well the task is done, but from where the doing comes.

Although such an expression of Peter's love was for the Lord, such love for the Lord was a manifestation of how Peter himself was. He adored the body of the Lord Jesus more than the will of God and advised the Lord to care for Himself. This was a manifestation of Peter's own self. Therefore, the Lord taught in such a way. Truly the soul-life tends to be independent, serving God according to what it considers to be

good but not walking according to the will of God. Doing the will of God is the loss of the soul. Every time God's will is accomplished, the intention of the soul is also broken. Every breaking of the intention of the soul is a practical application of the dealing of the cross to the soul-life.

The Lord Jesus called the disciples to forsake the soul-life because Peter spoke according to his soul. But the Lord also considered that the words spoken by Peter were from Satan. Thus, we see how Satan uses man's soul-life. If at any time this life is not put to death, Satan has a tool for his work. At this time Peter spoke this word because of his love for the Lord, but Satan was making use of him. At this time Peter prayed to the Lord and begged the Lord to pity Himself, but Satan had inspired him. It is a fact that Satan can tell man to love the Lord and can tell man to pray. He is not afraid for man to pray and love the Lord, but he is afraid that man would not use his own soul-life to love the Lord and pray. If the soul-life still remains, Satan can still expand his enterprise. Oh, may God make us understand the danger of this life! Believers should not consider that they are spiritual just because they now love the Lord and long for the heavenly things. The soul-life has to be put to death. Otherwise, God's will cannot be accomplished; instead, the soul-life will be utilized by Satan.

Self-pity, self-love, fear of suffering, and shrinking from the cross, are manifestations of the soul-life. The greatest goal of the soul-life is to preserve its own existence. It is very unwilling to suffer any loss. Therefore, the Lord's calling is that we should deny the self and take up our own cross, thereby causing us to lose our soul-life. Whenever a cross is placed before us, it is to call us to lose our self. We should have a heart disregarding our self, and through the power of God we should give up our life for others' sake. The Lord says that this cross is ours because this is what we have received from God individually. In order to do the will of God, God is calling us to bear the cross which we should bear. This cross is ours and is specifically given to us by God. But it is also linked to the cross of Christ because when we are willing to take up our own cross through the Spirit of the cross of Christ, the strength of the cross of Christ enters our being and enables us to lose our soul-life. Every time we bear the cross, we lose our soul-life. Every time we bypass the cross, we nourish and preserve our soul-life.

We should note carefully that what the Lord Jesus says here is not something which can be accomplished once for all by making a great effort. In Luke 9:23 the word "daily" is added to the phrase "take up his cross." Thus, this kind of cross is continuous and unceasing. With respect to our death to sin, we know that this cross is already a fact, an already accomplished fact that merely requires our recognition and reception. But with respect to the loss of our soul-life, this cross is another matter. This is not an accomplished matter but one that requires daily practice and daily experience. This does not mean that we never lose our soul-life or that we gradually lose it; rather, it means that the relation of the cross to the soul-life is different from the relation of the cross to sin. The death to sin was accomplished by Christ for us; when He died, we all died with Him. But the loss of the soul-life is not an already accomplished fact. Rather, it requires that we daily bear our own cross through the power of the Lord's cross, determining to deny the self until it is lost.

The loss of the soul-life is not a matter that can be accomplished either once for all by making a great effort or within a short period of time. With respect to our death to

sin, once we are standing on the position of the cross (Rom. 6:6), we can have an immediate deliverance from sin, enabling us not to be oppressed by its power and no longer to be its slave. Complete victory can be gained in an instant. The loss of the natural life, however, is a step by step process. When the Word of God (Heb. 4:12) penetrates deeper and deeper, the working of the cross will also be deeper, and the Holy Spirit will cause the spiritual life to grow more, making it more united with the Lord. A believer cannot deny the soul-life which is unknown to him. He can only deny that part of the self-life which is known to him. The revelation of God's Word must increase; then the work of the cross can be deeper. Therefore, this cross is for us to bear "daily." The more there is the understanding of the will of God and the more there is the knowing of our self, the more there will be the need of the working of the cross.

THE CROSS AND THE SOUL'S LOVE OF THE WORLD

In Luke 17:32-33 our Lord has a similar word, but what is pointed out there is concerning the things of the world: "Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his soul-life will lose it, and whoever loses it will preserve it alive." Here the Lord speaks again that we must lose the soul-life, but what the Lord speaks here especially stresses the believers' reluctance to lose their belongings. The Lord told us to remember Lot's wife because she even remembered her belongings while she was in danger. She did not turn back and walk toward Sodom; she did not backtrack even an inch. The only thing she did was cast a look behind. But how much is revealed in this looking back! It speaks forth a very long story in her heart.

A believer can leave the world and lose all things outwardly, but within him he still can have a heart loving all those things he lost for the Lord's sake. This then is the working of the soul-life. With a believer who is consecrated to the Lord, there is no need for him to regress and go back again to the path of the world. He also does not need to labor to gain back what he has forsaken for the Lord. The unwillingness of the heart to part with the world is sufficient to show that he has not clearly seen the position of the world in relation to the cross. There is no need for the working of the soul-life to cause man to turn back and walk toward the world. It only needs to cause the believer, secretly within his heart, to be reluctant to give up the things which he is going to abandon or which he has already abandoned.

When the soul-life really reaches the point that it is lost, none of the things of the world can truly touch the believer's heart. The soul-life in fact belongs to the world; thus, it is reluctant to give up the things of the world. Only when a believer is really willing to put the soul-life to death will he be able to follow unflinchingly the teaching of the Lord Jesus on the mount. In the teaching on the mount, we do not see that the Lord clearly mentioned the function of the cross. However, we know that unless a believer really has the experience of dying with the Lord—not only being dead to sin but also denying the soul-life based on being "already dead"—he will have to devise ways to follow the teaching of the Lord on the mount. If the cross has not done a deep work in a believer's soul-life, even though he can walk outwardly according to the teaching on the mount, his inward heart and his outward walk are not one. A believer who has lost his soul-life can spontaneously and without any pretense give away his cloak when he is sued for his tunic. A believer who has lost his soul in death is a believer who is cut off from all the worldly things.

The condition for gaining the spiritual life is that we should have some loss; then we will have some gain. In this world, it is not by how much we have gained that we are counted rich, for actually, the richer we are, the more we lose. We should not use "gain" to measure our life; we should use "loss" to measure it. How much wine has been poured out is our real measurement. It is not how much we have retained. The one who has lost the most is the one who has the most with which to supply others. The power of love can be seen by the sacrifice of love. If our hearts have not been cut off from loving the worldly belongings, our soul-life has not yet been under the working of the cross.

Hebrews 10:34 says that certain believers were robbed of their family possessions, but this they "accepted with joy." This is the issue of the work of the cross. The attitude of the saints toward their possessions is an indication of whether the soul-life is preserved or is already willing to be put to death.

If we really want a pure and spiritual living, we have to let God work on our heart, in order to be truly cut off from everything worldly and no longer have the intention of Lot's wife. Not loving worldly belongings in such a way is a condition for gaining the complete spiritual life in Christ. When the Holy Spirit reveals the heavenly reality and the complete spiritual life to a saint, he will despise all the worldly things because the one cannot be compared with the other. The experience of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3 is precisely like this. In the beginning he "counted as loss" all things; later he truly "suffered the loss of all things" that he might gain Christ. Eventually, he told us that the issue of this is to know the power of Christ's resurrection. This is a complete spiritual life. We often do not know how much power our soul-life has. When we are tested in the material things, we see where our soul-life is. It often seems that the loss of possessions requires more of the grace of God than the loss of life! The worldly things are really the material for testing the preservation or loss of the soul-life.

Those children of God who pay too much attention to their drinking, eating, and daily home life should let the cross do a deeper work in them so that their spirits will not be surrounded and influenced by their souls. Thus, their spirits will be separated from all things worldly and will be enabled to live in God without any hindrances. Whoever cares for the things of the world always does so because his soul-life has not been lost and has not passed through the working of the cross.

THE CROSS AND SOUL POWER

In John 12:24-25 the Lord Jesus again talked about the problem of the soul-life: "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. He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." Later on, He explained the meaning of these two verses, saying, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. But He said this signifying by what kind of death He was about to die." This chapter of the Bible records the most successful time of the Lord Jesus' whole life. Lazarus had resurrected, and because of Lazarus, many Jews believed in the Lord. Besides this, even the Greeks wanted to see Him. At this time He entered Jerusalem to be welcomed by men. According to man's viewpoint, it seemed that the cross was unnecessary and that the Lord could draw all men to

Himself without going to the cross. However, He knew that there was no other way that man could be saved except by the cross. Although His work was very prosperous outwardly, He knew that if He did not die, He could not give life to man. If He died, He would then draw all men to Himself and really give life to them.

Here the Lord clearly stated the function of the cross. He considered His own self as a grain of wheat. If a grain of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, no matter what, it is still one grain. If the Lord would be crucified on the cross and die, He would then give life to many men. Here the Lord pointed out that the condition of all fruit-bearing is death. Without death there is no fruit. There is no other way of bearing fruit except through death.

Our goal, however, is not to stop at an examination of how the Lord Jesus Himself was. What we especially want to pay attention to is how this relates to our soul-life. The Lord Jesus related the grain of wheat to Himself in verse 24, but in verse 25 He indicated that such a death as His and such fruit-bearing as His should not apply only to Himself. He indicated that whoever is His disciple should walk according to His footsteps. He pointed out what the meaning of the grain of wheat is in relation to Christians. He considered the grain as representing their soul-life. If a grain of wheat does not die, it cannot bear fruit. Accordingly, if the soul-life is not lost in death, neither can it bear fruit. What the Lord Jesus stressed here is the matter of the fruit-bearing work. Although a believer's soul-life is very powerful, this power cannot produce a work of bearing fruit. All talents, gifts, knowledge, wisdom, and power that issue from the soul-life are unable to cause the believers to produce many grains. Just as the Lord Jesus had to die in order that He could bear fruit, so also the believers must die that they may be able to bear fruit. The Lord indicated that although the power of the soul-life is good, it is useless in God's fruit-bearing work.

When the believers are doing the Lord's work, the greatest danger is that they would be self-reliant and use all the power of their soul-life: their ability, gifts, knowledge, persuasive power, eloquence, and cleverness. In the experience of many spiritual believers, the soul-life is very active in doing work for the Lord unless they concentrate all their attention to put the soul to death. On the one hand, they must ask the Lord not to allow the soul-life to have any opportunity of intruding, and on the other hand, they must watch not to let the soul-life have any function. Thus, how could those who are unwilling to deny the soul-life and watch and pray in such a way guard themselves from being intruded by the soul-life? All things belonging to the soul should be put to death. We should be willing not to depend on them at all. We should be willing to let God lead us through the darkness of death without any dependence, without any feeling, without any seeing, without any understanding, but in calmness, trusting the working of God Himself. Then God will cause us to gain a more glorious soul-life on the side of resurrection. "He who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." The soul-life is not lost; rather, it is allowed to pass through death. When we die and can neither see nor feel anything, God—not ourselves—will be able to use the soul-life to impart His life to us. If the soul-life is not lost in death, the believer will suffer the greatest loss. If the soul-life is lost, it will be kept unto eternal life and always be used by God.

Here we must not misunderstand, thinking that we should no longer use our mind and ability. This verse of the Bible explains clearly: "He who hates his soul-life in this

world shall keep it unto eternal life." Apparently, we have lost our soul, but actually we keep it unto eternal life. To put the soul to death is not to destroy or give up the function of the different parts of the soul, just as "that the body of sin might be annulled" (Rom. 6:6) is not to destroy the hands, feet, ears, and eyes of the human body. We are told to "present our...members as weapons of righteousness to God" (v. 13) after destroying the body of sin. Likewise, putting the soul-life to death and taking up the cross to follow the Lord does not mean that henceforth we become like wood and stone, without sensation, without thought, and without idea, giving up the use of all the faculties of the soul-life. The members of the body and the function of the soul still exist and still are completely used, except that they are being renewed, strengthened, and directed by the Holy Spirit. The question is whether the faculties of our soul are being strengthened and directed by the soul-life or by the Holy Spirit through the human spirit. The faculties still exist, except that the life directing them and animating them is put to death. Thus, the Holy Spirit, through the transcendent life of God, is afforded the opportunity to be the life of these faculties.

Each faculty of our soul, although passing through loss in death, still exists. Putting the soul-life to death does not mean that henceforth our mind, emotion, and will are completely abolished and become emptiness. We can clearly read in the Bible about God's thought, will, joy, satisfaction, love, and gladness. Even with the Lord Jesus, the Bible often says that He "loved," "exulted," "grieved," and also "wept." When He was in the garden of Gethsemane, He "offered up both petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7). Therefore, the faculties of the soul do not vanish, nor does the believer become a sensationless, unsympathetic, and icy, cold person. Man's soul is man's own self, man's personality, and all the faculties of his own life. If these do not receive vitality from the life of the Spirit who is from above, they must receive the power of their living from man's natural soul-life. The soul in the sense of the faculty of the soul still exists; but the soul in the sense of the life of the soul must be denied completely. All it has must be put to death. Only this can enable the Holy Spirit alone to use each faculty of the soul without any interference of the natural life.

Here we see the resurrection life. If man has not gained the transcendent life of God, once he is lost in death he is dead and cannot resurrect. The Lord Jesus could die and resurrect because in Him there is God's uncreated life. This life can pass through death, not be destroyed, and be manifested again in the freshness and glory of resurrection. The Lord Jesus poured out His soul unto death and gave His spirit into God's hand. Since His spirit had God's own life, He could resurrect. His death only caused Him to be free from the soul-life and caused His life, the life of God's Spirit, to be manifested greater and brighter. If a man without God's life is dead, although his spirit remains forever, he cannot resurrect in eternal life as the Lord did.

It is hard for men to understand that God, having given His life to us, still wants us to have an experiential death with the Lord, thereby making His own life in us pass through death and resurrect again. Nevertheless, this is the law of God's life. Because we have the life of God, we can pass through death and remain living. Such a death causes us to lose our soul-life, thus enabling us to be in the resurrected eternal life where we gain God's life more richly and more gloriously.

God's goal is to have His life within us lead our soul-life through death so that when His life resurrects, it will cause the soul-life to be resurrected with Him and bear fruit unto eternity. This is the highest and deepest lesson of the spiritual life. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to us how indispensable resurrection is and thereby cause us to know how indispensable death is also. May the Spirit of revelation make us know that if we do not hate our own life and put it to death, our spiritual life will suffer much loss and be unable to bear fruit. When God's life within us and our soul-life pass through death and resurrect together, we have the possibility of bearing fruit that remains unto eternal life.