

Christian Gospel Conference

The Christian Life

December 13-15, 2024

Houston, Texas

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



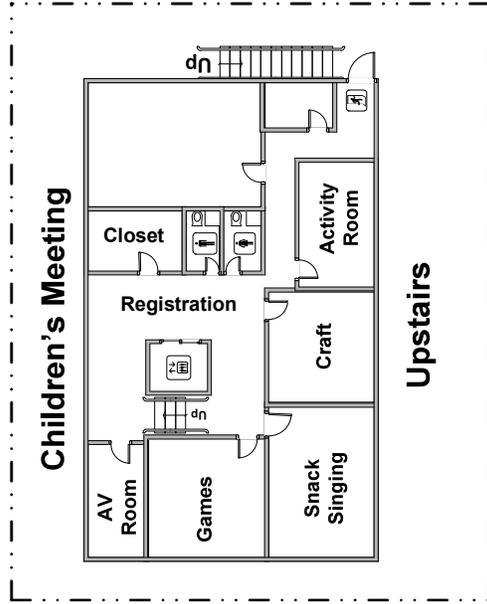
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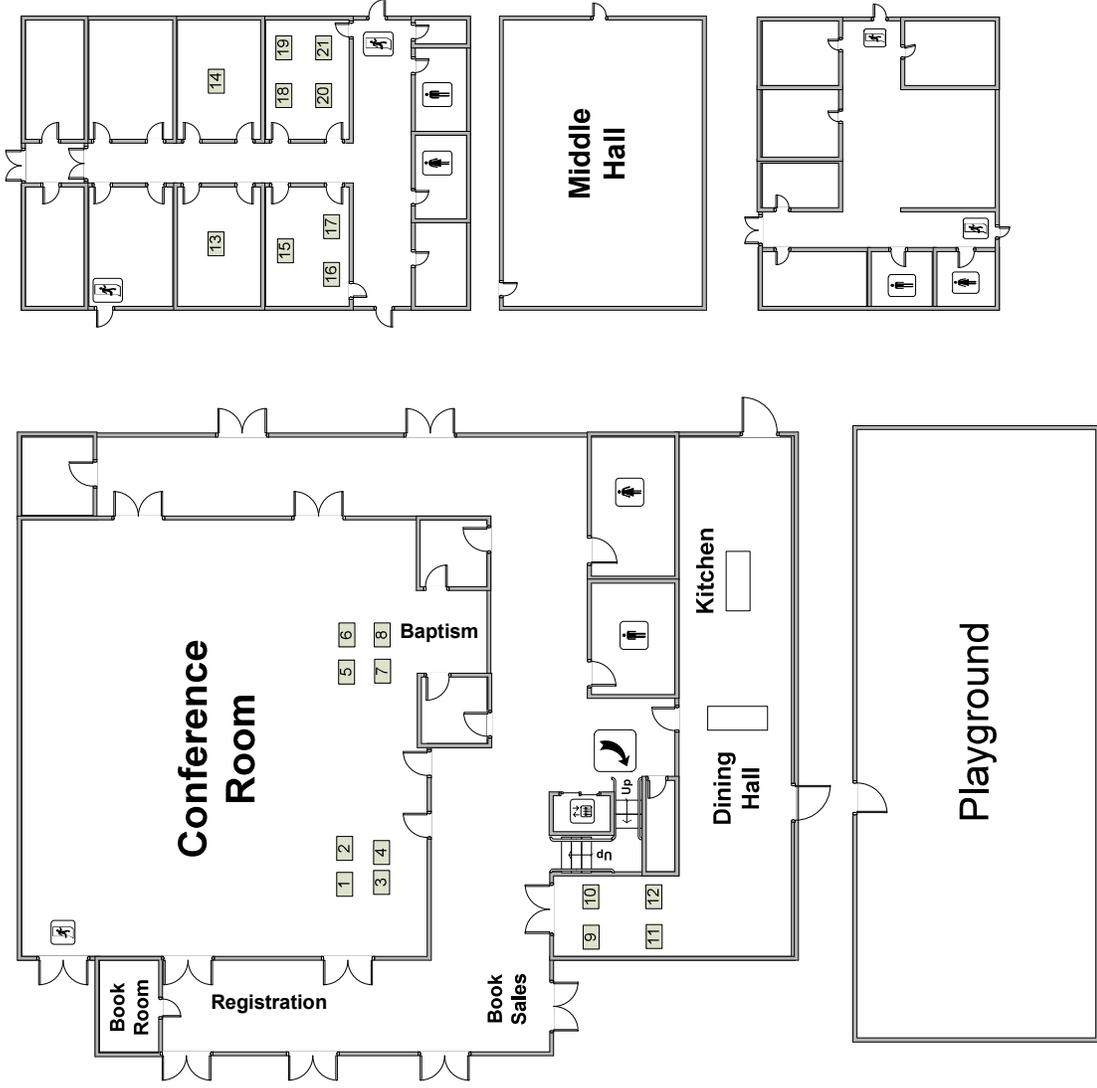


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Conference Schedule

Friday – December 13

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm – Session 1

7:30 – Singing and Message 1

8:30 – Small Groups

9:00 – Greet & Dessert and Hospitality

- Dismiss

Saturday – December 14

10:00 am - 12:00 pm – Session 2

10:00 – Singing and Message 2

11:00 – Small Groups

11:45 – Break for Lunch

12:00 pm - 5:00 pm – Break & Gospel

Activities 12:00 pm – Lunch

1:30 pm – Gospel Outing / Visitations

4:00 pm – Gospel Reports

5:30 pm – Dinner

6:45 pm - 9:00 pm – Session 3

6:45 – Singing

7:00 – Message 3

8:00 – Ministry Reading in Groups

8:30 – Overflow by Groups

- Dismiss

Lord's Day – December 15

10:00 am - 12:00 pm – Session 4

10:00 – Singing and Message 4

11:30 – Overflow

12:00 – Concluding Word

- Dismiss

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Message One

The Intrinsic Significance of the Christian Life

Scripture Reading: John 14:21, 23; 2 Cor. 2:10; 4:6-7

- I. The Christian life is a life of living Christ; our living should be Christ, and the way to live Christ is to love Christ-Phil. 1:19-21a; Gal. 2:20:
 - A. We can live Christ by loving Christ to the uttermost; if we do not love Christ, we cannot live Him, and loving Him is the best way to concentrate our entire being on Him-2 Cor. 5:14; 1 John 4:19; Phil. 1:19-21a; Mark 12:30; Rev. 2:4-5; John 14:21, 23; 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:9; 16:22.
 - B. To love God means to set our entire being-spirit, soul, and body with the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)-absolutely on Him, that is, to let our entire being be occupied by Him and lost in Him, so that He becomes everything to us and we are one with Him practically in our daily life.
 - C. When we love Him, "the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God" (1 Cor. 2:10); the Greek word for *searches* is used in reference to active research, implying accurate knowledge gained not by discovering but by exploring; the Spirit of God explores the depths of God concerning Christ and shows them to us in our spirit for our realization and participation.
 - D. To live the Christian life is to love Jesus the Son of God so that we will be loved by the Father and the Son and enjoy the Son's manifestation to us and Their visitation to us for Them to make a mutual abode with us-John 14:21, 23.
 - E. The Christian life is a life of loving God and loving one another with God Himself as our love; Christ lived in this world a life of God as love, and He is now our life that we may live the same life of love in this world and be the same as He is in His lost-one-seeking and sinner-saving ministry journey-1 John 4:16-19; Luke 10:25-37; 19:10; Eph. 4:20-21; Gal. 5:13-15.
- II. To live the Christian life is to do all things in the person of Christ, in the face of Christ-2 Cor. 2:10; 4:6-7:
 - A. The Greek word for *person* is literally "face," as in 4:6; it refers to the part around the eyes, the look as the index of the inward thoughts and feelings, which shows forth and manifests the whole person.
 - B. The apostle Paul, who was a pattern for the believers (1 Tim. 1:16), was one who lived and acted in the presence of Christ, according to the index of His whole person, expressed in His eyes.
 - C. Whenever our heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away from our heart, and we can behold the Lord of glory with an unveiled face; actually, our turned-away heart is the veil; an unveiled face is an unveiled heart to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ- 2 Cor. 3:16, 18; 4:6-7; 1 Sam. 16:7; Eph. 1:18a.
 - D. The glory of God is in the face of Christ, and His face, His person, is the indwelling treasure in our spirit-2 Cor. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 3:4.

- E. We are earthen vessels who are worthless and fragile, but within our spirit we contain a priceless treasure, the face, the person, of Christ Himself (2 Cor. 2:10; 4:6); in the whole universe there is nothing so precious as to behold the face of Jesus (Gen. 32:30; Exo. 25:30; 33:11, 14; Psa. 27:4, 8; Rev. 22:4):
 - 1. It is only when we are living in His presence, looking at the index of His being, that we will sense that He is such a treasure to us; if we have some problem, we just need to tell Him; He is right within us, and He is with us face to face—Phil. 4:6.
 - 2. Seeing God equals gaining God, which is to receive God in His element into us to transform us (Job 42:5-6; Matt. 5:8); the very God whom we look at today is the consummated Spirit, and we can look at Him in our spirit to absorb the riches of God into our being and be under the divine transformation day by day (2 Cor. 3:18b; Matt. 14:22-23; Col. 4:2).
- F. As we turn our heart to the Lord in our spirit to behold Him face to face and beam Him into others (Isa. 60:1, 5), we are in the process of being transformed into His glorious image unto the day when “we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is”—2 Cor. 3:18—4:1; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4.

III. To live the Christian life is to walk worthily of the calling with which we were called—Eph. 4:1-4:

- A. The first item of a walk worthy of God’s calling is for us to be diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit as the reality of the Body of Christ, with the transformed human virtues strengthened by and with the divine attributes—vv. 1-4:
 - 1. In the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, there is the transformed humanity of Jesus; to drink of and flow out the one Spirit for the one Body is to drink of and flow out the Spirit of the Man Jesus, to drink of and flow out the humanity of Jesus with His divinely enriched human virtues of lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering for bearing one another in love—John 7:37-39a; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 16:7; Eph. 4:2-3.
 - 2. If we call on the name of the Lord and feed upon Him, we will enjoy Jesus as a man, and all the virtues of His uplifted humanity will be ours in the Spirit of Jesus for the practice of the recovered church life in the Spirit of reality as the reality of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:3-4, 17; 12:3b, 13; 16:13; Eph. 4:3-4a.
- B. The second item of a walk worthy of God’s calling is for us to grow up into Christ the Head in all things—vv. 15-16:
 - 1. In order to grow up into Christ in all things for the building up of His Body, we need to enjoy Christ as our all-inclusive, universal replacement for the producing of the one new man, so we must “hear Him” and see “Jesus only”—Mark 9:7-8.
 - 2. Whatever or whoever is not Christ, God “fires”; God has replaced everything in His Old Testament economy with Christ—1:1-8; Matt. 17:3-5; Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:5-10; 11:5-6; cf. Isa. 22:20-25.
 - 3. When God created us, He “hired” us; when He put us on the cross, crucifying us with Christ, He “fired” us; when He resurrected us together with Christ, He “re-hired” us by making us a new species of God-men, a new invention of God as His corporate masterpiece, bringing us back to His original intention of creating us for His glory, His corporate expression—Gen. 1:26; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:6, 10, 15; Isa. 43:7.
- C. The third item of a walk worthy of God’s calling is for us to learn Christ as the reality that is in Jesus—Eph. 4:20-24:
 - 1. *The reality is in Jesus* refers to the actual condition of the life of Jesus as recorded in the four Gospels; Jesus lived a life in which He did everything in God, with God, and for God; God was in His living, and He was one with God—vv. 20-21.

2. In His life on earth He set up a pattern, as revealed in the four Gospels; then He was crucified and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit so that He might enter into us to be our life; we learn from Him, according to His example, not by our natural life but by Him as our life in resurrection—1 Cor. 15:45b; Col. 3:4.
 3. As we love the Lord, contact Him, and pray to Him, we automatically live Him according to the mold, the form, the pattern, described in the Gospels; in this way we are shaped, conformed, to the image of this mold—this is what it means to learn Christ—Matt. 11:29; Rom. 8:29.
- D. The fourth item of a walk worthy of God’s calling is for us to live in love and light—Eph. 5:2, 8:
1. We need to be partakers, enjoyers, of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4); the divine nature is what God is—God is Spirit (John 4:24), God is love (1 John 4:8, 16), and God is light (1:5); Spirit is the nature of God’s person, love is the nature of God’s essence, and light is the nature of God’s expression.
 2. We all need to spend an adequate amount of personal time with the Lord to privately fellowship with Him in our spirit so that we can be filled with His loving essence for Him to shepherd others through us and so that we can be filled with His shining element for others to see Him in us—John 4:24; Luke 15:20; Matt. 5:15-16.
- E. The fifth item of a walk worthy of God’s calling is for us to live by being filled in spirit to overflow with Christ—Eph. 5:18:
1. Speaking, singing, psalming, giving thanks to God, and subjecting ourselves to one another in the fear of Christ are not only the outflow of being filled in spirit but also the way to be filled in spirit—vv. 19-21.
 2. To be filled in spirit is to be filled with the riches of Christ to become the fullness of Christ, the overflow of Christ; by calling on the Lord and pray-reading His Word, we can continually receive Him as grace upon grace to become His fullness, His overflow—3:8; 1:23; 3:19b; Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 6:17-18; John 1:16.

IV. To live the Christian life is for us to accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit:

- A. God wants to take away our taste and change our scent by our accepting the discipline of the Holy Spirit, which is God’s emptying us from vessel to vessel for the removal of the lees, the dregs, of our natural outer man until we have the pure taste of Christ and exude the pure fragrance of Christ—Jer. 48:11; 2 Cor. 2:14-15; S. S. 4:16; 2 Kings 4:8-9:
 1. “The Father of spirits” disciplines us through trials and chastisement “that we might partake of His holiness”—Heb. 12:4-13.
 2. Those who have never gone through trials and chastisement have not been emptied from vessel to vessel; thus, the taste of the lees, the dregs, the sediment, of their natural disposition, their outer man, their self, remains within them and their scent is not changed—Jer. 48:11; Rom. 8:28-29; S. S. 4:16.
- B. Mary had an alabaster flask filled with a pound of ointment of very valuable pure nard; when she broke the flask and poured it out on the Lord, “the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment”—John 12:2-3; Mark 14:3; cf. S. S. 1:12.
- C. The alabaster flask signifies our outer man, which needs to be broken so that the inner man can break forth; the Lord works in us and on us in so many different ways for the purpose of breaking the earthen vessel, the alabaster flask, the outer shell—2 Cor. 4:7; John 12:3, 24; Rom. 8:28-29.
- D. What we are by nature means nothing; only what the Spirit constitutes into our being counts; the discipline of the Holy Spirit destroys our natural disposition and habits and brings in the constitution of the Holy Spirit in maturity and sweetness; God orders

everything in our environment to tear down what we are naturally so that He may form in us a new disposition, new character, and new attributes—John 3:6; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15.

E. There are two main reasons for not being broken:

1. A person is not broken because he is living in darkness; in all that happens to him, he puts all the blame on other people or the environment; he has no revelation of God's hand and that God is the One who is dealing with him—cf. Job 10:13; Eph. 3:9.
2. A person is not broken because he loves himself too much; we have to ask God to remove self-love from us; all misunderstandings and dissatisfactions arise from only one thing—secret self-love.

F. We need to realize that everything through which we pass has only one purpose—that God's life would be released through us and expressed in us; may our outer man be broken to such an extent that the inner man can be released and expressed; this is precious, and this is the way of the servants of the Lord—John 12:24-26; 2 Cor. 4:12.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Message Two

**Living the Christian Life by Enjoying the Flow of Life
with the Ministry of Life out of and for the Magnificent House of God**

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 47:1-12; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Cor. 9:11; 3:6, 9; 4:15; 3:2, 12

- I. In order to live the Christian life, we need to enjoy the flow of life out of the house of God-Ezek. 47:1-12:**
- A. God's ultimate move is His move in man to deify man by saturating man with all that He is in His life, nature, element, and essence for the glory, the expression, of God-2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2.
 - B. The water flows out from under the threshold-Ezek. 47:1:
 - 1. In order for the water to flow, there must be a threshold, an opening-cf Psa. 81:10.
 - 2. If we draw closer to the Lord and have more contact with Him, there will be an opening that will allow the living water to flow out from the church-Hymns, #846.
 - C. The flow is toward the east-Ezek. 47:1:
 - 1. The river of God flows in the direction of God's glory-cf Num. 2:3; Ezek. 43:2.
 - 2. If everyone in the church seeks and cares for God's glory, the living water will flow out from the church-John 7:18; 1 Cor. 10:31.
 - D. The water flows out from the right side of the house-Ezek. 47:1:
 - 1. In the Bible the right side is the highest position, the first place-cf Heb. 1:3.
 - 2. The flow of life must have the preeminence within us, becoming the controlling factor in our living and work-Rev. 22:1; Col. 1:18b.
 - E. The flowing is by the side of the altar, showing that we need the dealing of the cross and a full consecration to enjoy the flow of life-Ezek. 47:1.
 - F. For the increase of the flow of life, we need to be measured by the Lord as the man of bronze-40:3; 47:2-5; Rev. 1:15; cf John 7:37-39:
 - 1. To measure is to examine, test, judge, and possess; the four measurings of a thousand cubits, which is a complete unit (cf Psa. 84:10), indicate that as creatures, we need to be thoroughly measured by the Lord so that He may take over and thoroughly possess our entire being (Isa. 6:1-8).
 - 2. The more we allow the Lord to examine, test, and judge us to possess us, the deeper the flow becomes; the depth of the flow depends on how much we have been measured by the Lord-cf 1 John 1:5, 7.
 - 3. The more we are measured by the Lord, the more we are restricted and limited by the flowing of the grace of life until eventually we are lost in and carried along by the flowing Triune God as a river in which to swim; in one sense we lose all our freedom, but in another sense we are really free-Ezek. 47:4-6.
 - G. The river causes everything to live; the flow of the river produces trees, fish, and cattle-vv. 7, 9-10, 12.
 - H. The river waters the dry, parched land and heals the death waters; this watering and healing are for the purpose of producing life-v. 8:
 - 1. The river is unable to heal the swamps and marshes; a swamp or marsh is a neutral place, a halfway place, a place of compromise and lukewarmness-v. 11; cf Rev. 3:15-16.
 - 2. For the flow of life and for the church life, the Lord Jesus desires and requires absoluteness; by being absolute we will be in the flow, and the flow will not be a trickle but a river to swim in; then everything shall live wherever the river comes.

II. Our enjoyment of Christ as the flow of life is for us to be sowers, planters, waterers, begetters, feeders, and builders with the ministry of life for the marvelous organic building of God, the magnificent house of God—2 Cor. 3:6:

- A. A minister of life is a sower who sows spiritual seeds:
1. In 1 Corinthians 9:11 Paul says to the Corinthians, “We have sown to you the spiritual things”; *the spiritual things* refers to spiritual seeds.
 2. A seed is a container of life, and to sow a spiritual seed is to impart life in, with, and out of our spirit; the Lord Jesus came as a Sower to sow Himself as the seed of life into the human race—Matt. 13:3, 37.
 3. In the Lord’s recovery we, as ministers of the new covenant, need to be sowers who impart life to grow and produce Christ in others.
- B. A minister of life is a planter who plants Christ into God’s people—1 Cor. 3:6:
1. The believers, who have been regenerated in Christ with God’s life, are God’s cultivated land, God’s farm, in God’s new creation—v. 9.
 2. In order for us to plant Christ into others, we need the genuine experience of Christ as life in our spirit.
- C. A minister of life is a waterer who waters people with Christ; once we plant Christ into others, we need to water them with the water of life—v. 6:
1. We may liken a waterer in God’s farm to an irrigation system with a reservoir that supplies a farm with water; we should be a divine “irrigation system” with a reservoir of living water stored within us to water the church as God’s farm.
 2. We need to have the genuine experience of Christ as the water of life and a living contact with Him so that we can be a channel of living water, a divine irrigation system, that can supply others with the water of life—John 4:14; 7:37-39.
- D. A minister of life is a begetter, a father, who imparts life to his children, whom he begets—1 Cor. 4:15:
1. To beget is to generate spiritual children, to bring them forth, through the impartation of life.
 2. We need to have the divine “life germ” in order to impart the divine life into others so that they may be begotten as children of God.
- E. A minister of life is a feeder; feeding is a matter of life; it differs from teaching, which is a matter of knowledge:
1. To give milk to drink or food to eat is to feed others (3:2); what the apostle ministered to the Corinthian believers was milk, and it should have nourished them.
 2. The sound teaching of the apostles ministers the healthy teaching as the supply of life to people, either nourishing them or healing them—1 Tim. 1:10b; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:9.
- F. A minister of life is a builder who builds with gold, silver, and precious stones:
1. Gold symbolizes God the Father in His divine nature, silver symbolizes Christ in His redemptive work, and precious stones signify the Spirit in His transforming work (this is versus wood, which signifies the human nature; grass, which signifies man in the flesh; and stubble, which signifies lifelessness)—1 Cor. 3:12.
 2. Song of Songs portrays that in the proper church life, the perfected believers coordinate with the transforming Spirit to perfect Christ’s loving seekers by ministering the Triune God to them for their transformation by the Triune God’s attributes being wrought into them to become their virtues—1:10-11.
 3. This is for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem for the accomplishing of God’s eternal economy—1 Cor. 3:12; Rev. 21:18-21.

THE MEANING OF REGENERATION

Among fundamental Christians today, there is little talk about God as the generating Spirit. When I was regenerated more than fifty years ago, I realized that regeneration was wonderful, and I tried to find a book that could give me an adequate definition of regeneration. Eventually I purchased a book entitled *The Genuine Definition of Regeneration*, expecting that this book would give me the definition I wanted. But much to my disappointment, that book said nothing about God as the Spirit coming into us to regenerate us. Rather, it merely said that regeneration means that we have a new beginning and that all the old things have passed away. But after years of experience and of studying the Bible and the writings of others, we have come to see that to be regenerated is simply to be born of God. In regeneration, God as the life-giving Spirit comes into our spirit to regenerate us with His life and nature. This is the reason the Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). That which is born of the Spirit of God is our regenerated spirit. At the time of our regeneration, God's Spirit came into our deadened spirit to enliven it with the divine life and nature and thereby to make us sons of God. What a marvelous fact it is that we are sons of God! We have the assurance that we are truly God's sons because in our spirit we can sweetly cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

RECEIVING THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

Although regeneration is a marvelous reality, my burden in this message is not on regeneration itself. My burden is on the Spirit. Only by being the Spirit is God able to regenerate us. If you ask people who God is, some will say that He is the Creator. Others may say that He is also our Redeemer and Savior. Not many will say that God is the Spirit.

As the Spirit, God is not simple, for the Spirit is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. This Spirit includes divinity, humanity, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Christians commonly take spiritual matters for granted. Some talk about Christ's incarnation and human living with little realization of the significance of these things. The One who was born in a manger in Bethlehem and who was raised in a carpenter's home in Nazareth was the very God Himself in human form. Imagine that the almighty God, the Creator, became a man and was restricted to the home of a carpenter and even worked for years as a carpenter! Jesus was called Emmanuel, God with us. This means that when Jesus lived on earth, God lived on earth. Furthermore, in His living He was patient and hidden. He did not make a display of Himself. For years, He was limited there in Nazareth. When He came forth to carry out His ministry, He did not do so on a large scale, but on a small scale and even in a lowly way. People wondered about Him, asking who He was, for they knew His mother, brothers, and sisters. They knew Him merely as Jesus of Nazareth.

When some Christians say that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, they consider that as the Son of God He is different from God. They do not realize that the Son of God is God Himself. John 1:1 does not say, "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was the Son of God." Rather this verse tells us that the Word in the beginning was God. This Word became flesh (John 1:14). For the Word to become flesh means that God Himself became flesh. It was God in the flesh who worked on earth, who washed the feet of the disciples, who was arrested in the garden, who was tried before the high priest and before Pilate and Herod, and who was sentenced to death and crucified. Yes, the One who was crucified was the very God. Some may ask: Is it possible for God to be crucified? The answer is that God was crucified in the humanity of Jesus. Recognizing this, Charles Wesley says in one of his hymns, "Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" (Hymns, #296). The second stanza of the same hymn opens with the line: "'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!" The One who died for us was not only Jesus of Nazareth, but God, the very One who created us. Yet, as God was dying on the cross, He cried out to God, saying, "My God, My God..." (Matt. 27:46). Those with a doctrinal mentality may be at a loss to explain this. How can God say to God, "Why have You forsaken Me?" The answer is that God was dying on the cross in the form of a man. Therefore, as a man He could cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" After His crucifixion, He was buried. Then, on the third day, He was resurrected. First Corinthians 15:45 says that as the last Adam He became a life-giving Spirit. Therefore, in 2 Corinthians 3:17 Paul goes on to say, "Now the Lord is the Spirit" (Gk.).

God today is the Spirit including the elements of incarnation, humanity, crucifixion, and resurrection. The effectiveness of Christ's wonderful death, the power of His resurrection, and the reality of His resurrection life are all in the Spirit. This Spirit is no longer merely the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Jehovah, but the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

As the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit includes the elements of incarnation, humanity, crucifixion, and resurrection. When we called on the name of the Lord Jesus and were saved, such a Spirit entered into our being to regenerate our deadened spirit and to make us sons of God. The Spirit who came into us at the time of our regeneration is the ultimate consummation of the Triune God, the realization and expression of the Father, Son, and Spirit. This Spirit has come into us to impart into our being the life and nature of God. Because we have been regenerated by this Spirit in our spirit, we have become sons of God.

Not many Christians realize that they are sons of God and that God wants them to live the life of a son of God. After they are saved, most Christians try to improve themselves or to do something to please God. In their efforts to improve the natural man or to do something to please God, the vast majority of the Lord's people are missing the mark of God's economy. God's salvation is for His economy, and His economy is not a matter of ethics. Rather, by His salvation according to His economy, God has regenerated us by the divine life that we may be His sons and live as sons of God. God's goal is not simply that we improve our behavior

and thereby do good instead of evil. It is not God's purpose merely to have a number of good people. God's desire is that we live as sons of God. God wants us not simply to be cleansed. He wants us to live as sons of God. If we would do this, we need to receive the Spirit of God. We have been born of the Spirit to receive the Spirit.

THE CONSTANT RECEIVING OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 3:5 says, "He therefore Who is supplying to you the Spirit and doing works of power among you, is it by the works of law or by the hearing of faith?" This verse indicates that God continues to supply us the Spirit. We may use electricity as an illustration. After electricity has been installed in a building, electricity is supplied continually to the building. Likewise, after God regenerated us by His Spirit to make us His sons, He has been continually supplying to us the Spirit. Nothing is more crucial than the constant receiving of the Spirit. The Galatians had been saved and had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith. However, they had been misled and distracted and had turned back to the law. Instead of taking the Spirit as their source, they took the law as their source. Many Christians today have also been distracted from the Spirit. We all need to be brought back to the Spirit as our source. We must come back to God Himself as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. Sisters should not be occupied with trying to be a good wife or mother. Instead, they should open themselves to the Spirit as their heavenly source and receive the transmission of the Triune God, the heavenly electrical current, into their being. If they receive such a transmission, they will automatically be good wives and mothers. I encourage you to pray, "Lord Jesus, I open myself to You. I thank You that I have been born of God, born of the all-inclusive Spirit. Lord, this Spirit is still transmitting something of You into my being. I thank You, Lord, for this marvelous transmission."

LIFE-STUDY OF EZEKIEL
MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX
THE RIVER FLOWING FROM THE HOUSE

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 47:1-12; Psa. 36:8; 46:4; Joel 3:18b; Zech. 14:8a

The book of Ezekiel speaks of two rivers. The first river, in chapter one, is the river Chebar, which was in the place where the people of God were held in captivity. The second river, in chapter forty-seven, is the river of life in the holy land. The first river is for carrying out judgment; the second river is for supplying life. To be near the river Chebar is to be in a place of discipline, but to be near the river of living water is to be in a place to receive life. In this message we will consider the river flowing from the house.

GOD BEING FOOD AND WATER TO MAN

Genesis 2 speaks of the tree of life (v. 9) and of a river that went out of Eden to water the garden (v. 10). Both the tree and the river signify that God desires to impart Himself to man as life. The tree of life indicates that God wants us to eat Him, and the river indicates that God wants us to drink Him. The tree and the river in Genesis 2 are the beginning of two lines—one concerning God as living food and another concerning God as living water—that run throughout the Bible until they consummate with the tree of life and with the river of water of life in Revelation 22. Regarding God as man's food, the Bible speaks of the meat of the lamb, the unleavened bread, the manna, the various offerings, and all the produce, both animal and vegetable, of the good land of Canaan. In John 6 the Lord Jesus spoke clearly about this: "I am the bread of life" (v. 48); "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven" (v. 51); "My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink" (v. 55); "he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (v.57). Regarding God as water for man to drink, the Bible speaks of the spring (Exo. 15:27), the water out of the rock (17:6; Num. 20:11; 1 Cor. 10:4), the water from the well (Num.21:16-17), and water from the ground (Judg. 15:19). Psalm 36:8b says, "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." Psalm 46:4 says, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, / the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." Joel 3:18 says, "A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord." Zechariah 14:8 says, "It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." The Gospel of John speaks of the living water in 4:14 and 7:37-38. These portions of the Word reveal that God as living water has flowed out from eternity into us to satisfy our thirst.

The portion of the Word that describes the flow of the living water of God in the most detail is Ezekiel 47. It is significant that the flow of the river of life is not in chapter one. In that chapter, instead of the river of life, there was a consuming fire. In chapter thirty-seven there was a wind that became breath to us, but there was no water flowing. The flowing of the water did not begin until chapter forty-seven. The water could not come in before chapter forty-seven, because the house had not been built up.

THE FACTORS WHICH PRODUCED THE RIVER

Several crucial factors brought in the flow of the river. The first was the building up and completion of the house. Following this, the people began to have their living according to the house, according to its pattern, laws, and statutes. Their daily life and all their conduct began to be according to the form, fashion, pattern, statutes, and laws of the house (43:10-11). Next,

the serving ones, the priests, were serving the Lord in a proper way. Finally, there were all the offerings: one lamb out of two hundred, one-sixtieth of the wheat and barley, and one-hundredth of the oil. There were yearly offerings, monthly offerings, daily offerings, and all

the solemn feasts. We need to realize that the experience of all these matters brought in the flow of the river.

When the Lord saw all these things, He must have been very happy. He had a house the place of His throne, a place for the soles of His feet, a place where He could dwell for His rest and satisfaction. He saw the house with its forms and statutes, and He saw the priests and the offerings. Therefore, He sent the flowing of the river, and the river began to flow out of the house.

Now we can understand why there is no mention of the flowing of the river before chapter forty-seven. The flow of the river depends on the building. Whenever and wherever a group of believers is built up in oneness as described by Ezekiel, there will be the flowing of the river out of the building. If there is the building in your locality, the flow will come forth out from the building. Suppose regarding the church in your locality the Lord can say, "This is the place of My throne, this is the place where I can put the soles of My feet, and this is the place where I can dwell, rest, and be satisfied." If the Lord is able to say this about your place, the river will surely flow out of the building.

Today many zealous Christians pay attention to outreach and to gospel work in the mission field, yet their situation is quite poor. They go out to work for the Lord, but no flow follows them, because they neglect the source of building up of the church. There can be no flow apart from the genuine building. If there is a strong building up in the local churches, there will be a river flowing out of the building to other places. There will be the flowing, the flooding, and the impact.

How much we need the building! We need the church to be built up as the temple, the house of God. Out of such a building, the flow of God will issue. The outreach depends on the building. The preaching of the gospel depends on the building. This is the reason that in John 17:23 the Lord Jesus said that when we are perfected into one, the world will know that the Father has sent the Son. This means that when we are built up as one, the world will be convinced. The divided situation of Christianity greatly limits the impact of the gospel.

WATER FLOWING OUT FROM THE THRESHOLD

Ezekiel 47:1a says, "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward." In order for the water to flow forth, there must be a threshold, an opening, through which it can flow. This indicates that if we, through Christ, have more contact with God and draw closer to Him, there will be an opening which will allow the living water of God to flow out from the church.

THE RIVER FLOWING TOWARD THE EAST

The river issues forth from the house and flows toward the east (v. 1b). The east is the direction of the glory of the Lord (Num. 2:3; Ezek. 43:2). The flowing toward the east indicates that the river of God will always flow in the direction of God's glory. The river cares for God's glory.

Everything in the church life should be for God's glory. For example, in our preaching of the

gospel, we should seek the glory of God. If our gospel preaching is for God's glory, there will be an outflow of living water. However, if we do not care for the glory of God, the flow will be limited. Everyone in the church should seek and care for the glory of God. Then the living water will flow out from the church.

THE WATER FLOWING OUTFROM THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE HOUSE

Ezekiel 47:1c also tells us that the water flows out from the right side of the house. According to the Bible the right side signifies the highest position. The flowing of the water from the right side indicates that the flow of the Lord should have the preeminence. We need to give the Lord the highest position, and we also need to give the flow of the Lord the highest position. Then the flow will be prevailing and become the controlling factor in our living and work.

FLOWING BY THE SIDE OF THE ALTAR

The flowing is by the side of the altar (v. 1d). This indicates that the flow is always by the cross. If we do not have the dealing of the cross, the flow will be frustrated. If we would have the flow, we must have the dealing of the cross. We need to be willing to pass through the cross so that the flow may come forth.

THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING REED

The main point here is the man with the measuring reed in his hand (v. 3). This man, who is the Lord Jesus Himself, has the appearance of brass (40:3). As we have pointed out, in typology brass, or copper, signifies judgment and testing. The Lord Jesus was tested and judged as a man, and because He was tested and judged, He is now testing and judging. Because He was tested, He is qualified to test, and because He was judged, He is qualified to judge. He is the One with the measuring reed in His hand, fully qualified to measure us.

We have pointed out previously that to measure means to test, to judge, and to possess. When a sister is about to buy some cloth, she first examines the cloth and then measures it. Whatever amount she measures she also possesses. This indicates that to measure is to examine, test, judge, and eventually take over and possess.

MEASURING THE FLOW OF THE RIVER

The man came with a measuring reed in his hand to measure the flowing of the river (47:3-5).

Measuring a Thousand Cubits

When this man first measured the river, there was only a trickle coming out from the house. Then he measured a thousand cubits, and the flow became deeper, up to the ankles (v. 3). Again he measured a thousand cubits, and the flow became deeper, up to the knees (v. 4). After this the man measured yet another thousand cubits, and the flow became even deeper, up to the loins (v. 4). When he for the fourth time measured a thousand cubits, the flow became a river which could not be passed over, and the river became waters to swim in.

In the Bible the number one thousand signifies a complete unit. For example, in Psalm 84:10 the psalmist says that a day in the Lord's courts is better than a thousand outside. Since one thousand signifies a complete unit, to measure a thousand means to measure a complete unit; it is a complete measuring.

If we want to enjoy the flow out of the house, we need to be measured completely. If we want to enjoy a flow that is deeper, we need to be measured, that is, tested, examined, judged, and

taken over by the Lord. Our motives, our intentions, our aims, our goals, our desires-all must be judged. Everything we possess and everything we are involved in must be judged. This will deepen the flow within us.

As we are judged by the Lord, we need to make a thorough confession. We need to allow the Lord to be our Judge and let Him bring us into His light and expose us. Then we should say to Him, "Lord, all that You have judged is now Yours. I ask You, Lord, to take me over, to take full possession of me."

The Lord's judging and testing of us are not once for all. In Ezekiel 47 the man measured not once or twice or even three times; he measured four times. In the Bible four is the number of the creature. The four measurings here indicate that as a creature we need to be thoroughly judged and tested by the Lord and then be fully taken over by Him.

To be taken over by the Lord completely is not easy to experience. We may think that we have been fully taken over by the Lord, but after a period of time we will realize that we still have some reservation. Then we will be tested and judged again, and after this we will have a further consecration to the Lord, saying, "Lord, take this and possess it."

To be taken over by the Lord completely is not easy to experience. We may think that we have been fully taken over by the Lord, but after a period of time we will realize that we still have some reservation. Then we will be tested and judged again, and after this we will have a further consecration to the Lord, saying, "Lord, take this and possess it." We may think that the Lord has taken over everything, but the Lord knows that He has gained us only to a certain extent. Therefore, some time later we may again realize that we have reserved and preserved very much for ourselves. Once again we will make our confession to the Lord and experience His testing and judging. Even after a number of years, we still may have not been fully possessed by the Lord, and thus we will again need to be measured, tested, judged, and possessed by Him.

The Depth of the Flow Depending on How Much We Have Been Measured and Taken Over by the Lord

You may be wondering how we can determine how much we have been measured and possessed by the Lord. We determine this by the depth of the river. If the river is only up to our ankles, this proves that we have not been measured fully by the Lord. The depth of the river depends on how much we have been measured by the Lord. There is no need for us to argue and justify ourselves. Instead, we should simply consider the depth of our flow. How deep is your flow? Is it up to the ankles? To the knees? To the loins? Has the flow become a river that cannot be passed over? Has the flow become waters to swim in? We need to consider our personal situation in this way.

The same principle applies to the local churches. There is no need to argue concerning the church in your locality. You may say that the church in which you are is the best. Your church may be the best according to your concept, but it may not be the best according to the flow. You may claim to have a flow, but how deep is this flow? Consider the depth of the flow in the church where you are. The flow may be only up to the ankles or the knees or the loins. Perhaps the flow is a river that cannot be passed over, and thus it may be waters to swim in. The depth of the flow in every local church depends on the degree of the Lord's measuring

and possessing. Concerning this, we can fool others, but we cannot fool the Lord. He knows the depth of the flow where we are.

We all need to be measured and taken over by the Lord. For His measuring the Lord needs our cooperation. It is difficult for the Lord to measure us, judge us, possess us, and take us over without adequate cooperation on our part. May we look to the Lord for His mercy that through His measuring in all the local churches there will be a river that no one can pass over.

GRACE VERSUS SELF-EFFORT

It is easy to walk on dry land, but the flow of the river makes it difficult to walk. When the water is up to the ankles, we can still walk, but it is not very convenient. When the water is up to the knees, it is more difficult to walk. When the water is up to the loins, it is very difficult to walk. This indicates that before we enjoy the grace of the Lord as the flow, we are able to do whatever we like. When we experience the Lord's flow only in a shallow way, we can still walk by our own effort. But when the flow becomes deeper, reaching up to the knees, walking becomes much more difficult. We have grace, but the amount of grace we have is not sufficient, so we continue to exercise our own effort.

As the flow increases, it bothers, restricts, and frustrates us. When the flow of grace rises higher, to the loins, this is the hardest time to be a Christian. Our situation becomes quite awkward. For example, on the one hand, we may have enough grace to make it difficult for us to lose our temper; on the other hand, we may not have enough grace to overcome our temper. We have grace, but we still need to exercise our own effort. This is a dilemma. The river of grace is with us, but it is not deep enough. But once the flow of grace becomes so deep that we cannot pass over, we will praise the Lord and begin to swim in the river. As we swim, we will no longer try to stand on our feet. Instead, we will abandon our self-effort and begin to swim in the river.

The less grace we receive from the Lord, the more we need to use our own strength. But when we receive an abundance of grace, we no longer need to use our own strength. Instead, we cease from our self-effort and allow the flow of the river to carry us along. As we are carried along in this way, we can easily follow the Lord and let Him lead us wherever He wants us to go.

I am concerned that many among us have not yet given up their self-effort but are still trying to stand up on their own. They continue to struggle in their efforts to stand on their feet. This means that they are exercising their own effort to be an overcomer. Those who are in such a situation need to realize that they need more grace. They need a deeper flow so that they will give up trying to stand and instead will swim in the river. The best way for us to swim in the river is to put our trust in the flow of the river, forget our own efforts, and let the flow carry us along. When we receive the abundance of grace, this is our experience.

Although the grace is sufficient, we still need to go along with the flow of the Lord's grace. When we are being carried along by the river, we should not try to have our own direction. We should forsake our direction and move in the direction of the flow. However, the flow may be in one direction, but our intention is to move in the opposition direction. For this reason, the Lord often has problems with us.

THE RIVER CAUSING EVERYTHING TO LIVE

Where the river flows, everything shall live and be full of life (Ezek. 47:9). This river is the river of life, and only life can cause things to live. Mere teachings and gifts are not important here, because they cannot impart life. Ezekiel does not say that everything shall know or that everything shall exercise gifts; he says that where the river comes everything shall live.

In this flow the trees live and bear sweet, delicious fruit every month (v. 12). Also, the water brings forth an abundance of fish (v. 9). Cattle are implied by the names of two cities-Engedi and Eneglaim (v. 10). Engedi means "the fountain of the lamb," and Eneglaim means "the fountain of two calves." These fountains are for the young cattle, the lambs and the calves. From all this we see that the flow of the river produces trees, fish, and cattle.

In the proper church life there are many trees producing fruit, and thus there is no lack of fruit. If the church in your locality is living, there will be trees bearing fruit. Trees producing fruit are an indication that there is a flow in your church. The trees grow by the living water. If there is a flow in your local church, there surely will be the trees bearing an abundance of fruit.

With the flowing of the river, there is also fishing (v. 10). Fishing signifies the increase in numbers. If the number of people in your local church does not increase year after year, this means that there is no fishing, and no fishing means that there is no flow. If we would have fishing, we must have the flow. We need a place to cast out and spread our net. We need fishing order to have an increase in numbers.

In the church life we also need some fountains of lambs and fountains of calves for feeding. Thus, we need food, we need the increase in numbers, and we need the feeding. This will bring in the mending, the building up. Oh, we need the trees, the fishing, and the fountains! All these matters depend on one thing-the flow of the river. Once again we see how much we need the flowing of the river of God.

THE RIVER FLOWING TOWARD THE EAST SEA

Ezekiel 47:8 says that the river flows toward the East Sea. According to the map, the East Sea is the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea. By the flowing of the river out of the house, the salt water of the Dead Sea will be healed. This means that death will be swallowed up by life. When there is a rich and deep flow of life in a local church, much death will be swallowed up by life. However, if there is no flow in at particular church, that church will become a "dead sea" full of salt. But if there is the flow of the river, deadness is swallowed up by life, and then the "dead sea" will be made alive.

THE RIVER BEING UNABLE TO HEAL THE MARSHES

Although the Dead Sea and the dry places can be made alive and deadness can be swallowed up by life, the marshes cannot be healed (v. 11). A marsh is a place that is neither dry nor flowing with water. Consisting partly of mud and partly of water, a marsh is neither wet nor dry. A marsh signifies a situation that is full of compromise. This means that wherever there is a compromising situation, there is a marsh. We should never become involved with any situation that is a "marsh."

The Lord Jesus rebuked the church in Laodicea for being lukewarm and neither hot nor cold. He told those in Laodicea that they should be either hot or cold but not lukewarm. He also said that if they remained lukewarm, He would spew them out of His mouth (Rev. 3:15-

16). To be lukewarm is to be in a compromising situation, to be in a marsh.

Our stand concerning the church must be absolute. If you stand in a denomination, you should stand absolutely. If you stand with an independent group, you should stand with that group absolutely. If you stand on the ground of the church, you must stand absolutely. You should be either cold or hot, but you should not be lukewarm. To be lukewarm is to be in a marsh. If you give up the denominations and the independent groups yet are not absolute for the proper ground of the church, you are in a marsh. It is possible for one to be in the church life without being absolute. Such a person is a marsh.

Not even the Lord can heal a marsh. A marsh is a neutral place, a halfway place, a place of compromise. Certain saints are neither in Babylon nor in Jerusalem but in a halfway place between Babylon and Jerusalem. This means that they are in a marsh and even that they are a marsh.

We need either to be absolutely in the flow or stay on dry ground. If we remain in a marshy or "muddy" situation, the Lord cannot do anything with us. It is very easy to get into a marsh, but it is very difficult to get out of one. The church must be in a place of absoluteness. Thus, for the church life we need to be absolute.

The church should also be a place after its kind. Genesis 1:11-12 says that the grass, the trees, and the herbs brought forth each after its own kind. An apple tree cannot bring forth an apple-peach. To bring forth an apple-peach, that is, for something not to be after its kind, is to be a marsh. A man must be a man and a woman must be a woman; no one can be a man-woman. If you are in a denomination, be there after your kind. If you are in an independent group, be there after your kind. Likewise, if a group of saints in a certain locality are the church in that locality, they must be the church after its kind.

If you are in the Lord's recovery, be in the recovery absolutely, not halfway. Come back all the way from Babylon to Jerusalem. If you stop halfway, you will become a marsh, and you will not have any flow, not even a trickle. Rather, you will have just enough water to make you "muddy." You will be a marsh, and a marsh cannot be healed. Throughout all my years in the Lord's recovery, I have never seen a marsh that was healed.

In Revelation 22:11 the Lord Jesus says, "Let him who does unrighteousness do unrighteousness still; and let him who is filthy be filthy still; and let him who is righteous do righteousness still; and let him who is holy be holy still." Here we see that the Lord Jesus desires and requires absoluteness. We must learn to be absolute. By being absolute we will be in the flow, and the flow will not be a trickle but a river to swim in. Then everything shall live where the river comes.