

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CROSS

Romans 7:4—Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Let us have a further word of prayer.

Lord, we thank You that Your word is true. We come before Your word once again. Only Your word can reveal Yourself. We have to acknowledge that we do not understand Your word. But we thank the Lord, the Holy Spirit already abides in us. He will lead us into all truth. May You reveal Yourself to us as we gather before Your feet tonight. Even though we come empty-handed, may we go away full. When You are satisfied, then we are satisfied. May our glory and love be unto You, in Jesus' precious name. Amen."

The theme of this conference is: "The Way to the Eternal Purpose of God—The Cross." My responsibility is on how the cross deals with the Law. When we speak of the cross, we speak of the two sides of the cross. One is objective and the other is subjective. Two thousand years ago, our Lord completed the work of salvation; that is objective. Now the Holy Spirit has come and He abides in us. He works in us all that which was accomplished on the cross by the Lord Jesus two thousand years ago. This is a kind of fellowship. We refer to it as the fellowship of the cross.

When we speak of the objective cross, we have to perceive it. We need to know it because it is according to something that has already happened in history. If we want to be delivered from the Law, we have to see what the Lord has done two thousand years ago. If we were to do it two thousand years later, that is too late. He did not leave anything for us to do. Two thousand years ago, when our Lord was crucified, something happened. This has to do with the redemption of the cross.

When we walked through Paul's life—his past and his relationship with the Law—we saw the redemption of the cross—how Paul saw that he had died to the Law through the body of Christ. This is a glorious seeing. Now, we are going to go through a different angle. We are going to speak on the fellowship of the cross. The redemption of the cross has delivered us from the Law, and the fellowship of the cross fulfills the Law. To be delivered from the Law and to fulfill the Law seems like a paradox, but it is not. Our Lord said He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. So we will continue to see how the cross deals with the Law.

Last time, we saw that Paul could not be justified by the Law. If someone is to be saved, if somebody wants to have a position before God, it would have been from the work that God accomplished through those fifteen hundred years between the first Pentecost and the Pentecost after the Lord Jesus was crucified. God gave the Law for the purpose that man would seek grace. The Law is like a mirror to show us that we cannot keep the Law. Through the fifteen hundred years of an experiment, it proved that man failed. It proved that man needs a savior. God used the experts of the world, the Jewish people, through those fifteen hundred years. If the experts failed, all others would fail. The experiment brought men to their end.

It is like a person who is about to drown; you cannot go in to save him immediately. At that point, the one who is drowning has the most strength. If you try to save him, he

will take you down with him. You have to wait until he is weak and then you can save him. This is what happened two thousand years ago. At first, the Jews, those experts said, "We can; we can; we can." But now, after fifteen hundred years, even Paul said, "I cannot." It seems that they had reached their end, so the Lord Jesus came to the world as their Savior. For this reason, we see that man was not saved by the Law. For no one can be justified through the Law. Man is saved by grace through faith; not of himself, but it is the gift of God. What does it mean? It means that God put us under grace. Grace is not you who have done it; it is God Himself who has done it. God has done something on the cross. What is it? It is justification by faith.

Thank the Lord, Paul saw. On the road to Damascus, he met the Lord. The Holy Spirit caused him to be born again. Subsequently, when he read the Scriptures, the entire Old Testament was illuminated. It was the same Bible, but now the Holy Spirit interpreted it and led him into all truth. Paul's eyes were opened. Previously, he thought that those who hung on a tree were cursed; therefore the Lord Jesus could not be the Messiah. Now the Holy Spirit spoke to him. Yes, those hung on a tree should be cursed. Jesus should not have been hung there. The one who should have been hung there was Paul, and it should have been you and me. We should have been cursed. We should have been cursed by the Law, but the Lord died for us. He hung on the cross for us, and He redeemed us from the curse of the Law.

Now Paul understood; now he saw. Before that, he was zealous for the Law: "As to the righteousness that is in the Law, I am blameless." It can be said that he fulfilled the entire law, even if there were a hundred commandments. However, he missed one and that is what Stephen told him. "Those of you who keep the Law have always resisted the Holy Spirit; you have betrayed and murdered the Righteous One. You have nailed Him, the Son of God, the Gift of God, to the cross. And you said you have no sin; you did not break any commandment." The sin that Paul committed is *the* sin of sins. It is the greatest sin of all. No wonder Paul said that he was the chief among sinners. The one who keeps the Law, the one who is blameless as to the Law, now can see, "I am a sinner." Who did that? Thank the Lord, Paul received revelation. When he saw what was accomplished on the cross, he prostrated before the word of God. It was not Paul; it was God who had done it all. Thank the Lord! This is as Saint Augustine said, "God gave the Law so that we can seek grace." Through fifteen hundred years' history of failure, men say we need grace. We need the Savior.

FULFILLING THE LAW

There is another side to why God gave grace. It is that the Law can be fulfilled. Isn't that amazing? The Law is holy, and the commandments are holy. They represent God's will; they represent God's standard. God's standard is never lowered. This is why the universe exists. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's word shall not pass away, not even one iota or stroke. The Lord said, "I came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it." He gave the Law so that we can seek grace, but He gives us grace so that the Law can be fulfilled. What is this about? This is Paul's on-going experience. When he was saved by grace through faith, he realized that it was the Holy Spirit who had done it all.

In Galatians 3:3 he said, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" Paul was able to help the churches in Galatia because he himself learned a deep lesson. In his pursuit of God, he used to be under the Law, even

though later he began by the Spirit. At the time he felt, "Since I began by the Spirit, I do not have to do anything in order to go to heaven. I do not have to do anything to be saved. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that I have been born again. But if I am to grow, if I am to be completed, then it is to be achieved with my flesh." For someone who lives under the Law for an extensive time, even though he sees being born again has nothing to do with the Law, if he wants to grow, if he wants to be perfected, he has to do something. He has to help God a little bit. Even though these are words rebuking the Galatians, this is Paul's own experience. How do we know?

If you read Romans 7 you will know. Some people tell us that Romans 7 is Paul's autobiography. Many scholars have debated about the experience of Paul in this chapter, whether it was before he was saved or after. The content of the chapter tells us very clearly that it is after he was saved. Why? He said: "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." Someone who is not saved would not like God's law; and he would not like God's law in the inner man. Romans 7 is the history of Paul's failure. It is the conflict of the flesh in Paul. Not only does it speak of the sin but it also speaks of the death. Sin has to do with our filthiness; death has to do with our weakness in doing God's will. Now he has been saved and understands God's will, so he wants to please God.

IMITATING CHRIST

Therefore to the Corinthians he says, "Be ye imitators of me even as I also am of Christ." Paul was one who imitated Christ. He wanted to please God. Also in Ephesians 5:1 he said, "Be imitators of God, as beloved children." Paul imitated God. How can Paul imitate God? How can he imitate Christ? He has to please God. For this reason, he established law for himself. God had already put him under the principle of grace; however, he put himself under the principle of law. Before, it was the burden of sin, now it is the burden of holiness. Why is it a burden? You cannot do this and you cannot do that. I have to be humble like Christ. I have to be gentle like Him. Before, you told me what is black, what is white, what is sin, what is not sin. But it is no longer just that. Now it is: what is the humility of Christ? What is the gentleness of Christ? So I am to imitate Christ. Is what I do today Christ-like? Daily, Paul put himself under law. In his epistles, when he speaks of the Law, there are two usages. One has an article "the" in front of the word *Law* and it refers to the Law of Moses. The other has no article in front of the word *law* and it refers to a principle.

We know that Paul is not under law but under grace. It does not mean that there is no law; it is not lawlessness. If you are under grace, sin is no longer your master. It does not say that there is no law. It says that sin is no longer your master. What does it mean? It means that God is dealing with Paul according to the principle of grace and not the principle of law. Now he is saved by grace. He wants to grow and not remain as a babe. He wants to be an imitator of God; he wants to be like God. Christ's standard is higher; God's standard is higher. He wants to please God. Can he please God?

He said in Romans 8:8, "And those who are in the flesh cannot please God." He knows that he is of the flesh; he cannot please God. At one point he desired to please God. How can you please God? God's standard is so high. Unbeknownst to him, he put himself under the principle of law: "From now on, I have to be very careful of what I say. From now on, I need to be patient. The more I can be patient the more the patience of Christ can be manifested because that is the outcome of what I set my will to do.

Likewise, gentleness is the result of my resolute will; thus by laboring and working I put self under the principle of law.”

To imitate God, to imitate Christ, is a matter of life. It is the nature of life to grow. If you put a flock of chickens and ducks in the water, while the ducks would love the water, the chickens would “chicken out.” This is the matter of life. For this reason, there is the need for a standard. For ducks to wade in the water, they have to have the life of a duck. To imitate a duck, you need to reach that standard by putting yourself under the principle of law. If you were to grow the life of a duck, you then put yourself under the principle of grace. This is the story of Paul after he was saved. This is the story of Paul’s growth.

THIS BODY OF DEATH

Then finally he said, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). Romans 6 speaks of the body, and Romans 7 also speaks of the body. Romans 6 speaks of the body of sin. Romans 7 speaks of the body of death. The emphasis here is death. Death is the weakest of the weak.

Paul said that some did not discern the body of Christ at the Lord’s Table, so some became weak and some even died. What does death mean? Death is when it is at its weakest state. Paul saw that his body was the body of death. It had reached its weakest point, so he cries out, “Who can set me free from the body of this death?” Paul had been brought to his end. He has a prayer: “Who can deliver me from the body of this death?” Thank the Lord! This is Romans 7, and it is Paul’s biography. This is his failure, and this failure is after he was saved. He wanted to be sanctified; he wanted to be victorious. Consequently, he failed miserably. He knew he could not do anything.

Before he told his own story at the beginning of chapter 7, he noticed that when he was under the bondage of sin, it was like a master and he was its slave. When he speaks of the law, he said, “Wretched man that I am...” Before, it was the burden of sin, now it is the burden of being holy. How can we have the patience, love, and glory of God? It is impossible. Not only is there the law of sin but there is also the law of death. The law of sin makes me sin; the law of death hinders me from obeying God’s will. I see that standard. Christ is that standard. I want to imitate Christ. I want to reach that point. Unbeknownst to him, Paul had put himself under the principal of law, as if he was bound by a rope. If he is to be delivered from the Law, how can it be done?

Deliverance from the Law is in the same way as deliverance from sin. When we commit sin, it is the Lord’s precious blood that deals with it. The Lord does not deal with it directly. Sin itself is a nature; so there is a sinful nature in us. The Lord does not eradicate sin or uproot it. Rather, He deals with the sinner. When sin is eradicated, when sin dies, then the problem is solved. But God did not do it that way. The way of His salvation is for us to die. If sin does not die, I die. We thought that God wanted sin to die. Throughout church history, there have been people who wanted sin to die, but sin never dies. That is the difficulty. Many people get so nervous in their desire for a sinless perfection. However, the more they pursue, the more they cannot get it. It is not God’s way. God’s way is not for sin to die; God’s way is that we may die. As long as we die, the problem is solved. We have to be delivered from sin. The secret of being delivered from sin is to be delivered from law, so that we may be under grace and not under law.

MARRIED TO THE LAW

How do we go about it? Paul discovered that he was actually married to the Law. When someone is being married, they exchange vows: "Whether through health, whether through sickness, and so on, we will always be together." Many mothers hear that and they shed tears. These two people are joined together. Paul was just like that. Paul was married to the Law as if it were his husband. This is a good spouse; it is not a bad spouse. All his requirements and demands are right. Unfortunately she cannot meet them, especially, if she has a Chinese spouse. If she has a Chinese husband, maybe he read some writings of Confucius, so he has to honor his parents. He would tell his wife, "Now that our parents live in our home, every morning when you wake up, you have to go to greet your father-in-law and mother-in-law with a cup of tea." Being a young couple growing up in the United States, they also are mindful of the next generation. So he tells his wife to stay home to take care of their kids. All the children should be properly dressed when they go out. And he was born in the twenty-first century, in the age of the computer, and every day he gets numerous emails. Sometimes he wants his wife to help him filter through all two hundred emails, leaving him with just twenty to read. He wants his wife to understand the computer, so at least she can read emails.

If you were to ask his wife she would say, "The demands of the husband are right." The demand is not too burdensome. Every morning prepare some tea, every morning dress your children properly, and check emails for the husband. This is a good husband. His law is a good law, but the wife cannot stand it. The husband is very tidy, but she is very messy. The husband cannot stand a spill of a drop of water. The husband cannot stand any dirt, but the wife is carefree. The wife cannot understand anything about the emails. She has absolutely no idea how to turn on the computer, but she has to meet the demands of the husband. Sooner or later there comes a day that she will say, "Oh, wretched woman that I am..." Now do you understand?

Why is marriage a wall? People outside the marriage want to break through but people inside the marriage want to break out. There are many husbands like that. But don't forget, he is a good husband. He is not somebody who would mess around. He loves his wife but his demands are high. How can you live like this? Soon the wife will have a nervous breakdown. It is not that she does not want to meet his demands but in fact she is not able. What shall she do? Can she get a divorce? No! This is a Christian husband so she cannot divorce him. She cannot divorce and she cannot be set free from the husband. What can be done? There are two ways. One is for the husband to die, but this, of course, is not very good. The other way is for the wife to die.

Paul used this as an example. The Law is like the husband. According to the Bible, not one iota or stroke of the Law shall pass away. He lives very well. He lives forever. He never dies; that is to say, forever you are under the demand of the Law. So Paul saw that God's way is not for the Law to die; the Law cannot die. The Law is God's standard; the Law is God's will. Now what? He sees that God's way is for Paul to die. He wants Paul to die. He wants you and me to die; therefore the cross. Paul says, "You also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ."

When the Lord was crucified, the veil was torn from top to bottom. According to Hebrews, that veil represented the body of Christ. As the body was broken so the veil was torn asunder. Many cherubim were embroidered on that veil, and it speaks of four living creatures. The living creatures represent us. When the veil was torn, all the creatures died

as well. Paul saw that when our Lord was crucified and that veil was torn, Paul was there. It was Paul who died and not the Law. Paul died to the Law.

The Holy Spirit is very specific here, in that He did not mention the cross. He used the body of Christ, which encompasses the cross because the body is not to remain dead. It will be raised from the dead. When the Lord was raised from the dead, Paul was raised with Him. Of course, such a big problem exists between husband and wife then; if the husband does not die, the wife dies. The problem is that the husband not only does not want to die, but he also refuses to die. In order to be able to be delivered from the Law, then the wife must die. But if she dies, then she will suffer the loss of all things. Paul saw that there are two husbands. When she was raised from the dead (This is not a fairy tale; it is the fact in the Bible.), she married another husband. This husband is Christ Himself. He said, "That you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God" (Romans 7:4b). Now you have the fruit of humility. You have the fruit of gentleness. Now you are Christ-like. For this reason, on one hand we are delivered from the Law, and on the other hand we are joined to Christ.

This husband is different from the other husband. Every morning the wife should be the one who brews the tea, but now the husband often does it. And as soon as he comes home he sweeps the floor. He has demands, but he also has the supply. Being joined to Christ is the other husband, and this other husband represents grace. Hence, He has demands, but He also gives the supply. This is how Paul saw it through the objective history, how he could be delivered from the Law. God did it two thousand years ago. When Christ was crucified, we were crucified. We need to know this clearly and reckon it. All we need is to believe it. Thank the Lord for something that has already happened; you just have to receive it. From here on, the Holy Spirit will take us to the next step; He will give us to the fellowship of the cross.

God gave the Law so that we can seek grace; God gave us grace so that the Law can be fulfilled. To declare to the whole universe that God's will is forever God's will, God did not abolish His will. Under grace, we can attain to that which He wants to attain, that is until we are conformed to the image of His Son. That is God's eternal purpose, and the way to the eternal purpose of God is through the cross. It is because of the work of the cross that we are made dead to the Law. This is seeing and knowing. Now the Holy Spirit wants to apply that which happened two thousand years ago to our experience in our daily life today.

SIMON OF CYRENE

We are going to look at another character in Matthew 27:32: "As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross." This is a very special verse. We know that our Lord was to be judged in the judgment hall, and then He was to be crucified. Besides Jesus, there were two criminals that were to be sent to Golgotha. According to the Bible, there were four soldiers because four soldiers wanted to divide the Lord's garment. According to the tradition at that time, when the criminals were going to be crucified, the four soldiers would form a hollow square. The three criminals were placed in the center, each bearing his cross. The vertical portions of the cross were already on the mount, but they had to bear the weight of the beam. The soldiers would lead them in the procession. They never took the shorter route,

always the longest. Their intent was for many to see so that people would fear. So there were three who bore the cross.

What does it mean to bear the cross? It means they were condemned. There was a plaque on the front of their chest written with the inscription of the sin they committed. The plaque would be nailed to the cross with the person. Sometimes they hung it on their chest, and sometimes the soldiers would hold up the plaque so everybody in the city could see the inscription of the sin.

According to John, our Lord bore His own cross at the very beginning. In one night, he was interrogated, dragged from one place to another, scourged and mocked. At this point, He was exhausted to the point of death. Keep in mind that we are talking about the cross and the Law; we are talking about bearing the cross and the Law. This is the fellowship of the cross. In bearing the cross, the emphasis is on fellowship.

Here is an occurrence; the Holy Spirit took account of a person from Cyrene. Cyrene is today's Libya, a country in North Africa near the sea. If you do not remember Libya, you will remember the famous dictator Qadhafi. If you go to Alexandria, Egypt, and go west, you will see the Sahara desert about ten miles away from the Mediterranean Sea. There you have a city called Cyrene, a mountain town two thousand feet above sea level. There are even higher mountains in the south. Those mountains are very useful. They actually help to block the Sahara desert heat; therefore its soil is very fertile. The city of Cyrene is very important in that region.

Simon of Cyrene was Jewish, and the city used to be a Greek city. However, after Alexander the Great died, the great empire was divided. There was a dynasty in Egypt, whose king forced many Jews to the area of Cyrene. What does Cyrene represent? These people did not want to go to Cyrene. Everybody has the freedom to choose where they want to live, but these Jews were under the tyranny of the dictator. They were not their own. Simon of Cyrene did not want to bear the cross, and the people from Cyrene did not want to go to Cyrene. They were Jews, but they were no longer their own. These people were forced to go to Cyrene. The Jews, especially during the Passover, would collect their life-long earnings so they could go to Jerusalem for the Passover. Their life-long dream was to go to Jerusalem once in their lifetime to see the celebrated feast, even though they lived by the desert. If once in their lifetime, there was an opportunity for them to go to Jerusalem, it would satisfy all their longings. Why did they want to go to Jerusalem? They wanted to go to worship. They wanted to be with the children of God. But they did not plan on bearing the cross.

Then somebody touched Simon on the shoulder. When he looked back, it was not just a normal hand; it was the flat side of the spear of a Roman soldier. At this point he had no choice but to obey. Simon of Cyrene had to bear the cross of Jesus! Can you sense what he was feeling? That day was probably the grimmest day of his life. He would have asked, "Why me?" Why didn't the soldier touch somebody else besides me? We are like that. When many things come upon us, we ask: "Why me? Why me?" Very strangely, if God gave you ten million dollars, you would never ask, "Why me?" But as soon as you are called to bear the cross, you ask, "Why me?" This is not because you want to; you are not ready to bear the cross yet. Rightly so, because you are a Jew, you are to obey the will of God. That is why you go to Jerusalem, but the matter of bearing the cross is not listed in your itinerary.

After we are saved, we love the Lord, and we want to mature. Amazingly, we are often like Simon of Cyrene. When things happen, we have to bear the cross, but we did not commit a sin. The Lord Jesus was treated as a sinner, but He had no sin.

BEARING THE CROSS

What does it mean to bear the cross? It means that I am a sinner. Only Jesus was not a sinner. All we who bear the cross prove that we are the sinners. We are sinners saved by grace. So in Paul's old age, he said, "I am the chief of sinners." He says, "I am" in the present tense. He did not say "I was" in the past tense. "I am bearing the cross; that proves I deserve to die. It proves that I am a sinner; it proves that I can do nothing.

This is Simon of Cyrene. He was not ready when somebody touched him on the shoulder, but now he has to bear the cross. Understandably, that is the grimmest day of his life, but it also was the best day of his life. So many times when we bear the cross, we say, "Oh, such bad luck!" But there is no such thing as bad luck. This is actually the most blessed time. The experience of Simon quite often is our experience. The Lord says, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."

DENY SELF

What does it mean to deny "self"? It means you do not have your own agenda. You have amassed so much money, and your purpose is to go to Jerusalem. You want to worship God and rejoice with the people of God. However, if Simon of Cyrene had an important portion in the eternal purpose of God, how could he reach that purpose? He planned and thought about going up to the feast in Jerusalem. What does it mean to deny "self"? It means that you have to put your plan aside for the unexpected, no matter whether you like it or not, and that is bearing the cross. When you reflect, you will see that Simon was the most blessed. When you think that you are going through some difficulties, when you bear the cross, maybe you are feeling bitter, maybe you have suffered much. But afterward, when you reflect, you will see that you received the greatest blessing.

When Mark was describing the event, he said that Simon of Cyrene was the father of Alexander and Rufus. What does that mean? Mark's gospel was written for the Romans. So it must mean that Rufus was commonly known among the people in the church at Rome, that is to say Simon was saved. The Bible tells us in Romans 16:13 that he was the father of Rufus: "Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine." It is quite amazing for him to say that "his mother" is "my mother." This is something out of the ordinary. Simon of Cyrene says, "Why me?" Now the Lord's answer is that his son Rufus is chosen in the Lord because Simon was chosen. Every time we bear the cross, that is our glory because we have been chosen.

How many people did Simon of Cyrene help? Paul said his mother, that is Simon's mother, was also his mother. This is why the cross is the way to the eternal purpose of God. To Simon of Cyrene, that was the grimmest day of his life, but when he looked back, that was the most glorious day of his life. The Holy Spirit uses these stories to describe to us how the fellowship of the cross fulfills the Law.

What does the cross have to do with the Law? Do you know that the soldiers could do what they did? There was a law in Rome, and the Jews were in occupied territory. Under the Roman Empire everybody had to obey their law. "And whosoever shall compel you

to go a mile, go with him two.” The word *compel* is a verb, but the noun form of the word is actually a word that is filled with history. It is very interesting because this word was borrowed from Persia. In Persia where this word originated, it is *courier*. As in the story of Esther, a command was given and all the hundred provinces heard the command. How did they get the word out? They had to send people out. There were many different posts throughout the system. Each post was a courier post, and the couriers sent the message from post to post. Food and water were provided for the hungry and thirsty couriers at each post to soothe them. Many times the government would supply them, but there were times they were unable to meet their needs due to a short notice. For this reason, there was a Persian law that if the couriers could not find anybody to provide them with water or food, you had to provide for them, or you became the courier yourself. That is the origin of the word *compel*.

Many things came from Persia to Rome, for example the cross. Actually the cross originated from Persia because in the mind of Persians the ground was very holy; therefore no criminals should touch the ground during their execution. They must be lifted up above the ground. This is what John refers to in his gospel: “Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,” like the entire ground is very holy. But it is the most Holy One that was lifted up. Later on, Alexander the Great actually received from Persia the cross, and then from there it went to Rome. This word *compel* means “to compel to do something.” This word came from Persia to Rome, but Rome is a place that practices law. According to the Roman law, you cannot use someone at will. If someone asks you to walk, you can go a maximum of one mile. You are protected under Roman law; you only have to walk one mile.

A HIGHER LAW

In this background our Lord said that if someone asks you to walk one mile that is the highest demand of the law, and after one mile you do not have to walk again. But there is a demand even higher. Who demands it? Our Lord demands it. Your enemy wants you to walk one mile, and according to Roman law, you only have to walk one mile. You do not have to walk any extra. But who asks you to walk the extra mile? Our Lord asks you to walk the extra mile. There is something higher than the law. A demand is higher than the law. Amazingly, it is not only “the second mile,” but it is also “turn your other cheek.” It is the same principle.

The Bible says, “You have heard that it was said...” It did not say that you have heard from the Law. It is quite amazing. Here He speaks of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This is actually the oldest law in the world. According to history, the oldest law is called the code of Hammurabi, and it was given by a king of Babylon seven hundred years earlier than the time of Moses. And in it the law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” already existed. That too is a law. The Lord uses it to describe the principle of law. However, in the Old Testament, especially in Exodus, it says, “And if any mischief follows, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” Lastly, when someone hits your cheek, you are supposed to hit back according to this law. But what did the Lord say? What we have here is not only not the Old Testament law; it is also not the code of Hammurabi. Actually, the code of Hammurabi was not the highest law. It is true that according to history it was the earlier law. In the code of Hammurabi, it

says if someone is a nobleman and you hurt his eye, you will have to give him your eye. If you knock off his tooth, you need to give him your tooth. But if he is but an ordinary poor person, you only have to compensate him with money.

When you return to God's law in the Old Testament, it is very clear. If someone smites you on your right cheek, you are supposed to smite him back. The law is a principal of justice. But the Lord said, "Turn your other cheek." After the enemy has smitten your cheek, he is so happy. He has no intention of smiting your other cheek. Who tells you to turn your other cheek? It is our Lord. These are all laws. We have the Jewish law, we have the Hammurabi law, and we have the Roman law. For example, when you talk about the tunic and the cloak, it is also a law (See Exodus 22). The Jews have many tunics, but they have only one cloak. During the day, that cloak is a robe but at night it serves as a blanket. According to the Law, if you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets. If you don't, he would not be able to keep warm at night; he would have no covering to sleep in. So if someone were to take your tunic, he would have absolutely no desire to take your cloak because he would have to return it to you before the sun sets. It is too troublesome. But the Lord is not bothered by that, so you have to give him your cloak.

Why walk an extra mile? Simon of Cyrene bore the cross according to which law? This is what the Lord said, "If someone asks you to walk one mile, walk the second mile." When Simon of Cyrene read this portion of Scripture in Matthew, what kind of feeling do you think he had? He thought there was no purpose in bearing the cross. No, brothers and sisters, if someone asks you to walk a mile, you walk two. We know the end result is glory. We do not quite understand why we have to turn the other cheek. Why do we have to give the cloak? Why do we have to walk a second mile?

THE LOVE OF THE CROSS

This is the story of love. If someone has no love, he cannot do it. This love is the love of the cross. Where is this love manifested? It can only be manifested in one place, and that is on the cross. When men crucified our Lord, that is when men's hatred toward God reached its apex. When He was crucified, you ask who crucified Him. Men crucified Him. The whole world smote our Lord's right cheek. When they smote Him, does it mean salvation was accomplished? No. If it were, it would mean that Judas actually contributed to salvation. Today, many people like to study the matter of the gospel of Judas. Many want to speak on behalf of Judas, as though if Judas had not betrayed our Lord, we would not be saved. No, if only Judas, Pilate, and men crucified the Lord, salvation would not have been completed.

When men hated the Lord to the utmost, the Lord prayed: "Father, forgive them." Forgive who? Those who crucified Him; those sinners, you and me. Is God going to listen to that prayer? It is His Son; He has to listen to that prayer. But if He answered that prayer, where is the righteousness of God? Can God casually overlook one who has sinned as no sin? He cannot do that; so what is He to do? When our Lord was crucified, He prayed for us, "Father, forgive them." In order to accomplish His love and to accomplish His righteousness, the Lord had to stand in our place.

The Bible says, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Men smote Him; men crucified Him. For the accomplishment of salvation, He needed to stand in the place

of men. Now God has crucified Him; now God has to smite Him. What is salvation? What is the love of the cross? It is not just one cheek; the enemy wanted His right cheek. It is God who wanted Him to turn the other cheek, and then God smote Him. Our Lord obeyed God even unto death. Only in this way can God's salvation be accomplished. Judas had no contribution.

What manner of love is this? This certainly is the love of the cross. Moreover, when He was on the cross, the soldiers divided His garments and cast lots for His tunic. What does that mean? The four soldiers divided His outer garments into four parts, a part to every soldier. In those days the Jews wore four things—shoes, turban, girdle, and cloak—four pieces of clothing for four soldiers. One took the shoes, one took the turban, one took the girdle, and the other took the cloak. The only thing left was the tunic. The tunic was one seamless piece of cloth, and they did not want to tear it apart. So they played a game, and whoever won got to take the tunic. When our Lord was on the cross, when people divided His cloak and cast lots for His tunic, do you know what kind of impression the Lord portrayed to others? From men's perspective, God used men to strip Him; therefore this is a stripping hand. The cross has a process; there is a stripping process of the cross.

In the 1950s, brother Watchman Nee wrote a hymn: "God, You are dismantling that which I have built. It seems like You are stripping all that I have." Toward the end, he prayed the greatest prayer, "Lord, You can strip everything from me but You must leave one thing for me, that is Your stripping hand."

Through the soldiers, God stripped our Lord completely on the cross. That is the love of the cross. The world wanted Him to die: "Crucify Him; crucify Him." Yet He was raised from the dead. Man wanted Him to walk one mile; He walked two. For this reason, He accomplished the work of salvation. This is the love of the cross. This love is a complete love. The love that you have for your brother is but a half-circle. The love you have for your friends is but a semicircle. It is only when you pray for your enemy, when you love your enemy, that it is a complete love.

We all are enemies of the cross. The world is its enemy, the flesh is its enemy, and sin is its enemy. We are the objects of the love of the cross. This is the love of the cross. The Lord says, "You are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." How can we do that? Can we be holy as the heavenly Father is holy? It is impossible! But thank the Lord, in the passage in Romans 5, the word *perfect* speaks of the perfection of love. We cannot do anything. There is one thing that the Lord calls us to, and that is be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. He gives rain to both the good and the bad. If this love is complete love, you love your friends and you will love your enemies. When on the cross, the Lord Jesus had that love. He wants to communicate that love to you and me. This is the fellowship of the cross.

If you walk one mile, you have fulfilled the law. If you give the tunic, you have fulfilled the law. If you turn your cheek, you have fulfilled the law. Why aren't you happy? Why aren't you restful? Why aren't you joyful? When will you have joy? It is when you turn your other cheek. What does that prove? It proves that grace is growing in you. We are no longer under law but under grace. This life is a transcendent life. We are more than a conqueror. The Lord wants to communicate the love of the cross to you and me, that we might be complete; we might be perfect like the heavenly Father is perfect. That is God's eternal purpose. When we are conformed to the image of His Son, that is

His will and that is His eternal purpose. Since this is His will, it represents His standard. This law then is higher than any other law. When you have entered into the perfect love, then you have certainly fulfilled the Law.

The Law has only sixty points but you actually got a hundred on your test, for you have not abolished the Law but fulfilled it. To fulfill the Law is to accomplish the eternal purpose of God. May the Lord be gracious to us!

BEARING THE CROSS AFTER JESUS

When Simon of Cyrene bore the cross and followed the Lord, in the gospel according to Matthew, it says that he was “compelled” to bear the cross. And in Mark it tells us that he was the father of Rufus. The account of Luke tells us, “On him, they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus.” This is the meaning of bearing the cross. Many people bear the cross but don’t bear it after Jesus. That is not the Lord’s will. “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.” We forget the “follow Me.” You only remember how much you have suffered; you only remember your mother-in-law’s face; you only remember your daughter-in-law’s face; you only remember the harsh words: “You bear the cross; you suffer much.” What is it to bear the cross? When Simon of Cyrene bore the cross, he also bore it after the Lord Jesus.

The daughters of Jerusalem wept when they saw the bruises all over the Lord Jesus. The Lord said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. The day will come when they will not leave one stone upon another in Jerusalem. You are all sinners. Before long, God will execute His judgment upon you. Don’t weep for Me, I am going to the cross.”

How can this person be a sinner? How can a sinner say these words? He has to be the Savior. I want to know who He is. Because he bore the cross, he was near the Lord. He heard every word the Lord said. Who heard these words? How did Luke make an account for these words? Luke’s words were given to him by Paul, and Rufus’s mother was Paul’s mother.” Who saw all of this? Who was the witness for the Lord Jesus? Who was the witness for the cross? Thank the Lord; it was Simon of Cyrene.

You may not know that when you bear the cross that is the time when you are closest to the Lord. He will wipe away your tears. Your loss is no loss. You welcome the loss. You did not understand it at first. Why did the Lord treat me so? I came to worship Him; that is my dream. I do not want to bear the cross. He had never dreamed of what God had prepared for him. He had never given thought to it. No wonder, he was a chosen one.

Today, when you bear the cross, God is gracious to you. God treats you with love. God gives you glory. Now you can follow Him; you can hear His word and know Him more. Finally, you can perceive Him being crucified and how the soldiers stripped Him. You hear Him say, “Father forgive them.” That is the fellowship of the cross. This is the closest fellowship you can have with the Lord.

You see that Simon of Cyrene can fulfill the will of God in his life. You know that Mark followed Paul. He thought that it was an honor just to carry Paul’s briefcase. Then he found it to be difficult and he cried out for his mom and went away. That is Mark. He thought that it was an honor just to carry Paul’s briefcase. After Simon of Cyrene was saved, when he reflected, he did not just carry the Lord’s briefcase. If he knew that the Lord was the Son of God, that He was his Savior, why did God choose him and give him such a glory that he could bear His cross?

When we bear our own cross, we think there are many crosses. There is only one cross. That is when we receive from the Lord His cross. Then it becomes our cross. Thank the Lord. That is the story of Simon of Cyrene. For this, we thank the Lord. Unbeknownst to Simon of Cyrene, he actually fulfilled God's desire. I believe he did not just walk one mile; I believe he walked the second mile. He was subjected under the cross.

At last God's will was accomplished. May the Lord open our eyes! God gave the Law so that we can seek grace. We can be delivered from the Law because of the finished work of the cross. He gave us grace and by that grace we can turn the other cheek, walk the second mile, and give our cloak. Just as the Lord was on the cross so can we. What does that mean? It means we may be conformed to the image of His Son. Where is the mold from? That mold is the mold of the cross. May the Lord speak to us!

Let us pray:

Lord, we want to commit these words into Your hand. If You see fit, please use these words. Lord, solve our problems once for all. So many times we do not know what it means to bear the cross. But you can fellowship the cross to us. You have given us the love of the cross. We thank You. We welcome this fellowship. So many times we do not understand. But we want to hear Your words, deny ourselves, bear the cross and follow You. We thank You. You have chosen us. We give You praise, worship, adoration. We prostrate in the dust. Even if we have to crawl we want to come after You, because You are the one who has looked favorably upon us so that we can bear the cross and follow You. Listen to our prayer, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.