

PREFACE

The 12th West Coast Christian Conference was held from July 30 to August 2, 1998 in Seattle, Washington.

The theme of the conference was: WHOLLY SANCTIFIED. The part concerning 'Sanctification of the Soul' was delivered by Brother Stephen Kaung and was transcribed from audio tapes and printed by permission.

This finished version has not been reviewed by the speaker.

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Please read I Thessalonians 5:23,24.

Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly: and your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He [is] faithful who calls you, who will also perform [it].”

May we have a word of prayer:

Lord, we thank You and praise You. It is Your sovereign grace that You gather us together before You. We trust that You are among us. And we trust You shall speak to us. Lord, we only pray that we can be totally open before You, that we can truly hear Your own word, that Your word can examine our hearts, and Your word can save us because every word of Yours is powerful. Now, Lord we give this time back to You. We look to Your own Spirit to work here. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

We thank our Lord. He collected us from all directions. We believe, when God so gathers us together, He has His own

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perfect will. We pray that His will can be accomplished among us. So we ask ourselves to pray these few days before the Lord. For, if the Spirit of the Lord does not work, none of us can do anything. But when the Spirit of the Lord works, no one can resist it.

The two verses we read are the focus of our gathering together. I personally like these two verses very much because in these two verses God shows us His heart. God also shows us His calling, and also the Lord shows us His own work. It tells us here that “the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly.” So here we see that the mind of God is so that we can be wholly sanctified. Often times we believe in the Lord Jesus that His salvation will only bring us out of hell and bring us into heaven and that is it. Actually in the concept of the sinful man like us, if our sins can be forgiven, and if we can go to heaven after we die, then that salvation is sufficient to us. Many believers believe in the Lord Jesus only in this way. But the Bible shows us, in the intent of God, He wants to save us to an extent that we can be wholly sanctified, and that our spirit and soul and body can be wholly preserved. Then, in the days of our Lord Jesus, we can be blameless. So here we see the salvation of God is indeed complete and rich. It is not only that our sins are forgiven and we shall be brought into heaven, but He shall save us to an extent that satisfies His own heart.

Our God is a holy God, so He wants us to be holy also. We remember the Scripture tells us that, unless a man is holy, he cannot see God. Our God is holy, therefore we shall be holy too. In other words, God's heart toward us is that we can be like Him, that we can have a portion, that we can partake in His nature, that we can be complete, that we can be perfect and that we can be one with Him. This is the intent of God toward us. So, not only our spirit needs to be saved and needs to be sanctified, but also our soul needs to be saved and sanctified and even our body needs to be saved and sanctified, so that our whole being can be like Him before Him. This is the heart of God toward us.

However, this is not only the heart and mind of God. We see this is also the calling of God. God's calling is according to His own will and His own glory. God has called us, but what has He called us to? He calls us to glory. He calls us to be sanctified. He calls us to be perfected. He calls us to be blameless. So, dear brothers and sisters, here we see how high and lofty is the calling of God towards us. He calls us according to His own glory and His own grace. This calling is not just towards a few. This calling is to all. He calls all who believe on Him, so that all can be sanctified. We should not think that only a few can be called saints. The Bible tells us that every believer is a saint and that we can all have a portion in His holiness. Therefore, we can all commune with God. God

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wants us to be able to satisfy Him, so that we can be like Him. So this is indeed a glorious calling.

This calling is not only to us individually, but this is also a calling to us corporately. God not only calls us individually to partake in His holiness, but He also wants to gain a glorious and holy church, with no spots and no wrinkles. It is a holy and glorious church. This is the calling of God towards us. His calling is according to His own will. Brothers and sisters, I pray that we can all hear this calling. Probably many children of God do not yet know God is calling them. Therefore there is difficulty in their pursuits of God, for they have downgraded the calling of the Lord.

We thank and praise God. He tells us very clearly in His own word that His calling is a lofty one, a holy one, and a glorious one. To us who have been so called by Him, how shall we respond to His calling?

Brothers and sisters, there is one thing we have to admit. Now, the calling of God is so glorious, but this is not something that we can accomplish by ourselves. If we want to respond to this calling just by ourselves, how are we going to accomplish this by ourselves? Brothers and sisters, we cannot even save ourselves; we cannot cleanse our own sins. For our whole life, we can try our

best, doing this good or that good, but we see our own righteousness is just like that rag. It would be just like the fig leaves that Adam and Eve used to make garments for themselves; they could not cover their shame.

Brothers and sisters, now that we know that we cannot even save ourselves, how can we make ourselves wholly sanctified by ourselves? How can we partake in His character? And how can we be blameless on the day of His return? But, we thank and praise God. Here we see, the calling of God is something that God Himself is to perform, because God is faithful. He shall perform His own calling.

Here it says that the God of peace shall sanctify you by Himself wholly. It is He himself who is to accomplish this. Why does it say 'the God of peace' here? For, we know, our God is peaceful. In the trinity God, it is all harmonious. The Holy Father and the Holy Son and the Holy Spirit are in one accord. In them there is no separation. In them there is only harmony. They have only one spirit and one heart. In God there is peace.

Now this God of peace shall give this peace to us so that there is no separation between us and Him. Not only are we reconciled with Him, but also among us, and inside of us, there is harmony. In

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other words, the reconciliation of our spirit, our soul and our body is harmonious, and, in our whole being, it is consistent. Brothers and sisters, often times we see we are divided within. My spirit is willing, but my soul is not. My heart is willing, but my strength cannot match up. There is much conflict and turbulence within us. But we thank and praise our God. God himself is going to sanctify us so that we can be consistent and harmonious with Him, with ourselves, and with others. Our Lord is one with the Father. He wants us to be one with Him. He also wants us to be one with ourselves so that this peace can come to us and we can be sanctified wholly.

So this time when we gather together, we shall have this prayer before God. May these two verses become our prayer; these are prayers of faith. May the God of peace Himself sanctify us wholly. May our spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls us is faithful; He shall perform it. May we look to His grace so that we will cooperate with Him and allow Him to accomplish His glorious will in us.

The responsibility of our Brother Lance before the Lord is to talk about the spirit. My responsibility is with the soul. The responsibility of Brother Christian is with the body. Our Brother

Lance already mentioned last night that we can tell the difference between the spirit, soul and body, but we cannot separate them. If we separate them, then our being is totally lost. But, if these three things are actually at war with one another, then we shall not have a peaceful life. But, if the spirit, soul and body can be wholly sanctified, then that will bring glory to God.

This morning we would like to share on this matter of the soul. When we share on this topic concerning the soul, we have to start from the very beginning. This morning, we want to share about the beginning or the creation of the soul and its fall. Genesis 2:7 records that God made the shape of man with dust. Then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Originally, the shape or the likeness of this man made of dust was a dead one, just like a doll; there was no life, and it was not living. It lay there having only the shape of a man made of dust. So, do not think too highly of ourselves; we are only made out of dust. We are made of dust, and we shall return to dust. If, today, while living on this earth, we only consider our physical body as our prime purpose of living, then it will all be vanity of vanities.

But, we thank and praise God. After He finished making the shape of man by using dust, He breathed breath into the nostril of man. That breath came out of God himself. Our brother

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mentioned last night that we have a special relationship with God. Because when God created all other things, He only uttered a few words, and things were done. God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. But it was not like this when God created man. There was a breath of life coming out from the inside of God that entered into the nostril of man. This renders a direct relationship between man and God.

I do not know if my interpretation is right, but I will go ahead to put it before you so that you can judge and examine. The Bible tells us that God breathed the breath of life into the nostril of man. When the breath of life entered into this shape which was made of dust, this breath of life became the spirit of man. This spirit of man is not the spirit of God, but it comes from the breath of God. Therefore there is a direct connection between man and God. In the original language of Hebrew, here the 'life' in the breath of life is in plural. There may be two interpretations. Some say that in the Hebrew language, sometimes when you have to emphasize something, you use the plural. So here, maybe an emphasis is made to express that God is doing something special to man; hence the breath of lives. But it may also be possible that, when the breath of life enters the nostrils of man, on one hand it becomes the spirit of man, and, on the other hand, it gives man a living soul. Or, to put it in another way: When the breath of life comes in contact with this

shape made of dust, there is a reaction. That reaction makes man a living soul. In the Chinese translation, it says it is a living man with a spirit. That is only an interpretation. In the original language, there is no mention of the word 'spirit'. It only says: Thus, that man becomes a living soul. In other words, this man of dust now stands up. Now he is living. Now he becomes a living soul. Now he has his will; he has his thoughts; he has his emotions. And now he has his personality. He now becomes a man; he is a living soul.

Why is man called 'soul' in the Scripture? We remember when Jacob brought his descendants into Egypt, the Bible says that Jacob and his descendants, seventy souls, entered Egypt. This is the original language. The Chinese translation says 'seventy people', because indeed a man's soul represents man himself. In man, the soul indeed has the highest position, because that is where man has connection with God. In the order by which God created man, God wants the spirit of man to be in the highest position, so that he can commune with God there. He receives the will of God in the spirit. Then the spirit of man takes the will of God and gives it to his soul, so that his soul can will to receive God's will, willing to obey the will of God and taking the will of God to be good. Then his intellect, as well as his mind, can also understand the will of God. He will also have a compassion and emotion that loves the will of God. Then he determines that his body should do the will of God. So, this is the

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order by which God gives His will to the man He created. The spirit is at the highest position, because, in the spirit, man can know the will of God-that is the 'God consciousness'.

The soul also has its own consciousness. I know that I exist because I have my soul, I have my thought, I have my will, I have my emotion. Therefore I know that I exist. Last night our brother already said that our body senses the world. The spirit has the highest position in our life, but the soul is the most critical in our life, because it is in between the spirit and the body. It is the interface between the spirit and the body. Now, whether God's will can be done in our body depends on the attitude of our soul. If our soul accepts the will of God, then it can tell our body to do it. If our soul rejects the will of God, then it will not let our body do the will of God. So we see that the soul indeed is a critical part.

Brothers and sisters, when God created the soul of man, what was its condition? When God created man, his soul was very innocent. We often say that a child is very innocent. When God created man, the soul of man was innocent. There was no guile in him, and he was totally open. The soul of man at that time was free. The Bible has this image for us. When God created man and put him in the garden of Eden, God often times came to talk with them. As they were not unfamiliar with God, so, at that time, they were

very free before God. You cannot say that there was sin in them, because they had not sinned at that time. And you cannot say that they had righteousness in them either, because there was no righteousness appearing in them. We can say that their soul at that time was neutral. The soul then needed to be tested before we know the condition of the soul of man.

So when God created man, the soul of man was free and neutral. Man had his own free will because God created man in His own likeness. God is the only, and the first, free will in the whole universe. When He created us, He gave us a free will. That means that we can determine ourselves. We can choose ourselves. We can have our own opinions about what we want. It is the same with our thoughts. When we were created, we had thoughts, and we had minds. At that time we did not have the filthy sinful minds, but the noble thoughts did not start either. We can go either way. At that time, when God came to the garden of Eden to converse with man, as soon as they heard the footsteps of God, probably they would run to God like children. It would be just as your children come running to you when you return home. Even when you have just reached the door, when the children hear your footsteps, they run to you calling "Mom, Mom". I think that probably was the condition of Adam and Eve toward God. That love was not tested, but that was a true love, a genuine expression of their emotion. That was

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the condition of the soul of man when it was created. It was a living soul. It was not something without thought, without will, or without sensibility. If it were so, it would not be the man created by God. The soul created by God is a living soul, but that needs to be tested.

God put man in the garden of Eden. The garden of Eden was the best environment, because God had arranged that garden. Since God had designed it, I think that must be the best design. There were trees of all kinds of fruit, beautiful and delicious. God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of the fruits of all the trees in the garden. In the center of the garden there was the tree of life. We do not know what this tree looks like. But we do know this is the tree of life, and that 'life' is not the life of the soul, not the life which causes us to live. That 'life' is the life eternal, the life of God. God put his own uncreated life, glorious and holy, in that tree, which was in the center of the garden. Besides this tree, there was another tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If one eats of its fruit, it will develop one's knowledge of good and evil. But, amazingly, God said to Adam, "You shall not eat of the fruit of that tree. Because the day you eat of that tree you shall die." Why would God do that? Because God intended to give man a choice. After all, how would this man choose his own future? He could choose the tree of life, accepting the life of God, confessing that his

own life was not complete and he needed God to be his life, willing to submit to God, and letting the will of God prevail in his own life. This is one way of life. But, there is another way of life. If man chose the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that is to say, "I want to develop the ability of my soul. I don't need God to be my God. I want to be independent. I want to be god, like Him; I don't need Him."

Here we see that God put these two trees before man and let man choose. But, we thank God. God came to the garden to commune with them. I believe that, although God respects the free will of man, He would not say, "Man, you shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life. You have to eat of the tree of life." I believe God would not do so. But, I believe, by His own presence, God wanted to influence man to choose the tree of life. For, when man is with God, he is bound to discover that God is so perfect and so loving. God is also holy, righteous, and full of grace. Man will then be drawn to Him; he will want to be like God and submit to Him. Then, he would voluntarily go to the tree of life. But, regrettably, in spite of this exhortation of God, our father Adam did not go to the tree of life. He was also confused by Satan. So, he ate of the forbidden fruit. After he ate of the forbidden fruit, he immediately discovered that he was naked. Prior to this moment, they did not have any clothes on them, but they were not conscious that they

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were naked.

Now, I don't know whether my view is right here. This is not made clear in the Bible; this is just my thinking. You can take it or leave it. All the animals created by God have skin and hair. They all have fur as clothing. Man has skin, but he does not have a thick coat of fur. Although some have more hair, it is not thick enough to be his clothing. For all the other animals, their hair becomes their garment in the winter time.. (Today, I see people shave the hair of their pet dogs, and in the winter they put clothing on them. That is very unnatural, because God has already prepared clothing for dogs. We need not worry for God.) But, very amazingly, man does not have that kind of covering. So, personally, I believe when God created man, God gave man glory to be his clothing. But after man sinned, that glory left him.

Man originally had glory, for God told him to be in charge of the birds in the air and the animals on earth and the fish in the ocean. At that time, when a tiger met a man, the tiger would submit, probably because man had glory about himself. So when the tiger came in contact with that glory, it would submit. But nowadays, it is different. When a tiger sees you, it will tear you into pieces. Probably after man sinned, the glory that God gave left him, so he discovered himself to be naked. He had to use fig leaves to cover

his own shame. But then the cool air rolled in. When the wind blew, the fig leaves could not really cover them. So when they heard the steps of God in the garden, they hid themselves in the midst of trees.

Brothers and sisters, we see that, after a man sins, the soul of man falls. Here, something is happening. The first thing I'm going to say has something to do with the subject in Brother Lance's messages. We know that the Lord told Adam not to eat of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because the day he ate of it, he shall die. But, after Adam ate of the fruit of that tree, the Bible tells us that he lived on for more than 500 years, and he had sons and daughters. So here we see that his body continued to live for 900 years and multiplied with children; that means that his soul was still very active. But the word of God is inerrant. The day he ate of that forbidden fruit, his spirit died. Although the spirit was still there, the communion between that spirit and the spirit of God was severed. Death, as given in the Bible, is a separation between a person and the normal environment in which he should be in. The normal environment of man's spirit is God. But, the minute man sinned, his relationship with God was separated. He was separated from the living God. Although the spirit was still there, and it was still functioning, but that function was no longer normal, because its relationship with God was totally separated.

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Many people are very smart. He knows everything about astronomy and things of the earth. But when you talk about God with him, he is totally ignorant, because his spirit is dead. But his own soul is still very active. From that moment when man fell, he became a man of flesh and blood. The Chinese translation says it is of flesh and blood. But the original language says it becomes a natural man. What does a natural man refer to? A natural man refers to a fallen soul, just as it is said in Jude 19 that, without the Holy Spirit, it is totally carnal. Our being now falls totally under our soul and our body. The man's spirit now is totally separated from God. Thus, as man, we fall under our soul and our body. We become now a natural man. So, in Genesis 6, God says now that man is of the flesh, "My Spirit shall not strive with him".

So, we have become fallen man, a natural man of the flesh. What is our condition today? (1) We are separated from the life of God. (2) We have totally fallen into ourselves. (3) We become flesh. For the so-called higher class man, he would follow his soul. For the so-called lower class man, he will be completely controlled by his own passion. So here we see that man is now fallen. Now sin rules in man. Now man submits to the law of sin and death. What does it mean by the law of sin and death? The law of sin says, "You know this is something you should not do, but you do it anyway". The law of death says, "This I know I should do, but I

cannot do it.” Now, a man is under the total bondage of sin. To ask a man not to sin is impossible. To sin is natural. To sin is something you do not have to be taught. You do not need to have a school of sin to teach people to sin. A very small child knows how to sin at a very early age, because he was born a sinner. To sin is his natural ability. It is extremely difficult not to sin. You have to strive with all your strength to prevent yourself from sinning, for sin now reigns.

But, for us, ‘self’ now becomes the life of this fallen soul. We are self centered in every way. The whole world revolves around us as its center. Everything must be for our own benefit. This is the condition of a fallen soul. On the surface, we just follow the fashion of the day. But, in reality, we are controlled by the enemy in the air which controls within us. The Bible says we are the sons of wrath. The spirit of an unbeliever is dead. When he lives in the world on this earth, he lives in a fallen soul. Although some people seem to be more noble in their behavior, and they are more moral, while some seem to commit more sin in their behavior, the differences are but secondary. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; there is not one righteous, not even one. No one seeks God, and everyone goes astray. We are all like sheep gone astray. We have no God and no hope. This is the condition of man. This is the condition of a fallen soul.

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Brothers and sisters, we need to know our past and recognize who we are. We are totally helpless. We are unable to free ourselves from that depraved condition. Now, because of his own will and intellect and sensibility, when man discovers himself to be in such a condition, he desires to restore himself. So he turns to religion, ethics, or any moral things, trying to save himself. But, brothers and sisters, we know that we cannot save ourselves. Thank and praise God. As our brother already mentioned last night, it is the Lord Jesus who came to save us. The Lord willing, we shall share about the salvation of the soul tomorrow, about how our fallen soul can be saved. On the third day, we shall share on the process by which our soul is sanctified. All these emphasize experience. On the last day, we shall talk on the result of the sanctification of the soul. We pray that, because we have come here together to read the word of God, the Holy Spirit will bring us to holy sanctification. This is the will of God; this is the calling of God, and this is His own work. Let us pray:

Lord, here when we review our past, we really see that we were totally helpless. We were fallen. We were dead in sins and transgressions. We had no God and no hope. We were all sinners. Even our righteousness was all sins before You. But, Lord, we thank You and praise You, because You did not forsake us. Even before the foundation of the earth, You had chosen us in Christ.

Lord, You came to this earth and accomplished this perfect salvation. Lord, may You prick and move our hearts through Your own Holy Spirit, so that we can repent and believe on our Lord Jesus. O Lord, You have come to save us. We thank You and praise You. You save us to the very end. You save not only our spirit, but also our soul and body to the very end. Lord, we pray that You continue to open the eyes of our hearts so that we can see the glory of Your salvation and experience the efficacy of Your salvation. We give You all the praises. May Your will be done. In the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.