

Knowing Christ Through His Ascension

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Let us turn to the Ephesians, 2:5. “ Made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And raised us up with him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In order that in the ages to come, He might show the suppressing riches of His grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.”

Let us have another simple word of prayer. “Lord, we thank You that the word You speak to us is spirit and alive. Not only have You already ascended to heaven and are seated at the right hand of God, but Your word tells us even when we were dead in our transgressions, You made us alive in Christ. And we are seated with Christ in heaven. Our Lord, we thank You. We ask that You will continue to deeply reveal these words in our hearts. Just as Paul prayed, give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might truly know You. Listen to our prayer in Jesus’ precious name, Amen.”

To See Christ

When Paul was first saved, he saw the ascended Christ. Even though his physical outward eyes were blinded by great light, his inner eyes were opened. Paul met the ascended Christ on the road to Damascus, and likewise with us. At the moment we were saved, we all met the ascended Lord. So we can say, our experience began at the moment when we met our Lord. In reality, Paul did meet the ascended Lord. For the new believers and the young brethren, I want to speak a bit more in this point. Many people just know they are saved by grace. In reality, the Bible has an important truth: rebirth. When we are reborn, we are reborn of the Spirit. We are born from above. There are many stories. I want to remind brothers and sisters. When we read the New Testament, especially the four gospels, do you remember that our Lord once healed a man who was blinded from birth? The Pharisees were very nervous. May be because we Chinese do not understand

very well the background of the Jews, we are not influenced too much by this passage. We might ask why the Pharisees are that nervous; They want to find out if he was blinded from birth. They first asked the blinded, then his parent. Why are these Pharisees so anxious? In the background, it is a very important thing in history that our Lord healed a man blinded since birth. If you and I read the Old Testament, there were a lot of miracles. Crossing the Red Sea was a miracle. A dead man's resurrection was a miracle. Yet no matter how you read the Old Testament, you can't find this miracle: the blind sees. Is there such prophecy in the Old Testament? Yes. But when would the blind be able to see? It is when the Messiah arrives. The people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah. They were like Paul. They didn't think that Jesus was the Messiah. Even until today, they are still waiting for the Messiah. According the Old Testament, the Messiah will do something that has never been done before. Eyes that were born blind can now see. When our Lord healed the blind man of what does that remind us? It reminds us that our Lord is the Messiah. He is the one that the Jews have been waiting for. The Messiah has arrived amongst them. He has opened their eyes, but they don't believe. They thought that was impossible because they didn't believe that Jesus is the Messiah. They said this is not true. When we read the story of the blind, we are then clear why the Pharisees are so anxious and nervous.

The days that Adam ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, God said, "The day that you eat it, you shall die." We know that Adam live for another 900+ years after he ate the fruit. Yet when God said you shall die that day, then you shall die. Even though his body lived for another 900 years, even though his mind and his emotions were a few hundred years old, the day he ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Even, God said he would die. Where did he die? Not in his body, not in his sold, but in spirit. Our body touches the things around us and our soul feels our existence. Our spirit is the channel for us to have fellowship with our Lord. The day he ate of that fruit, his spirit died. The bible said, "Adam's eyes were opened, and he realized that he was naked." He was self-conscious. A pair of eyes was opened. It was blurry before, and now he feels he is naked. At the same time, his inner eyes became blind. All

descendants of Adams are born blind. Who then can open our eyes? Why can we see today? We were blind before; now we see. Ever since Paul met the Lord on the road to Damascus, he wanted to testify. Before he was blind, now he sees. It is the same with us. How are our eyes opened? How can we see? It is very much related to the ascension of our Lord.

Before we see this point, let me tell you a story. There was a young man. He was Prince Charming. He went down to a very deep valley one day. In that valley, there was a village. All the people that village were blind. He fell in love with a girl there. They were going to walk down the path of matrimony. Before he asked her hand in marriage, this girl had a condition. Everyone in this village was blind; only his eyes were opened. Everyone was normal except him. She could not marry someone who was abnormal. She said, "if you marry me, you have to take out both of your eyes. You have to be like us, blind, then I will marry you." That night, the young man debated over whether he would take out his eyes. He thought about it overnight. Without a word, he left that village. This is a very touching story, yet this is not a great story. If this were a grand story, that man would have taken out his two eyes.

That is not the end. Let me tell you a true story. This is an accurate story. Two thousand years ago, when our Lord became flesh, He went into a valley. In this valley, not a single one of us was not blind. When our Lord came to earth, He was just like that Prince Charming. He was a perfect man, but not like that Prince Charming when He came to earth. He indeed loved us. Because of His love for us, He had to do something. He was nailed on the cross for us. Not one of us had our eyes opened. Only our Lord had His eyes opened. He was always living before the smiling face of His Father. He never left His Father. We often say the Lord came to die for us because of our sin. That is true. But even more, why was the Lord nailed on the cross for us? He wants to open our eyes. How does He open our eyes? Is it like what the Jews think? As soon as our Lord came, their eyes will be opened. No. Because He wants to open our eyes and He loves us, He had to

be nailed on the cross. At noon time, we heard a voice, "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?" What does that mean? Your sins and my sins were suppressing our Lord. When the Father saw His Son, all of our sins were upon Him. So the Father turned His face away from Him. At that time, He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In the first three hours, even when He was going through so much pain and suffering, He still saw the smiling face of the Father. The smiling face of the Father can carry Him through all the sufferings. Sufferings were not sufferings as long as He could see smiling face of the Father. In order to complete the work of redemption, He stood in your and my position. His fellowship with the Father had never been broken before, yet in that short moment in time, when our Lord did the work of redemption for you and me, the Father turned His face away from Him. Suddenly our Lord could not see the Father's eye. What does it mean to have illuminating eyes? Our eyes are illuminated when we see the Father's face. When we don't see His face, it is as if we are blind. Heaven is heaven because God is there. Hell is hell because God is not there. When our Lord said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?", that pain is the pain of separation. That pain is the pain of hell. Our Lord has never been blind. But for you and me, He could not see anything in that moment. Why couldn't He see anything? It was like when He said, "I thirst." Why did He say, "I thirst."? Because He once told the Samaritan women, if you drink of this water, you will still thirst. How could he not thirst now? Our Lord must thirst on the cross. Our Lord was nailed to the cross, not only for our sins, but to open our eyes. He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" For this reason, He did the work of atonement for us. Thank the Lord. He was raised from the dead. The Bible tells us that He has also entered into glory.

What did Peter say? The one you have crucified, God has made Him Lord and Christ. In other words, God has made Him the Messiah and Christ. You don't have to wait for the millennium. When He ascended, He was already on the throne. In the millennium, our Lord will be seated on the throne in Jerusalem. There is no doubt about this. I want to tell you the good news. You don't have to wait till that day. That is why we are saved. He is exalted at the right hand of the Father. God has made Him our Lord and Christ. He is already Christ. Only Christ can enable our eyes to be opened. In order for our eyes to be

opened, the price that He paid was His life. For you and me, He was nailed to the cross. Now He can open our eyes.

Remember, when He returned to heaven, it was advantageous for us. If He did not go back to heaven, the comforter, the Holy Spirit, would not come. Thank the Lord. Because He went to heaven, He is the Christ. He will open our eyes. How does He open our eyes? The Holy Spirit comes down. Jesus said, "In a short time you not see Me, in another short time, you will see Me." Why will we not see Him? Our Lord ascended to heaven. How do we see Him? Our Lord came in the form of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord that arrives in the form of the Holy Spirit is the ascended Christ. He is the Messiah. He can open our eyes. What does it mean to be reborn? It means when we believe in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit ignites our spirit. Our spirit was blinded; now the Holy Spirit make alive our spirit and we revived unto our Lord. Our eyes are illuminated. This is the greatest story of love in the universe. Our Lord took out both of His eyes in the cross. Thank the Lord. When He ascended to heaven; now He an open all of our eyes. All those blind eyes in the valley are now opened.

Paul's Enlightenment

Before Paul was saved, he was a great and very educated blind man, yet he was still blind. Thank the Lord. On the road to Damascus, he was born from above and born from the spirit. When his eyes were first opened, the first person he saw was the ascended Christ. This is the story of our salvation.

If you are saved by grace, and reborn, don't say that you don't understand what ascension is. You may not understand, but you know it from the inside. When an infant first sees his mother's face, he doesn't understand. He doesn't know. He doesn't understand the wrinkles on his mother's face. But in his life, he knows that that is his mother. As the infant grows, he will understand. In terms of knowing Christ, none of us can say that we know nothing. Our experience begins there. The Holy Spirit ignites our spirit. We are born of the spirit. We are reborn. We are born from above. This is our beginning. If you

have not been reborn, you can have ten theologians and PhD's but they can still not teach you what it is. If you read the theological books, many books speak of ascension. Many people try to understand the ascension through books. Paul and each one of us understand the ascension because we are born from above.

We begin here and this is where Paul began. Paul has to use his whole life to experience what he met. He needs God's word. He did see, but he did not know how to explain it. He saw, but other people couldn't. How do you let other people see what you see? For this reason, God's word is very important. After we are saved by grace, God gave us His words. Thank the Lord. These words will explain what we saw. Remember, you saw right from the beginning, you just don't understand; therefore, you need God's words. It is the same with Paul. Do you remember the road to Damascus, not only did Paul see the ascended Christ, he also saw that the church is the body of Christ. How does he know that? Because the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you prosecuted." How is that possible? Jesus had already been nailed to the cross. If he is already in glory, I am only prosecuting those who believe in Jesus. How could I have been prosecuting someone in heaven? Slowly the light allows Paul to see. The head is in heaven and the body is on earth. If you hit my body, you hit me. So the Lord said, "Saul, Saul, why do you prosecute Me?" You see that vision. You see that vision on the road to Damascus. Only he saw, he needs the word of God to explain. He needs his whole life to understand what he saw. How does he understand? It was according to the word of God.

In his 33 years of life, Paul slowly learned what the ascension was. As the word became more and abundant in him in Ephesians, not only did Paul see, we saw as well. Because Paul gave what he saw to us, we can now see.

What Paul saw in Ephesians is what he saw on the road to Damascus; we cannot be without the word of God. Young people! Don't be lazy. If you want to know Christ more, forever you cannot leave God's word only if God's words become abundant in you. I am not speaking of outward word, logos, I am speaking of the word of life. Why are there these words? It is not for you to become theologians or be a Bible professor. It has to do

with our knowing. Without God's word, you cannot know the Lord. You might have some vision. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. God wants to use His words to make that picture clearer. For this reason, God spoke to Paul. Not only did he speak to Paul, but these words arrive in our hands.

Paul's Epistles

The first sets of book are 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Five years later, he wrote Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians. After another five years, he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon in prison. Just before he was martyred, he wrote 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. These are the words that God spoke to Paul. These are the revelations that Paul received from God. This is the Christ that Paul knew. This is how he knows the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. When you read his epistles, don't just look at the specifics. God gave Paul these words, so that Paul could know Christ. That knowing is still based on what he saw before. The first day, he saw the ascended Christ. The ascended Christ will bring him back 2000 years. Now he needs Paul's whole life. From the moment of his salvation, the ascension of Christ is Paul's experience. Paul has a subjective experience. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ can't just be objective. It is all in the experience. We then need God's word to make it clearer. For this reason, when you read these four sets of books, we have to ask what Paul tells us.

The first set is the prologue. The last set is the epilogue. The two sets in the middle have the greatest revelation. Do you remember what Paul said? I know nothing else. I just know Christ and Christ crucified on the cross. It is these words that explained what the second and third sets of books said. The second set of book shows us the cross. The third sets of books shows us the resurrected and ascended Christ. On the one hand, the cross; on the other hand, Christ. When you speak of the cross, you speak of the death of Christ. When you speak of Christ, you not only speak of resurrection, but also the ascension. Paul knew nothing else, he only knew Christ and Christ crucified. How does he know that? It will be very clear if you read his epistles. If you read Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, you will know how our Lord died. What happened when He died? It is like

our brother said. In these four sets of books, His death not only solved the problem of our sin, the flesh, and the world, but also of ourselves. When you read these epistles, on one hand, Paul has experience, and on the other hand, he has deeper knowledge. All of it was based on what he had seen before. Therefore, brothers and sisters, he gave us his revelations.

He was in the Roman prison when he wrote the third set of books. He let us know Christ. On one hand, Paul needed the word of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit allowed so many things to happen in Paul's life. He learned so many things. The Holy Spirit allowed him to go through so many things. All things work together for the good of those who love Him; the purpose of the Lord was for him to even know more about the ascended Christ. Not only was He the resurrected Christ, but an ascended Christ. The knowledge of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ is not only objective. More importantly, it is subjective. The objective knowledge is always matched up with the subjective experience. Ever since Paul was saved, these two things went together. If we are to follow the Lord, we have on one hand the objective truth and on the other hand, the subjective experience. The Holy Spirit allows many situations, and through these situations He speaks. Through the words, He explains the environment. Slowly Paul's eyes were opened, and he showed us the Christ whom he knew. Many times, we admire his revelations, but our experiences are so far behind. We are not worthy to speak of Paul's revelations. We cannot keep up with him. If we are to see what the Holy Spirit did in Paul's life and now allowed him to see his Christ, not only do we see the Holy Spirit birthed Paul. The Holy Spirit also molded Paul through the cross. Throughout his whole life, he needed to experience this.

When Paul wrote Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, it was the apex of Paul's life. His life reached an apex. His usefulness was at his apex. When he went out on his missionary journey, not just the first, second, but his third missionary journey, if you have made an account, he had approximately gone through all of Asia minor and half of Europe. You can say that it is about half of the circumference of this world. Not only that, but Paul indeed bore much fruit. Our Lord needs many more Pauls. One Paul is not

enough. We need ten, and even hundreds of Paul. When Paul wrote Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, we have to say his revelation reached an apex. Do you remember what he told the elder in Ephesus? He said, "According to God's will, I have not keep anything from you." So these four books should encompass all of God's will. Paul thought he reached his apex. We also thought that he did. His life reached an apex. It is as if he reached Mount Herman. His usefulness was at his all-time high. He said, "There is no other place that I can preach. I am going to Rome." Who spoke similar words? Alexander the Great. After he conquered the entire world, he was crying in his tent. His general asked him why he was crying. He said, "From now on, I don't have any more land to conquer." Only Alexander the Great spoke those words, but Paul spoke the same words. He wanted to conquer the whole world for Christ. Of the Macedonian region, he said there were no more places that He could speak. For this reason, he had to go to Rome. In terms of usefulness for the Lord, he reached the highest he could reach. He was on the Mount of Transfiguration when God answered his prayer.

While when the sun was at its highest, he said, "I want to go to Rome." God listened to his prayer. He did go to Rome. Paul said, "I want to joyfully come into Your midst." God listened to his prayer, and He did not. He answered his prayer by letting him go to Rome. He did not listen to his prayer for he did not go to Rome joyfully. He was going in chains. He had never thought of that. His schedule was Spain and Rome. He thought he would joyfully go to Rome. Paul did not go to Rome as a tourist because God's word said this Gospel will reach the ends of the world. At that time, if you preached the Gospel to Rome, that would be the end of the world. Paul forsook everything. He wanted to gain the whole world for Christ. For this reason, he wanted to go to Rome.

Paul's Imprisonment

Thank the Lord for listening to his prayer because that desire was God's desire. God's ways are always above our ways. Before it was a bright and shiny day, then it downpoured rain. When Paul was the most useful, he was chained. Therefore Paul kept saying, "My chains." What does that mean? Paul was a lively Paul. He would preach the

gospel anywhere. No matter where he went, so many people bowed before the Lord. This pair of hands was very different than all others. This pair of hand could be bound together. If this pair of hands was bound together, what would happen to those souls? Our hands can be bound. We are not useful people. Even if we live longer, we might not be useful. Yet Paul is different. Paul should live for longer years and be used by the Lord for many more years. Why, when Paul was the most useful time, was he bound in chains? Somebody so lively, used mightily by the Lord, full of revelations, suddenly he became bound in chains and then imprisoned in Rome. You can't imagine. Paul was not an angel. He was like you and me with flesh and blood. When we tear, he tears. When we are sorrowful, he is also sorrowful. When we are dejected, he is also dejected. If you read the letters of Paul, he is not without time of weakness, tearing, and self-pity. Do you see that? This had a great impact to him. He was prepared to be used by the Lord. He did not prepare to be bound by the Lord. All of us used by the Lord are prepared to be used by the Lord. We are never prepared to not be used. It was our Lord that sculpted Paul for over 20 years. Now Paul was the one that shines. Paul was useful. At this time, Paul was bound. Brothers and sisters, what kind of feelings do you have? The feeling is as if somebody who loves his life, somebody is an athlete who is very active, and suddenly he gets a stroke. Suddenly he cannot move. He can only remain in a chair. Before the whole world was his, now he is limited to this small area.

Sometimes we say we experience something because we were disobedient. We know why something happened to us: the Holy Spirit needs to correct us. How do you explain Paul's situation? Paul wanted to fulfill the will of God. He did not go to Rome for himself. He was going there for the Lord. You can picture when Paul was in prison. What kind of feeling is that? When somebody was hurt, when somebody was provoked, it was very easy for him to always think of himself. He pitied himself. Then he closed himself in a shell. He couldn't rise up. This was not only a spiritual man because the men of this world are the same. In this world, there is a word, depression. Somebody tells us that depression is a sickness. Because of its environment, many people fall into this own hole. They cannot climb out. Their hurt is too great. They can talk to nobody. They have to fallen into self. The greatest hurt the environment can give us is for us to look deeper and

deeper into ourselves. You can see that when Paul was in prison. Being a man, he was the same as you and me. So many times we turn into self-pity. So many times we put ourselves into a box and cannot get out. Many times people need medication. At this time, where is the way of salvation? Why did our Lord bind Paul and put him in prison?

Thank the Lord. When you read the epistles of imprisonment, prison was his true experience. In Ephesians, he told us a secret. The secret is that he went through all these sufferings. It was especially when he was suddenly bounded by the Lord. What is the answer? Who can save him from himself? I say this again. Many times our sufferings are not severe. It is only when we tumble ourselves into self that makes it worst. The sufferings in our lives might not be that heavy. The deeper you dig into yourself, the worse the suffering. Where is our road to salvation? How were you saved? How were you reborn? Where is the way to salvation? Why do we need medication? Our Lord has already prepared us salvation. What and how He did it in Paul, He will do in our lives. Of course, we are not in the same situation as Paul. We also have sufferings. Sometimes similarly to Paul, we don't understand. It is easy to be pitiful. We always ask "Why me among all these people?" If the Lord were to give you a million dollars, you would never ask "Why me?" When you hit sufferings, then you ask "Why me? What have I done to deserve this?" So many times, we can't explain our sufferings, just as Paul could not explain how he was bound. As you slowly read the epistles of Paul, you will understand the usefulness of the chain. The chains have to do with his revelations. This shows us that what God gives us is all a result of the prayer of the Holy Spirit. Because He is interceding for us, all things work together for good. There are no accidents in a Christian's life. We have only but incidents. Everything that happens to you is the result of the prayer of the Holy Spirit. Because it is the will of God for us to be conformed to the image of Christ, He has prepared different environments for us so that we might lose our freedom, we might be in a difficult situation. Thank the Lord! This is a very important lesson. When Paul wrote Ephesians, we know what he went through. How did he surpass and get out of it?

Paul's Overcoming

It was as if no one could save him from there. Paul was still in prison. Where was the problem? Paul was enclosing himself. Yet thank the Lord. The One who saved him is the One he first met when he became saved.

Let us read Ephesians 1:19, "And what is the surpassing greatness of his power towards us those who believe."

This is what Paul understood through his experience. May be we don't understand, but Paul understood. Paul knew that there is a surpassing greatness of power. When he was enclosed in himself, no one could save him. When he had fallen into suffering, no one could save him. At this time, he felt this power. That power was what he gained when he was first saved. That power was already in him. This power was a power of greatness and what is the surpassing greatness of his power. What is that power inside of us?

Ephesians 1:20, "Which he brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." This great power is in Christ. This power has two things. On one hand, it allows him to rise from the dead, on the other hand, it allows him to be seated at the right hand of God. There is resurrection power, and there is an ascension power. This power was already in Paul. When Paul was in himself, what power allowed him to be raised from the dead? What power allowed him to be ascended?

Ascension means that all enemies are at your foot. The whole world is at your feet. Before, he was below everything, he was under the environment, the suffering, and the chains. Who saved him beyond the chains? Now the chains are below. Prison is below. This is what Paul experienced. Because Paul experienced this, he shared it with us. What is His strength and might? The strength of His might is so that He can be raised from the dead. Our brother already shared that this is a great power. Brothers and sisters, if you were to be raised from the dead, you might still be on earth. You might still be in the enclosure of yourself. We are alive, but we are still on earth. Thank the Lord!

Resurrection and ascension are always together. If a power allows us to be resurrected, it will always allow us to be ascended. All the enemies are at our feet. Do you see what Paul describe it as? Let's continue to read verse 21, "Far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the ones to come. And He put all things and subjective under his feet."

How is that possible? God has a power in Christ. Not only to allow Him to rise from the dead, but to be seated at the right hand of the Father. It surpasses all. Everything is subjected under His feet. This is what happened in our Lord's life, but Paul said that this power is in us also. Thank the Lord; because of this power, we can experience the ascension of Christ. Because of the power of resurrection and ascension, it brings us into heaven. Because of this reason, when Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossian, Philippians, and Philemon, you see this picture of the heaven. Ephesians shows us the heavenly position. Colossian shows us the heavenly life. Philippians shows us the heavenly reward. Philemon shows us the heavenly man. When did Paul learn this lesson? Paul shows us that there is a power there. It is not only objective that the Lord has ascended, He is also seated at the right hand of God.

We should overcome because that overcoming life is in us. That great power is in us. This is an amazing story. You all know the story of how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. A caterpillar is not only ugly, but also lives in a flat land with only two dimensions. It doesn't know that there is another dimension called the heavens. If you want to let a caterpillar know what heaven is, it is impossible. It can go to seminary to learn what ascension is, but it doesn't have the experience of ascension. One day, the caterpillar enters into a cocoon. It is no longer two-dimensional in the cocoon. It is now zero dimensions. In the Old Testament, the greatest reward that the Lord gave the Israelites is the land. You have to be careful if you do business with the Jews because all the earthly blessings are given to the Jews. If you do business with them, all the money in your pocket will go to their pocket because the Lord has blessed them. That is the story of the Old Testament. God said, "You worm, Jacob." That is the story of Jacob. What does that

mean? You only know two dimensions. One day, God showed him a vision that he never saw before. He saw a heavenly ladder all the way to heaven. That ladder pointed toward another dimension. Now we understand. Our Lord is the heavenly ladder. Through the heavenly ladder, we know what is heaven. Otherwise, we will be like a caterpillar walking on this world. Thank the Lord. Before becoming a butterfly, it must go into a cocoon. Maybe it doesn't understand why am I am confined to this cocoon. I can't move. This is my prison. If the caterpillar were to write a letter, he would say, "These are my chains." Thank the Lord. One day, if this life is a life of death and resurrection, what does it mean? That means it will be alive again. Not only that, this is one life that would take it to heaven. When the butterfly is flying around, its dimensions are already one higher than being the caterpillar. This is Paul's experience of ascension.

Ascension as the Gospel

Paul was just like that caterpillar. Paul had the concept of the Messiah's kingdom; therefore, he thought of salvation for the whole world. When he wrote Romans and Galatians, the gospel was to conquer the whole world. If the gospel can conquer the Romans, it can conquer the whole world. When you read Paul's set of books, everything was about the world. It is different now. When he came of the cocoon, the power of resurrection and ascension inside took him to the heavens. Then he wrote these four epistles. We thought if you reached Roman, it couldn't get any higher. But now it is higher. It was only global; now it is universal. Church now is the universal man: the head in heaven, the body on earth. The church that Paul shows us is a heavenly one. It is very different than the church we see today. We always say we forget our umbrella at church, and if the church is the body of Christ, how can we forget our umbrella at church? For the church, Paul went through death and suffering. He was bound in chains. The power of ascension took him to heaven. He can tell us the things of the heaven. If you want to know the ascended Christ, read these four epistles: Ephesians, Colossians Philippians and Philemon. According to Paul, ascension is not only about position, not only are we seated with the Lord, but it is also the gospel.

In reality, Romans speaks of the gospel. Ephesians also speaks of the gospel. Romans begins with men, "For all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of the God." It went from the earth to the heaven. When Ephesians speaks of the glory of God, Paul takes us to the heaven. God has given us all the blessings of the heaven.

May the Lord open our eyes. Now Paul can see the situation in heaven. On one hand, he is seated with Christ at the right hand. On the other hand, this is his actual experience. This is not only an objective truth, but also a subjective experience. What is ascension? You are no longer buried in your own circumstance. You are no longer buried under pain or suffering. Yes, pain does exist, but you are no longer encompassed in yourselves. It is the power of resurrection and ascension that saves us from ourselves, takes us away from our environments.

You might have sandstorms on this earth. I remember when I was once in Richmond, Virginia. There was a very big snowstorm. I was wondering if I should take the plane. I never had that experience. When the plane was slowly ascending, we were surrounded by snow. If you were in Virginia, everything was covered with snow. Yet when the plane got into the sky, the sun shown. The power of resurrection and ascension is just like the plane that saves us from the environment. We might still be in prison. We might still be on earth. That prison is like the heaven. No wonder Madam Guyon said, "When I was in prison, every brick in the prison is like a precious stone." This is an ascended person. Here is somebody that experienced ascension. In other words, somebody who experienced the rapture. Thank the Lord. This is a true experience. Many people can testify to this.

As In Heaven

There is a brother named Robert Chapman. He really loved the Lord. He was one of the very famous brothers among the brethren in England over a hundred years ago. Darby really knew how to read the Bible. George Muller really knew how to pray. Robert Chapman knew how to love. One day, somebody wrote a letter, but did not know what

his address was. The address was simply Robert Chapman, University of Love, England, and you never thought that this letter would actually arrive to Robert Chapman. He was known for his love. His view was different than Darby. For example, Darby believed in pre-rapture. Robert Chapman believed that overcomers are rapture. The followers of Darby always criticized him. Darby got upset because those who actually criticized Robert Chapman wanted to gain favor from Darby. Darby said, "Don't criticize our brother. We always say that we are seated with Christ in the heavens. Our brother is there right now." Do you see that? That is somebody with the experience of ascension. Not only that, but we have a hymn that we all like to sing, "Lord I Desire to Live Before You whether morning or night, just one time."

Recently, we had an opportunity to go to Dublin, Ireland. My greatest desire was to see one of the greatest gardens in Europe. It is the Garden of Power Scott. Power Scott was a sister who really loved the Lord. It was Robert Chapman who told us, "Lady Scott, this sister, she was indeed heavenly. She was so heavenly it was as if her feet never touched that ground." She was Lady Scott. She was widowed at the age of 23. The Lord received her at age 36. Such a spiritual sister, and many people ask why she lived such a short life. All those who lived with Lady Scott in the village knew that she was heavenly. She opened up her castle. Darby would always go by horse to that castle. Part of that castle still exists. The garden is still there. She was in the garden as if she was not. If you read some of poems that she wrote, you will know that this is somebody living with Christ in the heavenlies. Do you remember in history of China there was the Boxer Rebellion? Many of the Western missionaries suffered much at that time. At that time, the daughter-in-law of Hudson Taylor was in China. For four days, her situation was critical. Many missionaries from the West were martyred for the Lord. Later, Hudson Taylor's daughter-in-law wrote in her dairy, "In those four days, we couldn't tell if we were in heaven or on earth." Those were the most dangerous four days. Those were the days when they suffered the most and when they were prosecuted. But there is one person that can be seated with Christ in the heavenly.

When you read the whole book of Ephesians, it speaks of sitting at the beginning, and then it speaks of walking, and then standing. Sit, walk, and stand. When speaking of sitting, it is sitting with Christ in heaven. You don't have to do anything. Everything is done for you. The victory has been won. We've gone through Golgotha. The Lord has resurrected. The battle is done. Salvation is complete. Now the Lord is seated. It shows that He is satisfied. For this reason, when we are saved, we are seated with Christ in heavens. This is not only an objective truth, but also a subjective experience. Thank the Lord! When Paul wrote Ephesians, he allows us to see the heavenly position.

When we read Colossians, especially in chapter three, we see a heavenly life. How do we know that it is heavenly life? Let us read, Colossians 3:1 "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

You see that resurrection and ascension are interlinked. If you have been raised with Christ, that resurrection power does not just end there. There is also the ascension. Not only does the caterpillar come out, but it also goes into the air and becomes a butterfly. What is the meaning of where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, the heavenly? The latter part of verse three, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Where is it hidden? It is hidden there. That is Christ who is our life. What life is that life? If you read in context, it is the resurrection and ascension life. Does it mean that we are no longer on earth? Does it mean that you don't descend from heaven? No. Verse 5, "Therefore, it considered the members of your earthly body." We are still on earth. On one hand we are on earth. On the other hand, we are in heaven.

What is the reason? Because our Lord ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven. The heavens came down. The Lord became flesh in Jerusalem. Heaven was in Jerusalem. When He went to Galilee, heaven went to Galilee. Because He was incarnated, the body limited him. Thank the Lord. When the Holy Spirit descended, there was no limit. So then the heavens descended. Now you are on earth as if you are in

heavens. How do you touch heaven? You are on earth. Heaven is so far away. Yet thank the Lord. Because of the accomplishment of the Holy Spirit, on one hand you are on earth, and on the other hand you are in heaven. You have to consider the members of your earthly body. You can't be relaxed just because you are in heaven. What kind of life is this heavenly life? It is an amphibious life. You know the frog can live on water or land because the life that it has is an amphibious one. According to Colossians, the life that you and I have is an amphibious life. On one hand we are in heaven. On the other hand we are on earth. Paul was in prison, yet he was also in heaven. Thank the Lord. Isn't this your and my experience? Let's remember, heaven and earth are connected for this reason. More importantly, the Lord is our heavenly ladder. The Holy Spirit has descended. He is omnipresent. He can bring heaven everywhere. If we experience all the work that the Holy Spirit has done on us, we are on earth as if we are in heaven. This is a glorious thing. Colossians shows us a heavenly life. We are in heaven and on earth. On earth, we have a body. We have sin. There is the world. There is self. How do we put ourselves to death? It has to do with our position in heaven. Because you have a heavenly life, you are seated with Christ in the heaven. Because you have that experience, you are in heaven. You can put to death your body on earth. I ask you to do an experiment. Has anybody picked themselves up before? Because you are in a space, you can't lift yourselves up in the same space. But if somebody is in a different space, then he can pick you up. So many times we want to deal with sin and the flesh. How do you deal with the flesh? It is like you can't save yourselves. You have to have a heavenly position. The Bible said you could put to death your body on earth. This is the secret of our overcoming. Sonship is overcoming life.

The Overcoming Life

Now we see the secret of overcoming here. We spoke of this last Persian Gulf War. We know the secret behind the American victory. If it were not because those heavenly eye, the satellite that controls everything on earth, they would not have won the war.

Do you remember the story of Deborah, how she defeated the enemies? She told ten thousand armies to go up to Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor represented the ascended place. All the enemies surrounded Mount Tabor. Deborah used her wisdom. She sent some of the armies from the southern part. When they came the southern part, those that were besieging Mount Tabor went to Mount Tabor. Not only that, but according to Judges, God attacked Sisera in the skies. Because God attacked from the skies, the river flowed up. The river overflowed and all the chariots were stuck in the mud. When somebody falls into the flesh, he can't save himself. Even if he is an iron chariot, he cannot save himself. How were Deborah and the armies saved? On one hand, they came from an overcoming position with the attack. On the other hand, God worked through the stars. The enemies were stuck in the mud. In the end, they gained victory. May the Lord open our eyes. If we are to overcome flesh, sin, and the world, there is a very important secret. You need to know that the life that we gain is an ascending one. Even as you are seated with Christ in heaven, you need to put to death your earthly body. This is our true experience. In the past, the planes in China were really old. One time, the pilot noticed there were some mice running around. He said there were too many mice. What were they going to do? He thought of a very good idea. He started flying the plane higher and higher, so high to a point that the mice suffocated because they couldn't breathe. Flesh can only live on earth, but not in heaven. This life is a heavenly life.

When we read Philippians, we will gain a heavenly reward. Even though Paul was in prison, he said, "I am no longer in prison. I am on the racetrack. I am running toward the goal." Somebody in prison should retire and rest. He said, "No, I am running toward the goal. I consider all as rubbish to gain Christ." You want to gain Christ. How do you gain Christ? The original means to win Christ? If we know God's grace, we don't dare use that word. Yet don't forget! In the four prison epistles, the other three speak of life. However, Philippians clearly speaks of the kingdom. Just like the four gospels, the first three speak of the kingdom. John speaks of kingdom. Here we see Paul running toward the goal. He didn't say that he was perfect. The words he used were as if he was in a race, and the Lord is the goal. Paul shows us that we are citizens of heaven. For this reason, he lives under the light of the kingdom. Not only that, when we read Philemon, it was

written when Paul was appealing on the behalf of Onesimus to Philemon. When Paul wrote Philemon, it was at the same time as when he wrote Ephesians and Colossians. If we read Ephesians and Colossians, we have to admit, his revelation was great. Colossians shows to us that Christ is the head of the church. Ephesians shows us that the church is the body of Christ. This revelation is so mighty. If you want to know Paul, he is someone who saw great revelation, someone who saw Christ as the head and the church as the body. If he really knows what the head is and what the body is, what kind of person is he? Philemon shows us who he is. Don't tell me what you saw that was so great. Don't tell me how great your vision was. You want to show what kind of person sees that vision.

When you read Philemon, there is a heavenly man. He said, "Like me, the aged Paul." He is a man. He has walked a long way. He said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." He said, "I am the Paul who aged." On the other hand, he said, "I am the prisoner of Christ." On these two points, he was appealing on the behalf of Onesimus to Philemon. He said, "If you regard me as a partner, please accept him; accept him as you would accept me. If he has done you any wrong, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, will repay you. I am writing this with my own hand." Paul eyesight was not good. Other people were writing for him. When Paul said he wrote it himself, this is a heavenly man. Who does he remind you of? He reminds you of the story of the cross. How our Lord appeal on the cross for us, "If he owes you anything, if he wrong you in anyway, charge that to my account, I will repay it." Here is a heavenly man conformed to the image of Christ. As he was appealing on the behalf Onesimus. We see this person not only knew Christ and the Church, he was conformed to the image of His Son. As he was appealing, you will be reminded of how our Lord appealed for us on the cross. We are all Onesimus. We have wronged the Lord in so many ways. We cannot repay Him. How our Lord appealed to the Father, "Accept him as you would accept me. If he has wronged you in anything, or owes you, charge that to My account. I will repay it." Now we see a heavenly man, not only having a heavenly position, but also gaining heavenly life and he was going to gain the heavenly reward. He was also a heavenly man. For Paul, the ascension was not only a theory, but it was his experience. Thank the Lord. Now we understand. When you put all of the words that God gave Paul together, all these words

can explain the light that he saw. He said, “ I was never disobedient to the heavenly vision.” That vision is the same, yet it got deeper and deeper. The knowing is deeper. Before, the words were not enough, now the words of God are enough. Now not only Paul saw what he saw, but the church can also see what he saw. Now we understand that the church is the body of Christ. From Paul’s experience, we know Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension. May the Lord impress his words deeply upon us.

Let us pray, “Lord, we thank You. May You bless these words! If You find it pleasing, use these words. We pray this in the precious name of Jesus, Amen.”