

## THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST

*Ephesians 4:20—But you did not learn Christ in this way. (Pay attention to the words “learn Christ.”)*

Let us pray:

*Lord, we want to thank You for this time that You have gathered us. It is Your love that has drawn us before You. Lord, we pray that as You draw us we may quickly run after You. We look to You, Lord, that in this meeting You will speak the words in Your heart. Give us the grace that we might understand Your words, and by Your grace we can rise up and follow Your word. Thank You for giving us this glorious theme. It is by Your grace that we can be conformed to Your own image. May our hearts have a prayer that we may be like You! We know that when You return we will all be like You. During this time, as we are on our way, may You give us the highest grace that by Your grace we can be conformed to Your image. This is the prayer from the depth of our heart. We pray this in the victorious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### LEARN CHRIST

We have just read a very important phrase: “But you did not learn Christ in this way.” A very small phrase here says: “learn Christ.” To learn Christ is actually a subtopic of the theme that we have at the conference. The theme of this conference is *Conformed to the Image of His Son*. We know this is a very glorious theme in the Bible. Once we are saved by grace we have a desire in our hearts to be like Him. We desire that when we look steadfastly upon our Lord, we can be conformed to His image, glory upon glory.

### *Imitating Christ?*

What does it mean “to learn Christ”? Many people think that to learn Christ is to imitate Christ. We need to imitate his beauty, His humility, and the patience of Christ. If we imitate Him, people can see in us Christ’s glory, His beauty and His patience.

In church history there is a very famous book, “The Imitation of Christ” which was written by Thomas à Kempis. At one point in history, this book was actually read hand in hand with the Bible. Almost as many people read this book as those who read the Bible. It shows us that in history many people loved the word of God; they had a desire in their hearts that they could be conformed to the image of His Son. Where is the way? They felt that they needed to imitate Christ, so they used their own ways to attain to that purpose.

To conform to the image of His Son is a very high goal. How do you reach that goal? We need to borrow Jacob’s ladder to climb from the earth to heaven. So when we go from earth to heaven, from not being like the Lord to being like the Lord, there is a ladder that we have to climb step by step upward. When we go through this way, we have spiritual training or exercise, and through these spiritual exercises we want to tell our body to obey us. So we do much work to imitate Christ. This book tells us that to be like the Lord we have to do much work. Many times we have to do penance to ourselves. So in church history this was how they imitated Christ; imitating Christ is one of our greatest accomplishments. You try harder and harder, and then, finally, you will be like our Lord.

We know of a very famous brother, Henry Suso, who was a member of the Friends of God. He really loved the Lord, but he felt that as he lived in the flesh he was not like the Lord. So he wanted to deal with his flesh so that it would obey him. He invented many tools for penance. He actually made a leather jacket, and inside were one hundred and fifty nails. When he put that jacket on, the nails were not pointing outward but were pointing inward. When he would sleep, the jacket was tucked in very tightly so that those nails would actually pierce him. He would hurt to such a point he would say, "God, this is such a death." He knew if he were to die to himself then he could live to God, and if He could live to God, he could be like Christ. Not only that, he also built a wooden cross on which were many nails. When Jesus was crucified, there were only four nails, but this brother had many nails. So daily he bore his cross and followed the Lord. Twenty years later, God said, "Enough; for twenty years could you indeed have the flesh obey you?" So God brought him to a second stage. This brother wanted to imitate Christ; he wanted to go on with those steps. Today he is not like the Lord, but tomorrow he will be like the Lord. This year he is not like the Lord, but next year he will be. Brothers and sisters, is learning Christ imitating Christ?

Paul used that phrase: "Be imitators of me as I also am of Christ." But when you read the context, is this the way Paul taught us to imitate Christ?

It was the same thing with Madam Guyon. She really loved the Lord. She wanted to choose God's will; she wanted to choose the cross. But because of her situation, her concept was that imitating Christ was that she should not be comfortable. So when she put her shoes on, many times she would put pebbles in her shoes. That way she thought she could imitate Christ.

We also know another very famous man called St. Francis. He really loved the Lord. When he read the Scriptures, especially the four gospels, he really wanted to follow the words. He was a very simple man and had a very simple heart. He had not read much about the mystics. He just read the Scriptures, and he wanted to imitate Christ. He not only loved the Lord, he also loved what the Lord loved. He loved God's creations, and he was friends with the birds and with the flowers. Many people called him the little brother of the little birds. As he imitated Christ, not only was he the little brother of little birds, he was also the little brother of lice. Why? Because he loved the Lord he wore a clothing of sheepskin, and inside the sheepskin were a lot of lice, but he was willing to be the friend of lice. He would do penance to himself because he wanted to be like Christ one day. So how did he deal with the lice wherever he went? He would take off the sheepskin and then he would shake it by a fire. Many of these lice had become his friends. Not only was he the brother of birds and flowers but also of lice. That way he could be conformed to the image of God's Son. According to legend, there were many miracles during that time. Two years before his death, according to legend, because he had indeed attained to conformation to the image of His Son, his hands had bruises and wounds and also his feet and his side. Paul tells us that we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son; but is this being conformed to the image of His Son?

What does it mean to be conformed to the image of His Son? When we speak of being conformed to His image, we speak of His personality. This personality has to do with the character of Christ. So when we are conformed to the image of His Son, it is by the Lord's grace. The character of Christ is then produced in us. When people see in us the character of Christ, then they see the beauty of Christ. When we gather together, the

church manifests the personality of Christ. Brothers and sisters, this is what Paul showed us. But many people believe that to learn Christ is to imitate Christ. There were many ways in church history, but let us return to the Bible, let us hear what Paul says.

Paul says, "But you did not learn Christ in this way." These were spoken to the saints in Ephesus. Do you know that Paul was with the saints in Ephesus for three years? For two years he rented a place called the school of Tyrannus. The historical remains at Ephesus are the most complete in that area. If you go to Ephesus today, you can still see the marble ruins. You can even imagine where the school of Tyrannus was.

Tyrannus was a philosopher who taught his students in his school. Because it was very hot in Ephesus, from noon to five o'clock all the students would take off. Tyrannus would come back after five o'clock and teach his students again. Paul probably used those five hours daily for over two years so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. In other words, at that time, Paul brought these people to the school of Christ for over two years. We do not know how much they learned, but if you want to know what Paul said during that time, you will find it in Romans, Galatians, and I and II Corinthians. Whatever the Holy Spirit wanted to give us an account of, He left in those four epistles. So Tyrannus was teaching his disciples, and Paul was also teaching the people in that area. In the school of Christ they learned very much. What Tyrannus taught was knowledge, and in his school you could learn much.

### *Learning Christology?*

How did Paul teach these people in the school of Christ? Learning Christ does not equal learning Christology. You have chemistry; you have physics; you also have Christology. You go to college to study physics and chemistry. You go to seminary to study Christology. Paul said, "You did not learn Christ in this way." Did Paul say that you learned much knowledge about Christ? When he spoke about being conformed to the image of His Son, the key, the most important point was to learn Christ. Many people understand Christology; very few understand what it is to learn Christ.

### **CHRIST IN YOU**

So we want to let Paul tell us from his own word what it is to learn Christ. Let us borrow a most simple and popular phrase of his. There is one verse in the thirteen epistles of Paul that encompasses everything about how Paul learned Christ. He said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

This verse encompasses all of Paul's life. This verse also shows us how Paul learned Christ. What Paul had learned was not about Christ, but he learned a living Christ. He could tell us that he had been crucified with Christ, and it was no longer Paul who lived but Christ who lived in him. In history, Christ lived on this earth; He loved me and He died for me. When He was nailed to the cross, God also put me there. God gave up my flesh; He no longer had hope in my flesh. He knew that the best place for my flesh was on the cross. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

What does it mean to learn Christ? To learn Christ means to relive Christ. It is that simple. Because the life of Christ is in Paul, this life is hidden together with Christ in God. This life is a secret life, a hidden life. If you have this life, then you have this living.

If you do not have this life of Christ, you cannot have this living. However, if you do not have the life of Christ, you can still learn of Christ.

Once I went to the zoo. I noticed that monkeys could eat western meals, and monkeys could also read books. How did they read the books? The monkey had a book; and in every book he would hide peanuts. So every time he would turn the page he would eat the peanuts, and it was as if he were reading the book. But he had no human life in him. He could imitate man, but he could never attain to it. To imitate man is a high goal. If a monkey could be like a man, what an accomplishment that would be! But a monkey will never be like a man.

The church history of two thousand years has told us that by ourselves we cannot imitate Christ. But thank the Lord, one day we were saved by grace. The life of Christ is now in you and in me. Now you have to ask: is it you who is living or do you let Him live? If you live, then of course it is not like Christ. If you allow Christ to live, then it will be like Christ. What is it to learn Christ? Thank the Lord; our Lord once lived on this earth. His beauty and His patience were seen by many. But when Christ lives in us, then many people will see the beauty of Christ in us.

Brother and sisters, there are many older brothers and sisters. We have walked a long journey. Many times we ask the question, "Are we like Christ?" We have almost walked our whole life. We wanted to be like Christ when we still had black hair, but now that we have gray hair, are we like the Lord? Are we like St. Francis? Before he was to meet the Lord, we were told that he was conformed to the image of His Son. Of course, this is hearsay, but we hear that his hands and feet were with nail marks. Now we look at ourselves. Are we like the Lord?

Thank the Lord, may we be encouraged! By ourselves we will never attain to it. There is a phrase of St. Augustine that is very interesting: "I tremble and I burn. I tremble because I am not like Him; I burn because I am like Him." This is the word of somebody who knows the Lord. We tremble because we are not like Him, but our hearts burn because we are like Him. We are like Him, and yet we are not like Him. Thank the Lord. This is our way to learn Christ.

### **PAUL LEARNED CHRIST**

So we have to see how Paul learned Christ. Paul was educated strictly under Gamaliel. From his birth he wanted to be a scholar. He studied the Scriptures to be a rabbi. At that time, the greatest rabbi was Gamaliel, and Paul was taught very strictly under Gamaliel. He had a very strict training of the Old Testament. He knew what was contained in it. If you were to ask Paul, "When you read the entire Old Testament and you speak of God's love, His righteousness, and all His attributes, what is the most difficult to explain?" Paul would tell you that in the Old Testament the most difficult thing to explain would be God's glory. Ezekiel saw God's glory. Wrong! He did not see God's glory; he only saw the image of God's glory. He saw the heavens opened, but don't forget that ever since man fell and sinned, according to the Bible, the heavens had already become bronze. In other words, after man sinned and fell, man was very distant from the Lord, as far as the earth is from heaven. Ever since man fell and sinned, the heavens were like bronze. It never opened, until one day, the Son of God, Jesus Christ came to the earth. When He rose from the Jordan River, if you pay attention to the four gospels, the Bible says that

the heavens rent asunder. When Jesus Christ came down, only He has given us an open heaven.

### *Seeing God's Glory*

Once we have been saved by grace, after we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, many times the heavens will open. The Bible tells us that the heavens were opened to Stephen, and he saw God's glory. He did not see the glorious image of God. No; he saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God.

What is God's glory? When you see Jesus Christ, you see God's glory. In the Old Testament when you read Ezekiel, it speaks of the glory of God, and it speaks of the throne of God. It speaks a little about God's glory, but you do not know what glory actually is.

### *Paul Sees the Light*

Brothers and sisters, this is a very important thing. In Romans 8, when he speaks of being conformed to the image of His Son, it continues on to speak of glorification. It does not only say justification by faith, it does not only say sanctification by faith, but it also speaks of glorification by faith. What is glorification by faith? It is being conformed to the image of God's Son. If we do not see God's glory, how do we gain glory?

How did Paul begin his lesson? How did Paul learn Christ? On the road to Damascus he met the risen Lord. We have heard how he explained what he saw on the way. After Paul was saved, he did not go up to Jerusalem to the apostles before him, but he went to Arabia, to the wilderness of Sinai. The way God had spoken to Moses is the way God also spoke to Paul. But remember, God spoke to Paul words that he had already said. Under Gamaliel he had learned many things regarding the law. That is God's word. But in the wilderness of Arabia God had to speak to Paul once again. Those words that He had already spoken in the Old Testament, God spoke again to him. When Paul was under Gamaliel, the Holy Spirit did not enter him because he had not yet accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. Once he was saved, the Holy Spirit abode in him, and the Spirit was to lead him into all truth. Previously the Old Testament was a closed book, but when the Holy Spirit taught him, one day light arrived. He saw the same word of God as given in the Old Testament, but the explanation was different. He saw the light.

How did he see justification by faith? He read Genesis 15, which he had read innumerable times before because he was a rabbi, and he was just like his master Gamaliel. They had the same Old Testament, and they were like the blind leading the blind. What others could not see, they could not see either. But thank the Lord, one day this rabbi was in the wilderness, and the Holy Spirit was in him. The Holy Spirit opened his eyes, and the scales fell off. And reading the same Genesis 15, he had a great discovery. He saw that man is justified by faith.

He read Genesis 1, "And the earth was without form and void, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water. Then God said, 'Let there be light and there was light.'" This speaks of God's creation, His old creation, but now the Holy Spirit is speaking in Paul. He had read this passage uncountable times; now the scales fell from his eyes. When he saw that the earth was formless and void and full of darkness, wasn't that his situation before? When he went to Damascus with documents, he was going to persecute the church. Yet the Spirit hovered on the face of the water, and God was just

like the farmer using the goads to prick Paul. But Paul did not obey and he kicked against the goads. Wasn't that the situation as he walked on the way to Damascus? When he was near Damascus, God said, "Let there be light and there was light." That is his story of salvation. So in Genesis 1:2-3, he read his own story. He said that in Christ it is a new creation; thus he was able to use the words of the Old Testament in Genesis to explain what happened on the road to Damascus. He met the glorious Lord, the risen Lord.

Then he says in II Corinthians 4:6, "For God who commands light to shine out of darkness." What does that mean? God said, "Let there be light." He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts. Thank the Lord! On the road to Damascus, his heart was full of darkness, and yet the Spirit hovered on the face of the water and that light shone in his heart. What did he say? It is to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Chinese translation has a little extra. But in the original, it just says that we know the glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ.

When Paul was persecuting the church, he was there when Stephen was martyred. Many people covered their ears, including Paul. He did not want to see; he did not want to hear, but he still heard. He heard the testimony of Stephen, that the heavens opened and he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. "This man should have died; this man should have been stoned. Surely he was one whom God was not pleased with; but why did his face shine like an angel? Why was his heart like a lion's heart, and his face like one of an angel? If he was not pleasurable to God, why did he see the heavens opened? I have learned so many lessons in the school of the rabbis; I know what the glory of God is. The most that Ezekiel saw was the image of God's glory. How could Stephen see God's glory?"

God's Spirit, just like those goads, was pricking Paul's heart. He never imagined that he, the chief among sinners who was not a bit prepared, could see God's glory.

God's glory is abstract; God's glory is invisible. So how do you see it? It is manifested on the face of the Lord Jesus. Man's face is his representation. It is also our manifestation. We see here that God is invisible. You cannot explain God's glory, and even Paul could not explain it. But Paul did see it on the road to Damascus. What was his vision? He saw God's glory. This glory could not have been concrete. When you see the face of the Lord Jesus, you see God's glory. What did Paul see? Paul saw what Ezekiel saw. Ezekiel could not explain it, but Paul could. This is to learn Christ.

### **EZEKIEL'S VISION**

When you read Ezekiel, you probably have some impression of chapter 1. Do you remember when Ezekiel was by the River Chebar in Babylon and he saw a vision coming from the north? From afar it was like a storm, and there was a cloud. On that cloud there were lights shining. As it approached, what he saw was actually a throne, but this throne was a mobile throne. God's throne should be in heaven; God's throne should be in Jerusalem. It would be impossible to see the throne by the riverbanks of Chebar. This mobile throne was on one hand carried by wings and on the other hand moved by wheels. The wings would bring the throne from heaven to earth; the wheels would take the throne from Jerusalem to the river Chebar.

We know that Ezekiel was a priest. He knew that the glory of God was in the holy of holies, and the cherubim were in the holy of holies. But he was amazed that he could see

God's glory at the riverbanks of Chebar. According to the concept of the Jews, the glory of God would be in Jerusalem in the holy of holies, if it is not in the heavens like in Daniel. So he could not understand what he saw. On one hand, this throne came from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, and with the wheels it could go from place to place; connected with the throne is heaven. Don't forget what is holding up the heavens. There are four living beings holding up the heavens. So this entire mobile throne is just like the royal chariot of the older times. If the Roman Emperor were to go out on his chariot, his throne would be on his chariot, and there would be four horses pulling the chariot.

You see that this mobile throne goes in all directions, and you see a life that is before the throne. And the word "living being" in the original actually has no "being" in it; it is just "living." What does that mean? As you draw nigh to the throne, you will be alive. If you go away from the throne you will be dead. So we see the life before the throne. If you are before the throne today, you do not have to be afraid that you are dead. Many people scream out loud and they think they must be alive. If you are distant from the Lord, no matter how much you yell, you are still dead. But if you live before the throne and you draw nigh to the throne, even if you do not cry out you are still living. Here we see at this mobile throne, there is a life before the throne. This life upholds the heaven. It is this life before the throne that brings God's throne from heaven to earth and from one place to another place. This is the life before the throne of God.

But this chariot is different from the chariot of Rome. How it looks depends on the direction you are looking at it. If you are on the west looking towards the east, as the chariot is coming towards you, you will see four men in front of you. If you are in the south, you will see four lions. If you are in the north, you will see four oxen. If you are in the east, you will see four eagles. The Bible tells us that there are four different faces to these beings. This life before the throne is so glorious you cannot know Him from just one direction, and you cannot understand Him from just one direction. This is God's glory. So you see how the life before the throne brings God's glory to earth and how it brings heaven to earth. This is the mobile throne that Ezekiel described to us.

Then you see upon the throne an image looking like a man. You see one picture above the waist and another picture below the waist. You also see a picture above heaven and another picture below heaven. But it is all within the sphere of the glorious throne. How do you explain this vision? Jewish rabbis tell us that you cannot just explain this chapter at will because the Old Testament was a closed book to them until Jesus Christ arrived. The heavens will truly open for us and the Holy Spirit will abide in us if we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Dear brothers and sisters, the glory that Ezekiel could not explain, Paul now understood. What Ezekiel described was actually a prophecy. It said that one day this mobile throne would come down to earth. For somebody who had been suffering, for those who were captives at the river of Chebar, what was their greatest comfort? If they were suffering in Babylon, if their suffering was in Jerusalem, how was God going to comfort them? How was God going to wipe off their tears? His presence was many miles away. But what did Ezekiel see? That throne came from the north but it should have come from the west. It should be coming from Jerusalem. When the people of Israel were in their calamity, they were taken captive to the north. Then they crossed the Euphrates, and they turned to the south. The greatest comfort was something that Ezekiel never

thought of. As they were fleeing and as they were leaving their homeland, they never thought of God's throne, God's glory, or God's presence. It was always with them, secretly. How was that possible? How was that possible in Judaism?

Thank the Lord; the Holy Spirit allowed Ezekiel to taste something beforehand—one day the Word would become flesh. Before, he was equal with God, and He emptied Himself, took the form of a bondservant and was made in the likeness of man. It is as if He is below the heavens. But no matter where our Lord goes, He brings God's throne with Him. Wherever He goes He brings heaven. Wherever He goes He brings the purpose of God. So the glorious image that Ezekiel saw points to Jesus Christ Himself.

When our Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross, the first three hours He was God's Son; the latter three hours, He stood in our position. Above the waist we see the Son of God; below the waist we see the Son of Man. Because He is the Son of Man He could be nailed to the cross for us.

So the vision that Ezekiel saw is the same vision that Paul saw on the road to Damascus. According to that image, Paul could say, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." When Christ was on earth, He was a living throne. He had four different faces, and you can see four different manifestations from four different angles. Matthew shows us that He is King; it is the face of a lion. Mark's gospel shows us an ox; He is indeed the servant of God. Luke's gospel shows us a Man, and John's gospel shows us an eagle.

#### **THE FOUR FACES IN THE GOSPELS**

Brothers and sisters, do you want to learn Christ? The four gospels show us the life before the throne from four different angles. Our Lord is the closest to the throne of God; the life is in Him. No matter where He went and how He lived when He was on earth, it is described in the four gospels.

Not only that, Paul says, "Christ lives in me," and he relives Christ. However Christ lived on earth before, today He also lives. So in the school of Christ the Lord does not leave us in darkness. When we read the four gospels, we should see God's glory, because God's glory is manifested in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Matthew's gospel many have said that it talks about the Lord as king. But we have to ask a question. How is the Lord king? How is He king after all? You need to use the word of God to explain the word of God.

In the first chapter of Genesis there is the genealogy: "Abraham begot Isaac and Isaac begot Jacob," and many people just skip the rest of the verses to verse 18. But if you skip these verses, you will not know how our Lord is king. There are fourteen generations, fourteen generations, and another fourteen generations. In the middle fourteen generations they are all kings, but only when it speaks of David does it mention the word "king." Solomon was a king but the Bible does not say King Solomon. There are 14 kings but only one throne. They all sat on the throne of King David. What does that mean? The genealogy of our Lord is the genealogy of David. In other words, how is our Lord king? He was truly the one who sat on the throne of David. How did David ascend to the throne? How was David king? He was chased by Saul throughout the wilderness; he was first humbled and then glorified. As David was wandering in the wilderness, he was king, because God had anointed him as king, but he was a king without a throne. Is that possible? In the earth all the kings have a throne, but as David was fleeing from place to

place, he had the life of a king, but you could not see his throne. But one day, he was to sit on the throne.

## THE KING

Our Lord is a king like this. No wonder that the wise men came to see Him when He was born. They wanted to see the King of Judah, representing us Gentiles, and presenting all the gifts of frankincense. But if you are king and you are given all these gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, why would the Lord speak to Joseph in a dream and say, “You are to take your wife and the Child and flee to Egypt”?

Note in history that there was a very famous king, the king of France, Louis the 14<sup>th</sup>. He said “I am the state.” When he said “I am the state,” many French Christians fled to the United States, because the king made the people exiles. Some of the most famous presidents in the United States—George Washington, the two Roosevelts, Truman, Eisenhower—were all descendents of the Huguenots, descendents of these French Christians. What is a king? A king is to be seated on the throne and he would exile others to the wilderness. But remember, our Lord was such a king. What is a lion? A lion is the king of all the wild beasts. If our Lord was a king, why was he exiled to Egypt? It is because He was a king like David.

Do you remember when the disciples were hungry and they plucked the ears of corn? What did Jesus say? “Have you not read in the Scriptures what David did when he was hungry and they were with him?” David was rejected; David was wandering, and our Lord is such a king. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. His life was the life of a Lion; His life was the life of a king. But He was wandering all over the place, from one wheat field to another. His disciples were hungry, just like those followers of David were hungry. So when we read Matthew’s gospel, it shows us the face of a lion and that is a condition of being a king if we are to be conformed to the image of His Son. Our Lord is a lion, and we also need to be a lion. But don’t forget, if our Lord is such a king, it is impossible for you to be Louis the 14<sup>th</sup>. Many people are not Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> in the world, but they are Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> in their home.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you are a true king, look to our Lord. God’s glory is manifested in the face of our Lord. One day our Lord rode upon a donkey into Jerusalem. The Bible says, “Behold your King comes; He is meek.” How is a king meek? Can you ever imagine Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> being meek? But our Lord is meek. He did not come on a stallion but He was on a donkey. Brothers and sisters, this is a lion. This is the face of the lion, and it is this image that we need to be conformed to.

When the Lord was judged before the priest, he said “I adjure You by the living God, are You the Christ or not?” When Jesus was beneath the cross, the Bible says that many times he spoke not—“the silence of Jesus.” He did not speak. Thank the Lord, this is our King. He was King, yet he did not say a single word. But when the priest said, “I adjure Thee by the living God, that You tell us whether You are Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus said, “Thou hast said, hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power coming in the clouds of heaven.” What does that mean? Of course He is the coming King. Then the high priest said, “Now you have all heard. What is your opinion?” They said, “He is guilty of death.”

Brothers and sisters, this King is guilty of death. Can you ever find such a king, one who deserves death? And then they spit in His face. This face of the lion, this face of the

king is with spit. All the kings' faces are with glory. Which king's face is covered with spit?

In the same passage in Mark's gospel, not only does it say that His face was covered with spit, but it also says that they covered His face. Do you remember when Moses came down the mountain, he also covered his face. We all have a head and a face. A king has a head and a face, but they covered His face. In the same story in Luke's gospel, they smote His face. Brothers and sisters, when our Lord was defamed, when they spit on His face, when they covered His face, when they hit His face, what was the reaction of this king? How would Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> react? How would an earthly king react? How was our Lord to react? His life is the life of a lion, and God's glory is to be manifested on the face of the Lord, a face with spit, a face covered, a face smitten.

Dear brothers and sisters, should He react? Of course He should. But He did not react beneath the cross. Under the cross there was not a single word, but on the cross there were seven words, just like the seven colors on the rainbow. If you want a reaction from this king, if you want the king to show His muscle, do not look under the cross. Look how He reacted on the cross. Don't forget, before He was crucified, He went through Gethsemane. And the Bible tells us that He went a little farther and fell on His face. In the original Greek it uses the word "face." He walked a little farther, and his face fell in the dust. He prayed, "Oh, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou will." When He rose up, He understood God's will, and His face fell in the dust. He submitted to God's will, and because He submitted to God's will, there was one reaction on the cross. And that reaction proved that He was the King; that reaction proved that He was the Lion. That life was the life of a lion.

What do we see when our Lord Jesus was lifted up after He suffered so much torture at the hands of man? The reaction of all those who were nailed to the cross would be to curse because the cross was too painful. Only cursing could lighten the pain. Our Lord did not say a single word beneath the cross, but when He was lifted up on the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

Dear brothers and sisters, when a man hit His right cheek, as His face was filled with spit, the reaction on the cross was that He turned His other cheek. It is because His face fell to the dust. It was the Father who told Him to turn His other cheek. So He was able to say, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do".

What man does at the most is what Pilate and Judas did. They nailed him to the cross, because the cross is the utmost of man's hatred to God. Pilate and Judas hated the Lord to the highest point. But because of the prayer of the Lord Jesus, "Father, forgive them," I ask you: is God going to answer this prayer? When God's Son prayed on the cross, could He refuse to hear? Of course, He would hear His Son's prayer. If God were to forgive somebody's sins without a reason, where is His justice? So on one hand, to fulfill God's love and on the other hand, to fulfill God's righteousness, our Lord walked the second mile on the cross. The first mile was the first three hours; the second mile was the latter three hours.

How do you explain the latter three hours? According to Isaiah 53, it was God who smote Him and afflicted Him. Not only that, it was God who nailed Him on the cross so that He could stand in your place and my place, that all our sins could be upon Him and salvation could be completed. So Judas only accomplished half. Some people say that Judas accomplished something by his labor although not by his merit, because if he had

not betrayed the Lord, how could we be saved? There is no such thing. The most Judas could do was to hate the Lord so much that he sent Him to the cross. But the first mile was not salvation, only the second mile was salvation. In the last three hours, when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." At that time He said, "I thirst. It is finished. Father, I give You My spirit." For this reason, on the cross our Lord walked the second mile, and He completed our salvation. It is the gospel of John that tells us when our Lord was on the cross, not only did they take His inner garments but they took His outer coat. The story of the cross is the story of the two miles; it is the story of the right and left cheek, and it is also the story of the coat and the cloak.

When the Lord was crucified, there were two thieves crucified with Him, one on the left and one on the right. They mocked the Lord Jesus because many people mocked Him, "If You are the Son of God, You can come down from the cross." Both thieves said the same thing; both mocked our Lord. But wait; on the cross our Lord said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And one of the robbers heard it, and he had a prayer. He said, "Lord, when You come into Your kingdom, remember me." He had a great discovery. On the cross this person is king; His throne is on the cross. He is a lion; He is able to turn his cheek. He is a lion, walking the second mile. He is a king. He is a lion, giving his second cloak and saying, "Father, forgive them." So here is one who can testify. Here is a witness who says that Jesus is King; He is King on the cross.

Before He went to the cross He had a crown of thorns, and His scepter was made out of a reed. Have you ever found a king on earth who wears a crown of thorns? Have you ever seen a king with a scepter that is made out of a reed? This is our King. God's glory is manifested on the face of Jesus Christ. His kingdom is the kingdom of heaven spoken of in Matthew's gospel. After you finish reading Matthew, have you learned Christ? Have you seen what kind of Lord our Lord is? Have you seen the glory of God manifested on the face of Jesus Christ? Have you seen the face of a lion?

### **SONS OF THE KINGDOM**

Thank the Lord, for this reason, not only is He king, He is the king of the kingdom of heaven. He wants us to be the sons of the kingdom of heaven. If the King is the Lion, we are all young lions; we have a life of the lion. Now we understand why our Lord said, "When someone hits you on the right cheek, turn your other cheek." How do people hit you on the right cheek? They use the back of the hand. If you hit somebody with the back of the hand, the other person would rather die than to be humiliated this way. When you slap someone with the back of your hand, you are spitting in their face.

Brothers and sisters, how do you react? Thank the Lord; the Lord gives us a glorious opportunity that we can be like Him in our daily life. Are you able to turn the other cheek? Are you willing to walk the second mile? If you do not answer, does that mean you are weak? It is very good if you can endure, but why are you not happy? It is because the Lord wants to conform you to His image. When someone slaps you on your cheek, you endure, yet you are not happy. You need to know what kind of life your life is. "It is no longer I who lives but Christ lives in me." If you live Christ you know how to react.

One day a pastor was preaching on turning the other cheek. Before he finished, somebody from the audience ran up and slapped him on the cheek. He was actually smiling at the beginning, but the more he thought about it the more angry he got. He said,

“Wait, wait,” and he took his Bible and hit him on the head with it. And he used the Scripture that said, “May the wrath of God always be upon you!”

Brothers and sisters, if we are not crucified with Christ, that is how we would always live. It would be impossible. But it is no longer I who lives; it is Christ who lives in me. The way our Lord reacted on the cross, is the way we relive Christ’s life.

When somebody slaps you on the right cheek, he has no intention of hitting you on the left. You have not wronged him, so he is very happy because he has already gotten his way with you. But you are not happy. The enemy did not tell you to turn your other cheek; it is the Lord who tells you to turn the other cheek. Are you willing to turn your left cheek? Before you turn your left cheek, are you willing to put your face down in the dust and consider yourself worthless? How can you have no reaction? Are you a man? Do you see that? Only when you put your face down in the dust, when you truly submit, naturally you turn your other cheek, naturally you walk the second mile, and naturally you give your cloak. Do you think this is difficult?

There was a true story that happened in Fujian. A sister was saved by grace who was previously a very mean woman. If you were to wrong her, she would curse your ancestors. One day she was saved. Many people felt the sun had risen out of the west. It is impossible. One young man said he would try her out. So he picked up a sweet potato from the ground, threw it at her, and then ran away. That woman did not go after him. She picked up the sweet potato, went home, and planted it in the garden. In the second year, many sweet potatoes came up from the ground. She picked two baskets full of sweet potatoes and went to the house of this young man. With a smiling face she said, “Do you remember last year when you threw a sweet potato at me? I planted it, and now we have many sweet potatoes. These are all yours.”

Brothers and sisters, this reaction is the reaction of a lion. The one who hits others is the weakest; the one who is hit but does not retaliate is already very strong. But the true lion, the true king, can turn the other cheek and walk the second mile. The rule of Rome says that you have to walk one mile for the government; you do not have to go more than one mile. But don’t forget; our life is a life of the lion. That life can never be satisfied until you walk the second mile. When you walk the second mile, man will see the glory and beauty of Christ on us.

### **PERFECT IN LOVE**

In the passage of Matthew 5, 6, and 7, lastly, the Lord said, “Therefore you are to be perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect.” What does that mean? Are we to be holy as the heavenly Father? We will never attain to that. When it speaks of perfection, if you read the context, it speaks specifically about this matter of being perfect in love, because the Lord says, “You are to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Do you see that? You can love your friends. You can love those who are lovely. Is that love? It is love, but it is not complete. It is just half a circle, not the full circle. But it is different when you love your enemies, for the heavenly Father gives rain to both the good and the evil, and he gives the sun to the good and the evil. If we love those we love, we are full of love, but our love is not perfect. He says, “You are to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.” The love of the heavenly Father is perfect love. The love of the heavenly Father not only gives the sun to the good but also to the evil. If we are conformed to the image of God’s Son, in the matter of love we are perfect. This love is a perfect love.

So where is the way? Learn Christ. When our Lord was on earth, from Matthew's gospel you can see that He is King. His life is the life of a Lion. But when you read Matthew's gospel and you only see Him as a King, is that it? How do you become conformed to the image of the King? The entire gospel of Matthew shows us that. That is how Paul learned Christ, and that is how we are to learn Christ in the school of Christ. May the Lord impress these words upon us! This is how this way is walked. This is how Paul walked. This is how many people who love the Lord have walked.

Have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? To be conformed to the image of His Son is to be glorified. What glory do we have? Only when the glory of Christ in us is manifested can men see the humility of Christ and the gentleness of Christ. Then you will understand what the Sermon on the Mount says. In one word, it is to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Not only has He called us, not only has He chosen us, not only has He justified us by faith and sanctified us by faith, but finally, we can be glorified by faith.

Thank the Lord! In the school of Christ we can, like Paul, learn Christ, in other words relive Christ. As in the account of the four gospels, the way our Lord Jesus walked on the earth at that time, that same life also lives in us today. I have been crucified with Christ, so I do not need to live by myself. Thank the Lord, may Christ live in us. When that life naturally flows, you have no contribution; it is all the Lord's doing. So Paul said, "I am what I am by His grace." May the Lord be gracious to us!

Let us bow our heads and have a simple word of prayer:

*Lord, we want to commit these words unto Your hands. We thank You for our elderly brothers. They have walked the Way their entire lives. Even though they might feel they are not like You, but You know. May we be comforted! May the young brothers and sisters see that in the school of Christ we may learn Christ! Listen to our prayers; in the victorious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Ponder over these questions....

- (1) If to learn Christ means to imitate Christ, then can we attain it through our own effort?
- (2) If to learn Christ means to relive Christ, then how do we overcome as Christ, overcome according to the four gospels?