

WCCC 2021

Brother Ted Peng

The Abundance of the Life of Christ (1)

The theme for this conference is the spiritual reality of the church. When we think about this, our heart jumps because we are so excited. This topic really affects our everyday life. It gives us joy and peace in our heart. It also opens our heart so we do not just think of ourselves. Rather, we think of God's purpose and His church. The subject assigned to me by the brothers is the abundance of the life of Christ. In this session I would like to share with brothers and sisters the preciousness of the life of Christ. Together, we can see the life of Christ that God has given us is so precious. It is precious in our own personal life. It is precious in our family life. And when we gather together, it is precious in our life together. And in the second session I would like to share with you how we can experience this abundant life of Christ.

Scripture Reading

Gospel of John 1: 12 – 13 But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to be children of God, to those that believe on His name; who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God.

Here, this 'Him' is Christ Himself. This is the beginning. And then we grow in the Lord and finally we come to the following verse that everyone is familiar with.

Romans 8: 29 Because whom He has foreknown, He has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the firstborn among many brethren.

Brothers and sisters, this is truly wonderful. It says 'we can be the brothers of the firstborn'. The life of Christ in us gives us some special characteristics. The first one is in

1 Corinthians 15: 48 'Such as He made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones.'

Here it mentions one that is called the heavenly. That is Lord Jesus. And then it said those who are heavenly, and that's you and me. Brothers and sisters, it is tremendous, because here it said, just as Jesus is heavenly, so we are also heavenly.

Another verse we want to read is about His resurrection life. And this is a story we all are familiar with in

John 11: 25 'Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life: He that believes on me, though He has died, shall live'.

The wonder is that when Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life, He was speaking to Martha and Mary. What Jesus was really saying was that He is the resurrection and the life of everyone who believes in Him. And for Martha and Mary, He was Martha's resurrection and life and He was Mary's resurrection and life. The Lord was talking about you and me.

And the next one is the life that bears fruits.

John 15: 5 'I am the vine; you are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing'.

Here our Lord Jesus was telling us that He wants our life to be a life that produces fruits.

The following I want to talk about is the life with joy in our heart when we look at God's purpose. The verse is in

Hebrews 12: 2 'Looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith: who, in view of the joy lying before Him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God'.

This verse referred to our Lord Jesus going to the cross. He saw that the purpose of God would be accomplished. So here it said 'in view of the joy lying before Him'. The Lord Jesus had a joy and the joy was that the purpose of God would be accomplished, even though he had to go to the cross.

Lastly, I would like to mention that the life of Christ in us is the servant life.

Matthew 20: 28 'As indeed the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many'.

This was the life of Christ on earth. And this is what Lord Jesus wants to give us.

I would also like to read a short Psalm which said how beautiful it is when the life of Christ is in us. When we gather together, and when His life fills us, then we can express how wonderful and how beautiful the life of Christ is.

Psalm 133 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the hem of his garments; as the dew of Hermon that descended on the mountains of Zion; for there has Jehovah commanded the blessing, life forevermore'.

There is one more place which gives us a picture of how beautiful that is.

Isaiah 60: 15 'Instead of thy being forsaken and hated, so that no one went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy from generation to generation.'

Here Isaiah was talking about Jerusalem.

Let us pray

Lord, we just put forth the verses that we read before You. Lord, from generation to generation Your heart for Your people is so beautiful. Lord, what You have told us in the bible is not just for teaching but for real. All these beautiful things that You mentioned in the Bible are what You expect us to be. Lord, we only have a limited time on earth, but we want to commit ourselves to You. What You want of us, what You want for the church and what You expect of us, Lord, we pray that we can catch up with You. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Born of God

Dear brothers and sisters, we read some of the verses that are very inspiring. Oftentimes we think we love the Lord, but sometimes we are very cold. And sometimes, in difficult times we went under and got distracted. But the eyes of Jehovah our God are on you and on me from the very beginning. The Bible said God created man in His own image in the very beginning and it was different from any other thing that He created.

And as time went on, it was God who came to seek a relationship with man and not the other way around. We remember He sought Adam, 'Adam where are you?' You remember that God's glory appeared to our father, Abraham. We also

remember it was God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. 'I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac and I am the God of Jacob.' A few generations later, God was the shepherd of the young David. So, it is God who comes to seek us and not the other way around.

Moses and David sought a living relationship with God. And this relationship was life relationship. It is from life, about life and brings in more life. We see how Moses and David experienced that before the LORD. Towards the end of Moses' life, he told the Israelites, 'He, the LORD, is your life'. (Deuteronomy 30: 20). And David in Psalm 36: 9 said 'with you is the fountain of life'. So, with Moses and David, when they thought about God, they thought about life.

Children, Sons, and Brethren

And in the fullness of time, God sent His only begotten Son into the world as a man. And whoever believes in Him will get a new life. The new life is the eternal life and is the life of Jesus Christ. And in 1John 5, it said whoever has the Son of God has life. And whoever does not have the Son of God, does not have life. And it is this wonderful thing that apostle John said in John 1. He talked about being children of God. Originally, we have nothing to do with God's life, but now we are made children of God. When we believe in our Lord Jesus, we became children of God. God said, 'we are no longer born of the will of the flesh, the will of lust and the will of man, but of God. Brothers and sisters, it is a very significant sentence. We now have a wonderful position – being God's children! In reality it is a powerful thing. We are not born of the will of lust, the will of flesh or the will of man. Brothers and sisters, all the natural things are born of the flesh, the lust and the will of man. Sometimes we hear people say, if your mom and dad and grandparents have bad temper then you will have a bad temper. And for some people who are from a certain province in China, then they are looked on as stubborn as a mule. The wonderful thing is that now we are not born or controlled by these things. We are born of God! How precious it is! God created us in His own image. But now He has made us to be real children of God; not born of all these things but born of Him.

The Bible tells us that when we were first born, we were like a child, but then spiritually we grow. And finally, we are a son. When we are a son, God thinks of us as brothers of the firstborn, Romans 8:29; we are brothers of Christ. When we think about this, we are amazed that people like us would be thought of this way by the Lord. But that is exactly what God has in His mind! That's exactly what the Lord Jesus came to do. And all the apostles in the past told us the above from their revelations from the Lord and experiences with the Lord. When we take this in seriously it becomes our power to follow the Lord.

Characteristics of the life of Christ in us

I would like to share some characteristics of the life of Christ in us. I think when I mention these characteristics, you will all echo because it does actually happen to you and to me. And if we think harder, if Christ's life is not in us, there will not be these characteristics.

The transcending life

The first characteristic is that Christ's life in us is a transcending life. We remember that John said, we are no longer born of the flesh, no longer born of the lust and no longer born of the will of men. When Lord Jesus talked to Nicodemus, the Lord told Nicodemus that he had to be born from above. And Jesus also said 'you have to be born from the Spirit'. The Lord was telling Nicodemus that he had to come from a different place. And then we read what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15: 48 'as with the heavenly, so are those who are heavenly'. I like the Chinese translation. It said, 'that heavenly one, however He is, we who are also heavenly should be the same'. Dear brothers and sisters, actually we have a heavenly transcending life. Abraham's children knew that. In Hebrews 11, it said if they want to go back to the country where they came from, they could. But they did not because they desired for a better country which is in heaven.

In very practical term, there is a picture that Paul mentioned in Philippians 2: 14 -15 '*Do all things without murmurings and reasonings, that you may be blameless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom you appear as lights in the world*'. A crooked and perverted generation and we are in it. But we are harmless and pure and a light in the world. And we hold forth the word of life. Brothers and sisters, this is a picture of a transcending life. Over the generations there were so many small groups of brothers and sisters who were persecuted. It was a crooked and perverted generation. But they were harmless and pure. And they appeared in their generation as light to the world. And people can see the word of life in them. This is the first aspect of the life of Christ in us.

The resurrection life

The second characteristic of the life of Christ in us is the resurrection life. The brother of Martha and Mary died. And there was no hope for Lazarus because he was dead. And Martha and Mary were so sad. There was no hope. Here came the Lord Jesus. And both Martha and Mary said, 'Lord if you came a little earlier, my brother would not have died'. Yet Jesus said 'I am the

resurrection and I am the life'. Dear brothers and sisters, what does that mean? He was not just talking about Lazarus. He was talking about Martha and Mary. Actually, He was also talking about you and about me! The wonder was that the Lord brought Lazarus back to life. And the Lord also made the heart of Martha and Mary alive again. Martha used to complain when she served. But in chapter 12 right after chapter 11, Martha served again without any complaints. The resurrection life was in her. I believed she was serving with joy in her heart. And this was the same with Mary. The resurrection life was in her. She poured out the nard on the Lord Jesus and the fragrance filled the room. That was her praises for the Lord. And the Lord said 'Wherever the gospel is preached, one has to tell the story of this woman'.

Brothers and sisters, we have to believe this resurrection life is in you and in me. Today, life is difficult especially for the younger brothers and sisters. The older brothers and sisters were not hurt as much. But the younger ones would be hurt really bad. It is not only the outward thing but the inward feeling that we feel so disappointed in ourselves. We made so many mistakes. We are so disappointed with ourselves that we even despair. But brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus is the resurrection and the life! Not only is He our life, His eye has never left you or me for even a minute. He knows your weakness and my weakness. He has shed His blood for our souls! He has become our cover so that we are not attacked by Satan. Satan wants us to believe that God does not love us anymore. But God's love to you and to me has never changed.

And not only love, but His expectation of us has never changed. And He expects you and me to grow spiritually and to be like His Son and to be a blessing to everyone around us. He expects us to come out of our pit and can serve the Lord like Martha and pour out our nard and praises like Mary. The resurrection life is in you and in me.

The overcoming life

The third characteristic is the overcoming life. John 16: 33 *'These things have I spoken to you that in me you might have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world'*. What was the Lord really talking about when He said He has overcome the world? John 14: 30 *'I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing'*. When Jesus said I have overcome the world, He specifically talked about the ruler of this world, Satan. Jesus have already given us His overcoming life. The first thing the Lord saw in Satan is that he is a liar. (See John 8). Jesus was saying Satan is a liar and he is the father of liars. This is the point about Satan that our Lord is focusing on.

Brothers and sisters, what does that have to do with us? Nowadays there are so many lies everywhere. The lies and conspiracy theory are all over the place. Are we willing to reject those lies? Are we able to reject these lies? Think of Jesus. Think about His overcoming life. 'Do not worry for I have overcome the world'. Brothers and sisters, when you suspect and know these are lies, you have to be willing to reject them. And if you are not sure, bring these rumors before the Lord and ask Him whether they are lies or truths. And I am sure He will answer. Brothers and sisters, believe that His overcoming life is in you and in me. And we ought to be willing and able to reject these lies. Just look at the Lord Jesus and you will see and know that the overcoming life is there.

The Lord Jesus is not only our life but He is now actually on the throne. He is not only on the throne of the universe but He is on the throne in my heart. Do I listen to Him who is on the throne or do I listen to those lies? How precious it is that the life of the Lord Jesus is an overcoming life!

The fruit- bearing life

His life is also a life that bears fruits. We have read John 15: 5 – He is the vine and we are the branches. Abide in Him and He in us and then we will bear fruits. In Galatians, it talks about the fruit of the Spirit. What it really means is that the Holy Spirit will bring out the life of Christ to bear fruits. Love, peace, joy and six others. I just want to mention about the first one which is love. And this love is the agape love, from the father to the Son, and from the Son to us. And the wonder is that this love is actually in you and in me. And the wonder is that sometimes in an assembly there is a brother or sister who bothers us so much we cannot love him or her anymore. But this fruit bearing life of Christ is in us. And when we think about His life in us then we are able to love our brothers and sisters.

The life that rejoices in God's will

The fifth point is that this life is a life that rejoices in the will of God. There are two places in the New Testament that I have read that Jesus rejoiced or that the joy was in the Lord Jesus. And both places have to do with the will of God, the Father. One place is in Luke 10: 2. The Lord rejoiced when the disciples came back and told Him how they had overcome the enemies. The Lord rejoiced and prayed to the Father, 'Father, this is your beautiful will'. And the second place is in Hebrews 12: 2 – the verse that our brother talked about this morning and we also read before. The way of the cross towards the end was very difficult.

But then the Lord said He could endure that with joy. It is because at the end the will of God would be accomplished and thousands and millions of people will be saved! This was the reason Jesus rejoiced in the purpose of God.

That life, brothers and sisters, is in you and in me. Apostle Paul exhorted us in Romans 12. He beseeched us to offer our bodies a living sacrifice. And then one thing will happen. Our mind will be transformed! And we will find the will of God good, perfect and pleasing. Of course, the will of God is good, perfect and pleasing to God. But when our mind is transformed, we now find the will of God is good, perfect and pleasing to me! And if that happens, it does not take long for us to love the eternal purpose of God. After we offered up our bodies and our mind are transformed, it does not take long for us to find that the will of God is pleasing. And we find that this Christ and His church is perfect, pleasing and so good.

And then something strange happens. We find that our thinking towards our Lord and His church has changed! And practically, the way you look at brothers and sisters will be different from before. You will not feel that brothers/sisters give me so much trouble that I will not come next week. Instead, next week you will still come and find that these brothers and sisters are lovely although they still give you trouble. And this is the wonder of that Christ's life in us, which makes us rejoice in the will of God.

The servant life

And the last characteristic of the life of Christ is the servant life. At the very end of His life, our Lord said to His disciples, the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. In 2 Corinthians 4: 5, Paul said he was not only the servant of the Lord, but he was also the servant of brothers and sisters. The life of Christ is a life that had been a servant. And then Paul followed and said this life is also a life that serves brothers and sisters. A lot of times, people in the world want to be the head instead of the tail. Everyone wants to sit in the higher place and no one wants to sit in the lower place. Everyone wants to be applauded by people. No one wants to clean the bathroom. The wonder is that when we come to church and when we realize that the life of Christ is a life of a servant, then you and I are willing and happy to do anything in His house.

When I was a young Christian, I read Deuteronomy 15 and there was this picture. A Hebrew slave served the master for six year and in the seventh year,

he could be set free. But he thought, 'I love my master and his house'. And he decided that he would be a bondservant in this house forever! This picture affected me. I love my master and His house. Brothers and sisters, this is the life the Lord Jesus has given us.

Four pictures when the life of Christ is abundant in the church

Finally, I like to present to brothers and sisters four pictures. You can pin them on your wall. It is when the children of God gather together, when the abundance of the life of God is in everyone, then what do you see? Actually, the first three pictures present God's thought in sequence in the Bible. The 4th picture explains why the first three pictures were possible.

Picture 1: Psalm 133 - Brothers dwell together in unity

The first one is David's Psalm 133. Verse 1 said, *'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity'*. Verse 2 continued, *'Like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the hem of his garments'*. It was very amazing. This Aaron was 400 years before David. So, something had gone into David's heart. There is the head and the blessing of the Lord comes down from the head and then to the body. David was impressed with the head. The blessing did not come from anywhere else. The blessings come down from the head. This precious oil comes down from the head. And the third verse talked about the dew that comes down from Hermon to Zion. And then he said this is life forevermore. Brothers and sisters, life forevermore is a New Testament concept thousands of years later. David somehow got two important things from God that touched his heart. One was the head and the other was the life eternal coming down to Zion to everyone. Then I realized the reason the brothers can dwell harmoniously and happily together is because of these two things.

Think about it, brothers and sisters, today if we do not hold fast the head, can there be any joy or unity in the church? If you and I do not pay attention to this eternal life in you and me, is it possible that we can love each other? Thank God that He has shown the head and this eternal life in every brother and sister. That is the basis for our unity in our dwelling together. The wonder is that these two things have been given to you and to me. We just need to pay attention to it. We need to honor the Lord and the heart of the Lord.

Picture 2: Isaiah 60:15 - Eternal excellence and joy from generation to generation

The second picture is in Isaiah 60 where he talked about Jerusalem. Jerusalem was in bad shape about three hundred years after David. Isaiah said it used to be a city of righteousness. But by then it was like a city of murderers. No one took care of the widows and children. The LORD's heart was actually sad. But He did not give up. In Isaiah, God actually said, 'behold my servant is coming'. In chapter 59, He said the redeemer of Zion is coming. He was coming to do one thing. And it was to make Jerusalem an eternal excellence. And it would be the joy for generations. This was what that servant would do. Eternal excellence – excellence means better than anything. And eternal means not only in the future, but in the present and in the past. There is one who will make Jerusalem an eternal excellence and a joy of many generations. Brothers and sisters, we know that nothing in this world is eternal. The good things in the world are never eternal. But the LORD said Jerusalem is going to be the eternal excellence.

Brothers and sisters, what God is saying is that when this redeemer servant comes, He will be the center of this place. He will be the life of that place. It will be the life of everyone there. And not only that, but it will be joy from generation to generation. That same joy will be there in my grandchildren's grandchildren. And the joy will be the same joy. Dear brothers and sisters, what can this be? Only Christ Jesus can be that eternal joy. When we open the Bible and more, we see that for about two thousand years, generation after generation, when people talked about Lord Jesus, joy filled their hearts. Then and now is the same. This eternal excellent and joy from generation to generation first of all talks about Christ. And it not only talks about Him, but about His life in everyone.

In Isaiah 61, the LORD said for those who mourn in Zion, He would give them this eternal excellent joy. These were the people who cried for Jerusalem because they looked at the condition at that time and they felt sad. But when this servant of the Lord came, He would give them the oil of joy. He would give them hope. And He would make them trees of righteousness. Every tree of righteousness did not grow by itself. It was actually planted by God. And this tree's purpose is for the glory of God.

At a certain age we were saved and became a Christian. When we believed in the Lord, He put a new life in us. That life is supposed to grow. If we love the world and do not love the Lord, that life grows very slowly. If we love the Lord, that life grows fast. As time goes on, the tree will grow to become a tree of righteousness. And it is for God's glory. This is the first aspect of eternal excellence. The life of Christ grows in us to be a tree of righteousness. In English

this is not singular but plural. That means you and me, brothers and sisters together. This is one beautiful scene of Zion.

The second aspect of this eternal excellence is in 62: 1. The servant of the LORD said He will make the righteousness of Jerusalem shine forth. He will also make Jerusalem as a lamp that shines. Brothers and sisters, the LORD is not talking about a physical city. He is talking about you and me, His church. He wants people from the outside to see the righteousness of God and the salvation of God. The righteousness of God is not your righteousness or my righteousness. Our righteousness is just a filthy rag. It is the righteousness of God. This Jerusalem or the church is not just a happy place. This Jerusalem or the church will shine forth the righteousness of God. Thank the Lord that God's righteousness, through Jesus Christ, is now in us. If you and I do not pay attention to the life of the Lord in us, then it does not mean anything. But if you and I pay attention to this life, then this life will grow and will shine out God's righteousness.

In 1 Corinthians 1: 30, Paul said now God makes Christ our wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption. It is wonderful because Christ now becomes your righteousness and my righteousness. When people in the world see the city of Jerusalem, they see the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of God in each one of us. They not only see the righteousness but also the salvation. In you and me, there is this thing called love that comes from God to His Son and through His Son to you and to me. And because of that when we see people who are not saved, without hope and in misery, we want to bring Jesus to them. This is the second aspect of the eternal excellence.

The third aspect of the eternal excellence is in Isaiah 62: 7. There the servant of the LORD actually assigned watchmen on the wall of Jerusalem. These watchmen would not rest. And they would not let God rest, until God makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth. What does that mean to you and to me? Brothers and sisters, we are the watchmen. If you and I do not care about Zion, this means nothing to us. If you care for Zion and care for the church, this means a lot. These watchmen on the wall are not looking at brothers and sisters to find their fault. But they are alert, and they look at God. God, what do you have to say to us? Lord, what do you want us to do? And this was what watchmen did in the Old Testament. But here the watchmen were not going to let God rest. They kept praying all the time so that God would do one thing! And that was that God would make Jerusalem to be a praise on earth. Brothers and sisters, Jerusalem is just you and me. We are a trouble for other people. And oftentimes we feel that we have so short changed God's house. But God will do something to you and to me. He is going to discipline us and lead us so that we can be like His Son. When all of us are like that, then the church is a praise

on the earth! And Jerusalem will then be a praise on earth. Brothers and sisters, this is the Jerusalem that is the eternal excellence and joy from generation to generation.

When we sometimes think about Psalm 133 or Isaiah 60, we say it is not possible and maybe it is talking about the future. Is that really so? Was that in God's mind? Now this Servant of the LORD, the Redeemer, when He comes, do we tell Him, Lord it is for the future, not for now. Brothers and sisters, that will really sadden His heart.

Picture 3: Revelations 3:7-11 - The church in Philadelphia

The third picture is Philadelphia. But we do not have time to go into it today.

Picture 4: Colossians 3:11 and Ephesians 1:23 - Christ is all and is in all

The fourth picture is very simple. It is what Paul said in Colossians 3: 11 and Ephesians 1: 23, Christ is all and in all. I thank the Lord that He gave Paul this very simple verse that captures the essence of all these pictures in God's heart. Brothers and sisters, if you and I are willing and are thoughtful about God's heart, this verse is what God expects you and me and His church to be, now. This is when we gather together and the abundance of the life of Christ in each of us, and God sees it, and everyone around sees it.

Let us pray

Lord, how we thank You and we praise You! From generation to generation and over all these years, things change but Lord, Your heart never changes. Lord, we thank You that Your expectations for people like us never changes. The life of Christ in us does wonderful things: brothers dwelling together in unity, an eternal excellent and a joy from generation to generation. Lord, we thank You and praise You. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.