

CHAPTER ONE

CONCERNING BREAKING THE BREAD IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE LORD

Scripture Reading: Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:19-20; John 6:53-58

The content of the church is Christ, and the intrinsic reality of every single matter in the church is Christ Himself. If we do not touch Christ and gain Christ, even our worship and service will be meaningless. Just as the reality of believing in the Lord is Christ's coming into us, and the reality of baptism is our union with Christ, so also all the services in the church should be related to Christ.

After a person is saved, he encounters several things. The first is baptism, and the second is the breaking of bread.

BREAD BREAKING

What is the meaning of bread breaking? And what is the reality of bread breaking? Once we mention the breaking of bread, almost all Christians will say that breaking bread is for remembering the Lord. It is true that in the Bible the Lord Himself said that we should break bread in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19). Thus, based on this word, many Christians conclude that the significance of bread breaking is the remembrance of the Lord. Although this word, this definition, is not wrong, the meaning of remembering the Lord is not simple.

The remembrance spoken of by the Lord is different from our thought concerning remembrance. When we talk about remembrance, we have our own concept. What is this concept? For example, after a father dies, his children remember him. We all understand this kind of remembrance, but is this remembrance the same as our remembrance of the Lord? I am afraid that many people would say that our remembrance of the Lord is simply our meditating on the Lord. This kind of concept, however, is very different from the thought of the Bible.

REMEMBERING THE LORD NOT BEING MEDITATING ON THE LORD

According to our natural concept, we think that when we break bread in remembrance of the Lord, we must calm down and meditate on the Lord in a detailed way. We feel that we need to contemplate how God came down to the earth from the heavens, was born in a manger, lived in Nazareth for thirty years, trod through Galilee and the land of Judea, suffered man's reproach

and persecution, was betrayed, bound, and scourged for us, bore the cross to Golgotha, was crucified, endured unbearable pain, bore our sins, and was judged by God on our behalf. Moreover, we feel that we need to contemplate His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and His sending of the Holy Spirit. We also feel that we need to contemplate the fact that He is now sitting in the heavens as our High Priest and that one day He will come again to take us to be with Him forever to enjoy His glory in eternity. We have all these scenes within us—from the throne in the heavens to the manger in Bethlehem, from Galilee to Judea, from the virgin Mary to Golgotha, and from the tomb to resurrection, ascension, the second coming, the rapture to be with the Lord, and the enjoyment of glory forever. However, this kind of remembrance is based upon a kind of religious concept that is void of any revelation or spiritual value.

All the terms and all the utterances in the Bible are different from our natural comprehension of things. The faith referred to in the Bible is different from our understanding of faith. The repentance mentioned in the Bible is different from our comprehension of repentance. And the remembrance spoken of in the Bible is definitely not according to our realization of remembrance. When we remember the Lord in the Lord's table meeting every Lord's Day, concentrating in our mind to meditate on the Lord Jesus silently, does this mean that we all love the Lord, are spiritual, and have the Lord's presence? This kind of remembrance by meditation is not the result of revelation but is a kind of religious worship. This is not service that is according to revelation but service that is according to our natural concept.

TO REMEMBER THE LORD BEING TO EAT THE LORD'S BODY AND DRINK THE LORD'S BLOOD

In the Bible the Lord does not tell us to meditate on Him in our remembrance of Him. What then did the Lord say? While eating the final Passover, "He took a loaf and gave thanks, and He broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). The Lord did not tell the disciples that at the Lord's table they had to quiet their hearts to meditate on Him in remembrance of Him. Rather, the Lord said, "This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." What the Lord indicated was that to remember Him is to eat Him. The remembrance in the Bible is not meditating. First and foremost, it is eating. What do we eat? We eat the Lord's body.

Verse 20 continues, "And similarly the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood, which is being poured out for you." The Lord meant that He wanted them to drink the cup in remembrance of Him. Hence, what is the remembrance of the Lord? We remember the Lord when we eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood. The remembrance of the Lord in the Bible is to eat and drink the Lord. To remember the Lord is to eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood.

THE LORD BECOMING OUR FOOD

What does it mean to eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood? To eat the Lord's body and drink His blood is to eat and drink of the Lord Himself. A person may say, "I have eaten some chicken." How was he able to eat the chicken? Without death and without the shedding of blood, the chicken could not have entered into him. The reason that the Lord Jesus can enter into us and become our food is that He died and shed His blood.

One day the Lord Jesus told the Jews, "Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (John 6:27). This meant that the Jews should not seek to eat bread and be filled, because bread is merely physical food and temporary. Instead, they should seek the food that abides unto eternal life. The bread that the Lord would give was His flesh, but the Jews did not understand Him. As a result, they contended with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (v. 52). Then the Lord Jesus said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life...For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him" (vv. 54-56). Then many of His disciples said, "This word is hard; who can hear it?" (v. 60). This was because they were full of their natural concepts.

What is it to eat the Lord's flesh and drink the Lord's blood? To eat the Lord's flesh and drink His blood is to take the Lord into us by eating and drinking Him. The Lord is life. Therefore, when He comes into us, eternal life comes into us.

EATING AND DRINKING THE LORD BEING TO RECEIVE THE LORD

From this we see that through His death the Lord gave Himself to us. If He had not died or shed His blood, He could not have any relationship with us and would not have a way to enter into us. He can enter into us because He died and shed His blood and thus became edible and drinkable to us. Now whenever we turn to our spirit, believing and receiving the Lord who died and shed His blood for us, we eat His flesh and drink His blood. We believe that in His body He bore our sins on the cross, that He died for us, and that His blood was shed for us on the cross. In God's eyes, when we believe and receive the Lord in this way, we are eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

What was accomplished through the Lord's flesh and blood is now our portion. When we believe in Him and receive Him, He enters into us through the Holy Spirit. When this happens, He is in us and in union with us, and we are in Him and in union with Him. Thus, to eat the Lord's flesh and drink the Lord's blood is to receive the Lord Himself as our enjoyment, our life within, and our food. This is to eat the Lord's flesh and drink the Lord's blood.

The greatest principle in eating and drinking is receiving, and the principle in receiving is union. Whatever we eat and whatever we drink will enter into us. Moreover, we are united with what we eat and drink. No matter how much we meditate on a person, he cannot come into us. Hence, bread breaking is not to meditate on the Lord but to eat the Lord's body and drink His blood. In baptism we enter into Christ and are united with Christ, and in bread breaking we eat and drink the Lord Himself and are thus united and mingled with Him. Every time we break the bread,

more of the Lord comes into us. Every time we remember the Lord, we have a deeper union with the Lord. This is to remember the Lord.

EATING, DRINKING, AND REMEMBERING THE LORD IN SPIRIT

In the past when we remembered the Lord, many of our concepts were religious and much of our remembrance was in our mind. Every time we came to the Lord's table, we contemplated His being God, His becoming flesh, His living on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, His dying on the cross, His being raised in three days, His ascending to the throne, and His waiting to come again. We always remembered the Lord in this way—we worshipped and meditated on Him in our mind. However, the Lord said that He is Spirit and that those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness (4:24). Only when we use our spirit and are in our spirit can we touch the Lord, worship the Lord, and genuinely remember the Lord.

Genuine remembrance of the Lord is receiving the Lord and allowing Him to enter into us again. The Lord said, "This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me...This cup is the new covenant established in My blood, which is being poured out for you" (Luke 22:19-20). We eat the bread, which signifies the Lord's body, and drink the cup, which signifies the Lord's blood. We do this in remembrance of the Lord. Our eating and drinking of the Lord is our remembrance of the Lord. The Lord does not want us to meditate on Him or contact Him with our mind; rather, the Lord wants us to contact Him, eat Him, and drink Him with our spirit. When He was broken for us on the cross, He shed His blood and released His life. The bread and cup that we touch outwardly signify His body that was given for us and His blood that was shed for us. This means that He has died, and His life has been released from within Him. Now we not only receive the visible bread and cup outwardly, but at the same time, we also touch and receive the Lord Himself in our spirit. We allow Him to come into us afresh, and again we gain Him, receive Him, and enjoy Him. The Lord said that this is to be "in remembrance of Me."

REMEMBERING THE LORD BEING TO RECEIVE THE LORD ANEW

In breaking bread, when we see the symbols, we turn to our spirit and receive the Lord again and again. Every time we break bread, we receive the Lord anew, and every time we break bread, we again contact the Lord who died and resurrected, touching Him in our spirit. If we truly see this, the next time we break bread, we will realize that inwardly we have been filled with many other things so that the Lord is not able to find any place, any empty room, in us. When we realize this, we need to pray, "O Lord, remove all the things that should not be in me so that You may have a place in me." The revelation we see will expose our inward problems and cause us to tell the Lord spontaneously, "O Lord, I am glad to pour myself out and empty myself. O Lord, I receive You as the Spirit into me. Fill me with Your resurrection life." By doing this, we will definitely be filled with Christ after breaking the bread.

There was once a brother who had been at odds with his wife for a long time. Inwardly, he felt that this was not right, but he simply could not help it. Every time he came to the Lord's table, after singing a hymn and calming down, he would begin to pray, "Lord, You are God, who took the form of a sinner and humbled Yourself for us. You were born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth..." He enjoyed his prayer, and the saints were joyful in their spirits. However, just as he was unhappy with his wife before the Lord's table, he was unhappy with her after the meeting also. After the Lord's table and after this meditation and prayer in his mind, he still had not been touched by the Lord inwardly. Therefore, he was the same after the meeting as he was before the meeting. He was still intact and was the same as he had always been.

One day, however, after receiving revelation and seeing that remembrance of the Lord is actually to receive the Lord, he could not touch the bread anymore. Why was he unable to do this? He could not touch the bread because he realized that since he was not pleased with his wife, he could not receive Christ within even though he might take the bread outwardly. Thus, he could no longer break the bread. Because he felt very wrong, he prayed, pouring out his sins and everything that was in him, saying, "O Lord, I pour out all my displeasure, my self, my sins, and the world that is within me." This was not a meditation in the mind but an inward receiving of the Lord. In that one hour of remembering the Lord by breaking bread, he enjoyed the Lord again. As a result, he became a different person.

BREAKING BREAD BEING TO PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S TABLE

The Bible tells us that when we break bread, we partake of the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:16-17, 21) and enjoy the Lord. When we invite people for a meal, we cannot serve ourselves as food. However, the Lord's table is different. In the Lord's table the Lord Himself is spread on the table. What is spread on the Lord's table is the Lord Himself. In remembering the Lord we come to His table, and on this table His flesh and blood are displayed. Today Christianity has made the Lord's table a religious matter, without the reality of Christ. However, when we come to the Lord's table, we come to receive the Lord Himself. We empty ourselves so that the Lord can come in. In this one hour we enjoy the Lord by eating and drinking of Him. By the end we have received and enjoyed Him inwardly. As a result, the world and the flesh are gone.

To partake of the Lord's table is to remember the Lord. Is there anyone who would attend a feast merely to observe and think but not to eat and drink? Everyone who attends a feast surely eats and drinks. Thus, if we truly know what it means to remember the Lord, we will definitely eat and drink to our heart's content at the Lord's table. Then every time we remember the Lord, we will be able to say with boldness that all our hunger and thirst are fully satisfied. When people ask us about what we are eating and drinking, we can tell them readily that we are eating and drinking the Lord Jesus. When we receive Him into us, He becomes our life and strength within, enabling us to love those whom we cannot love, to do what we cannot do, to be what we cannot be, and to live in a way that we cannot live. Then during the week He will be digested in us to become our everything, making us joyful and satisfied. This is to enjoy Christ and to receive the Lord.

I hope that our remembrance of the Lord will not be centered on meditating but will be based upon receiving. Every time we remember Him, may we eat Him, drink Him, and enjoy Him inwardly. Then may we take His riches back with us so that we will have Him as our satisfaction, joy, and supply. This is to remember the Lord.

CHAPTER SIX

A PRACTICAL EXERCISE OF PRAYING IN THE LORD'S TABLE MEETING

(1)

If we consider these exercises for the meetings as something too difficult and not worthwhile, there is nothing further to say. But if we think that these exercises are worthwhile, we should apply ourselves, spend our time, and learn to put ourselves aside particularly in this matter. Otherwise, these exercises will only be in letter; there will not be much spiritual significance. If we are not willing to pay the price, what we are doing can be compared to building a castle in the air. Therefore, if we are willing to pay the price, we must diligently apply ourselves to be exercised in this matter. This kind of exercise will yield no result if we do not have the heart for it.

Moreover, if we want good and rich meetings, we must allow the Holy Spirit to rule. The Holy Spirit cannot come out in a meeting unless He can first come out through us. Therefore, we must allow Him to reign in us by simply laying ourselves aside.

PRAYER IN THE LORD'S TABLE MEETING

Usually, at the beginning of the table meeting everyone feels quite ordinary; we do not have any particular feeling. In such a case we can select *Hymns*, #158, "Lord, Thy love has sought and found us / Wand'ring in this desert wide; / Thou hast thrown Thine arms around us, / For us suffered, bled, and died. / Sing, my soul! He lovèd thee, / Jesus gave Himself for me." This hymn can easily touch the feeling deep within us. On the one hand, it gives us a sense of the Lord's coming to seek us and His giving Himself up for us; on the other hand, it stirs up a sense of gratitude in our hearts and a desire to offer up our praise to the Lord. If we are touched in our spirit after singing and have entered into the feeling of the Lord's seeking us and giving Himself up for us, a brother should offer a prayer according to this feeling in his spirit.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PRAYING IN A LORD'S TABLE MEETING

Fitly Connected to One Another

We must pay attention to a few principles when we pray at a table meeting. First, our prayers must be fitly connected to one another. After singing a hymn that was selected according to the spirit of the meeting, we should utter a prayer to follow the hymn; we should not pray in a disconnected way. We should sense the feeling of a meeting by following the Spirit's moving within us. In a meeting we should be like those in a relay race in which we may not run outside the lane. After singing the first hymn, someone should follow with a prayer. After the first prayer someone else should follow with a second hymn or a second prayer, and perhaps there should be a third prayer. The entire meeting, including the selection of hymns, prayers, reading of Scriptures, exhortation, or testimony, should be carried out as if we are in a relay race; there should not be another beginning halfway through the meeting.

The present situation in our meetings is that we have one beginning after another, with each person making his own move. Five people have five different activities; ten people have ten different activities. From the beginning to the end, our meetings are continually being restarted. Thus, the entire meeting is disconnected, without a distinct beginning, progression, or conclusion. This is a serious mistake. We must firmly grasp this principle: with the exception of the beginning prayer, all subsequent prayers, whether it is one prayer or ten prayers, must be connected with each other and closely follow each other.

Moving Forward in the Spirit

Second, our prayers should move forward; they should not remain in the same place. Immediately after we offer a prayer in relation to a hymn, we must move forward in our spirit. We must not only move further but also move higher. For instance, when we follow *Hymns*, #158 with a prayer, our spirit must not remain in the same place; it should move forward. Horizontally, our prayer should advance further; vertically, it should climb higher. The first prayer leads to the subject; hence, the second prayer should climb one step higher, and then when another hymn is selected, it should climb even higher. We must hold on to this principle. Just as in writing a composition, we keep moving higher and further.

Maintaining the Feeling of the Meeting

Third, as we move forward in the meeting, we must learn to maintain the feeling of the meeting in our prayers and hymns. This simply means that we cannot proceed independently. As we move forward in selecting a hymn, and especially when we pray, we should bring the brothers and sisters with us. The more we pray, the more they will say Amen; the more we pray, the more they will be drawn to the center. The brothers and sisters may not be uplifted in their spirit before we pray, but after we pray, their spirits should climb higher and higher.

Suppose the brothers and sisters are in the feeling of the Lord's suffering, yet our prayer is concerning the Lord's glorification in heaven. Our feeling does not match the feeling of the brothers and sisters. According to our feeling, we have already climbed up to heaven, but the brothers and sisters are still prostrate on earth. This is not appropriate. We need to take care of the feeling of the brothers and sisters as we move upward. Hence, prayer requires a great deal of exercise. In a three-legged race we must take care of our partner who is bound to us; we cannot

simply run as fast as we wish. Likewise, as we move forward in a meeting, we must bring the brothers and sisters with us and run with them. Do not disregard this matter. This requires a considerable amount of exercise.

Using Utterances of Poetic Quality

Fourth, as a rule, all our prayers should contain utterances of poetic quality. We should pray with words that bear a poetic character; it is not good to pray with words that are too plain. For example, the Canaanite woman cried out to the Lord Jesus: “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!” (Matt. 15:22). Her prayer has a poetic nature as evidenced by the utterances *Have mercy on me* and *Son of David*. She came to ask the Son of David to heal her daughter. Without the poetic characteristic she might have asked the Lord in a rough way, “Just heal my daughter.” This kind of prayer is not wrong. She might have also said, “Jesus, my daughter is ill. Go quickly and heal her!” This would make her sound like a bandit who always speaks rudely to coerce people to do something, saying, “You do this!” However, although she was a Canaanite woman, when she came to pray before the Lord Jesus, her prayer was poetic: “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter suffers terribly from demon possession” (v. 22). Her utterances are refined and pleasant to the ears. Hence, there is a great deal for us to learn regarding prayer.

The Lord Jesus was even more poetic in His reply. He was not like us; we might have said directly, “Go away; I cannot heal your daughter.” The Lord did not do this; rather, He replied in a mild way, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs” (v. 26). The word *dogs* implies many things. The Canaanite woman’s answer was very proper: “Yes, Lord, for even the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table” (v. 27). The conversation between her and the Lord contains numerous poetic utterances. There is no direct mention of the daughter’s problem, yet the purpose of the entire conversation is for the daughter. This is being poetic. The Lord’s response is also very poetic. He did not say, “These Gentiles do not know God; even the children of Israel do not have such faith.” Instead, He said, “Great is your faith! Be it done to you as you wish” (v. 28). The Lord’s response is as poetic as the Canaanite woman’s prayer.

Furthermore, Jacob’s blessing of his sons (Gen. 49:1-28), Moses’ blessing of the children of Israel (Deut. 33), and the prayer of Samuel’s mother (1 Sam. 2:1-10) are passages in the Old Testament that are rich in poetic qualities. These qualities are especially evident in the Psalms. For example, Psalm 51 is David’s psalm of repentance. He says, “Therefore You are righteous when You speak; / You are clear when You judge... / Purge my sin with hyssop, and I will be clean; / Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow... / Create in me a clean heart, O God, / And renew a steadfast spirit within me” (vv. 4-10). On the surface, these expressions seem to be very plain, but in actuality, they possess rich poetic qualities. I hope that we will all pay attention to this matter and will be exercised in it. God is full of feeling. A person with much feeling tends to be poetic in utterance, whereas a person with little feeling tends to be rough in his expressions. The more a person touches God, the richer his feeling will be, and consequently, the more poetic his utterances will be.

However, do not think that merely being poetic is good enough; the most important thing concerning prayer is that it should touch people’s spirit. The more we are in the spirit, the more

feeling we have; the less we are in the spirit, the less feeling we have. The outward feeling of man is shallow; the inward feeling of man is deep. The spirit of man is the deepest part of man. The more we pray by the spirit, the more feeling we will have, and consequently, our utterances will be more poetic. Moreover, the more poetic our utterances are, the more we can touch the feelings of others. If our prayer is full of poetical utterance, it is easier for us to touch the spirit and the feeling of the saints. But if we use fancy words merely for the sake of being poetic, it will be ineffective and worthless.

In our service to God we must learn to be keen and tender in our feeling. We should not use common and rough expressions. Although our prayers are neither poems nor psalms of praise, through them we can touch the Lord who has the most feeling and who is the most exalted and glorious. Therefore, when we come before the Lord to speak to Him, our utterances should be full of poetic qualities and rich in feeling.

Bringing the Saints into the Revelation

Fifth, our prayers should not only move forward and upward, they should also bring the atmosphere of the meeting to the subject of the meeting. For example, the first section of the Lord's table meeting is for the breaking of the bread. After a few hymns and prayers we should bring the meeting toward the bread and the cup, to the feeling of breaking the bread. However, some prayers do not turn our feeling to the Lord's table but rather draw our feeling further away from it. Suppose the atmosphere at the Lord's table is that the Lord died and shed His blood for us, yet a brother prays in tears, "O Lord, no one but You can understand the hardship we suffer on earth." We cannot say that such a prayer is wrong. However, this prayer merely takes us to a Roman execution place to see the persecution of Christians; it does not show us the Lord's table.

If our spirit is focused on the bread and the cup and a prayer is offered regarding the Lord's suffering on earth, a brother should follow the prayer and the atmosphere of the meeting to select *Hymns, #226*, "For the bread and for the wine, / For the pledge that seals Him mine, / For the words of love divine, / We give Thee thanks, O Lord." This will bring us into the feeling of the bread and the cup. When we come to the fourth stanza, we should all stand up and prepare for the breaking of the bread. After singing, someone should offer a prayer of blessing to receive the bread and the cup from the Lord's hand.

Avoiding Formalities

Sixth, we should avoid formal prayers at the table meeting; instead, we should use words of revelation and words that convey spiritual facts. For instance, at the beginning of the table meeting, a brother may pray, "O Lord, once again we come to Your table." This word is formal; it is not of revelation. After singing *Hymns, #226*, we should normally have a certain feeling or seeing concerning the bread and the cup. We should not pray with formal phrases, such as "once again we..." especially if such a prayer was offered earlier in the meeting. Suppose we were invited to a meal and have been sitting for a while at the dinner table. When the food is put on the table, we should take it and eat. It would be formal for us to say, "Once again let us come and eat."

When we pray, we should simply say, “O Lord, we thank You for the bread and for the cup; we are here in remembrance of You. O Lord, thank You for giving us the bread and the cup.” The principle is that we mention the bread and the cup directly. We can also say, “O Lord, our hearts are filled with sweetness as we sing with our mouths and behold the bread and the cup with our eyes. O Lord, You are the sweetest One.” This is somewhat poetic. After this we can pray with words of revelation concerning the bread: “O Lord, although we are here breaking the bread, the bread was actually broken on the cross.” This word is significant because it shows that we can break the bread today because the Lord was broken at the time of His crucifixion. We should continually refer to the bread in our prayers. For instance, we may say, “Lord, we praise You that You were broken; You are no longer unbroken. Because You were broken, we can have Your life, Your very person.” After we have finished praying concerning the bread, we should go on to speak concerning the cup, still using words of revelation and of a poetic nature.

Then all the saints will have the inward revelation: “O Lord, the bread is so good, and the cup is so sweet. You received the cup as a portion on our behalf. You drank the cup of wrath so that today we have the cup of blessing. It is because You shed Your blood and died for us that the cup of wrath has become the cup of blessing. In this cup we see the precious blood You shed for us. It is because You shed Your blood that our sins were taken away from us, and God’s riches have come to us. O Lord, now we receive this bread and this cup from Your hand. While we are receiving them, we pray that You would add Yourself as a blessing to us. Lord, may we touch the reality of this bread and this cup, not merely the outward bread and cup. Lord, may we break this bread and drink this cup in our daily living.” We must bring the brothers and sisters into the feeling of the bread and the cup.

Through our prayer both the bread and the cup are unveiled to the universe. After our prayer everyone should have seen the bread and the cup. This kind of revelation is not received instantly. Therefore, we need to spend the time and energy to exercise diligently. If in every locality there are ten saints who know how to select hymns and another ten who know how to pray, the situation of the various meetings will surely be living and full of the life supply. Thus, everyone will love to come to the meeting and live the church life.

There are fifty-two weeks in a year. If week by week, we speak the story, the beauty, and the sweetness of the bread and the cup through our prayers, what a rich church life we will have! For example, when we are remembering the Lord in a table meeting, we may see the beauty of the Lord’s fine living on earth. When it is time to bless the bread and the cup, someone may bless and thank the Lord for the bread and the cup, saying, “O Lord, this bread is like the cakes of fine flour in the Old Testament. Lord, You are like the fine flour. You are fine in every aspect.” Then when we break the bread the following week, we may see the suffering of the Lord; thus, we bless the bread and the cup by saying, “O Lord, from the time You came to the earth, You suffered continually. Lord, You are the one grain who passed through smiting and grinding. You suffered Your whole life. Lord, the cup displayed here portrays You as a grape that was crushed, squeezed, and pressed. You have suffered so much for us. Lord, we thank You.” In this way the saints will know the Lord in His different aspects.

We must all be desperate before the Lord to avoid formal words and, instead, use words of revelation. For example, after the bread and the cup are blessed, a brother may select *Hymns*,

#93. As a rule, someone should offer a prayer that follows the feeling of the hymn, saying, “O Lord, because You were betrayed by man and forsaken by God, You measured sin’s distance on the cross for us. This distance includes darkness, wrath, and the curse. Here, despite such a distance, we are receiving the bread and the cup.” We should then thank and praise the Lord for His cross. After this, a brother who has seen the revelation that resurrection comes after the cross should pray, “O Lord, You not only died, but You also resurrected for us. On one hand, we have seen Your death; on the other hand, we are in Your resurrection. Lord, we are here remembering You in Your resurrection. We praise You that You resurrected and that You are with us now and forever. Today we praise You in Your resurrection.” In this way the entire meeting will move forward and will be full of revelation. Therefore, praying in the table meeting involves many aspects. Our prayer may be compared to the four seasons, which can be represented by different kinds of blossoms. Our praises concerning the bread and the cup should change according to “the season.” For example, even though we see the Lord’s death, we are still in His resurrection.

Furthermore, the utterances of our prayer in a table meeting should not be too free or careless. For instance, someone may pray, “O Lord, You shed Your blood drop by drop.” This is not appropriate. We may be able to teach in this way in a children’s meeting, but we cannot pray like this in a table meeting. That would be a joke. Another example is to pray, “O Lord, our hands have sinned, so Your hands were nailed for us; our feet have sinned, so Your feet were nailed for us; our head has sinned, so Your head was pricked for us...” We may think that this is a good prayer, but this prayer is from the human mind and devoid of revelation. The Lord Jesus’ hands and feet were nailed not merely because our hands and feet have sinned but because our entire being has sinned, including our ears, our eyes, our tongues, etc. Because of *Hymns*, #93, we can say to the Lord, “On the cross You measured sin’s distance. When You were on the cross, You knew how far away we were from God because of sin. It was not until we saw Your death on the cross that we knew how far away we were from God because of sin. Before You died on the cross, we did not know how far away we were from God, and we did not even realize that we were sinners.” This is a revelation.

In short, our prayers at the Lord’s table meeting should focus on these six principles: being fitly connected, moving forward in the spirit, maintaining the feeling of the meeting, using poetic utterances, having revelation, and avoiding formal expressions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A PRACTICAL EXERCISE OF PRAYING IN THE LORD’S TABLE MEETING

(2)

OFFERING STEADY PRAYERS

We may begin the table meeting with a hymn, follow the hymn with some prayers, and then sing another hymn. By this point in the meeting, the spirit should be relatively high and strong. When our praise has reached a climax, we should bless the bread and the cup. While the bread and the cup are being passed, if the spirit of the meeting remains very strong with the sense of the Lord in glory, another hymn might give us a feeling of being “out of breath.” Hence, it is better to offer some steady prayers.

If the atmosphere of the entire meeting has reached a high point and we have been led to the subject of the meeting, with the bread and the cup having been passed, we should remain in a quiet spirit to be in steady fellowship with the Lord, meditating on Him and remembering Him. Selecting a hymn in such an atmosphere would disturb the meeting, causing it to lose its elegance. Therefore, it would be best for two or three brothers and sisters to stand up and pray. But the prayers should not be too excited because the meeting has already reached its peak. At this high point we need to remain steady and calm in an uplifted spirit and offer some words of praise so that the saints can sense the Lord’s glory and sweetness. This is appropriate.

While we are exercising to offer this kind of prayer, we must remember to link our prayers with the bread and the cup and bring everyone’s feeling toward the Lord’s table. Our prayers should not be separate from the Lord’s table; rather, they must be connected to the Lord’s table. For example, when the bread and the cup are being passed, we can pray, “O Lord, as we take the bread and the cup, and as our hands touch the bread and the cup, we sense that You are the Lord of glory.” In this way we are immediately connected to the feeling and subject of the meeting and thereby enable the saints to touch something. This kind of exercise involves a great deal of learning.

PRAYING WITH REVELATION

Moreover, we should pray with words of revelation and avoid preaching prayers. What is a preaching prayer? And what is a prayer with revelation? Suppose we talk with two people concerning hall one of the church in Taipei. We may tell them that the meeting hall on Ren Ai Road is made of wood and has many glass doors and windows that face different directions. This is giving a sermon. However, we may bring them to hall one and say, “Look at the doors, the windows, the courtyard, and the inside furnishings.” This is revelation, a seeing. One way is to give a sermon, and the other is to speak by revelation.

Suppose someone wants to find a wife for a brother. One day he visits the brother and says, “Brother, there is a Taiwanese sister; she is tall and has large eyes.” This is giving a sermon. Then one day the matchmaker brings the sister to the brother and says to him, “This is Sister So-and-so.” This is revelation.

Many times our prayers are doctrinal prayers, not prayers of revelation. This means that when we pray, we merely recite a message to others concerning the Lord, as if the Lord is not there. We do not give others the feeling that the Lord is right in front of us and that we are gazing at Him while speaking of His glory. There is a great difference here. We need to have the utterance of revelation when we pray. Let us consider some examples: “O Lord, we praise You that You became flesh”; this is a doctrinal prayer. “Lord, thank You that today You are in glory, yet You

still possess human nature. We praise You”; this is still a doctrinal prayer. “O Lord, although we are touching the bread, we sense You in glory. Lord, we praise You”; this is a prayer with revelation. Although these prayers refer to the same thing, they are expressed in two different ways. Whereas one is doctrinal and formal, the other is living and with revelation. Therefore, we must exercise to speak words of revelation. This is a great matter and should not be taken lightly.

There is no record of doctrinal prayers in the entire Bible. In Genesis 18 Abraham did not pray, “O God, You are righteous”; rather, he prayed, “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justly?” (v. 25b). This is a prayer of revelation. Many brothers and sisters use doctrinal expressions and utterances in their prayers. Most doctrinal prayers lack poetic qualities, and many prayers of revelation are full of poetic characteristics. For example, the prayer, “Although You are in glory, what we see is the honor You received in glory,” is somewhat poetic. It would be very good if all our prayers could bring us into the prayer for the bread and the cup of the Lord and if they also contained some poetic words of revelation.

more we ask, the farther away we are. But if the sense of glory is disclosed, revealed, the saints will sense it, and we will not pray to enter into glory because we have already arrived in glory. This is the secret.

We would point out this way, hoping that the brothers and sisters will learn this secret so that in all kinds of meetings they will exercise to utter prayers of revelation, not prayers of doctrine.

A PRACTICAL EXERCISE OF PRAYING IN THE LORD’S TABLE MEETING (3)

PRAYER BEING THE BEST WAY TO BEGIN THE WORSHIP OF THE FATHER

Some have asked whether we should first pray or first sing a hymn to begin the worship of the Father after breaking the bread at the table meeting. In practice, it is easier to begin with singing and more difficult to begin with prayer. If we are able to have a good beginning with prayer, it is best to begin with prayer. If the prayer is strong enough to touch the spirit of the meeting, even to touch this particular section of the meeting, then prayer is the best and the sweetest way to begin this section of the meeting. We should remember that this is the beginning of a section and not the beginning of a meeting. Thus, for the sake of spiritual elegance and height, it is best to begin with prayer.

It is best to use a hymn, not prayer, at the beginning of a meeting, because at the beginning the spirit is relatively low, and it is difficult to pray. In principle, however, prayer is the best way to begin, because a hymn is not as high as a prayer. But when we are unable to offer suitable prayer, we must use a hymn. After the breaking of bread, if the attendants are high in their spirit

and able to follow the Lord Jesus to come before God, then it is not so good to start the worship of the Father with a hymn. We should have a prayer of continuity, a prayer that continues the flavor of the preceding section, that follows the Lord Jesus to come before God and to offer up praises to Him. Such praise turns the entire meeting from the first section to the second section, from remembering the Lord to worshipping the Father. It would be very elegant and beautiful for us to sing a hymn after such praise and continue with two more prayers.

LEARNING TO TOUCH THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE MEETING

The most precious point concerning a meeting is that we learn to touch the atmosphere, the feeling, of the meeting. Suppose the atmosphere of the meeting has already brought us to the point where we want to follow the Lord to take the way of the cross before us. This means that we have seen the Lord on the throne in glory, and we want to follow Him to take the way of the cross. In such an atmosphere, it would not be so appropriate for us to turn the meeting to enter into the worship of the Father by simply calling a hymn; this would not be elegant. However, if we can use a prayer to turn the feeling of following the Lord to an atmosphere of worshipping the Father, the praising spirit will be stronger, and we can then choose a hymn to express the spirit of praise and worship.

In such an exercise we still need to pay attention to the spirit and pay attention to praying with continuity. It is difficult to have the proper utterance for prayers in this section. For example, it is not proper for us to begin a prayer by saying, "O Lord." A prayer that begins with "Lord" is addressing the Lord, not the Father. Therefore, such a turn is not adequate. It is very difficult to make a turn after we have used the title *Lord*. If we call on the Lord's name in the section on the worship of the Father, the flavor will be weakened. Although God is both the Lord and the Father, when we speak of the Lord, we sense the aspect of His being the Lord; we do not sense the aspect of His being the Father. Thus, when we are worshipping the Father, it is best to call Him Father.

Our prayer should contain more revelation and fewer doctrines. Prayer is not preaching; rather, prayer is speaking forth a spiritual matter we have seen. Prayer is related to revelation, not doctrine. It is doctrine when someone tells us that the meeting hall is in such and such a condition. But it is revelation when he takes us to the meeting hall and shows us the glass windows and the planters.

A FEW PRINCIPLES CONCERNING PRAYER IN THE LORD'S TABLE MEETING

How should we pray in the table meeting? If we firmly grasp a few principles, we will be able to offer proper prayers. First, there is "initiating" prayer, which means that the meeting does not have a particular subject, but we feel something in our spirit and express it with a prayer. For example, no one may have expressed a feeling concerning God's love, but one may have an

inward, spiritual inspiration concerning God's love, a feeling that is as strong as an atomic bomb. If he expresses this feeling with a prayer, everyone will have a feeling concerning God's love.

Second, there is "expressive" prayer, which means that all the brothers and sisters have a certain feeling, such as the love of God; however, there is the need for someone to express this feeling with a prayer. This kind of prayer needs expressive utterance in order to speak forth this feeling. For instance, while sitting in the meeting, one may clearly sense that everyone has a feeling concerning God's love; therefore, he offers a prayer to speak forth, to express, this feeling. Whereas initiating prayer is for revelation, expressive prayer is a speaking forth, to pray forth the sense that is within everyone.

Third, there is "motivating" prayer. If we are in an atmosphere of remembering the Lord, but it is time to begin worshipping the Father, we need to be motivated in order to turn the atmosphere to the worship of the Father. Our spirit of worship cannot make a proper turn if we are not properly motivated; therefore, there is a need for motivating and strengthening. Previously the saints were in a spirit of remembering the Lord; now we should use a prayer to motivate, to draw out, the spirit of worship and strengthen it. Then we can go on to worship the Father. Thus, in the table meeting there are prayers for initiating, for expressing, for motivating, and for strengthening.

NEEDING TO HAVE A RESERVE IN OUR LIVING

I hope that we would all apply ourselves in these matters. If we have a personal reserve, we will be able to draw from it and use it in the meetings. Many times we cannot open our mouths and pray, because on the one hand, we do not have the inspiration, and on the other hand, we do not have enough reserve. It is not that we lack a burden in our spirit to pray; rather, it is that we do not have the utterance for prayer or a reserve for prayer. For example, it may not be as easy for the Chinese to speak in English as it is for them to speak in Chinese. When they converse in English, they may not have enough vocabulary to express the many feelings within them; thus, there are many things that they cannot express.

In our daily living we must practice to gain the utterance for prayer; we also need a reserve of prayer. We do not merely need to exercise our praying spirit; much more, we must seize each opportunity to exercise out of our reserve of prayer. In this way we will gain the key to prayer.

PRAYER OF CONTINUITY

Some have asked what utterance and vocabulary are needed to pray in continuity. In the atmosphere of a meeting we may sense that we are before the Lord and that the Lord is among us; we also may sense that He is leading us and that we are following Him to the Father. At this time someone needs to create a feeling of praise to the Father and motivate and draw out the worship of the Father. After a motivating prayer another brother should offer a prayer for strengthening. Then we need a prayer to express, not to initiate. To initiate something is to bring in something that was not present. However, when the spirit of the meeting is strong, and we all have the sense that the Lord of glory is among us and leading us to worship the Father, there is

no need for an initiating prayer. There is only a need for an expressive prayer to continue the previous section.

Some of the prayers in the table meeting are initiating prayers; they speak forth a feeling that was not previously present in the meeting. Other prayers are expressive prayers to speak forth and express the feeling that is presently in the meeting. Still other prayers are motivating prayers to cause the meeting to turn from one atmosphere to another. Finally, there are strengthening prayers. Regarding the words we use in our prayers, we should not speak doctrine; we should express the reality.

HAVING A DIRECTION IN OUR PRAYER

With the literature work in Shanghai we had a principle in writing our articles: we always considered that we were speaking a message instead of being shut up in a room alone. We would not have been able to write our articles if we considered ourselves as being shut up in a room. Even though we were writing in a room, we always considered ourselves to be speaking to an audience. Only in this way could our writing be living and real. Even though no one was with us, we considered that the brothers and sisters were before our eyes and that we were speaking to them.

Our prayer should be in this principle; we should direct our prayer. We know that the Lord Jesus is within us and among us; we are not simply praying to the air with our eyes closed. In this way we can be delivered from doctrinal prayers. I believe that our prayers will be greatly improved if we can firmly grasp these crucial points.

BEING DILIGENT IN OUR EXERCISE AND NOT DESPISING IT

If we are willing to apply ourselves in these matters in the church life, we will be able to touch some definite, spiritual matters in the meetings. Our meetings are not rich or enjoyable because we do not know how to meet. For this reason we must carefully exercise how to meet; we should never consider this as a small matter. All who serve the Lord and all the responsible brothers in the churches must be diligent in this kind of exercise; we must not despise this matter.