

Week 5:
God's Economy and Consecrating to the Lord in Love Weekly Reading

Materials

(All reading materials are available at: <http://www.ministrybooks.org/alphabetical.cfm>)

Week 5 Day 1

- Ep 1: 9** Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,
- 10** Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
- Ep 2: 19** So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

A Christian Who Loves the Lord Must See God's Economy

Reading: *The Central Line of the Divine Revelation*, ch. 3, sec. 2, par. 2

A. God's Will Being God's Wish, God's Desire

God's will is God's wish, God's desire. God's will is what He wishes to do and wants to do. God's good pleasure is of God's will. Ephesians 1:5 speaks of "the good pleasure of His will." His good pleasure is embodied in His will, so His will comes first. God's will was hidden in God as a mystery, so Ephesians 1:9 speaks of "the mystery of His will." In eternity God planned a will. This will was hidden in Him; hence, it was a mystery. God's will as a mystery hidden in God issues in God's economy, dispensation (3:9). From God's will issues God's economy through His purpose, good pleasure, and counsel.

God's Economy Being God's Household Administration, God's Plan and Arrangement

Ibid., par. 4

C. God's Good Pleasure Being What God Likes, What Pleases God

God's good pleasure is what makes God happy. It is what God likes, what pleases God. We have a hymn in our hymnal which speaks of God's intent and pleasure (see Hymns, #538). God has predestinated us unto sonship according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph. 1:5). This means that God

likes to have sons. His predestination is unto sonship. Unto means for or in view of. God's predestination of us is for His sonship or in view of His sonship. God is happy and glad about gaining sons. It is His good pleasure to have us as His sons.

Definition of the Word Dispensation (or Economy)

Reading: *The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity*, ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 1, 8;

DEFINITION OF THE WORD DISPENSATION

In these messages we will be on a basic item in the Bible, the divine dispensation. We will not try to cover the entire theme of God's dispensation. Our burden is just to see the central view of the divine dispensation. Dispensation is a translation of the Greek word, *oikonomia*. This Greek word has been anglicized into the English word economy and is equal to the word dispensation. The basic meaning of this word is a kind of arrangement, a kind of an arranged order. So it may be considered as a plan, as a management, or as an administration. God has a divine arrangement of His administration. The entire Bible tells us God has been working and is still working on this plan.

Of course God's plan includes a lot of steps, but many Christians have misunderstood the word dispensation to merely indicate a period of time or an epoch for certain dealings of God with man. The best Bible teachers understand that this word denotes God's plan, God's arrangement, of His full salvation. This is absolutely right, but we still have to ask, What is the goal of God's full salvation? What will be the consummation of God's plan?

If we look into the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation, we could see God's works and also the goal of God's works. We can realize that God has been going on toward a goal. Some may say that this goal is simply God's full salvation. But what then is the goal of God's salvation? Not many Christians have seen the definite goal of God's salvation.

Genesis 1 tells us that God created man in His own image (vv. 26-27). This surely indicates that God wants man to express Himself. At the end of the Bible there is a city which bears the glory of God and which is the composition of many names. There are twelve names from Israel and

twelve from the church. All twenty-four of these names denote the saved ones of God. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel denote all the redeemed saints of the Old Testament, and the names of the twelve Apostles denote all the saints of the New Testament. This tells us that the New Jerusalem is a composition of all God's redeemed ones.

The city bears the glorious image of God, denoting that this composition of God's redeemed ones is the expression of God. This makes it very clear that God's goal is to work Himself into His redeemed people. God wants to work Himself into His chosen people that He may have a full expression in eternity. This is the goal of God's full salvation. God's dispensation is toward this goal. We must see, not only God's dispensation, but also the goal of God's dispensation, that is, God is working Himself into His chosen people.

In Ephesians 1:10 we can see that there is a plan, an arrangement, or an administration for God to head up all things in Christ. This is God's dispensation, His universal administration, to head up all things in Christ. Presently we cannot see that all things are headed up in Christ, but God is working on this. First God would collect His chosen people and put them into Christ. Then He would work Christ into them so that they all might become the parts and members of Christ with Christ as their Head. All these dear Christians have been headed up into Christ. We know that Christ is our Head, and we all are members of His Body. This gives us a picture of the heading up of things in Christ. Although we may come from many different countries, we have been headed up into Christ. In the name of Christ and in His enlivening Spirit we have been headed up into Christ. Christ is the heading up. Verse 10 tells us that in the fullness of the times God will head up the entire universe into Christ. By that time God will be fully expressed. This is the goal of God's dispensation.

Ephesians 3:9 also speaks of God's plan, the dispensation of God's mystery. This is a kind of order, or system, or arrangement, or administration of God's full salvation. According to the context of Ephesians 3:9, God's plan of His full salvation is to dispense the unsearchable riches of Christ into His chosen people to produce the church. The dispensing of Christ's riches is for the producing of the church to fulfill God's eternal purpose.

In 1 Timothy 1:4 we see God's household administration, which is to dispense Himself into His children that He may have a household, the church, to express Himself. From these three portions of the Word, we can have the general view of the meaning of God's dispensation. The Greek word, *oikonomia*, is composed of two words: *oikos*, meaning house and *nomos*, meaning law. Hence, it refers to the house arrangement, household management or administration. The word denotes the management and distribution of the wealth of a rich household. Joseph in the Old Testament was an example. Joseph was the administrator of Pharaoh's house, which was so rich that it could even supply other nations. There was a need of some management and administration and order and system to distribute the riches of Pharaoh's house. Otherwise, the riches would lie there undistributed.

By this you can see what is the *oikonomia*. That is the household management to distribute and dispense the riches of the house. Our Father surely has a great house with a rich store of the unsearchable riches of Christ. This great house needs some administration, some management, some system, some plan to dispense and distribute all the riches to God's people.

The Revelation and Vision of God, ch. 5, sec. 2, par. 6-7

The Greek word *oikonomia* is made up of two words: *oikos*, denoting a "house" or "household," and *nomos*, denoting a "law" or "principle." The meaning of these two words combined is "household administration." This house is the house of God, including all the saved ones in the whole human race, all those who were chosen by God and have received God as their life (Eph. 2:19). They are a group of people who became the new creation by receiving God's life through God's selection. They are a big family of God. Furthermore, in this big family we are the masters and all the angels are the servants who wait upon us, ministering to us as those who inherit so great a salvation (Heb. 1:14).

In this universal house, there is the need for a household administration to arrive at a specific purpose. Whenever there is a household administration, it is necessary to have a dispensation and a plan. This is not a small matter. With the household administration, there is a

dispensation; with the dispensation, there is the need for a plan. Hence, when God makes His dispensation, He designs a number of administrative procedures for the carrying out of His economy. For this reason, oikonomia may also be rendered dispensation, which means “arrangement” or “plan,” referring to God’s plan for His administration. In God’s administration, God’s plan, there are many dispensations and many ways.

Week 5 Day 2

- Ep 3: 9** And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been chidden in God, who created all things,
- 10** In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,
- 11** According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The Center of God's Work throughout the Ages Being to Accomplish His Eternal Economy

Reading: *Messages Given During the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry*, ch. 20, sec. 1, par. 1

GOD'S CENTRAL GOAL— WORKING HIMSELF INTO MAN

Throughout the ages, God has only one work, and that is to work Himself into man. I hope that everyone sitting here can listen carefully to this. Why did God create the universe? Why did He create man? Why did He create you? What is God trying to accomplish? This is an important question. If God wants to do something, and you do not know about it, your Christian life is meaningless. You may think that God's intention is for you to have joy and peace. It is true that God wants you to have joy and peace, but these things are not God's center. God is not merely giving you peace, blessings, forgiveness, eternal life, and so forth; His central thought is to work Himself into man. What is the ultimate goal of God in the old creation as well as in the new? It is to work Himself into man. This is God's goal. God's redemption is for this goal. He created the universe in order to put man in it, and the purpose for Him to have man is to work Himself into him. I cannot tell you why God wants to do this. But I do know that this is His desire; He wants to work Himself into man.

The Content of God's Economy—to Dispense God Himself into His Chosen People in His Trinity

Reading: *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, msg. 2, sec. 3, par. 3-4

To Dispense God Himself into His Chosen People in His Trinity

God's New Testament economy is His plan to dispense Himself into His chosen people in His trinity. In what way does God dispense Himself into His people in His trinity? This dispensing has three steps. First, it is of God the Father. The Father is the source, the origin. Second, this dispensing is through God the Son, who is the course. Third, God's dispensing is in God the Spirit, who is the instrument and sphere. Through these steps of God the Father, through God the Son, and in God the Spirit God dispenses Himself into His chosen people.

For the Producing of the Church as the Kingdom of God Consummating in the New Jerusalem

God's New Testament economy to dispense Himself into His chosen people is for the producing of the church (Eph. 3:10). This dispensing brings forth the church for the manifestation of the multifarious wisdom of God according to His eternal purpose made in Christ (Eph. 3:9-11). This means that through the dispensing of God in His trinity the church is produced to exhibit God's manifold wisdom.

For the Producing of the Church as the Kingdom of God Consummating in the New Jerusalem

Ibid., par. 5-6

We have pointed out that the church today is the kingdom of God. Therefore, the dispensing of God into us produces the church as the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 4:17 and 20 show that the kingdom is the church life today. In verse 17 Paul refers to his ways "which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church." Then in verse 20 he says, "The kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power." These verses show that the kingdom of God is the church everywhere, and the church everywhere is the kingdom. The kingdom is here because the church is here.

The church as the kingdom of God will have a consummation, and this consummation will be the New Jerusalem for the eternal expression of the

Triune God. Revelation 21:2 says, "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The New Jerusalem is a living composition of all the saints redeemed by God throughout all generations. It is the bride of Christ as His counterpart (John 3:29) and the holy city of God as His habitation. As the bride of Christ, New Jerusalem comes out of Christ, "her husband," and becomes His counterpart, just as Eve came out of Adam, her husband, and became his counterpart (Gen. 2:21-24). The New Jerusalem is prepared as a bride for her husband by participating in the riches of the life and nature of Christ. As the holy city of God, she is wholly sanctified unto God and fully saturated with God's holy nature to be His habitation.

Week 5 Day 3

- Jn 1: 14** And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and 6ereality.
- 1Co 15: 45** So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul”; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- 1J 3: 2** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.

God’s Dispensing Being for God’s Economy

The First Step—Becoming Flesh

The Second Step—Becoming the Life-giving Spirit

Reading: *The Economy and Dispensing of God*, ch. 2, sec. 3, par. 1-3; sec. 4, par. 1-2

GOD'S DISPENSING BEING FOR GOD'S ECONOMY

God's economy, that is, His plan and arrangement, is God's goal (Eph. 1:10; 3:9). God's dispensing, that is, His apportioning and distributing, is His means. In order to accomplish the economy of working Himself into man, God has to pass through the means of dispensing. Hence, God's dispensing is for God's economy.

To Dispense God Himself to Men

The First Step—Becoming Flesh

In order to dispense Himself to man, the first step God took was to become flesh and be a man (John 1:14). When He was in the flesh, on the one hand, He was the Lamb of God who took away man's sin (John 1:29). On the other hand, He was the brass serpent, which shows that He became flesh, that is, He was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3). As the brass serpent, He had only the form of a serpent; He did not have a serpent's poison. While the Lord was in the flesh, He was lifted up on the cross and destroyed Satan, the old serpent (John 3:14; 12:31). Furthermore, He was also a grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. Through His death He released God's life (John 12:24).

The Second Step—Becoming the Life-giving Spirit

The second step God took in order to dispense Himself to man was to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). These two steps contain two "becomes." The Lord first became flesh, and then He became the life-giving Spirit. His becoming flesh was for the accomplishing of redemption and the releasing of God's life. His becoming the life-giving Spirit was for the dispensing of Himself as the Spirit into man to be man's life.

Regenerating, Transforming, and Glorifying the Believers

As the life-giving Spirit, Christ first regenerated our spirit (John 3:5-6) so that, in addition to our natural life, we might receive the eternal life of God as the new source and the new element of the new man. After this, Christ as the life-giving Spirit spreads out from our spirit to transform our soul. If we set our mind, the main part of our soul, on the spirit and cooperate with the operation and work of the Lord Spirit within us, our mind will be renewed (Rom. 12:2). When our mind is renewed, our will and our emotion as the other parts of our soul will spontaneously be renewed also. In this way God's life and nature will be added into us, and we will be metabolically transformed into His image to express Him (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

Finally, He will transfigure our bodies so that our bodies may be redeemed to enter into His glory, and our entire being may be like Him in every way (Rom. 8:17, 23; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2). This is the ultimate consummation of God's salvation. In His salvation, God first regenerated our spirit. Now He is transforming our soul. In the end, He will transfigure our bodies, so that our three parts will be saturated with the Spirit and will be like Christ in every way. All these steps are part of the divine dispensing in us.

The Bible Dealing Exclusively with the Economy of God

Reading: *A General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-man*, ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 2

**THE BIBLE BEING A MYSTERIOUS BOOK— DEALING
EXCLUSIVELY WITH THE ECONOMY OF GOD**

The Bible is a mysterious book to us. Tens of thousands of people read the Bible, yet each one has his own opinion. In my studying of the Word, I went through several stages of progression. Eventually, according to my study, I saw that the entire Bible is a book that deals exclusively with the economy of God, and that in particular the New Testament is focused on the consummation of the economy of God. Hence, the New Testament is especially thorough in dealing with the economy of God. Paul wrote to Timothy, asking him to charge and exhort certain dissenting ones not to teach different things any longer. What are the “different things”? They are things that have nothing to do with the economy of God (1 Tim. 1:3-4). With this as the guideline of observation, today, needless to say in the past generations, very few things taught by Bible teachers can be linked to the economy of God. Although what they teach is both scriptural and fundamental and concerns Christ and His salvation, in their presentation to people, they do not link these things to the economy of God. Hence, “the economy of God” has become a phrase not used in Christianity.

“God Became Man that Man May Become God” Being the Essence of the Entire Bible

Reading: *The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, ch. 2, sec. 1, par. 2; ch. 1, sec. 4, par. 3 10

**“GOD BECAME MAN THAT MAN MAY BECOME GOD”
BEING THE ESSENCE OF THE ENTIRE BIBLE**

I sense that I still need to fellowship with you brothers concerning the matter of the vision. Tonight we want to see the matter of “God became man that man may become God” in the economy of God. The words “God becoming man and man becoming God” sound very simple, but to be able to see how God could become man requires us to spend much time to study. He came to become man that man may become Him, but how can man become God? We also need to look into this point carefully. Strictly speaking, these words are the essence of the entire Bible. The entire Bible is an explanation of the eternal economy of God. Up to the present time it has been thirty-five hundred years since the Jews began to read the Old Testament; Christians have been reading the Old and New Testaments for nearly two thousand years. Millions of people have read the Bible.

However, unfortunately, not many have truly seen the proper significance and real meaning in the Bible. This does not mean that throughout the generations no one has seen the visions in the Bible, but what people saw is fragmented. One saw a little concerning one aspect, and another saw a little concerning another aspect. Hence, among all the departments of the human race in the whole world, Christianity has the greatest number of books. That no other department in the world has more books than Christianity is proof that many people have seen something from the Bible.

God is God, and He Himself has begotten us as His children. Whatever anything is born of, that is what it is. We cannot say that when sheep beget sheep, the old sheep are sheep but the little sheep are not sheep. Since God has begotten us, we are the children of God. Furthermore, 1 John 3 says that God will work on us to such an extent that we will be like Him completely (v. 2). From the day God created man, this has been the purpose of God. Hence, what He created was man, yet He created man with the image of God. Adam was created with God's image and likeness. Then God set man before the tree of life, meaning that He wanted man, who had God's image, to receive God as his life. As a result, if a man who has received God as his life is not God, then what is he? But the Lord also shows us clearly that we are God in life and nature. A father begets a son, and this son surely is the same as the father in life and nature. Suppose the father is an emperor. We cannot say that all his children are emperors. The children have only their father's life and nature but not his status; this is clear. God did this that He might produce a Body for Christ, that is, that He might produce an organism for the Triune God, the ultimate manifestation of which is the New Jerusalem.

In the Chinese-speaking conference in February of this year, the brothers wanted me to speak, and my burden was to speak about this matter. For twenty-seven years I had not written a new hymn. Several days before the Chinese-speaking conference I wrote a new hymn with four stanzas:

1. What miracle! What mystery!
2. That God and man should blended be!
3. God became man to make man God,
4. Untraceable economy!

5. From His good pleasure, heart's desire,
6. His highest goal attained will be.
7. Flesh He became, the first God-man,
8. His pleasure that I God may be:
9. In life and nature I'm God's kind,
10. Though Godhead's His exclusively.
11. His attributes my virtues are;
12. His glorious image shines through me.
13. No longer I alone that live,
14. But God together lives with me.
15. Built with the saints in the Triune God,
16. His universal house we'll be,
17. And His organic Body we
18. For His expression corp'rately.
19. Jerusalem, the ultimate,
20. Of visions the totality;
21. The Triune God, tripartite man—
22. A loving pair eternally—
23. As man yet God they coinhere,
24. A mutual dwelling place to be;
25. God's glory in humanity
26. Shines forth in splendor radiantly!

After singing this hymn, you can realize that it is a special hymn. In the two-thousand-year history of Christianity there is not one hymn that is of this category. This is the unique hymn in this category of hymns. This hymn speaks very clearly concerning the high peak of God's vision.

Today in the Lord's recovery, it is not that we will not preach the gospel anymore; but preaching the gospel is for begetting. And it is not that we will not nourish the saints anymore or that we will not perfect the saints anymore. All the begetting, nourishing, and perfecting are for the building. However, what are we building? Are we just building the local churches? No. We are building the local churches for the building up of the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Then, does this mean that we just forget about the local churches? No. The local churches are the procedure for God to accomplish the building of the Body

of Christ. God still has to greatly use the local churches. Thank the Lord, through this kind of fellowship I hope that we all know where we are today and also where we should be and what we should do.

Week 5 Day 4

- 1Co 6: 20** For you have been bought with a price. So then glorify God in your body.
- 2Co 5: 14** For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- Rm 12: 1** I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Our Need to Consecrate Ourselves to the Lord in Love to Cooperate with God's Economy

Reading: *The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity*, ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 5
The city bears the glorious image of God, denoting that this composition of God's redeemed ones is the expression of God. This makes it very clear that God's goal is to work Himself into His redeemed people. God wants to work Himself into His chosen people that He may have a full expression in eternity. This is the goal of God's full salvation. God's dispensation is toward this goal. We must see, not only God's dispensation, but also the goal of God's dispensation, that is, God is working Himself into His chosen people.

God Loving Us and Having Bought Us with the Price of His Blood

Reading: *The Experience of Life*, ch. 3, sec. 1, par. 5

We cannot avoid dividing a Christian's early life experiences into these two stages. Yet, according to the truth, these two stages should not and cannot be divided. Let us first consider the division, "in Christ" and "abiding in Christ." When a man is saved, he is translated into Christ and should then be abiding in Christ. Once we share what Christ is, unite with Christ, and possess the fact of being in Christ, we should have fellowship with Christ, enjoy Christ, and have the experience of abiding in Christ. No one ever moves into a house without living in that house and enjoying it. Likewise, once a man is in Christ, he should abide in Christ—these two events are closely connected and take place almost simultaneously.

Because of this, “in Christ” and “abiding in Christ” can only be regarded as one stage. “Abiding in Christ” should be the first stage, with “in Christ” being simply the beginning of this first stage.

Consecration Being the Transfer of Ownership

Ibid., sec. 2, par. 3; sec. 3, par. 2-5

If we were to investigate the consecration experiences of Christians, we would discover that most were constrained by the love of the Lord. This motive is truly good and reasonable. But if we were to consecrate ourselves to the Lord only because of the constraint of the Lord’s love, would this consecration be sufficiently stable? Experience tells us that it is not. The reason is that love is the story of our heart’s mood and desire. When we are happy, we love; when we are not happy, we do not love. Today, we are in the mood to love, so we consecrate ourselves; tomorrow we are not in the mood to love, so we do not consecrate ourselves. Therefore, if consecration is purely a matter of love, it will not be sufficiently stable. It will be subject to as much change as our unstable mood. When we understand the basis of consecration and realize that consecration is based on the matter of purchase, our consecration will then be stable and secure. A purchase is not a matter of mood, but a matter of ownership. God has already bought us and has the right to own us. Therefore, whether we are happy or not, we must consecrate ourselves.

The motive of consecration is the love of God. Whenever the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, we will naturally be willing to become the prisoners of love and consecrate ourselves to God. This kind of consecration, motivated by the love of God, is mentioned very clearly in two places in the Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and Romans 12:1. Second Corinthians 5:14-15 says: “For the love of Christ constraineth us (constraineth in the original has the meaning of the rushing of waters)...and He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.” In other words, these verses tell us that the dying love of Christ is like the rushing of great waters toward us, impelling us to consecrate ourselves to God and to live for Him beyond our own control.

Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." The mercies referred to here are the love of God. Therefore, in this place also, Paul is seeking to move our hearts with the love of God. He would cause us to have the motive of love, so that we might consecrate ourselves willingly to God as a living sacrifice. We see from these two passages that the love of God is the motive of consecration.

In a normal consecration this motive of love is very necessary. If our consecration rests solely on the basis of consecration, the realization of God's right to us, this consecration will only be based on reason; it will lack sweetness and intensity. But if our consecration has love as its motive, if our feelings have been touched by the love of God, the constraint of this love will cause us to consecrate ourselves willingly to God. This consecration will then be sweet and intense.

Week 5 Day 5

Mt 22: 37 And He said to him, “ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

38 This is the great and first commandment.

Mk 14: 9 And truly I say to you, Wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her.

We Ought to Love the Lord Fervently, Consecrating Our Whole Being

Reading: *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 18: *Notes on Scriptural Messages* (2), ch. 12, sec. 1, par. 1-3

LOVING GOD

Issue No. 37

Scripture Reading: Matt. 22:37-38

Several months ago, a certain Western missionary passed away in Fukien province. I once remarked that among the people I have known, she was a very deep person in the Lord. Since I am more knowledgeable about her affairs, I have considered writing a biography for her and have been collecting her lectures, articles, and essays for editing purposes. A package of her belongings arrived several days ago including a piece of paper with the following words written on it: "O God, I thank You, because You have a commandment saying you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind!" Oh! How profound this is! I do not know how many Christians would say, "God, I thank You because You have a commandment which says you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Indeed, since we are all believers, we ought to love God. No other religion speaks of loving God like ours. Loving God is unique to Christianity.

The Bible says that he who believes in the Son has life. Believing is adequate because it does not say to believe with all your heart. He that believes will have eternal life. We are never told to believe with all our heart. However, loving God requires all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind.

This is the first commandment. No matter where it is placed, this commandment is always the first. This is also the greatest commandment. Wherever it may be, it is the greatest. Today we must praise God for commanding us to love Him.

Loving the Lord as Mary Did

Ibid., vol. 19: *Notes on Scriptural Messages* (3), ch. 12, sec. 1, par. 5

"A woman came [Mary—John 12:3], having an alabaster flask of ointment, of very costly pure nard." Pure nard is precious enough, whereas a very costly, pure nard is unmatched in excellence. This very costly, pure nard was inside an alabaster flask. The alabaster flask was also very precious. Not only was Mary offering to the Lord a costly ointment, but the flask that contained the ointment was also very precious. We can offer to the Lord only what is most precious.

Pouring the Ointment over His Head

Ibid., par. 7

"And poured it over His head." When she did this, the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment (John 12:3). Not only was the house filled with the fragrance then; even now as we read this passage, we can sense the fragrance! Even the house we are meeting in right now seems to be filled with fragrance! This love to the Lord and this consecration to Him indeed is a fragrance that has lasted until now and will last until eternity.

Mary Having Done a Noble Deed on the Lord

Ibid, sec. 2, par. 7

"She has done a noble deed on Me" (v. 6). The Lord was opposed to the disciples' concept, who thought that such an anointing and consecration to Him was a waste. The Lord said that it was a noble deed and not a waste. It is a noble deed to love Him too much, to obey Him too much, and to be spent on Him too much; it is not a waste. It is a noble deed to love Him to the extent that we forget about the criticism of those who are older in the Lord. It is a noble deed to love Him to the extent that we forget about the need of the poor outside. It is not a waste. It is a noble deed to

love Him to the extent that we waste everything on Him. This is not a waste. The Lord thinks that we can never be too much in the way we treat Him. Our love to Him can never be too much. Our obedience to Him can never be too much. No matter how man sees it, and no matter how those who serve together criticize, the Lord says that this is a noble deed. The result of the preaching of the gospel is not only to send sinners to heaven but to make every saved person a lover of Christ. This is why the Scripture says, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed!" (1 Cor. 16:22).

Week 5 Day 6

- Rom. 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
- 1 Cor. 2:9** But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
- 10** But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
- 1 Pet. 1:8** Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,

All Things Working Together for Good to Those Who Love God

Reading: *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 18: *Notes on Scriptural Messages* (2), ch. 12, sec. 2, par. 6

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God." Many know this verse well. Only one kind of people enjoy the good: those who love God. If you do not love God, perhaps not even one thing is working for you. God does not alter things; He changes your heart. If you love God, then all things, though unaltered, will work for your good. Sometimes you complain about everything that comes your way. You complain concerning this and concerning that. Yet if love is there, all these will mean nothing to you. Loving God will make an unsatisfactory environment a profitable one.

Things Which Eye Has Not Seen and Ear Has Not Heard and Which Have Not Come Up in Man's Heart; Things Which God Has Prepared for Those Who Love Him

Ibid., par. 7

First Corinthians 2:9-10 says, "But as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But to us God

has revealed them through the Spirit." What do we see in these two verses? What God has prepared for those who believe is eternal life, yet the thing which God has prepared for those who love Him is in the future. Only those who love God can know of this coming blessing. If someone tells you about a marvelous thing he saw, it surely will not be comparable because the coming blessing has not yet been seen by eyes. If someone tells you about a wonderful thing he heard, it also must be a lesser thing than the coming blessing because no ears have heard it. If someone can indeed imagine the unsurpassable best, it still cannot compare to the coming blessing because it has not yet entered into the heart of man. Nevertheless, God has revealed to us by His Spirit this thing which no eyes have seen, no ears have heard, and what has not entered into man's heart. In other words, a lover of the Lord may enjoy what men have not seen, heard, nor dreamed of in this life. When God discloses His glory to you, you will exclaim, "Oh, what joy!" This heavenly glory is so much that you will find it hardly bearable.

Grace Being with All Those Who Love Our Lord Jesus Christ in Incorruptibility

Ibid., sec. 3, par. 10

Ephesians 6:24 says, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility." To whom is grace given here? God gives it to those who love the Lord in incorruptibility. If others would ask you, "Do you believe in the Lord?", the whole world would marvel if you answer, "I am one who loves the Lord."

May We All Be Passionate Lovers of the Lord Jesus

Ibid., par. 12

Finally, brothers and sisters, I wish to repeat what that old believer said to the departing young man: "May you be a passionate lover of the Lord Jesus!"