

ND2-012:Substitution of Christ — Gaining Christ

Outline:

【Preface】 Because of the “indwelling of Christ,” He becomes our life. This new life has to keep growing, forming, and becoming mature. In this process, God makes all things work together for good, so that we can experience Christ in all things, gain Christ, and be formed in the image of the Son of God. Therefore, we are not only "justified" because of Christ's redemption, but also "sanctified" and "glorified" through the growth and maturity of the indwelling life of Christ!

In this process of sanctification, an essential revelation is that we need to constantly "gain Christ" through the "substitution of Christ."

A. "It is no longer I...but Christ" is the key to spiritual growth and the victorious life

On the path of our spiritual growth, the greatest enemy and hindrance is always our “old self.” To experience the life of Christ, and also to continuously grow and mature, one must go through the cross and die to the life of the "old self." By dying and resurrecting with the Lord and letting the life of Christ "substitute," we can live "no longer I, but Christ."

- *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)*
- *"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)*

B. God makes all things work together for us to gain Christ

God himself orchestrates all things, so that all things work together. Therefore those of us who are chosen and loved by Him may gain Christ and be conformed in the image of the Son of God. Therefore, the Christian's life and experience should have spiritual significance and eternal value, depending on if we experience in faith by the Holy Spirit.

- *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose...whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." (Romans 8:28-30)*
- *"...seeing that you have put off the old self[d] with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,[e] free; but Christ is all, and in all." (Colossians 3:9-11)*

C. How to experience the "substitution of Christ" in real life so that we can gain Christ

1. Hungry for the revelation and the help of the Holy Spirit

Crucifixion with the Lord is a key revelation, let us see that "suffering is not the purpose of God, but to be glorified is." The connotation and purpose of all experiences of the cross is Christ. This vision will bring us to a completely different spiritual realm. The Holy Spirit is not only willing to reveal to us, but also to help us enter this blessed truth.

- asking God to *"give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling..."* (Ephesians 1:17-18)
- *"the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth..."* (John 16:13).

2. For the purpose of gaining Christ

Because of this vision, Paul made the wisest choice-" for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," and the most exclusive pursuit-" but one thing I do...." Our eyes and strength must also learn to shift from solving problems to being able to experience and gain Christ through the situation.

- *"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."* (Philippians 3:8-11)
- *"12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:12-14)

3. Put off yourself, turn to Christ, and let Christ live for us

Christ is our life, and the cross is our way—through Christ's indwelling, He becomes our new life; through the work of the Holy Spirit on us, we can experience the death and resurrection of the cross with the Lord. The resurrection is a testament of the true experience of the cross. Without "no longer I," there would be no "but Christ!"

- *" For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his...Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him."* (Romans 6:5, 8)
- *"The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;"* (2 Timothy 2:11)
- *"always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. "* (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)

4. Cherish every situation

Because we see “Christ is all and in all,” and also believe God can make “all things work together,” so that our life becomes meaningful and positive, also we don’t want to waste any opportunities that we could have experienced and gained Christ!

- *“We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” (Ephesians 4:15)*
- *“making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:16-17)*
- *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 11 inquiring what person or time[a] the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” (1 Peter 3:3-12)*

Meditation, Practice, Discussion

☐ Content Review: Based on the theme verses and content of this lesson, what are some questions you may have?

1. In view of Christ, how did Paul teach us about the promises and blessings concerning “no longer I, but Christ?”

2. How do you interpret “Christ is all and in all” and apply it into our life and ministry?

3. What are the keys for us to experience the "substitution of Christ" in real life so that we can gain Christ?

☐ Further Reflection: The impact of this lesson on me, the revelation from the Holy Spirit, and additional insights

1. On the path of spiritual growth, why is “no longer I” important?

2. Think about the life after you got baptized, have you experienced any critical moment but yet gained Christ? Did you learn anything from today’s lesson? What would you change from now? (Hint: Ephesians 1:17-18a, Philippians 3:8-14)

☐ **The Path to Implementation:**

1. Among my small group, family, work, and life, which specific situation or moment is your weakest point that you need the “substitution of Christ” to live out for you? According to the reminder from today’s lesson, how would you practice “substitution of Christ” in these real life situations?

2. Each day for the next two weeks, please intentionally put down yourself, and turn to Christ, and let Christ live out for you. Please record your insights and practices below. Please be real and you don’t necessarily need to be victorious. Refers to the three steps to ignite the keyless vehicle.

SERMON:

Brothers and sisters, peace be to you!

Today is the twelfth lesson of the new man discipleship, and is the third topic of stage two. The stage two — "new life" is almost the most important stage in the whole discipleship. There are four topics in the second stage: The first "Indwelling of Christ," shows us that Christ has indwelled in us, so we must connect to Christ; the second "Formation of Christ" talks about Christ in us, Christ becomes our life, and this new life needs to grow, take shape, and mature to form us into the image of the Son of God. This is the principle of God's work in us, and is the explanation of our life encounters; today, we are going to the third topic- the "Substitution of Christ," through living out "*it is no longer I ...but Christ,*" not only can we experience Christ, but we can also gain Christ. The fourth topic is the result of the previous three topics, which is "the manifestation of Christ." It talks about how we can live out Christ, and become the witnesses of Christ becoming flesh. These four topics are not only the foundation of our beliefs, but also the core values of our faith. They will also greatly impact the quality of all our lives and ministries. Therefore, these four topics are very important, and worthy to be emphasized and reported.

Today’s topic— "The Substitution of Christ," is the most important of these four topics. It is also the most important, indispensable and can’t be neglected, the most important of the

25 lessons in our New Man Discipleship (ND Therefore, it is also a subject that the enemy always wants to deceive us. So, I hope everyone can listen carefully! We need to have such a sincere attitude towards the Lord, especially at the pivot, foundation, and most important turning point of our faith. Today's message not only brings us to the core of the faith of Christianity, but also leads us to a completely different state. "The Substitution of Christ" talks about how we truly experience " *it is no longer I ...but Christ* " in life and service. This is not just a truth, but it allows us to truly experience and gain Christ through every situation.

Because of the indwelling of Christ, He becomes our life. This new life has to keep growing, formed, and mature. In this process, God makes all things work together for good, so that we can experience Christ in all things, gain Christ, and be formed in the image of the Son of God. Therefore, we are not only "justified" because of Christ's salvation, but also "sanctified" and "glorified" through the growth and maturity of the indwelling life of Christ!

In this process of sanctification, a very important and key revelation is that we need to constantly "gain Christ" through the "substitution of Christ."

Below, I will talk about it from three perspectives:

A. "It is no longer I...but Christ" is the key to spiritual growth and the victorious life

Here we mentioned two most important things in our lives: the problems of life and the problems of living.

"It is no longer I...but Christ" is the secret of our spiritual life and the key or secret of victory for all saints. The world teaches us the opposite. It is advocating self-promotion, to exalt oneself, to emphasize oneself, to focus on oneself. But Jesus said: " *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" (Matthew 16:24) He did not say this for us to deliberately pursue external suffering, but for our inner life to experience Him and be changed by Him. Therefore, " *it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;* " this is the key to our spiritual growth and victorious life.

Dr. ShangJie Sung once asked brothers and sisters a question when holding a staff training in Beijing: "What is the greatest difficulty or the worst enemy on the way to spiritual growth?" He told everyone to close their eyes, and wrote a big "I" on the blackboard. Brothers and sisters, don't think that this was just an example, you heard and went your way. Do you often feel unhappy? Do you often feel that people around you bother you and make you uncomfortable? Do you often question why God allows so many unfair things to happen to you? Do you often complain about why God made you go through so much trouble? The root cause of all these were from that "I." I'm going to give this sermon this week, but I found that there are many difficulties at home: health problems, children problems, swimming pool leaks, roof leaks, many things had broken, even the car was hit... I asked God: "Lord, is the price so high to speak a message?" Then, in all our encounters, do we truly believe that God wants us to experience what is meant by " It is no longer I...but Christ?" And the greatest difficulty is still "I!" Because "I" always puts its eyes on "my" needs, " my " problems, " my " difficulties, " my " encounters, " my " feelings, " and my " gifts." "The future... is all "me." **Therefore, the greatest enemy and hindrance on the path to spiritual growth will always be our "old self." To experience the life of Christ, to grow and mature continuously, one must go through the cross and die to the life of the "old self." By dying and resurrecting with the Lord and letting the life of Christ "substitute," we can live "no longer I, but Christ."**

Galatians 2:20 says: "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*" This not only talked about the past, "I have been crucified with Christ"; it also talked about God's promise, which is the state that God's children should have—" *it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*" Paul said: "*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*" (1 Corinthians 2:2) Paul didn't speak with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to Galatians the mystery of God, because the core of the entire Christian faith is "Jesus Christ and him crucified"; the secret to the growth and victory of the Christian life lies in "Jesus Christ and him crucified"! If we admit that this is the core of our faith, then we should also admit that the greatest hindrance and enemy on the spiritual path is "I." It is difficult to have this kind of knowledge, and it is not only difficult, but also rare to have this kind of spiritual reality! I often say half-jokingly: "One of the scriptures we quote most is Song of Songs 1:5, "*I am dark, but lovely.*" We believe in the Lord, and we admit that we are corrupted, weak, limited... admit that we fall short in many things before the Lord. However, when we talk about being dark, we still can't help but feel like "I am lovely," "I have a bad temper, but I am a true Israeli," "I don't know how to cover up, but I won't conceal, I am straightforward." "Although I don't believe in Jesus, can't be called a Christian like you, but I think I should be saved because I behave upon my conscience." "Although I don't sing well, but I sing in truth and spirit, unlike you"... When we talk about our shortcomings, we always add a sentence to the end: "*I am dark, but lovely,*" "Although I may lose my temper, but I am not like you." This is one of our problems. If we are willing to admit this that is the first step.

B. God makes all things work together for us to gain Christ

God himself orchestrates all things, so that all things work together, therefore those of us who are chosen and loved by Him may gain Christ and be conformed in the image of the Son of God. Therefore, the Christian's life and experience should have spiritual significance and eternal value, depending on if we experience in faith by the Holy Spirit.

This is a revelation in faith, so that we not only know such scriptures, not only believe that God does what God does, but also enable us to truly and actively believe in every situation we encountered was predestined by God to make us "no longer I, but Christ."

We have said that a great turning point in Hudson Taylor's spiritual life was through the letter of his co-workers, quoting John 15 — the message of branches abiding in the vine, abiding in the Lord. When others describe the secret of Dr. Hudson Taylor's spiritual victory, they use a special term—"exchanged life": when he found himself weak, that he can't do it, that he is corrupted, has bad thoughts, living in his sinful nature; or when he found himself in difficulties, and the situation disturbed him and brought him negative emotions..., he exchanged with the Lord. He is not struggling or working harder. He only knows that the branches must abide in the vine, "I just want to exchange with the Lord and let Christ replace me." This is the best deal and the most valuable exchange! Sometimes we go to a "garage sale" and buy a good-quality and inexpensive item, and we will be extremely happy. But in fact, it is just an earthly thing, fire will burn it away, but we thought it was worthwhile; how much more worthy it is to exchange with Christ!

Another spiritual great man I admire is Brother A. B. Simpson. He wrote a hymn called "Exhalation and Inhalation (or breathe in and breathe out, please see your hymn book)," which is the 235th hymn in "Hymns of the Saints." This hymn teaches us to take spiritual deep breaths:

I am breathe out my sorrow, breathing out m sin;

I am breathing, breathing, breathing, all thy fullness in.

Especially in verse 7: "I am breathing every moment; Drawing all my life from Thee; Breathe by breath I live upon Thee, Lord, Thy Spirit breathe in me." In fact, "breathing" is the best exchange experience. We are doing it every day. Inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, whoever does not do this, he cannot live. And spiritually, AB Simpson also taught me to breathe spiritually. As he wrote in the song, what we exhale is sorrow, sin, sickness, and weakness... Everything in us is not from the Lord. The things that disturb us and hurt us, we all exhale them out, and then I breathe in his holiness, his life," and his power...this is called "exchanged life."

Romans 8:28-30: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose...whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." So, do we really know? If you really know, then why so many complaints? Why do you suffer so much? This passage is actually telling us the law of God's work in us; on the other hand, it is also the explanation of all our experiences and encounters. Why did I encounter this or that incident? Sometimes when we asked, God let us know the answer; sometimes we didn't know at the time, but then God let us know much later; especially sometimes we felt that God was unfair or God doesn't make sense), but at the end when God lets us understand, we can only bow down and worship Him. Just as I used to ask God: "Why me? Why do I have to suffer so much? Why...?" Now, I still ask the same question "Why me?" but it becomes "God, why do you love me so much? Why do you treat me so graciously? Why do you tolerate me so much? Why have you done so many wonderful things in me? Why me?" In the past, I blamed God; now it is full of gratitude. Ask God to help us so that we can see this.

Colossians 3: 9-11 also says: "...since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. "This paragraph of Scripture echoes the passage in Romans 8 above. All things work together for good to conform us into the image of the Son of God. This is for us to practice; and to put off the old man and put on the new man is also to form us into the image of the Son of God. This is a grace and is work! No matter Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all, Christ is all and in all." (Col 3:11) The context of this verse tells us that Christ lives in the new man who is born again and saved. Moreover, from the overall consistency of the Bible, we know not only Christ is all, but also in all. He is full in all things, and is in all of our encounters. "Christ is All" emphasizes "what Christ is." God made Christ our wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption. If we lack faith, he is our faith, faith is a living person; if we lack peace, he is our peace, and peace is a living person; if we lack joy, he is our Joy, Joy is a living person. And this "living man" is Christ. If we are in Christ, we are in that state. Paul repeatedly said: "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4). It says—in Christ, that is to say, in Christ we will be joyful, because He is joy! "Christ is All" focuses on what He has given us and what He is; while "In all" focuses on where He is, He is He who is full in all things, how we can gain him by faith. "Christ is all " says that it is like God gives us a blank check (not a bounced check). He has signed his name on the check: Jesus, as in 2 Corinthians 2:20 tells us: "For *all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen.*" Brothers and sisters, Christ is all, this is something we can experience. If we experience Christ whenever we are in the weakest, most filthy, most corrupt, and most vulnerable of our lives; and experience Christ's substitution, you will find that it will become the strongest, most blessed moments, and we

will be a blessing to others through that experience. Therefore, don't underestimate your own weakness. God always finds some gaps in us that allow us to acknowledge our failures, let us experience the substitution of Christ, let us experience that all things work together for the good, so that we can benefit from the good of becoming Christlike.

C. How to experience the "substitution of Christ" in real life so that we can gain Christ

This is the key to today's message, how we can experience the substitution of Christ in real life so that we can have Christ. I have four key points here:

1. Hungry for the revelation and the help of the Holy Spirit

Crucifixion with the Lord is a key revelation, let us see that "suffering is not the purpose of God, but to be glorified is." The connotation and purpose of all experiences of the cross is Christ. This vision will bring us to a completely different spiritual realm. The Holy Spirit is not only willing to reveal to us, but also to help us enter this blessed truth.

Brothers and sisters, we really need such eye opening and revelation. We may think that "The Book of Job" is a book about suffering. The theology of suffering must use "Job" as a textbook. But in fact, suffering is not the subject of "Job" it is be glorified. God is never willing to make us suffer. The purpose of our suffering is not suffering itself, but into the glory. Therefore, I often say: "The purpose of the cross is not to make us suffer. The cross has only one purpose, it is Christ, to give Christ to us." Suffering is just a backstage. Through Job, we can see the law of the way God works, and the final outcome to be given to us, is a glorious ending—our lives have been changed, and our relationship with God is no longer the same. Job, a person who reveres God, used to be just a person that "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;" however, being through the work of God, he was able to say "But now my eye sees You." He originally thought that he was pretty good and couldn't bear others saying he sinned, but then he repented in dust and ashes. This is something that only God can do!

We need the revelation of the Holy Spirit for us to see that we really need the cross. Paul said in the Book of Ephesians: asking God to "*give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling...*" (Ephesians 1:17-18).

What exactly is this calling? In today's sermon, Mrs. Yu is also asking us: What are we hoping for? God's calling is for us to experience Christ and gain Christ; so that we can be conformed in the image of the Son of God, because Christ is our glory. And the Holy Spirit is here to help us, as the Lord Jesus said: "*the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth...*" (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit not only leads us to understand, but also guides us into all truths.

Many times, we choose a place for vacation because we saw some photos, advertisements, or pictures of the beautiful scenery on TV. Have you ever wondered where the first place you will go on holiday after the pandemic is over? Not just looking at the picture, but going there in reality, won't you be full of hope? We were relatively poor in Taiwan when we were young, and we were very envious of seeing America, and Disneyland. In that situation, unless someone paid for you, brought you to the United States, and bought you Disneyland tickets, you can't do any of these. If it happened, when you arrived at the

gate of Disneyland, you just sighed, "Oh, I'm finally here!" and you only stayed at the gate for one day and went home. Won't you feel stupid and you wasted it all? You had come, but didn't enter, and didn't really experience it, only left with envy. The Holy Spirit comes to let us understand and let us see; moreover, He also wants to bring us to enter in. The Holy Spirit is our best teacher, the best home schooling, and He is teaching us in everything.

"You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink," this is a famous proverb. Likewise, God will never force us to turn to Him. We must have the desire and the need ourselves so that we can take the next step. Therefore, this desire is very important!

2. For the purpose of gaining Christ

Because of this vision, Paul made the wisest choice-" *for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,*" and the most exclusive pursuit-" *but one thing I do....*" Our eyes and strength must also learn to shift from solving problems to being able to experience and gain Christ through the situation.

First, don't focus on the difficulties. Whether it is illness, financial problems, interpersonal problems, dissatisfaction with the church... Our eyes should not be fixed on difficulties. Because this will only make us sink deeper and more painful, unable to resolve it. To get out of the predicament, first of all, we must turn our eyes from the difficulties to God. If you have been bitten by a fiery serpent, don't look at the wounds or the dead people around you; stand up and look up to God! In all difficulties, we must learn to turn our eyes to Jesus.

Second, don't put all your hope and effort on solving difficulty. If our focus is only on solving difficulties; then, even if the difficulties are resolved and the rock is removed, but the water does not rise, we will still encounter the reef and the rock. We will encounter difficulties in the future and then be stuck still.

Third, in all situations, we should ask: "Lord, what do you want me to learn? What do you want me to gain?" We habitually ask God: "why?" but very rarely ask God "what"—what do you want me to learn from this? What do you want me to gain? You must have good intentions for allowing this to happen to me. What are your good intentions...?

Lastly, we must have a summary of what we have gone through: What did I learn from this and what did I gain? Did I get what the Lord intended? Is my life different? Has my relationship with God changed...? We should have a purpose in everything we do, even our life experience should have a very clear purpose, and this purpose is to "gain Christ." It is because of this observation that Paul can have:

- **The wisest choice-**"... *for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord* " (Philippians 3:8).
We can't count all things as rubbish like Paul did; there are so many things that we not only never treat as rubbish, but as treasure. However, Paul reminds us to know our Lord Jesus Christ as the most excellent. Paul did this himself, because of this vision, his whole life changed.
- **The most dedicated pursuit-**"...*but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 3:13-14)

Paul said "I may" twice in the passages in Philippians 3:8-14. Even if Paul is such a spiritual giant, knows God so well, and lives in the Holy Spirit, he is still so serious and humble, for fear that he does not gain Jesus. Chapter 3:10 to 11: "*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*" What Paul cares about is whether the resurrected life is revealed in his body. Verse 12: "*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me*". Paul can "*forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead,*" he must attain it. Therefore, the goal must be single-minded and focused, and we must care whether the ending is actually attained.

Thirty years ago, an old friend of my father saw an advertisement of a famous dentist on TV, so he went for him to extract his teeth. After the extraction, it was discovered that the dentist had removed the wrong tooth. Similarly, in the 1980s, a patient in Florida suffered a severe fester on one of his feet. The doctor said that it must be amputated. He accepted the big blow optimistically. However, the doctor cut the wrong foot the next day, and removed his healthy foot. Brothers and sisters, we all feel miserable for them when we hear stories like this, feel like they have suffered in vain. But in fact, many of our experiences are the same as theirs: the "tooth" was pulled, the "leg" was amputated, but we didn't get the ending we deserved, we didn't remove what we should have removed, we didn't receive what we deserved. Paul specially reminds us that we must aim to gain Christ. If we don't get it, we should not be satisfied.

Once, it was rare that I had an opportunity to have a trip with Mrs. Yu to Greece. Halfway through filming, I suddenly found a sentence on the camera screen: "No memory card." I forgot to insert my memory card into the camera. All the photos we took earlier were in vain and nothing was left. In fact, many of our experiences are like this: We passed through, but there was no eternal value, and did not attain Christ. What a pity! After I found that there was no memory card in the camera, I immediately bought one in the tourist area. No matter how expensive it was, I bought it. Normally, I would absolutely refuse to buy things in tourist areas, but for the precious memory that I was unwilling to waste, I had to bite my teeth to buy it no matter how expensive it was. In the same way, when we go through all kinds of situations, we must have this kind of unwillingness to waste, not passing through without attaining Jesus, without attaining eternal value.

3. Put off yourself, turn to Christ, and let Christ live for us

The two points mentioned earlier were conceptual reminders; and this point is a practical how-to, how we let Christ come to live for us. This is the core content of this lesson, which can be said as "how of how." This is my personal spiritual stumbling. After years of weakness, failure, and frustration, God disciplined and manifested in me, so that I can share with you my own experience and help you to avoid the wrong way. Relying on the law, on self-revolutions, on our own efforts, but not knowing to turn back and rely on Christ, is often the reason why we have such a hard time. **Christ is our life, and the cross is our way—through Christ's indwelling, He becomes our new life; through the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we can experience the death and resurrection of the cross with the Lord. The resurrection is a testament of the true experience of the cross. Without "no longer I," there would be no "but Christ!"**

There is only one destination of the cross - to give Christ to us. If you have not believed in Jesus, Jesus Christ laid down his life to complete the work of redemption, lead us to eternal life, let us receive the life of Christ, restore the relationship with God, and give Christ to us. If

you have believed in Jesus, all the situations we have been through, God teaches us about “the cross, deny yourself, empty yourself, and obey”, it leads us to one destination, neither to torture us nor make us suffer, but leads us to gain Christ. Therefore, when we truly become “no longer I, but Christ,” the resurrection and the living out of Christ becomes the evidence of the precious cross. However, a lot of times, we are not truly “dead,” rather, we are pretending to be “dead”. For example, we feel very uncomfortable when others give us feedback, but because of our ego or being a pastor, we are not able to get angry at the moment, and even pretend to be humble and say, “yes...thanks for bearing with me, I will keep improving myself.” But when you return home, you are too angry to eat dinner, hardly fall asleep, and grumble about “How dare you? You were the student from my Sunday school, and you are daring enough to challenge me?” When we are being spiritual in front of others -- this is to pretend to be “dead,” and not truly “dead.” However, to truly experience the cross, we must go through Christ, and must go through resurrection!

(a) Put yourself down

This is not easy! It is difficult to put ourselves down, because we are not able to realize how incompetent and corrupt we are. Sometimes we can admit our corruption, but not truly understand how bad it is. A lot of time, after we fail or commit sin, we easily move on and do not truly understand deeply enough to confront our failure and the consequences of sin. Therefore, we don't learn the lesson that God wants us to learn, and not truly experience “Substitution of Christ ” and “Transform of the Holy Spirit.” We only admit that we are wrong, or even apologize, but we are not making any change.

Sometimes it is because we are not suffering enough and keep things as they are; until one day, we can't bear it anymore, we come to realize we cannot act like this anymore. There was a single brother who told me that he was about to blow up. He led the Biblestudy every friday and also participated in the choir on Sunday, however, he was flooded by pornography when he was at home. In the beginning, he confessed to God, declared the blood of God, the forgiveness of God, and received healing from God. Then he returned to serve, and hoped that he could overcome the sin, but the truth was he failed hard every time. He cannot overcome the sin and he cannot bear it anymore.

This brother was suffering greatly. However, this kind of suffering makes us truly realize our mistakes and allows us to think about “what's wrong with me? The salvation of God is a “perfect salvation,” and the Bible tells us we are “more than conquerors,” but why am I still suffering and cannot overcome the situation?” Sometimes, our understanding of sin is too shallow and that leads us to often just muddle through and do not thoroughly reflect on the sin. Sometimes, because our suffering is not painful enough to make us desperately ask, “ Lord, if you do not bless me, do not help me, I will not let you go.” Such as when Jocab wrestled with the servant of God at Peniel, he said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” (Genesis 32:26) We need to wrestle, fast, and eagerly ask for God to lead us through the problem!

Besides, we cannot put ourselves down because we care too much about how others think of us, and neglect how God thinks of us. We are lacking the true fear of God and care a

lot about how we perform in front of others. We pretend to be nice and others might think we are spiritual, but we are actually far away from it. Others might look up to us, however, we are actually still useless. Because we only care how others think of us, so we can hardly put down ourselves.

“for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption...” (Galatians 6:7-8) The “flesh” mentioned here refers to the “lust” (In the Chinese version Bible, “flesh” word is translated into two words -- “lush” and “flesh.”) When we talk about “flesh,” we think it must be far away from us, we always think we are not “sowing our own flesh.” However, we still follow our “old self,” “sow to our old selves,” and “reap the result from our old selves.” On the contrary, if we “sow to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:8) The eternal life, the everlasting life, which is the life of the son of God, we gain Jesus Christ.

Paul explicitly mentioned in Romans 6 verse 5 and 8, *“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”* and *“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”* The same words are also mentioned in 2 Timothy chapter 2, *“The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him,”* (2 Timothy 2:11) “If” is being mentioned several times, it means we have the final decision on whether or not you decide to put down yourself; whether you choose to put down yourself or not, whether you choose to turn to Christ or not, the “key” is on you. God has done his part, His blessing, His salvation, His provision, he has done everything, the key is whether we want to accept them or not.

If a person needs to have surgery, he tells the doctor, “I don’t like to have injections, please don’t put anesthetic on me.” This is his choice, then we might hear his howling from the pain a few minutes later from the operating room. Sometimes, we evangelize to people, “you need to believe in Jesus!” And the man replies, “No, thanks, not now. I am not ready yet! When I breathe my last breath, I will call out to the Lord.” This is his choice. A lot of time, the salvation is ready, there is a way out, but we don’t want to put ourselves down. We always say, “Any time, you can make a U-turn to God!” The key is on you to make the turn! If you need to go all the way to the North, such as Seattle, to visit your sick parents, and also plan to bring them to see a doctor and grocery, the intention, destination, and plan are all good. However, you realize you accidentally drive to the South and towards Los Angeles instead. At this moment, will you tell yourself, “I have good intentions, so I need to keep going!” You must turn back towards the right direction immediately. We are in this situation a lot of the time, we try to persuade ourselves, “My motive is good, I want Jesus, I am not trying to commit to sin.” However, we are still going forward in the wrong direction.

Thus, don’t look down on the word “If,” do not think this is an act of legalism. The salvation is ready, but God will not force us, the decision making is totally on us. Paul mentioned three “ifs” here, they are all related to “Death” and they all lead to the same impact --- *“we will also live with him (Jesus Christ).”* Therefore, aspiration should match with our action, this is the obedience in the salvation that God has prepared for us.

b) Turn to Christ

“Turn to Christ” and “Put yourself down” should be happening at the same time, as the two steps with one foot. We need to put ourselves down, and also need to turn to the Lord. However, we often treat them separately, that’s what Satan wants us to do, so that we admit that we are corrupt and useless, and then trap ourselves in the frustration, anger, and resigned suffering situation. This is like when we only admit and regret that we drive in the wrong direction, but do not take action to make a u-turn, we remain in the wrong way. Therefore, we cannot just stop here, we need to make a u-turn to God. When we truly and willingly put ourselves down, and turn to God, everything is no longer the same.

c). Let Christ live for us

The key word is “let.” Let Christ live for us, this is the core of “Substitution of Christ.” If we can “put down ourselves, and turn to Christ,” we are at least living with God and under the protection of God, but God wants to be our life and strength, so that we can spread wings and soar, and He can help us to soar between heaven and earth, we can live out the heavenly victorious life. God does not want us to just hide back in His shelter, He wants us to gain heavenly victory through Him, triumph in every situation, and more than conquerors. So He trained us in the Bible, “*the Lord alone guided him,*” (Deuteronomy 32:12) God guides us, Jesus teaches us, Spirit helps us here, those are all for our life to be grown, matured, and truly live in front of God!

We are afraid to cycle uphill, because we can hardly move up no matter how hard we pedal. Nowadays, we have hybrid bikes, we can bike in normal mode most of the time, and when we need to go uphill, we can get up easily with the help from electrical power. Although you can still bike uphill with your strength, you eventually come to a limit and need help from the hybrid mode. You only need to turn on the switch, accept the power, the electricity will help you. This is “let.” Your bike has this built-in function, but you refuse to use it, and you even walk your bicycle. This is even heavier than the normal bike because it has an engine. You ask for it! Therefore, “let” is a key. When I feel useless, corrupt, do not stop here, we need to turn to Christ, and ask, “LORD, please help me!”

I am not just making irresponsible and sarcastic comments. I just said that there were so many things that happened to me in the last week. I asked God, “LORD, can I live out the truth?” And I found the grace of God is really there! It does not mean I do not feel frustrated, I did, especially when I found there were leaks at my house, and it did not get fixed. Then the dishwasher broke down as well. I got irritated by these troubles because I am a human being. However, when I am willing to put myself down, turn to God and say, “God, come here!” When I “let” Christ come in, I can experience the grace that God has promised. If I just think of “What would Jesus do?” this is not enough, because it is such a high standard and I cannot do it. I am too irritated to bear anymore! We experience a lot of situations that we classify as “we cannot do anything.” But those situations are also our turning point. When we change our attitude and perspective, we will find out those are the situations that God allows us to experience Him. I can even say, “when we experience the most suffering, God can give us the greatest help to overcome it.” When we are doing fine, we can hardly grow, because we feel like we can handle everything properly just with some perseverance. However, when we are

brought to the hardest situation by God, we will turn to God, and really “let” God come in. Brothers and sisters always say, “man’s ending is the beginning of God.” Actually, God has started way earlier than that, God has prepared us for everything in the beginning. Those (toughest) situations are helping us to realize, “I can’t do it anymore, I still need God; I am not only incapable, I need to let God come and help me out!” Therefore, we will truly say from the bottom of our hearts, “God, please come!”

Just like when we rode a bike, the earlier we understand we are incapable, the earlier we turn to Christ, the earlier we experience the blessings and help from God. God can be experienced, He is true! If we want to control ourselves, not to get angry, or to get addicted to something, many we are useless. When I went to work, a coworker took the credit for my work, I got extremely pissed off. I told myself, “Let’s forgive him, a great man rarely stoops to harbor grievances for past wrongs.” Then the anger in me became smaller. but when I think of the ugly attitude he had against me, I became angry again. Have you ever experienced this? Sometimes, when a married couple has an argument, the wife thinks, “Let’s move on and forgive him.” She feels better, however, when she sees the same attitude from her husband, she becomes angry again. We often act like this with ups and downs with our emotions. We need to deal with our emotions everyday, we just pretend to be calm, which we have suffered enough. However, in the moment when Christ substitutes me, all the emotions of anger, injustice, disobedience go away. We can truly and completely forgive that coworker. When the love of God is inside us and replaces us, everything can be completely different!

I hope that every Christian, can experience at least one time of “the substitution of Christ.” The earlier we can, the better! When we truly experience “No longer I, but Christ,” we can truly experience there is a treasure in earthen vessels, inside us, this great power is not coming out of us, but from Christ alone. You will find out you have great perseverance, patience, and faith even in the toughest situation... We are no longer the same! Today, when we face pornography, we do not just suppress the lust inside us, but find out that the holy life is replacing my adverse life. This is called “the substitution of Christ.” This is not faking to be nice from the outside, but the growth and transformation inside us. We must ask God in those situations, and let Him help us through. There are a few of us who experience the power from Jesus immediately, and ride on the “motorcycle” or “car” forever. A lot of us are like the “hybrid bike” or “E-bike,” when we understand we are really exhausted, then we realize God is here from the beginning. But once we experience Him, turn to Him, “let” Him do the work, we can go through the “uphill.” Next time, we learn to turn to Him sooner than last time, this is called the process of growth.

4. Cherish every situation

Because we see “**Christ is all and in all,**” we believe God can “make all things work together,” so that our life becomes meaningful and positive, also we don’t want to waste any opportunities that we could have experienced and gained Christ! So Paul says, “*we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ*” (Ephesians 4:15); and he told us

to “*make the best use of the time*” or “*make the most of every opportunity*” (Ephesians 5:16) Every situation, every opportunity, we want to get the most of it and make it towards a good destination --- to the destination that God prepares for us, or we should not reconcile as it.

From 2 Peter 1:3-4, “*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to[c] his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*” This is a precious and great promise --- everytime when I am willing to put down myself, willing to escape from the corruption from our sinful desire, we can be the partakers of the divine nature! Thus, we can receive the great qualities from God as Peter told us in the following verses, our life becomes positive, very positive, and enters into the Kingdom of God with abundance.

There is nothing considered little for Christians. If anything has a relationship with God, it is considered a big thing. For Christians, there is no ordinary thing, it becomes splendid when it is related to God. Although we live on earth, the Spirit inside us can make us live out a heavenly life; although we live in flesh, we are from dust, the Spirit inside us can make us live out a heavenly life; although we live a short amount of time, God connects us with eternity.

Brothers and sisters, if we truly understand Christ lives inside us, and He comes to substitute us, our life will become completely different! Let's pay attention to the three key things we talked about today: “put down yourself, turn to Christ, and let Christ live for us.” Every step is important. My last slide is a picture of a keyless remote of a vehicle. There are three steps to start the car: 1) bring the transmitter (keyless remote) with you, 2) step on the brake, 3) press on the “start” at the same time. If we forget one of the steps, we cannot start the car. It is the same as letting “Christ to substitute”: at first, we need to have Christ lives inside us, then we can follow steps two and three. We cannot ignore any of the steps, we cannot irresponsibly say, “I am willing to live out of Christ...Jesus, you live out for me.” We need to admit that we are incapable, we truly “put down ourselves,” and truly turn to Christ. Let's learn together, there are a lot of things worth our attention, because “Substitution of Christ” is the key for us to become sanctified and glorified.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, please help us, by what we have known, what we suppose to know, but we still don't understand. The Holy Spirit not only comes to help us to understand the truth, but also to bring us into the truth. Lord, please let us truly experience those blessed truths everyday. May you bless your church, bless everyone who hears about this message, and never let the enemy dust our eyes; prevent us from continuing to live with our past mistakes; don't let us get dusty again after God has purified us, and return to our old lives. Let us learn to rely on Christ who lives inside us, let us live completely different lives. Listen to our prayer, in Jesus' Name, we pray, amen.