

# **Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare**

## **Message 2**

2 Cor. 10:5; Psa. 27:4; 42:1-2; 86:11; 131:2

We began to see in the first message that we are in the midst of a spiritual warfare. Actually, from the moment we get up we find ourselves in the midst of this spiritual warfare. There is a conflict between God and Satan. There is a conflict between two wills. Once upon a time in the universe there was no such conflict; at that time there was one will. Then God created the angels. He created the universe and He chose to give even the angels a free will. This was before the creation of man. One among God's creation chose to exercise his will not in line with God's will, but against God's will. That became the source of all conflict even until today: the conflict between countries, the conflict between peoples, the conflict within families, even the conflict within our very self. Have you not ever had feelings one way and another way at the same time? Maybe even this morning you had a feeling, "There's a meeting. I would like to go to the meeting but I am so tired. It's Saturday and I have so many things to do." You have a feeling: "I need the Lord, I need to pray" but then I don't feel like praying. There is a conflict right within our being.

We also saw the matter of the divine romance. The Bible from start to finish is a presentation of this romance. God desires to marry His people. I still remember the first meeting that I was in as a teenager and the brother had a us turn to Isaiah and Jeremiah, not just one verse but verses here and there. I never heard these verses before and I never read these verses before that say, "For your Maker is your Husband." I said, "There's a verse in my Bible that says this?" I knew God was the Creator but I did not know that the Creator created me to be His wife. From start to finish God wants to romance His people.

These two matters are put together in the Bible quite a number of times, the bride and the warrior. Last night we saw in Revelation 19 that there is a declaration, perhaps the most joyous declaration since the declaration on the cross, "It is finished." That was a marvellous declaration from the Lord Jesus: "It is finished." But in Revelation 19 you have the declaration, "His wife has made herself ready." The Lord is longing for that day come. We are gathered here today in this meeting for that day. We pray that our fellowship today would be bride preparing fellowship; that is our goal. There is such a declaration, His wife has made herself ready and she is clothed with fine linen bright and clean. Then just a few verses later, as we mentioned last night, when the Lord is coming to fight Antichrist, the armies that come with Him are also closed in fine linen white and clean. When you read this chapter have you seen these two cases? Who has the fine linen first? The bride. A few verses later, who has it now? The warrior. You have to realize that these are not two separate groups of people; the bride is the warrior. So we are involved with both the divine romance and spiritual warfare.

Then we came Ephesians which reveals the church in so many aspects. Probably at least 12 aspects of the church are shown in there: the assembly the gathering of the called ones, the body, the new man, the kingdom, the family, the house, the fullness of God—so many aspects. But the final two aspects revealed in the book of Ephesians are the bride and the warrior.

In chapter 5 is the bride: "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." When you got saved, probably you realized that Christ loved you and gave Himself up for you. This is the

gospel that I heard when I was that little seven year old boy. That night I felt that even if there was no one else on Earth, Christ would have died for me. I was so filled with the love of God that night. That is John 3:16: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Sometimes when we share the gospel we even tell people, put your name there in that verse instead of *the world*. Read it, “God so loved— and then say your name—that He gave His only begotten Son.” So on one side, when the Lord was on the cross, He saw you and He saw me and He was there dying for us. That is one side. But in Ephesians 5 it says, “Christ loved the church gave Himself up for her.” So yes, what He did was very personal to each one of us, but on the other side, He had a goal, He had His desire. He saw you and died for you for the church, to get the bride. That is chapter 5 of Ephesians.

In Chapter 6 we see that our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness. When it says, “Put on the whole armour of God” that is to be prepared for warfare. The church is revealed in Ephesians as the bride in chapter 5 and the corporate warrior in chapter 6.

Then we also saw 2 Corinthians chapters 10 and 11. What do we see in Chapter 11? We see Eve, the first bride. Paul says, “I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God.” Jealousy sort of brings romance and warfare together. “I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband.” Paul had preached the gospel to the Corinthians so in the first book he said that he had begotten them; he was their spiritual father. But in his view when he preached the gospel to the Corinthian believers, he was betrothing them to Christ. This means that whenever we got saved we got engaged, we entered into this divine romance, into this relationship with our Lord. But then Paul says, “But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted.” The enemy came into Eve’s thoughts in the garden and he tries to fight against us in the same way.

Chapter 10 compliments this: “For though we walk in flesh, we do not war according to flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, As we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.” So, in this context we can see that Satan’s weapons are thoughts. He injects his thoughts into our mind. These are the flaming darts that we see in Ephesians chapter 6. Satan fights against us so we need to be equipped with the whole armour of God.

My burden this morning is to have what I hope is practical fellowship on how to put on this armour, how to take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ. Before that though, I would like to read a couple of verses from the Song of Songs. Chapter 6 is another place where the scriptures bring together the two matters of the divine romance and the spiritual warfare. Verses 4 and 10 read, “You are beautiful, my love as Tirzah, As lovely as Jerusalem, As terrible as an army with banners.” “Who is this woman who looks forth as the dawn, As beautiful as the moon, As clear as the sun, As terrible as an army with banners?” These verses have the phrases, “You are beautiful”, “You are terrible.” Imagine if a young man would say to the girl that he is engaged to, “You are so beautiful and terrible.” That might cause some misunderstanding. But here the Lord says, “You are so lovely and terrible.” Actually, she is lovely to the Lord and terrible to the enemy. So right here you can see the divine romance and the spiritual warfare. The beautiful, lovely one is likened to Tirzah and Jerusalem. Tirzah was the palace of the kings in the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem was where God’s house was, the apple of God’s eye. So the church is God’s house, the church is God’s kingdom. She is beautiful and lovely; she is His bride. That is one side, but this

beautiful one is as terrible as an army. It is so consistent throughout the scriptures: the bride is the warrior. But as I mentioned last night, let us not focus too much on the warfare. We are in the warfare but one way to win the war is to develop the romance. When we go deeper with the Lord in our fellowship with Him, this is defeating the enemy.

Now let us come to the verses that we read in the book of Psalms. I would like to highlight some words to focus our fellowship. We do encourage the saints very much to set aside some minutes, some time, just for the Lord. It is best if it is in the morning. Of course, there are saints who have their situations because of health or because of work. We surely understand. We don't want to make this something legal or put anyone under bondage based on our fellowship. So if your schedule does not permit and you are spending the time with the Lord in the afternoon or the evening, no worries. We are talking about separating time for the Lord. We recommend not only a set time, but even a set place of fellowship. It should be a place that is free from distractions so that you can focus on the Lord. Why? Because the enemy is very subtle; he comes in through our thoughts.

One time we had a kind of informal training for our college students between the semesters in January. We gathered our college students for 3 weeks. On Monday nights we would come together and fellowship with them many of the principles that I will share this morning. Then from Tuesday through Friday we gathered at the church meeting hall with the purpose to give every one of them one hour to practice having personal time with the Lord. During that time we would assign each person a different room. Then after one hour we would come back together, make a circle and then fellowship. It was not to fellowship about what they enjoyed such as a verse. We asked them, "What did you do in your hour with the Lord? When the distractions came, how did you counter the distractions?" It was very interesting. Remember, we were in the meeting hall and that was not anyone's set place. It was a new environment with saints scattered in the different children's meeting rooms. We had testimonies such as, "I started to pray, 'Oh Lord Jesus, Oh Lord—Oh there is a map, the journeys of Israel. I never noticed that before. Oh, Dan is way up here.'" They spent 5 minutes looking at the map. Then they realized, "Oh Lord Jesus." Maybe they heard a sister calling loudly in another room and then remembered, "Oh Lord, I love You." And then a few minutes later, "Oh, there is spider web in the corner. I never noticed that spider web." That could have been the room where this sister teaches the children, but she never noticed the spider web. Now she is trying to pray and she notices the spider web. Do you know what she did? Remember that this was a 3 week training; she was going to pray in this room for the next 3 weeks. She noticed that every corner had spider webs. She went and got a cloth during her prayer time, got a chair, and wiped all the spider webs away. You might say that she got distracted, but I say that she was preparing the room for her prayer for the next 3 weeks. She was removing the distractions.

We need to have a place where we remove all the distractions. Maybe it will take us a few days. One time I was having hospitality in my home during a conference. My regular place to pray was occupied so I went to pray in my kitchen. I was there pacing in my kitchen and then noticed a magnet on my refrigerator; it was upside down. That magnet had been there for years and I never noticed that it was upside down. When did it come to my mind? When I was trying to contact the Lord. The enemy was distracting me with just a magnet; I turned it right side up so that I could forget about it. So saints, the place you pray is also important. It is good for us to have a place where we go to have fellowship with the Lord. If you have such a place, it won't be too long before you are already in the presence of the Lord when you go there. It makes it easier for your mind to be focussed and your spirit to be exercised. Don't think that the place is insignificant. Have a set time and a set place.

When we come to the Lord at such a time, there are different categories of prayer. There is the prayer of petition, the prayer for things, the prayer for people, even for people to be saved, or the prayer to know the Lord's will. As we are growing up we need to know the Lord's will about our future, about our education, about the job that we have, about our career, concerning marriage, and concerning migration for the Lord's move. We need to pray for these types of things, but the morning fellowship is not the time for that. Those prayers should be at other times. Petition is important but the prayer of fellowship is more basic where all we are doing is coming to behold the Lord's countenance. That is what we find here. Psalm 27:4 says, "One thing have I asked from Jehovah; That do I seek: To dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in His temple." The house of the Lord has two aspects: one is our spirit and the other is His church. Here we take it and apply it as our spirit: I want to dwell in my spirit, to do what? Just to behold the beauty of Jehovah. After you behold, then to inquire in His temple. Don't reverse the order. Don't come to inquire first; behold first. We contact the Lord; we come to behold Him. I would say that we come to breathe Him; we come to absorb Him. In principle, basically prayer is our spiritual breathing.

Prayer is breathing. In Lamentations 3:55-56, Jeremiah says, "I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, From the lowest pit. You have heard my voice; do not hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry." Jeremiah tells us that our calling on the Lord is breathing, our crying to the Lord is breathing. Shall we cry to the Lord? "Oh Lord Jesus! Oh Lord Jesus!" That which we just did is a deeper breathing but as you are sitting here and I am standing here, we all should be breathing the Lord, absorbing Him and taking Him in.

I would like to point out that physical breathing has two parts. Of course, we don't think about breathing. If you are thinking about breathing, probably something is wrong with your breathing. You just breathe. Breathing has two aspects, breathing in and breathing out. You all knew that but spiritually, breathing out is first. We need to breathe out in order to breathe in. Even physically it is healthy, not just to take a deep breath in but to more deeply breathe out, to empty the lungs. Without the proper exhaling a certain amount of bad air stays there. What we breathe out is somewhat negative; sometimes it even smells bad. Every living organism, in order to survive, must discharge things. If something is wrong with your digestive system and you cannot discharge what should be discharged, that could kill you. We become toxic, so we need to discharge things. That physical picture exactly matches our spiritual situation. To go on in a healthy way we need to exhale, we need to discharge things. Confession of our sins is probably the first type of discharge. When someone gets saved, when the gospel is preached and they call out to God for forgiveness, that is a discharge letting go of their sins, and then they take in the Saviour.

Let's look at hymn 255; it is a wonderful classic hymn by brother A.B. Simpson. The topic is breathing. Lets just sing verse 1 and the chorus.

O Lord, breathe Thy Spirit on me,  
Teach me how to breathe Thee in;  
Help me pour into Thy bosom  
All my life of self and sin.

I am breathing out my sorrow,  
Breathing out my sin;  
I am breathing, breathing, breathing,  
All Thy fulness in.

Note that in the chorus first I am breathing out my sorrow, breathing out my sin, and then I am breathing in. Nearly every verse follows this principle. Verse 2 says,

I am breathing out my own life,  
That I may be filled with Thine;  
Letting go my strength and weakness,  
Breathing in Thy life divine.

You need to breathe out even your strength. Sometimes our strength prevents the Lord from filling us. We are too strong, too able, so we don't get the Lord's supply. We need to breathe out our strength and our weakness. Sometimes we feel that we are so weak, so terrible, so this, and so that. When we say this we feel like this disqualifies us from taking the Lord in. Actually, we need to breathe out that weakness and breathe Him in as our very strength. What else?

Breathing out my sinful nature,  
Thou hast borne it all for me;  
Breathing in Thy cleansing fulness,  
Finding all my life in Thee.

I am breathing out my sorrow,  
On Thy kind and gentle breast;  
Breathing in Thy joy and comfort,  
Breathing in Thy peace and rest.

Sometimes I found out, both in my own experience and with others, you cannot avoid frustrations, problems and disappointments. From the time of the curse, from the time of the fall, we know that human life would be this way. No one can escape; so we have difficulties and frustrations. We all have our share. At times we give the enemy ground to inject his thoughts into our thoughts: "How come that family never suffers? Look at that family; everything is perfect. Why us? Why me?" We need to breathe such thoughts out. We also need to breathe out our sorrow. Recently my own family was passing through a little something, and too often in the time with the Lord in the morning, I didn't even realize when the thought came. A family member was suffering and there was a feeling of weight, heaviness like a cloud covering. That could take 7 or 8 minutes before you realize, "Oh Lord, oh Lord, amen." By the time you realize where you are you are too deep in a pit that you made for yourself; it is hard to climb out. We need to breathe out our sorrows. We also need to breathe out our disappointments. Have you never been disappointed? Have you never been disappointed with your spouse? Have you never been disappointed with God? "God, I thought that You are faithful. Even I preached to others that You are faithful. Why are You faithful to everybody except me?" It is not that way but didn't you ever feel that way? When you feel that way, you need to breathe that out. Sometimes the darts of the enemy come to us because we gave the enemy ground to visit us because we held on to certain things. We need to learn to breathe out.

Verse 6 begins "I am breathing out my longings". Do you have longings, desires? "In Thy listening, loving ear; I am breathing in Thy answers, Stilling every doubt and fear."

Let's sing verse 7 and the chorus:

I am breathing every moment,  
Drawing all my life from Thee;  
Breath by breath I live upon Thee,  
Lord, Thy Spirit breathe in me.

I am breathing out my sorrow,  
Breathing out my sin;  
I am breathing, breathing, breathing,  
All Thy fulness in.

I also want to recommend hymn 719. This hymn has not been translated into either Spanish or Chinese. Let's sing verse 1 and the chorus:

Like a river, glorious  
Is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious  
In its bright increase;  
Perfect, yet it floweth  
Fuller every day,  
Perfect, yet it groweth  
Deeper all the way.

Stayed upon Christ Jesus,  
Hearts are fully blest;  
Finding, as He promised,  
Perfect peace and rest.

This chorus uses the phrase, "Stayed upon Christ Jesus". *Stayed upon* is based on the King James Version of Isaiah 26:3 which reads, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." We no longer use the word *stayed* in this way. This is actually the sister verse to Romans 8:6: "For the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." Isaiah says, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed, or set, on Thee." The Recovery Version says, "You will keep the steadfast of mind in perfect peace." The word *perfect* does not appear in the Hebrew. The literal translation is, "You will keep him in peace, peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" or "You will keep the steadfast of mind in peace, peace." Don't you want peace, peace? How do you keep your mind set on the spirit?

This hymn was written by sister Frances Havergal. We have a few of her hymns in our hymn book. Look at verse 2:

Hidden in the hollow  
Of His blessed hand,  
Never foe can follow,  
Never traitor stand;

This verse talks about a foe, an enemy, and a traitor. What is the difference? A traitor is an enemy on the inside, an enemy who was your friend but became an enemy. Who is the traitor? Our mind, our emotion, and our own will. They betray us.

The next line says, “Not a surge of worry.” Have you ever had a surge or worry in your morning prayer? “Oh Lord, I love You—Oh no! I forgot to do this and this.” “Oh no, today is...” How many of you have ever experienced something like that? So I am not alone. I think that we all have experienced this: a surge of worry or a shade of care. That is what I was describing to you before. My natural concern for my family member is like a shade that comes slowly and covers me.

I don’t have this kind of utterance but sister Frances Havergal must have had all these same experiences and put them into poetic form. “Not a blast of hurry...” Have you never finished your morning prayer, “Oh Lord Jesus.” Gasp! You see the clock and don’t even say “Bye, bye Lord.” Imagine if I am talking with brother Ron, “How is your family?” and then just turned around and ran away. If it was someone else you would at least have the courtesy to say, “Brother Ron, sorry, I need to go. Let’s continue later.” But I think that we don’t have the sense that we are with a person. With Him we don’t need to say, “Bye, bye.” With Him we can say, “Lord Jesus, can we continue this on the way? Can we continue our fellowship in the car? I need to go work now.” You can continue your morning watch with Him all the way to work, but the surge of worry, the shade of care, or the blast of hurry can take us away from the spirit.

How can we set our mind on the spirit? Psalm 42, verses 1-2 say, “As the hart pants After the streams of water, So my soul pants For You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, For the living God. When will I come and appear Before God?” Firstly, we should have the sense that when we are spending time with the word that we are appearing before God. We should say, “Lord, here I am. I am not just coming to the Bible. I am not just coming to the material for the prayer. Lord, I am coming to You.” We should have the sense that we are coming to a living person and we just appear before Him. We do not need to say much, but we present ourselves to Him and say, “Lord, here I am. I am available.” Sometimes we sit with people but don’t really appear before them. We are there outwardly but don’t present ourselves inwardly. Especially in these days, if you go to a restaurant, there may be family of 5 or 6 people at the next table with every one of them looking at their phone. There is no fellowship going on between them. I hope that we are not with the Lord outwardly but somewhere else inwardly. So the first thing is that we need to appear before God.

Psalm 86:11 says, “Teach me, O Jehovah, Your way; I will walk in Your truth. Make my heart single in fearing Your name.” The King James Version says, “Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.” “Unite my heart to fear they name.” I need four brothers to help with an illustration” Brother one, you are the mind; brother two, you are the emotion; you are the will; and you are the conscience. Stand in a single line. Now when you come to the Lord you need to pray, “Lord, unite my heart.” But do you know what happens? When we come to the Lord, very often the mind goes somewhere else. It is very difficult if the mind is not united, not single. The mind goes and then you come back: “Oh Lord, Oh Lord.” Then 30 seconds later, the mind goes another way, perhaps further away than the first time. And then, “Oh Lord Jesus, oh Lord Jesus” and you come back. But then through the mind you remember, “Oh today, I’m going to see the Blue Jays play.” Do you like the Blue Jays here? Then the emotion, “Tonight my dad is taking me to see the Blue Jays.” You were try to touch the Lord and the emotion got carried away. You try to pray, “Oh Lord, Oh Lord” but then you are too excited to stay there. Sometimes the will just does not want to go along. He just does not feel like it today. Have you ever felt that way? “Lord

Jesus, I love You but ... I just don't feel like opening the Bible." It can be very difficult. Similarly, if there is something on your conscience, it blocks the flow. So, we need to pray, "Lord, unite my heart. Make my heart single today."

Psalm 131:2 begins, "Surely I have calmed And quieted my soul." This is the key. We need to calm down our soul. We need to quiet down our soul. Our soul is talking too much. The emotion and the mind need to be calmed down. What are some practical helps to calm our soul? One of them is singing. Let's come to hymn 812:

- 1 I come to Thee, dear Lord,  
My heart doth thirst for Thee;  
Of Thee I'd eat, of Thee I'd drink.  
Enjoy Thee thoroughly.
  
- 2 Just to behold Thy face,  
For this my heart doth cry;  
I deeply long to drink of Thee  
My thirst to satisfy.

Don't you sometimes awaken with a hymn in your heart already? Perhaps, it is from the meeting the night before, maybe because you were listening to some hymns in your heart the day before. I take that as the Lord calling me to fellowship. There is something in that hymn; it is good to be in that hymn. Actually, your morning revival started right there, not 30 minutes later after you washed up, got dressed, and came to your set place of prayer. Right there your fellowship began. It is very good to use a hymn to fellowship with the Lord. In my experience, I find that singing brings me to the spirit in the easiest way with the least amount of effort. When I am singing, my mind is not wandering. When I am singing, my heart is drawn to the Lord. When we were singing just now, I don't know if you were singing just because I asked you to sing or if any of these words touched you, but no one started to pray. Of course, we don't interrupt the singing in the middle of a verse to pray when we are together. But when you are by yourself, you can sing like this: "Just to behold Thy face" ... Excuse my voice. The Lord does not care what our voice sounds like; He likes to hear our voice. Sometimes in the morning our voice does not sound very good, but the Lord likes to hear it anyway.

You might begin to sing, "Just to behold Thy face, For this my... Yes Lord, my heart." Do you know that you don't need to finish singing the line? You don't need to finish singing the whole song before you pray. You don't even need to complete a word. As soon as there is some anointing, convert that feeling to words, to prayer. This will lead us in fellowship and this will counter all the flaming darts because we enter into a real, genuine spiritual fellowship with the Lord. We could be singing, "Thy glorious, radiant face My heart delights to see.... Lord, I love seeing Your glorious, radiant face. Lord, I just want to behold You this morning. As I am enjoying Your word, I want to go past the word; I want to behold You. Lord, my eyes are only for You." As you are praying this, the Lord might say, "Really? What about what you were looking at on the computer yesterday? Were your eyes for me? How long did you spend reading those articles, and then watching this video, and then the other thing?" Then I said, "Yes Lord, forgive me Lord. cleanse me; my eyes are for You."

How did we get there? Actually, we already had a few things. We had singing; we had calling mingled with our singing; we had praying; and we had confessing. We didn't even get to the verses assigned to this morning and already we entered into a kind of fellowship. I encourage you to follow



the anointing in your fellowship with the Lord. Follow that little feeling, that feeling of richness is wet with anointing. Sometimes we pray and it is a little dry, but other times there is a flow when we pray. As soon as there is any kind of feeling, convert the feeling to words. That is how we have fellowship. It is very interesting; as we are talking to the Lord, our speaking to Him becomes His speaking to us, and we confess and go back to more prayer.

It is the same with our reading of the Word. Of course, a good way to calm the mind is to pray-read the Word, pray-read the Bible. But as you are pray-reading, I encourage you to keep the same principle: be flexible and follow the inner anointing. We might be praying over this verse, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." You could be praying, "Lord, in the beginning was the Word. Thank You, in the beginning was the Word." Then you have the feeling, "Lord, Lord, I want Your Word to be my beginning in everything today." You convert the feeling to prayer. You convert the phrase into your prayer. The verse says, "In the beginning was the Word" but this touches you: "Lord, be my beginning. Lord, in everything that I do today, be my new beginning. Be my source. Oh Lord, be my Alpha and be my Omega." The verse doesn't say anything about Alpha and Omega; why do I pray about Alpha and Omega? Sometime in the past I enjoyed a verse that mentions Alpha and Omega. This verse touches me so I pray, "Lord, be my Alpha; be my Omega." Then maybe the Lord touches you, "How about yesterday? Was I your Omega yesterday?" "Oh Lord, no, no. You were my Alpha, maybe you were my beta, but I don't think that you reached to be my gamma. I don't think that I applied You even by lunch time. Surely Lord, You were not my Omega. Lord, forgive me. But Lord, thank You for a new beginning. Thank You that Your blood cleanses me." At this point, don't make any promises. Many believers fall into a trap; we confess and then we promise never to do it again. Don't do that because that will not work anyway. Instead of promising, we should consecrate; we give ourselves to the Lord again. So our time with the Lord should also have consecration. These are not steps, one and then the other. Actually, the anointing will lead us. "Lord, I give myself to You that You might be my Alpha and Omega this day."

Perhaps you start singing a song. We have a song, hymn 389, that says, "From morning to evening my one world Thou art". Maybe this comes to your mind because you are praying concerning Alpha and Omega. "Lord, from morning to evening be my one world" and then spontaneously you just start to sing. You should not have in your mind, "Singing is over. I can't sing anymore except at the end. We are in the pray-reading part of our fellowship with the Lord." Don't hold the Lord in a box; don't hold the Lord in a form. If there is a feeling within you, sing. The words of that song may become more fuel for more prayer. When you come back you realize, "I didn't finish the whole verse. The whole verse says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' I only prayed, 'In the beginning was the Word', six words. I only prayed the first phrase. Such fellowship could occupy 15 or 20 minutes and you didn't even finish one verse. I hope that our fellowship with the Lord can go deeper, and that we would practice all these things, not merely as practices, but that we would be able to practice this with both sweetness and depth.

Out of this we get some benefits. There are at least three benefits in developing this kind of fellowship with the Lord. The first is that we will get the personal enlightenment; the Lord will shine on us individually and personally. He will shine deeper into us to touch some things that may have been hindering our going on with the Lord for years. We have to say that when we observe the brothers and sisters, some have not had much change after three or five years. I know that they are faithful to serve; I know that they are faithful to be in the Word. Why is there not much change or

transformation? It could be that they are not allowing the Lord the time to shine into them. We need the Lord's light to be like a laser surgery to touch the inward part of our being.

Another benefit is that we get personal encouragement, personal comfort. As I mentioned before, all of us pass through different trials. Often when we are passing through these things we really need someone to sympathise; we need someone to come alongside. There are times when, even though we fellowship, we don't have the sense that others enter into our feeling. The Lord, as it says in Isaiah 50, can encourage the weary with a word. Sometimes one word from the Lord will give you the strength to go on.

The third benefit is that with this kind of fellowship and practise with the Lord, we learn how to follow the anointing. In our lives in going on with the Lord there are decisions that need to be made. Young people need to decide concerning their future, concerning marriage, concerning taking a job. Perhaps the job is in another town or city; uprooting your family is not a small thing. How do we know the Lord's will? We need to pray for the Lord's will. At those times it is very important that we know how to pray and follow the anointing. But where do you learn to follow the anointing? Every morning when you are with the Lord and He is leading you to this hymn, that verse, this impression, that prayer. As we are following the anointing our realization or sense of the anointing becomes stronger.

These are some benefits. I would like to add one more to this list. In our fellowship with the Lord, we should also have praise or thanksgiving. I hope that in all our fellowship with the Lord there could be some praise. We just thank Him. We don't need a reason to thank the Lord; we don't need a reason to praise the Lord. He is worthy of our praises. Praise is really the way to victory; praise is really the way to spiritual victory.

Once we have this kind of fellowship with the Lord, this brings us into oneness with the Lord. Then we can pray in His name. Now is the time to make petitions. But how do we pray? Here I want to highlight two words in Psalm 27, verse 4: *beholding* and *inquiring*. That verse says that the psalmist's desire was to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple. This is the way to behold; this is the way to come into the Lord's presence. Once we are in the Lord's presence, if there is a burden on our heart, we should say, "Lord, how shall I pray? Is it time to pray? Shall I pray for this burden? Shall I pray for that loved one? Shall I pray for this new one?" It is very possible that the Lord will say, "No, not yet. Just stay with Me; just keep enjoying Me; just stay focussed on Me." Our attitude should be, "Okay Lord. Those are all Your burdens so You send me whenever You want." We just continue to behold. Then later on we might say, "Lord, is it time to pray?" Then He might say, "Okay, now it is time to pray." We should not start praying. We should say, "Lord, how shall I pray? What is Your desire for this burden?" In this kind of fellowship we are really one with the Lord for His move in our lives and on the Earth.

I would like to read one verse in closing. Isaiah chapter 30, verse 15 says, "For thus says the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest you will be saved; In quietness and in trust will be your strength." This is a word for everyone in general but I would say particularly for those who have a heart to serve in the church life. In returning and rest you will be saved. In quietness and in trust will be your strength. Brother Nee has a very sweet message concerning this verse. It is titled *In Rest Shall be Your Strength*. How do we have the strength to serve the Lord for the long run? How do we have the endurance to live the church life, to be the Lord's testimony in the midst of spiritual warfare? It is not easy—when we are standing for the Lord the enemy will attack us all the time. Where is the source of our strength? It is right here in this verse, "in returning and rest". It is in loving the Lord, in beholding the Lord, in spending time with the Lord to rest

before Him. Then it says “in quietness”. We need to learn how to be quiet before the Lord. This does not mean that you need to be totally quiet. Last night one of the brothers said that sometimes he falls asleep when he is before the Lord. That is probably the most blessed sleep you will enjoy. But what really needs to be quiet according to Psalm 132:2 is our soul. Our soul needs to be calm and quiet. You can quiet your soul by singing, calling, praying, and so on. When your soul is calmed down, then the Lord has the way to strengthen you. But Isaiah 30:15 ends like this: “but you were not willing.” I hope that we can pray-read this verse sometime. The Lord can touch us to pray, “Lord, make me willing. Make me willing to return; make me willing to rest; make me willing to be quiet; make me willing to trust You so that You can energize me, You can empower me and I can be one with You for this warfare. But Lord, I love You; I am focussing on You.”