

Will you please turn to I Timothy 4. We'll read from verse 8 to verse 10. "Exercise thyself unto piety of godliness; for bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for everything, having promise of life, of the present one, and of that to come. The word is faithful and worthy of all acceptation; for, for this we labour and suffer reproach, because we hope in a living God, who is preserver of all men, especially of those that believe."

2 Corinthians 4. We'll begin with verse 7 and we'll read through verse 18. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us: every way afflicted, but not straitened; seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body; for we who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh; so that death works in us, but life in you. And having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I have believed, therefore have I spoken; we also believe, therefore also we speak; knowing that he who has raised the Lord Jesus shall raise us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the grace abounding through the many may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Wherefore we faint not; but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day. For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal."

John 12. We'll read from verse 24 through verse 26. "'Verily, verily, I say unto you, except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He that loves his life (and the word "life" here is soul life) shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal (and the "life" here, **zoa**, God's divine life). If any one serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall be my servant. And if any one serves me, he shall the Father honor.'"

## **Prayer**

*Dear Lord, we do want to thank thee for gathering us together again this day. Every time when we gather in thy name, we are assured that thy presence is with us. Dear Lord, we treasure nothing more than thy own presence. Will you please manifest thyself to each and every one of us. Open our hearts that we may see thee. Open our eyes that we may see thee. Open our ear that we may hear thee. Thou art all that we desire. Will you not fill us this day and bring us into all that thou hast ordained for us that thou may be glorified. We ask in thy precious name, Amen.*

Thank God for gathering us together again this day. I hope that we all remember the theme that God has given to us for this time. We are talking about spiritual exercise and this is something that not only we should hear it but actually we are all involved in it. Exercise; every one of us must do it. Nobody can exercise for you. So I hope dear brothers and sisters that we are here in the gymnasium ready to exercise. You know in exercising, you must apply yourself and you must do it constantly. You must do it according to rule and you must relax. If you do not relax and you are tense, you cannot exercise. So I hope dear brothers and sisters relax. Let the Spirit of God do His work.

We have mentioned that the one basic and fundamental exercise is consecration because this is the door to all spiritual exercises. Consecration is not only a door but it is a way. Consecration is something that we need to daily exercise. You cannot say five years ago I have consecrated myself. That doesn't work. You have to see that you have to consecrate morning and evening. It is like a burnt offering, the fire of burnt offering never goes out, and consecration is something deepened all the time. You add and add to your consecration. And not only everyday there will be that daily burnt offering but when it comes to new moon, you add something to it. When it comes to festivals, more to be added. So this is the way of consecration. We should be on the altar all the time and we should be all of us, all of oneself be on the altar. This is the basic of all spiritual exercise.

Then we mention something about the dividing of soul and spirit. After we believe in the Lord Jesus, the dead spirit in us has been quickened into life and the Holy Spirit comes and dwell in our spirit. The Holy Spirit who dwells in our spirit is the life of our spirit. But we mentioned before, who dwells in our soul? We know that self, our fallen nature, our Adam, dwells in our soul. So to a believer, you will discover that willing yourselves, there are two different lives: In your spirit, there is the divine life, while in your soul you still have your human, fallen, I. There are two different lives in two different areas. According to your inward feeling, you want to please God; but according to your awkward feeling, you want to please yourself. And that's the reason why to believers, you begin to experience this civil war within yourself. I think it is a very important thing in our Christian life that we will sense the dividing of the soul and the spirit because its result is far reaching. You know the tactic; the strategy of the enemy of God is to boost your soul. This is his ancient strategy and he's still practicing it today. In the Garden of Eden, he tempted Eve's soul. He wants Eve's soul to grow. He wants Eve's soul to grow that he may be independent of God. But behind it, if Eve should do that, then she falls into Satan's hands. So the strategy of the enemy is always try to kill your spirit and boost your soul and we find it happened in the Garden of Eden. The spirit was dead and the soul was very very much alive and since that onward, from Adam onward, all who are born of Adam had the nature of Adam. So that's the reason why you find people of this world they live by their soul life and no spirit life. They had no contact with

God; they were self-centered, self-conscious, and everything is self. Unfortunately, we find even God's people forget that they have a new spirit and the Holy Spirit dwells in their spirit. Even the church teaches that you have only soul and body and the church even teaches that there is no difference between soul and spirit. So when you look at Christianity today, the teachings and the practice are centered upon how to boost the soul life instead of spiritual life. But God's strategy is just the opposite. In the heart of God, He wants our spirit to be in ascendance and He wants our soul to be subjective so that we may live a dependent life upon God, that we may live a life with God. So dear brothers and sisters, we need to understand the strategy of God and the strategy of the enemy.

So the dividing of the soul and spirit is extremely important. That's the reason why we emphasize that the next exercise is the dividing of soul and spirit. Now as we find in the Word of God, the way that the soul and spirit can be divided is not by our own introspection; it's not by our own analyzing. If we analyze ourselves, the very analyzing is of the soul so we fall into soul life. So how can the soul and the spirit be divided? Where is the exercise? Now here you need to relax. If you are tense, you will never be able to see the dividing of the soul and spirit. Unfortunately good Christians are tense Christians. Good Christians do not relax. They want to please God; they want to live the spiritual life. So they constantly ask, "Is it of the soul or is it of the spirit? Is it of God or is it of I, of me?" You become very intense and you become nervous. So nervous Christians are good Christians. Now brothers and sisters, how can the soul and spirit be divided? Do you remember you are a sacrifice, a sacrifice offered on the altar? A sacrifice is not supposed to be restless. So all you need to do is to lie on the altar quietly. "Lord, here am I. I'm yours. You have to divide my soul and spirit." Now if you really rest in the Lord and look up to Christ, you will find the Holy Spirit will quicken the Word of God and He will show you what is of the soul and what is of the spirit.

### **The Outward Man and the Spirit**

Now this morning we like to go further exercise. Dividing gives us a sense of the difference between soul and spirit; but dividing doesn't mean that the soul is broken and the spirit is released. So this morning, we will like to continue with our spiritual exercise. We will be considering this matter of the breaking of the outward man and the release of the spirit.

You remember in Hebrews 4, when the Word of God is talking about this matter of dividing the soul and the spirit, it said that the Word of God is like sharp to a sword, penetrating and dividing the soul and spirit, as dividing the bones and the marrow. The relationship of the bone and the marrow is the relationship of the soul and the spirit. The bone serves as the shelter of the marrow, so the spirit is within the soul. The soul is like a shell and the spirit is the content. The bones are the structure and the marrow is the life. So you find that our spirit is imprisoned in the soul.

Oftentimes, we find our spirit cannot be released because it is confined by the soul. Within my heart, I'm willing but I found I'm bound, I cannot do what I want to do and I do what I do not want to do because our soul is so strong, our spirit is so weak. So brothers and sisters, the problem here is your soul has to be broken. But do not misunderstand. The breaking of the soul does not mean the annihilation of the soul because if the soul is annihilated, the person is gone. So you find the soul as an organ is still there; it is just to be purified. But the life within that soul has to die. That life within the soul has to be changed. Instead of I in the soul, it has to be displaced by Christ in my soul. Formerly, it is I who use all the faculties of my soul. Who thinks? I think. Who feels? I feel. Who decides? I decide. So you find it is the "I" life that is using the soul. It is a fallen life. So no wonder to sin is with me but to do good is not in me. Brothers and sisters, where does Christ dwell in your life? He dwells in your spirit but He has to come out and sit on the throne of your soul. He must displace the "I" in your soul and He will be in charge of your soul. He will use your feeling. He will use your mind. He will use your volition so everything that comes out represents Christ and not you. That's metamorphosis. This is transformation. This is we are being transformed and being conformed to the image of Christ and this is something going on at present.

### **The Salvation of the Soul**

This is the salvation of the soul. The salvation of the spirit is of the past; we already have it. The salvation of the soul is now, transformation, and the salvation of the body is resurrection. So brothers and sisters, do you know there is a salvation going on everyday in your life? For the spirit life to be released, so that you may live a spiritual life and you may have spiritual service, and you may have spiritual worship, you have to go through this process of the breaking of the outward man and the release of the spirit.

### **The Treasure and the Earthen Vessels**

Now in order that we may understand this, the Bible uses two different parables. Now one is in 2 Corinthians 4. In verse 7, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Now you notice that the treasure here is singular number but the vessels here is plural number. Now why is this so? Because the earthen vessel represents us and if you read on, you find it refers to our outward man. You can see this in verse 16. "Wherefore we faint not; but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day." So here you find another two terms used to represent soul and spirit. "Outward man" refers to our soul. We are earthen vessels. This is what man is: We are opaque, we are not very clear, of earth. It is not transparent. And you find that the earth is everywhere. All of us are just earthen vessels. Do you agree that you are an earthen vessel? We think of ourselves as alabaster flasks. You remember Mary, how she came to the Lord? She had an alabaster flask, and within the flask, there is the pure nard, a pound of pure nard. That's a

very very expensive ointment. Maybe Mary preserved this for her marriage. This was her treasure but she was so touched by the Lord. She was so grateful to the Lord in calling her brother back to life. She wants to do something to the Lord. What could she do? She took her most precious treasure, an alabaster flask with a pound of pure nard. She came to the Lord, open it up and drop a few drops? No. She came to the Lord, breaks the alabaster flask and poured the ointment on the Lord. Brothers and sisters, this is the breaking of the outward man and the release of the spirit. So unfortunately, even though we are but earthen vessels, yet we consider ourselves an alabaster flask. We want to preserve ourselves; we are not willing to break ourselves and because we want to preserve ourselves, therefore, the treasure, the light of the treasure, cannot be diffused.

### **By the work of the Cross, the Soul life is broken**

The treasure is one. In all the earthen vessels, there is only one treasure, Christ. He is our treasure. If I have a treasure, will I put it in an earthen vessel? No. I will put it in a golden box. That is the wonder of God's work. God put His most precious treasure into the lowest humblest vessels. Who but God will do that? Did you ever thank God for that, that He should put Christ into such a humble, meek, worthless person, as I am? Why did He do that? He wants the radiancy of the glory of God be manifested but He is imprisoned within us. You remember what our Lord said? In Luke 12, He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized. I feel so strengthened." Our Lord Jesus, He has a human soul just like we are. Our soul is contaminated but His soul is pure. His feeling is pure. His thinking is pure. His volition is pure and yet, He feels that He is being imprisoned. He wants to be released and the release came on the cross. There you find He was broken and His life was released. So brothers and sisters, you find the Lord shows us that we are earthen vessels. The earthen vessels had to crack, has to be broken so that the light of the treasure, the radiancy of the glory of God may come forth. That's the reason why the apostle Paul says, "I bear in my body the dying of Jesus." The death there is not a noun, it is a verbal noun. Dying, the death of Jesus has the power of putting everything to death. So, Paul said, "the dying of Jesus work in me." The dying of Jesus, so work in me, that my soul life is broken so the life of Christ may be manifested in me. Death in me but life in you. That is the way of ministry.

Brothers and sisters, so here you find the outward man is decayed but my inward man is renewed day by day. The seen seem to be passing by but the unseen is eternal. Now that is the breaking of the outward man for the release of the inward man.

### **That Grain of Wheat Falling into the Ground and Die**

Now there's another illustration and that is in John 12. You remember the story that happened during the last visit of our Lord Jesus to Jerusalem. You remember He has a triumphant entry into

Jerusalem, as if the whole world is for Him. Even the Gentiles, the Greek, wanted to see Jesus. Humanly speaking, this is the most glorious time of our Lord Jesus' life and strangely, when Phillip, an angel, came to the Lord and said, "Some Gentiles, Greeks, want to see you," our Lord Jesus said, "the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." But when He said, "The Son of Man shall be glorified," His meaning is the opposite of the world's sense. In the world's sense, now the entire world is after Him. That is glory. But in the heart of our Lord Jesus, He speaks of the cross. That is the time of His being glorified. Therefore, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except the grain of wheat falling into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Our Lord Jesus is the grain of wheat. Before He fall into the ground, there was no wheat on earth. The whole field is filled with tares. We are all tares.

Our Lord is thee wheat. He falls into the ground. That speaks of His incarnation. If He falls into the ground and remains and then on mount of transfiguration, He exits, there will be no grain or wheat on the earth. But the grain of wheat fall into the ground dies. He came to die. Why? If it dies, it bears much fruit and here we are. So the Lord began to explain it. He says, "He that loves his life shall lose it." This applies not only to Himself but to all of us. If anyone loves his soul life, in other words, that grain of wheat will not die, you put that grain of wheat on the table, a thousand years it is still that grain of wheat. There is life within but outwardly there was a shell to protect it, to preserve it.

But as long as the shell is not decayed, the life within will not be released. If the outward man is not broken, the inward man cannot be released. If we keep our shell, we love our soul life, the Lord said, "you will lose it." But if you hate your soul life—who hates their soul life? No one. We love it; we preserve it; we protect it; we defend it but unless we hate this soul life—we will not be able to preserve it, that is to save it. And more than that to life eternal. In other words, not only your soul will be saved, but the divine life in you will be released. And the Lord said, "if anyone serves Me, let him follow Me. And where I am, there also shall be my servant." This is where the Lord is so this is where you should be. And if anyone serves Him, the Father will honour you.

### **Breaking of the Outward Man and the Release of the Spirit is the Work of the Holy Spirit**

So dear brothers and sisters, you find in these two parables, we can see the necessity of the breaking of the outward man and the release of the spirit.

Now we call it a spiritual exercise. Now can you break your outward man? Nobody can. This is a work by the Holy Spirit. Again you find that consecration is the foundation. If you are consecrated, you're willing to go this way, and then the Holy Spirit will work in you. The work of the Holy Spirit for the breaking of the outward man and the release of the spirit is twofold.

Number one, the enlightenment or the revelation of the Holy Spirit; number two, the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The enlightenment of the Holy Spirit is within. The discipline of the Holy Spirit is without. So the Lord uses these two ways to bring us into the breaking of the outward man. We have already said, it is the Holy Spirit who uses the Word of God to divide the soul and the spirit. But He's not only to divide it, He is to break it. What's the use of dividing if it's not broken? Thank God He has shed some light upon us. So we begin to see what is the soul and what is of the spirit. But we need further light. In other words, throughout our Christian life, we need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. We have no new revelation; that is, any revelation outside of the revealed Word of God, because all the revelation has been completed in this book. But that doesn't mean that we have no revelation. On the contrary, we need to live constantly under revelation. That is to say, the Holy Spirit has to enlighten His Word and make it living and operative in our life. Maybe I will use an illustration. Maybe I'll use Watchmen Nee's experience. I can quote a number people but for time sake, I'll just use one. Now our dear brother Watchmen Nee after he was saved, he really loved the Lord. He spent lots of time reading the Word of God and he began to serve God. For several years, he was disturbed before God because he had heard the so called Keswick teaching, higher life teaching. As Paul said, "Our old man was crucified with Christ." Therefore I'm delivered from the power of sin. And brother Nee, he said he try to reckon himself as dead in Christ and alive in Christ. But the more he reckoned himself dead, the more alive he became. So he sought the Lord, he prayed, he read the Word. Nothing happened. He was not delivered from the power of sin. But one day, when he was in his room studying the Word, suddenly light came to him. When Christ died, I died. How? Christ died two thousand years ago. How can I die when He died two thousand years ago? And suddenly the Lord showed him because you are in Christ, because you are in Him so when He died, you died. Now suddenly light breaks out and he was immediately released. He ran down the stairs and in the kitchen he met a brother. He said, "Brother, do you know that I died?" And the brother said, "What happened?" Are you troubled with Romans 6? Have you been trying to reckon yourself as dead? And the more you reckon the more alive you become? You need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, it not only Divides, it Kills, it Heals**

Thank God for the Bible, but the letter kills. The Spirit quickens. So we need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to shed His light upon us. In our spirit suddenly it enlightens, and when the light comes, it not only divides, it kills, and it heals.

Usually, the work of the Holy Spirit in breaking the outward man will touch your prominent part. You know when you are walking and you hit the wall, which part of your body hits first? Nose. That projects out. You know our soul is like that. In every soul, there is special projection. This is your strong point, your strength. Unless the Holy Spirit touches that, it is not broken. But

when that is touched, you are broken. Some people are very clever and unless your cleverness is touched by the Holy Spirit, your soul is not broken. So that's the reason why we need to seek the Lord that He will shine upon us, search as a search light, search every part of our soul—divides it, kills it, and heals it. Job, the strongest point of his life, is righteousness, self-righteousness. Until that is broken, and it is broken by a vision and revelation of the majesty of God, not by reason but by who. When he saw the Lord, he repented in dust and ashes. He was a broken man but he was a new man.

### **The Discipline of the Holy Spirit**

So dear brothers and sisters, the Lord sometimes use light to break the outward man and other times, He use what we call the discipline of the Holy Spirit. He will arrange our circumstances. You know, I often say to those who are redeemed, God loves us so much. He will arrange everything for us. To a believer, there is nothing called by chance. Everything is arranged by our God; even our hair has been numbered. This morning when you comb your hair and hair number 10,001 falls down, God knows it. That's the love of God. He knows exactly what is best for you. So He will arrange our environment. Nothing happens by chance. The people you are with, the circumstance you encounter, everything in your life is arranged by the Holy Spirit. He uses that arrangement to break your outward man.

The best example is Jacob. You know Jacob, the twister, how he can maneuver and play and he always comes on top. But God so arranged. He had to flee for his life and he was away from home for twenty years and he met his match. God so arranged that. Laban was as tricky as he was and they maneuvered against each other. He seemed always to come to the top but he came to an impossible situation. He had to flee again and you remember in Genesis 32, how he was all alone wrestling with the angel. Even the angel cannot overcome him. Do you know how strong you are? Do I know how strong my soul is? Like Jacob, the angel cannot overcome him. And then the angel touched his thigh. You know in wrestling the most important point is the thigh. So the angel touched his thigh and he was crippled. You know what happened? He hangs onto the angel, "Bless me otherwise I cannot live anymore." And the angel said, "What is your name?" "Jacob." "Now, you shall be called Israel, prince of God." Brothers and sisters, God used environment to break Jacob. From now on, Jacob walks with a limp. He was not perfect yet but he was crippled and finally in his old age, he blessed Pharaoh, the greatest king in the world and he lean upon his rod and worshipped God. Brothers and sisters, this the breaking of the outward man and the release of the spirit.

So God uses these two ways work together. God, according to His wisdom, to everyone He works livingly. Do not try to be like other people because everyone is special to Him and He deals with us, everyone, specially. He knows the shape of our soul. You know our soul has a shape just like

a body has a shape. No two bodies are exactly alike; even twins. No two souls are exactly alike. This is how special we are. The shape of our soul is our temperament. That's the shape of our soul. Some people are naturally slow, some people are naturally quick. Some people are born introvert and some people are born extravert. Some people are very active, outgoing. Some people are very reserved and hidden. Nothing wrong with that. That's your shape and God will deal with you according to that. So our experiences are all different. Some people's experiences are very drastic. Some people experiences slowly slowly slowly and then got it but thank God, the result is the same—the breaking of the outward man and the release of the spirit. So may the Lord lead us in this spiritual exercise.

*Dear Lord, we do commit these scattered words into Your hand. We trust thy Holy Spirit to make it living and operative and lead us into this way of life. We thank thee and praise thee. In thy precious name, Amen.*