

**LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO
GOD’S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH**
(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

**How to Conduct Ourselves in the House of God—
Exercising Ourselves unto Godliness**

RM Hymns: 866

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15a, 16a; 4:7b-8; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:7; 4:22; Titus 1:1

- 1 Tim 3:15a But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, ...
1 Tim 3:16a And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: ...
1 Tim 4:7b ... and exercise yourself unto godliness.
1 Tim 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.
1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,
2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
Titus 1:1 Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's chosen ones and the full knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness,

I. “I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God”—1 Tim. 3:15a:

- A. What Paul ministered to Timothy was entirely concerning how to conduct himself in the church—1:3-5, 18-19.
1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things
1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.
1 Tim 1:5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith;
1 Tim 1:18 This charge I commit to you, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you might war the good warfare,
1 Tim 1:19 Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith;
- B. The way to conduct ourselves in the church is by becoming one who loves the Word of God—3:15a; cf. John 6:63, 68.
1 Tim 3:15a But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, ...
John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
John 6:68 Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life,
- C. Respecting the headship of Christ and bearing the truth are two governing principles that we must follow in order to know how to conduct ourselves in the church life—Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15.
Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- D. In order to properly conduct ourselves in the house of God, the church, we need to take care of the healthy teaching—2 Tim. 4:3-4.
2 Tim 4:3 For the time will come when they will not tolerate the healthy teaching; but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears,

- 2 Tim 4:4 And they will turn away their ear from the truth and will be turned aside to myths.
- E. We must live and act in our spirit so that in the church God can be manifested as the living God—John 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 6:17; 1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- John 4:23 But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him.
- John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.

II. “Confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness”—v. 16a:

- A. The important word *godliness* is used nine times in 1 and 2 Timothy—1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3, 5-6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5.
- 1 Tim 2:2 On behalf of kings and all who are in high position, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
- 1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- 1 Tim 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.
- 1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,
- 1 Tim 6:5 Perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.
- 1 Tim 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain;
- 1 Tim 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.
- 2 Tim 3:5 Having an outward form of godliness, though denying its power; from these also turn away.
- B. Godliness is a mystery because it is real and living yet invisible—1 Tim. 3:16a; 6:11.
- 1 Tim 3:16a And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: ...
- 1 Tim 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.
- C. The full knowledge of the truth is according to godliness—Titus 1:1.
- Titus 1:1 Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's chosen ones and the full knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness,
- D. The truth, the reality, of God's eternal economy is according to godliness, which is God manifested in man—v. 1; 1 Tim. 3:16a.
- Titus 1:1 Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's chosen ones and the full knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness,
- 1 Tim 3:16a And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: ...
- E. Godliness is godlikeness, being like God, expressing God—Col. 1:15; 3:10.
- Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- F. Godliness is not merely an outward matter; the word *manifested* in 1 Timothy 3:16 indicates that godliness is an inward life with an outward expression.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.

- G. As believers in Christ, we should pursue godliness; to pursue godliness is to live a daily life that manifests God—6:11.
 1 Tim 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness.
- H. In order for God to be manifested in the flesh, godliness needs to be expressed in our whole living—1 John 3:2; 2:28.
 1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.
 1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that if He is manifested, we may have boldness and not be put to shame from Him at His coming.
- I. God's economy is God coming into us, and godliness is God going out of us—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:16a:
 1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.
 1 Tim 3:16a And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: ...
1. The Christian life is simply God coming in and God going out—John 4:14; 7:29.
 John 4:14 But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.
 John 7:29 I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.
 2. Because godliness is the expression of God, the Christian life should be a life that expresses God and bears God's likeness in all things—Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 Heb 1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
 3. First Timothy 2:2 says that we need to lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness; even in small things, we need to lead a life in all godliness, everywhere and in everything.
 1 Tim 2:2 On behalf of kings and all who are in high position, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity.
 4. Our church life, our daily life, and our family life are simply God coming in and God going out all day—2 Cor. 13:14; 3:18.
 2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
- J. The church of the living God is the ultimate mystery of godliness because the proper church life is the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh—1 Tim. 3:15-16; Col. 1:15.
 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
 Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,

III. "Exercise yourself unto godliness"—1 Tim. 4:7b:

- A. The way to conduct ourselves in the church life is to exercise ourselves unto godliness—3:15a; 4:7b; 2:2.
 1 Tim 3:15a But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, ...

- 1 Tim 4:7b ... and exercise yourself unto godliness.
 1 Tim 2:2 On behalf of kings and all who are in high position, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity.
- B. We all have to exercise our spirit because the mystery of God is with our spirit—Eph. 1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:22.
 Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,
 Eph 3:3 That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief,
 Eph 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,
 Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
 Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.
 Col 1:26 The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints;
 Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,
 Col 2:2 That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,
 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
- C. Our Christian life is a life of godliness, which comes out of God's dispensing of Himself into us; this depends upon our spirit being fully exercised—2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Tim. 4:22; Philem. 25.
 2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
 Philem 25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
- D. We need to build up the habit of exercising our spirit—1 Tim. 4:7b; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 2:22:
 1 Tim 4:7b ... and exercise yourself unto godliness.
 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
 Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
1. A godly life issuing from God's dispensing depends upon the exercise of our spirit—1 Tim. 4:7b; John 4:23-24.
 1 Tim 4:7b ... and exercise yourself unto godliness.
 John 4:23 But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him.
 John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.
 2. If we do not exercise our spirit strongly to cooperate with the Lord, God cannot dispense Himself into us—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4, 9.
 2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
 Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
 Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.
- E. The word *exercise* implies forcing—1 Tim. 4:7b:
 1 Tim 4:7b ... and exercise yourself unto godliness.
1. To exercise is always a forced matter.
 2. Whenever we are in a hard situation, we have to force ourselves to exercise our spirit—cf. Rom. 8:28.
 Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

3. If we Christians want to be strong and grow in the Lord, we must force ourselves to use our spirit—2 Tim. 4:22; Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; Rom. 8:16.
- 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
- Rev 1:10 I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,
- Rev 4:2 Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting;
- Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.
- Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- F. To exercise our spirit is to set our mind on the spirit—v. 6; Mal. 2:15-16:
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Mal 2:15 But did He not make them one? And the remnant of the Spirit was His. And why the one? He sought the seed of God. Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one be treacherous to the wife of his youth.
- Mal 2:16 For I hate divorce, says Jehovah the God of Israel; and he who does it behaves in violence, says Jehovah of hosts. Take heed then to your spirit, and do not be treacherous.
1. When we set our mind on the spirit, we have the inner sense of life and peace, the sense of strength, satisfaction, rest, release, liveliness, watering, brightness, and comfort.
 2. When we set our mind on the flesh, we have the inner sense of death, the sense of weakness, emptiness, uneasiness, restlessness, depression, dryness, darkness, and pain.
 3. Our Christian life is not according to the standard of right and wrong but according to the spirit, and we know the spirit by the inner sense of life and peace—Rom. 8:6, 16; 9:1; 2 Cor. 13:14.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- Rom 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit,
- 2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- G. To exercise our spirit is to discern our spirit from our soul—Heb. 4:12:
- Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
1. We should always be on the alert to discern and deny anything that is not of the spirit but of the soul, the self—Matt. 16:25; cf. Luke 9:25.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?
2. All the time we need to keep our spirit separate from our soul—Heb. 4:12; 1 Thes. 5:23.
- Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- 1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. The enemy's strategy is always to mix our spirit with our soul.

4. Whatever we are, whatever we have, and whatever we do must be in the spirit; everything that God is to us is in our spirit—2 Tim. 4:22.
2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
- H. In order to prove that the exercise unto godliness is the exercise of the spirit, we need to go to 2 Timothy, where Paul says that God has given us a spirit that is strong, loving, and sober; such a spirit is with a strong will, a loving emotion, and a sober mind—1:7:
2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
1. The word *spirit* in 2 Timothy 1:7 denotes our human spirit, regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit—John 3:6; Rom. 8:16.
2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
 2. To fan into flame the gift of God is related to our regenerated spirit—2 Tim. 1:6.
2 Tim 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
 3. *Of power* refers to our will, *of love* to our emotion, and *of sobermindedness* to our mind—v. 7.
2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
- I. To exercise ourselves unto godliness is to exercise our spirit to live Christ in our daily life for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 4:7b; Eph. 2:20-22; 4:12, 16; 1 Cor. 14:4, 12.
1 Tim 4:7b ... and exercise yourself unto godliness.
Eph 2:20 Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone;
Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
1 Cor 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.
1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE EXERCISE OF OUR SPIRIT

Now that we have seen something concerning the human spirit, we need to go on to see the exercise of our spirit.

OUR SPIRIT BEING THE LAMP OF THE LORD, SEARCHING ALL OUR INWARD PARTS

Proverbs 20:27 says that our spirit is the lamp of the Lord, searching all our inward parts. This shows that within man there is something of God, and this is man's spirit to be God's lamp. Of course, in the lamp is the light, so here the implication is very meaningful. Within man there is such a lamp, but the lamp needs the light, and the light is God. What man has is just an empty lamp. The lamp needs the light to shine. This shows that God as the light has something in man as His vessel to contain Him and to express Him, just as the lamp contains the light and expresses it.

The second point we have to stress is that this lamp of God, which is our spirit, searches all our inward parts. No doubt, this is altogether the inward searching, not the outward rebuking or instruction. We should help the saints realize how significant the human spirit is. Proverbs 20:27 can be used to impress the saints so that they can see how man's spirit is so close to God and is something of God within man. This is a strong point. The human spirit is God's vessel to contain God and to express God. Every lamp serves these two purposes. The lamp serves to contain the light and to express it. Then it works. When it works, it enlightens, it shines, and it searches.

OUR SPIRIT BEING THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART

First Peter 3:4 reveals that our spirit is the hidden man of our heart. The hidden man is a meek and quiet spirit. When our spirit is meek and quiet, it is hidden. First Peter 3:4 indicates that every part of our being may be considered as a man. Our physical body is our outward man, our soul is our expressed, manifested man, and our spirit is our hidden man.

According to 1 Peter 3, the most beautiful part of our being, the prettiest adornment, in the sight of God is a meek and quiet spirit. This is the hidden man of the heart. This point shows that our spirit is the deepest part of our being. So if we are going to be pretty in the eyes of God, we have to be pretty from the depths of our being. We should not be pretty just outwardly, in a physical way. We have to be pretty inwardly, in the hidden man. This man is hidden from the eyes of man, but it is not hidden from the eyes of God, because such a hidden man, that is, a meek and quiet spirit, is pretty in the eyes of God.

We have to point out that 1 Peter 3:4, on the one hand, says something about the hidden man but, on the other hand, refers to it as being in the sight of God. This means that this meek and quiet spirit is hidden in our heart from human eyes, but it is not hidden in the sight of God. God sees it. So this is the real beauty that a godly person should have.

OUR REGENERATED SPIRIT BEING OUR INNER MAN

We have to help the saints realize that our human spirit is the lamp of God, serving God with a purpose. Furthermore, this spirit is a beautiful, hidden man in the sight of God. Also, when our spirit is regenerated, it becomes the inner man (Eph. 3:16). The sense of the word *inner* is stronger than the sense of the word *hidden*. The hidden man is one that is not manifested, but the inner man can be very active and aggressive. According to Ephesians 3, the inner man must be very active and very aggressive to live the Lord out. After the inner man is strengthened, Christ has the way to make His home in our heart. This indicates that the inner man is not just something hidden, meek, and quiet but is something very living, active, and aggressive so that Christ may use it for Himself to make His home in our heart.

According to the Bible, I believe the above three points are the basic description of what our spirit is. Our spirit is the lamp of the Lord, a pretty, hidden man in God's eyes, and the inner man, living, active, and aggressive for the Lord to fulfill His purpose. These three points help us to know what our spirit is.

OUR SPIRIT NEEDING TO BE STIRRED UP

Beginning from this point, we need to see what our spirit should do. Ezra 1:1 says that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia. Then verse 5 says that God stirred up the spirit of a remnant of Israelites to go up to build His house in Jerusalem. Our spirit needs to be stirred up for God's interest (cf. Exo. 35:21). We should not wait for others to stir up our spirit. Instead, we should stir up our spirit by exercising our spirit (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6-7). On the one hand, the Lord is the One who stirs our spirit up, but we should not be passive. We ourselves have to cooperate with the Lord to stir up our spirit.

OUR SPIRIT NEEDING TO BE BURNING

Our spirit needs to be burning. Romans 12:11 charges us to be burning in spirit, and Acts 18:25 tells us that Apollos was fervent, burning, in spirit.

OUR SPIRIT INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT NEEDING TO BE THE FACULTY OF OUR PRAYER

Prayer is the way to exercise our spirit, but many Christians do not pray with their spirit. They pray by using merely their mouth and their mentality with their emotion. They do not use their spirit when they pray. If one person asks another person to do something for him, he might simply open up his mouth according to his mentality and his emotion without exercising his spirit. Many Christians today pray to the Lord in exactly the same way. They do not use their spirit.

In the past we prayed many times without exercising our spirit, but Ephesians 6:18 says that we need to pray at every time in our spirit. We need to use our spirit as the faculty of prayer. We cannot hear things by exercising our eyes or smell things by using our ears. We must use the proper faculty to hear and to smell. In the same way, we have to pray by exercising our spirit as the proper faculty of our prayer. The faculty for us to pray is not our mind or emotion but our spirit. The more we stress this, the better. Many saints and young ones among us need to learn how to use their spirit in prayer.

A good illustration of using the spirit is when a person loses his temper. When he loses his temper and yells, he is not using his mind. At that point, he is in his real person, that is, his spirit. If we do not yell from our spirit, our yelling is a false performance. The real yelling surely comes out of our spirit. Of course, this is a negative example, because when one loses his temper, his spirit comes forth in a cruel and rude way. But in principle, we have to learn to use our spirit in prayer in the same way. Whenever we open up our mouth, we should exercise our spirit to utter something. Whenever we pray, we should pray in our spirit, using our spirit to say something to the Lord. Our spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit needs to be the faculty of our prayer.

OUR SPIRIT NEEDING TO BE THE MEANS OF OUR WORSHIP

According to John 4:24, our spirit needs to be the means of our worship. We need to worship God the Spirit in our spirit and with our spirit. Many saints come to the meeting to meet, but they do not come to worship. We may go through the formality of meeting without rendering the Lord the real worship that He desires. To worship is to exercise our spirit. Whenever we begin to exercise our spirit, the worship begins. We may think that our worship begins when we call a hymn or when we pray. But our worship actually begins when our spirit rises up and is exercised.

In other words, in a meeting we may sing a lot of hymns, yet without worship. Even we may read many verses of the Bible, yet without worship. We may even pray without worship. Many so-called Christian services have singing, the reading of the Bible, a sermon, and a benediction, all without the exercise of the spirit. There is no worship because no one exercises his spirit.

Our meetings need to be full of the exercise of the spirit. When we come together to meet, before singing, before praying, before reading, before doing anything, all of us should exercise our spirit. There should be such a worshipping spirit in all our meetings. Many times the elders exercise their spirit to open the meeting. Then they stir up others' spirit. This is not the best situation. All the saints must rise up to exercise their spirit. We have to help the saints to realize that we need to use our spirit to worship. Our spirit needs to worship God directly apart from merely depending upon singing, reading, or praying in a formal way.

OUR SPIRIT NEEDING TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ENJOYING THE LORD

Our spirit needs to take the lead in enjoying the Lord. This is fully shown in Luke 1:46-47. In these verses Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has exulted in God my Savior." These two verses, no doubt, are describing the enjoyment of the Lord, and in the enjoyment of the Lord, our spirit has to take the lead. First, Mary's spirit exulted in God; then her soul magnified the Lord. Her praise to God issued from her spirit and was expressed through her soul. But today we mostly use our soul first. We must learn to directly use our spirit and let the soul be a follower of the spirit. Our spirit must take the lead aggressively in enjoying the Lord. Our spirit should subdue our soul to make the soul its follower.

OUR SPIRIT NEEDING TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

First Corinthians 14:32 says, “The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.” In our spiritual ministry our spirit has to take the initiative. If our spirit is waiting, that means our spirit is dormant. On all occasions our spirit should take the initiative to minister something.

OUR SPIRIT KNOWING THE THINGS OF A MAN

To know the things of a man, we cannot depend upon our mind. To know a man, we need our spirit. First Corinthians 2:11a says that only the spirit of man can know the things of a man. If we do not know how to exercise our spirit, we cannot know people. To know people, we have to exercise our spirit. A person may come to us and speak something to us, but if we merely understand him with our mind according to his word, we will be cheated. We have to exercise our spirit to know his spirit and his intention behind his word.

PERCEIVING THINGS IN OUR SPIRIT

We also need to perceive things in our spirit (Mark 2:8a, KJV). To observe things according to our sight and understanding is not the real perceiving. The proper perceiving is to see through things and to know things thoroughly by exercising our spirit.

PURPOSING IN OUR SPIRIT

Paul purposed in his spirit (Acts 19:21a). We may think that to purpose or make a decision is always by using our will. But we must purpose and make decisions in our spirit. Then we are spiritual men.

JUDGING A PERSON IN OUR SPIRIT

First Corinthians 5 tells us that Paul judged a sinful one in the church in Corinth in his spirit (vv. 3-5a). We should not judge anyone superficially according to our feeling or understanding. We have to judge people in our spirit.

BEING A PERSON IN OUR SPIRIT

We need to be a person in our spirit. John says that he was in spirit on the Lord’s Day (Rev. 1:10). To be a person in our spirit needs much exercise.

EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT BY DOING THE ABOVEMENTIONED THINGS

To exercise our spirit we have to do all the abovementioned things. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1979, vol. 1, “Basic Lessons on Life,” pp. 590-595*)