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THE SAINTS' DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF GOD

IN THE IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Scripture Reading: *Psa. 90—92*

The Psalms, the most difficult book in the Bible to read and understand, is divided into five books. Book 1 is composed of Psalms 1 through 41; Book 2, of Psalms 42 through 72; Book 3, of Psalms 73 through 89; Book 4, of Psalms 90 through 106; and Book 5, of Psalms 107 through 150. The division of the Psalms into these five books is not according to chronological order, that is, it is not according to the time of writing. Neither is the arrangement of the books according to the nature of the teaching found in these books. In each book there are psalms that are a mixture of the revelation concerning Christ and the complex sentiments of the psalmists, sentiments that are according to the writers' thought regarding good and evil.

In this message we come to Book 4, which, like Book 3, has seventeen psalms. The seventeen psalms in Book 4 are in three categories. Psalms 90—92 are in one category; Psalms 93—101 are in a second category; and Psalms 102—106 are in a third category. It is hard to say how the Psalms were divided into five books, but we can be sure that this arrangement was not made by the human mind. Of course, certain persons made the arrangement, but the Spirit was also involved. As the Lord showed us during our study of the Psalms in 1969, the five books of the Psalms were divided by the Spirit according to four crucial words: Christ, house, city, earth.

Although Psalm 1 is on the law, in Psalm 2 the psalmist turns from the law to Christ. In verse 7 we have Jehovah's decree concerning His Son: "You are My Son;/Today I have begotten You." This indicates that God does not care for the law but for His Son, Christ. In Psalm 27:4 we have a word concerning the house: "One thing I have 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." Psalm 36:8 speaks of being saturated with the fatness of God's house and of drinking of the river of His pleasures, for with Him is the fountain of life (v. 9a). Psalm 46:4a says, "There is

a river whose streams gladden the city of God." In Psalm 48 we find expressions such as "the city of our God" (v. 1) and "the city of the great King" (v. 2). In Psalm 72, the last Psalm in Book 2, we have a word about the earth. Verse 8 declares, "He will have dominion from sea to sea/And from the River unto the ends of the earth." Psalm 89, the last psalm in Book 3, unveils Christ as the unique Possessor of the whole earth. Therefore, in the Psalms we see Christ, the house, the city, and the earth.

In this message, entitled "The Saints' Deeper Experience of God in the Identification with Christ," we will consider Psalms 90 through 92. As we read these psalms, we need to seek what they reveal about the deeper experience of God and about the identification with Christ.

Psalm 90 opens with a word concerning God as our dwelling place: "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place/In all generations." To be sure, the Bible is the only book that tells us that God can be our dwelling place. Psalm 42:1 speaks of panting after God as a hart pants after streams of water. In preaching the gospel, we may tell others that they can drink, eat, and breathe the Lord Jesus, but have you ever told others that they can dwell in the Lord? Dwelling in the Lord is deeper than drinking Him. Many of us, after coming into the church life, can testify of drinking, eating, and breathing Christ, but have you ever had the thought of dwelling in Christ?

Psalms is not a book on good and evil. Psalms is a book on Christ—a book on drinking Christ, eating Christ, breathing Christ, and dwelling in Christ. Christ is the living water to quench our thirst. In Psalm 36 the river of God's pleasures is for our drinking, and the fatness of God's house is for our eating. We can drink, eat, and breathe the Lord. Now in Psalm 90 we see that we can also dwell in the Lord.

Psalm 90 was written by Moses, the one who gave the law with all the statutes and ordinances. In verse 1 this lawgiver, who was quite old, proclaimed that God is our dwelling place in all generations. Then in verse 2 he went on to say, "Before the mountains were brought forth,/And before You produced the earth and the world,/Indeed from eternity to eternity, You are God." This was a new thought, something altogether

unprecedented. Have you ever considered this matter of God's being our dwelling place?

From my youth I was taught by Bible teachers regarding the abiding in Christ mentioned in John 15. The Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me and I in you" (v. 4a). At that time I understood the word "abide" as meaning to stay or to remain, not to dwell. But eventually I learned that the Greek word translated "abide" means not simply to remain but also to dwell. To abide in Christ is to dwell in Him, not just remain or stay in Him. When we dwell in our house, we have our life and our living there. This means that our life and living are altogether wrapped up with our dwelling place. We spend more money on our house than on anything else. Some people really love their house and all the furniture in it. Furthermore, our house indicates the kind of person we are. In Scotland, for example, the people are known for the excellent way they care for their houses.

According to Moses' word in Psalm 90:1, our house, our dwelling place, is the Triune God as our Lord. Dwelling in God is the deeper experience of God. When we experience the Triune God to the degree that we take Him as our dwelling place, we have the deeper experience of God.

As we have indicated, Psalms 90 through 92 are about the saints' deeper experience of God in the identification with Christ. We have seen that the deeper experience of God is to dwell in God, but what is revealed in these psalms concerning the identification with Christ? To answer this question we need to read 91:9: "You have made Jehovah, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, Your habitation." Moses, the writer of Psalm 90, took Jehovah as his dwelling place, and the writer of Psalm 91 did the same thing. Verses 11 and 12 indicate that "You" and "Your" in verse 9 refer to Christ. These verses are quoted in Matthew 4:6 and applied to Christ. This reveals that not only Moses took God as his dwelling place, but even the Lord Jesus, while He was on earth, took God the Father as His habitation. Moses, the lawgiver, and Christ, the grace-giver, were the same in taking God as their dwelling place, as their habitation.

To take God as our habitation, our dwelling place, is the highest and fullest experience of God. To take God as our dwelling place is to experience Him to the fullest extent. Probably no one among us would dare to say that he dwells in God all the time. But this is what

Christ did. When He was living His human life on earth, He continually took God the Father as His habitation.

To be identified with Christ is to be identified with Him not only in His death, in His resurrection, and in His ascension but also in His taking God as His habitation. We are identified with Christ to such an extent. A number of good books have been written on our identification with Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension. Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasized the identification with Christ in His death; T. Austin-Sparks, the identification with Christ in His resurrection; and Brother Nee, the identification with Christ in His ascension. If we would be identified with Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension, we need to abide in Christ. If we do not abide in Christ, we are separated from Him and thus are not identified with Him. The only way that we can be identified with Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension is to abide in Christ, and to abide in Christ is not only to remain in Him but also to dwell in Him, taking Him as our everything.

To dwell in our house means that we have our living there in many different ways. For instance, I eat my meals at home, sitting in my comfortable seat at the dining table. Likewise, to dwell in God is to have our living in God. Often we speak about eating Christ, but we need to see that when we eat Christ, we should be dwelling in Him.

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Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for the blending and one accord among the saints
- Pray for the burden how to raise up spiritual children at home
- Pray for YP that they will be companions with one another to pursue the Lord together.
- Pray for the English-speaking testimony and gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- For daily exercise in GOW training: prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth and attend Lord's day meeting on time.

Announcement

- Morning Revival: Crystallization study of Psalms Message 16.
- YP Bible reading: Correspondence Course for Gospel of John
- Prayer meeting Tuesday (2/28) at bro. Liu's place 14020 Shadow Oaks Way, Saratoga ◦
- Spring YP retreat 3/16 ~ 18, sister Conference 4/13~14, Bible Camp 6/18~22, SST for YP 7/22~27, please sanctify the week.