

Exercising The Spirit

Scripture Reading:

Hymn: 866

- Prov. 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.
- 1 Tim. 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- 2 Tim. 1:6-7 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. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

I. Knowing our human spirit:

- A. Our spirit is the lamp of the Lord, searching all our inward parts—Prov. 20:27.
- B. Our spirit is the hidden man of the heart—1 Pet. 3:4.
- C. Our regenerated spirit is our inner man—Eph. 3:16.

II. Knowing the need of our human spirit:

- A. Our spirit needing to be stirred up—Ezra 1:1, 5; cf. Exo. 35:21.
- B. Our spirit needing to be burning—Rom. 12:11; Acts 18:25.
- C. Our spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit needing to be the faculty of our prayer—Eph. 6:18.
- D. Our spirit needing to be the means of our worship—John 4:24.
- E. Our spirit needing to take the lead in enjoying the Lord—Luke 1:46-47.
- F. Our spirit needing to take the initiative in spiritual ministry—1 Cor. 14:32.

III. Exercising our human spirit—1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:7; 4:22:

- A. Exercise being a strong term used in the New Testament—1 Tim. 4:7:
 - 1. Exercising ourselves unto godliness—1 Tim. 4:7-8:
 - a. Bodily exercise profiting for a little.
 - b. Godliness being profitable for all things.
 - 2. Exercising unto godliness by exercising our spirit with which the Lord is—1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:7; 4:22.
- B. Fanning our spirit into flame—2 Tim. 1:6-7:
 - 1. God having given us not a spirit of cowardice, but of power, love, and sobermindedness.
 - 2. Our spirit being surrounded by the three parts of the soul—mind, emotion, and will:
 - a. Our will should be strong, full of power.
 - b. Our emotion should love people, full of love.
 - c. Our mind should be sober, full of sobermindedness.
- C. Setting our mind on the spirit—Rom. 8:5-6:
 - 1. Our mind set on the flesh is death.
 - 2. Our mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- D. Discerning our spirit and soul—Heb. 4:12:

IV. The way to exercise the spirit:

- A. Exercising the spirit by calling on the name of the Lord.
- B. Exercising the spirit by pray-reading the Word of God.
- C. Exercising the spirit by praying.
- D. Exercising the spirit by changing of organ.
- E. Exercising the spirit by seeking the truth.
- F. Exercising the spirit by walking according to the Spirit—Rom. 8:4-6; Gal. 5:16, 25:
 - 1. Learning to sense the Spirit.
 - 2. Walking according to the inner life and peace.

Referenced Books: *The Basic Lessons on Life*, Lessons 17-18; *Our Human Spirit*, Chapter 10; *The Four Crucial Elements—Christ, The Spirit, Life, and the Church*,

Chapter 7; *The Spirit with Our Spirit*, published in Chinese but not in English, Chapter 8.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

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 hearts. 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 hearts.

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. (*The Basic Lessons on Life*, p. 135.)

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. (*The Basic Lessons on Life*, p. 136.)

In the New Testament there are a number of seeming contradictions. Actually, of course, they are not contradictions. On the one hand, the New Testament reveals that we should not have our own works. We should not do things in ourselves either to participate in God's blessing or to accomplish something for God's purpose. But on the other hand, the New Testament uses a strong word such as *exercise*. In Colossians Paul said that he labored, toiled, fought, and struggled in an agonizing way (1:29; 2:1). These words are stronger words showing something which is very difficult to do. We all need to see these two aspects. Our not doing anything means that we should not do anything by our flesh, by ourselves, or by our natural life. But on the positive side, we have to labor, to travail, and to struggle in our spirit. Actually, the exercise of our spirit comprises and implies all these words: labor, toil, struggle, wrestle, and fight.

Today whatever we do positively in our spirit is a kind of exercise. The word in Greek for *exercise* is the basis of the English word *gymnastics*. To participate in gymnastics, one must use all of his energy to exercise his whole physical being. We must exercise our spirit in the

same way. The whole environment around us does not help us to exercise. It has an intention to keep us down. The whole situation does not help us to go on to labor. It helps us to be lazy; helps us to be backsliding. It is a downhill current. The downhill current helps us go down. Actually, the current carries you. But if you go uphill, you have to exercise, and you have to struggle. (*The Basic Lessons on Life*, p. 142.)

Walking according to the Spirit

The Christian walk is a walk according to spirit (Rom. 8:4) which is our spirit mingled with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). We have seen that we can know this spirit by sensing the different aspects of life, peace, or death. Whatever we do, whatever we say, we have to do it and say it by the spirit, not by the soul or by the flesh. Whatever we do, we must turn to the Lord. Some Christians may think to turn to the Lord means to turn to the heavens, but to turn to the Lord in our experience is to turn to our spirit because the Lord is in our spirit. This means to set our mind on the spirit (Rom. 8:6). To set our mind on the spirit means to turn ourselves to the Lord. We must turn away from the flesh, away from reason, away from sickness, and away from troubles. Even Bible knowledge and teaching could be a distraction from which we must turn away. Day by day we have been distracted from our spirit by many outward things.

To love your wife is not wrong, but good. To consider the Bible teachings and seek after knowledge is good, but in our love, consideration, and seeking, we are mostly independent from the Lord. We set our mind, which represents our self, on so many things other than the Lord Himself in our spirit. We mostly either do things by the soul or by the flesh, not by the spirit. We all must learn this practice: whatever happens to us, we must turn ourselves to the Lord. This means to turn to the spirit. On the one hand, I deny my natural and independent mind, emotion, and will, which is my self. On the other hand, I learn to sense the spirit. I only do things when I sense that I have the inner life and peace. To do this is to exercise the spirit. We all must practice to walk according to spirit in this way. (*Our Human Spirit*, pp. 70-71.)

The Secrets of Exercising Our Spirit

One of the secrets of exercising our spirit is to call on the name of the Lord. We may consider calling on the name of the Lord as the best secret of exercising our spirit. For example, the secret of exercising our feet is to walk. For walking, we use our feet; for seeing, we use our eyes; for hearing, we use our ears; and for praying, we use our spirit. Whenever we pray, we need to use our spirit. Some may have the feeling that when they pray they are often in their mind and not in their spirit. Praying in spirit requires much exercise. This may be likened to a child learning to walk. Before he can walk, he must first learn to crawl and later to stand. After he can stand, then he learns to walk. Once he learns to walk, he no longer needs to crawl or hold on to something. Perhaps when you first start to pray, you are in your mind; but after much practice in praying, you will gradually be in spirit. After further practice, you will reach a point that whenever you pray, you pray in your spirit and with your spirit. Prayer is not just for petitioning God but even more for contacting and fellowshiping with God. Therefore, the best way to pray is to call on the name of the Lord. The Bible even tells us to pray unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17). The only way to pray unceasingly is to call on the name of the Lord.

Besides praying, we need to read the Bible. Reading the Bible is not for gaining more knowledge and doctrines but for receiving spiritual supply. The Bible contains profound truths that are not for the believers' objective knowledge but for their subjective experience. To dive into these profound truths, we need to use our spirit because the Lord said that His words are spirit and are life (John 6:63). To touch the spirit in the Lord's words, we need to

use our spirit. When we use our spirit, we dive into these profound truths, which are able to help open up our prayers, making them more penetrating and richer. Whether our prayers are deep and rich depends totally upon our knowledge of the truth.

Therefore, there are two secrets of exercising our spirit: prayer and pursuing the truth. These two matters complement each other. We must pray, and we must also dive into the truth. Praying can help us get into the truth. The more we get into the truth, the deeper and richer our experiences will be. Even the sense we have when calling on the name of the Lord becomes deep, rich, and weighty. In this way our taste and feeling for the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be very different from that in the past. (*The Four Crucial Elements—Christ, The Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 109-110.)

Questions:

1. Please describe your understanding of the human spirit according to the Bible?
2. What is the need of the human spirit?
3. According to the Bible, why must Christians exercise the spirit?
4. How does one exercise the spirit?