

**THE LIVING NEEDED
FOR THE CHURCH LIFE
IN A PROPER AND HEALTHY
LOCAL CHURCH**

By Titus Chu

**A HEALTHY LOCAL CHURCH
MUST BE ON THE GROUND OF LOCALITY**

Being a local church in practice requires three extremely crucial things. Brothers, if you don't have these three things, you are not a healthy local church. The first matter is the local ground. What is the ground? The ground is the site. The site is the location for the building. Do you know what makes a building precious? A building is precious firstly because it has a site, and the site is the ground. The ground must be correct before there can be a proper building.

Sometimes we pay attention to building before we have paid attention to the site. The Lord realized however that if you want a builded-up church, then that builded-up church must be on a proper site. What is that site? The site is the locality. Every local church is built in a locality, which is according to the city government. For instance, the city of New York is one site. Yet they may say, "We have 8 million people! We have many boroughs." Well, it doesn't matter how many boroughs you have and how many people you have. For each city government, there should only be one church. The city of Detroit has only one church. It is the same for the city of Wixom. One city, one church. So we must build on the right site with a healthy desire to bear the Lord's testimony.

A HEALTHY LOCAL CHURCH WILL HAVE THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BODY

Secondly, a local church must have the fellowship of the Body. No local church is independent. For instance, suppose a leading brother in one locality would call the leading brother in another locality so that those churches might have some fellowship. That second brother may be reluctant, thinking it would occupy two evenings. He may say, “We love you brothers very much, but don’t you know that we are a church too? It would be better if I call you based on our schedule.” This sounds funny, but think about it. Is this legally right or wrong? Legally it is right, because no local church is bigger or greater than the other local church. So every local church has to honor other local churches. But for some reason, right or not, you know something is wrong. What is wrong? They have missed the opportunity for the fellowship of the Body.

For example, think about our physical body. The good part with our body is that all the “members” love one another. And these members do not make issues, they just love one another and care for one another. Occasionally though, some members become a problem. For instance, a toenail might become painful. You get bothered, so what should you do? Let me tell you the secret. Take a knife, and cut it off!! If a finger gets painful and causes you to not sleep well, cut it off! When the next finger is painful, cut it off!! After all the ten fingers are gone and the hand gets painful, cut it off!! Have you ever met someone dumb enough to do that?? Probably not. But for some reason, Christians often do that. Christians like to cut people off because they give them headaches. “I’m going to get rid of you!” Do you know what that is? That indicates you do not see the Body. If you see the Body, then you realize that in practicing the church life, all the churches should desire fellowship with other churches, and the individual members should desire fellowship with one another.

A HEALTHY LOCAL CHURCH MUST HAVE HEALTHY TEACHING

Then the third matter is that every healthy church life must have healthy teaching. This is a big topic. What are the healthy teachings? How can we define healthy teaching? This is hard to expound in a few minutes, but to have a basic understanding we must realize five things: the healthy teaching is the teaching of Christ, the healthy teaching is the apostles' teaching, the healthy teaching is the present speaking of the Lord, a healthy teaching is the anointed teaching, and the healthy teaching builds up the Body of Christ. Always remember these five things. When people ask you whether or not your local church has the proper teaching, remember these five things. Is this teaching the teaching of Christ? Is this teaching the apostles' teaching? Is this teaching the present speaking of the Lord, the Lord's speaking at this time? Is this teaching anointed, and does this teaching build up the Body of Christ?

For instance, I am speaking now. If you were to study me, you might ask, "What is he teaching? Is his teaching one with the teaching of Christ?" I think most Christians will have no problem with that. But then you ask further, "Is what he is teaching the apostles' teaching?" You may even have to ask, what is the apostles' teaching? The apostles' teaching is the teaching according to the whole New Testament, the complete New Testament. In other words, it is the teaching with a view. It is what the Bible says, but with a view. Then thirdly, is this teaching a present speaking, the speaking that can meet the need of the saints? You know something, a lot of teaching may be "right", but you know it's not the Lord's present speaking. But even with the present speaking there should be rich anointing. It cannot be very dry, just something you read or heard others say.

Let me illustrate this way. We printed a little journal called the *Fellowship Journal*. In the first issue we included a CD which was a reading of the articles in that journal. We thought that the saints would enjoy listening while they were driving in their cars. But one brother called me. His word was very interesting.

Firstly, he said, not all the saints have CD players. Secondly, the CD was merely a reading of the articles in the journal and not the original speaking of the message given. I asked him, “What is the difference?” The brother’s answer was interesting. He said, “When we are listening to the original message we are anointed, we are inspired, we are empowered, but when we are listening to this CD, it just seems we know what’s going on but we don’t feel the anointing. Rather we feel somewhat indoctrinated.” Have you experienced this? But when we are under the healthy teaching, one that is anointed, we will say, “Lord thank you, I have your presence, I’m nourished, I’m fed, I see some light.” So, the healthy teaching must be the teaching of Christ, it must be the apostles’ teaching, it must be with the present speaking, and it must bring us anointing. Finally, a healthy teaching will build up the Body. The more such teaching is ministered, the more the saints are built up. The end result of the teaching must be the building up of the Body of Christ.

Allow me to testify. Do you understand what I mean by “present teaching”? You don’t prepare for the message. The message comes out from you. A prepared message may not have the Lord’s presence, and may not necessarily be the present speaking. An overly prepared message may not be anointed. Regarding this mornings message I’d like to testify to you. I began to open the Bible and look over some places. I asked, “Brothers, will these verses be okay?” So, have I prepared? You ask, “Didn’t you prepare this?” I would answer, “No.” “Then where did you get it?” You brothers gave it to me. Without you brothers I wouldn’t have it. As we are fellowshiping about the healthy teaching, I wrote down C on the board (for Christ’s teaching), then the A came out (for apostles’ teaching). Then as I wrote the A, P came out (for present teaching). When I wrote P, another A came out (for anointing). Finally B came out (for building up). So C A P A B. Hallelujah! What is the healthy teaching? The teaching of Christ, the apostles’ teaching, the present speaking, the anointed speaking and the speaking that is for the building up of the Body of Christ.

The present teaching must be the teaching that is able to meet the need of the saints today, so that the saints can enjoy it today, and it becomes nourishing to the saints today. Furthermore, when you minister, it cannot be doctrine. It must be divine speaking. What is divine speaking? The speaking that is anointed. It has to be speaking with the anointing of the Lord and released with the building up of the Body in view. Satan himself is very busy, but with a different view. His view is to destroy the testimony of the Lord, and for this he is doing a lot. So we should realize that it's not a matter of how busy we are. It's not a matter of how much we labor or even how well we speak. Rather, it is a matter of whether or not the church is built up. Sometimes young sisters give some simple testimonies. I wish you all could learn this. When they stand up and give a simple testimony, then what happens? The church is built up. As a contrast, sometimes saints may shout and do a lot, but the result is that the church loses its harmony. We must be careful. If the teaching does not build up the saints, the teaching will divide the body.

THE LIVING NEEDED FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love.

— *Ephesians 4:1-2*

Now, for us to consider the practical church life, I would like to read the verses in Ephesians 4. If you have the *Recovery Version* you will notice there is an outline written by Brother Witness Lee which points out the practicality. The heading reads, "The Living and Responsibility Needed for the Church." Here is the church life and the church living. How do we live out the church life? There are at least three crucial points.

Ephesians 4:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called.” This refers to something related to our life. What should characterize this life? He continues, “With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love.” The Apostle Paul gives us the key. What is the secret of the church life? The secret of the church life is this: concerning yourself, be low; concerning the saints, be meek; and concerning the growth of the saints, be long-suffering. These three matters are crucial.

With all Lowliness and Meekness

Who is low? I tell you, people are funny. Either we feel we are nobody or we think we are on top of everybody. Very few people know that the secret of the church life is lowliness. What is lowliness? It means you are in a place of learning. You are a learner. A learner is a lower person. Perhaps when an elder is here you become very low, but when the high-schoolers are here, you suddenly become very high. However, the secret of the church life is to always be low, to always be one willing to learn.

Then more than this, we must realize that the church life comes with meekness. Possessing meekness causes you to not insist and to have no ability to attack. In the church life it is sometimes too easy for us to insist and too easily we attack. By all this the church life cannot go on. So to ourselves, we are very low, with lowliness. To the brothers, we are very meek.

You know brothers, in the church life as we interact with others, we all are tested. There may be many things about me that offend you, and there may be many things about you that offend me. Do you know what we need? Meekness. A meek person will have a proper way of being with others unlike himself. We might be so different, but when there is the outflow of love, the expression of that is called meekness. Eventually we can be with others just like we are with our spouse, just like we are with our children, or with our aged parents. The church life needs to be a living with meekness.

With Long-Suffering

The secret of the church life is with yourself, be low, the lower the better. You shouldn't have a thought, "I've read all these books. Have you read them??" You see, what kind of spirit is this? Sometimes brothers have gone to a conference or training and when they returned began to challenge everybody, "You don't know..., you don't know...." At that time I had a lot of sympathy to them because this kind of challenging just shows immaturity. They are young, so what do you expect? But I really had the feeling, oh, there's a lot of growth needed. Now this is where long-suffering is needed. We have to realize that when we see something in others, and we may even see a lot, the more we see, the more we need to exercise long-suffering. Otherwise the church life will be filled with issues. With each one of us, growth is needed. That growth takes time and in the process of growth, the one who nourishes us, the one who cherishes us, is the one who suffers. Long-suffering is the secret.

You know brothers, with every saint's growth there is a suffering. As you are helping others to grow, you suffer. "Brother, pray." You may both feel, "eeerrgh." "Brother read the Bible," again "eeerrgh." "Brother, are you in the morning revival?" "eeerrgh." "Can we go out and preach the gospel?" "eeerrgh." Brothers, do you have such groaning within yet? If no groaning, that means you have not yet been in the church life. You are only playing the church. The church is merely your entertainment. If you are really in the church life, you would say, "Oh Lord Jesus, I am low. When I am with saints, I become very meek. When I labor for the saints to grow, I have long-suffering." Sometimes just the little contact I might have with a brother causes me to realize lowness, meekness and long-suffering.

Keep the Oneness of the Spirit

Following this, Paul continued with three things. The first is in verses 3 and 4: "Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace: One Body and one Spirit." Here

Paul mentions something very interesting. We are talking about the practical church life, and the church life is actually the body life. Since it is the “body life” we would expect Paul to stress the oneness in the body life. But Paul doesn’t teach us the oneness of the Body. He teaches us the oneness of the Spirit. It’s very interesting. Actually let me tell you something in a simple way. I don’t recall one place in the Bible that teaches us to keep the oneness of the Body. Why? The oneness of the Body comes out of the oneness of the Spirit. Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit will produce the uniting bond of peace. Brother Lee was very strong regarding this. The oneness is inward and not outward. The oneness of the Spirit is a fact.

What does the Bible show us? We shouldn’t focus on the oneness of the Body, because if the oneness of the Body is stressed, that means the real oneness is gone already. Let us suppose there is a family where the brothers and sisters are really one. They could have a lot of varieties, a lot of differences, but let’s suppose they are extremely one. This is because they have one life. But now suppose they all try to walk the same way, left, right, left, right. You know there is something wrong. Why do you know there is something wrong? Because that oneness is merely oneness of action. As members of the Body of Christ, we will never have only the same action. Rather, we have the same life, the same Spirit. Out of the same Spirit we keep the oneness of the Spirit and we manifest this one Body.

In the Uniting Bond of Peace

The Bible here says that we keep the oneness in the uniting bond of peace. What does that mean, “uniting bond of peace”? It means, do not make any issues. Don’t try to correct. Don’t try to improve. Rather stand with the saints in long-suffering, waiting for their growth for the Body to be built up. This is the uniting bond of peace.

THE GIFT OF CHRIST MUST BE PERFECTED

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore the Scripture says “Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men.”

— *Ephesians 4:7-8*

The Greek word used for “gift” in Ephesians 4:7 is *dorea*, and it means the gift of life. Every regenerated one enjoys the gift of life. However, the word used for gift in 4:8 is *doma*, and it indicates a constituted gift. These two verses use two different Greek words. One is *dorea*, meaning the gift of life. Therefore, if you are saved, you are gifted. Since you are regenerated, you are gifted. Because you are a member of the Body, you are gifted. But the next verse, which tells us that the Lord ascended and gave gifts to men, uses the Greek word *doma*. Since this Greek word ends with “-ma”, this indicates or describes that it is the result of a process. *Doma* comes from *dorea*. *Dorea* means you have the gift of life. *Doma* means there is a constitution of life within you and you become a gift to the body.

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose two of us, a young brother and I, stand side by side. We are very different, aren't we? But are we both gifted? What do you mean, he is gifted and I am gifted? How can you say this brother and I are equal? But the Bible does say every Christian is gifted. He is gifted. I am gifted. We both have *dorea*. We both have the divine life. But in order for the church to be built up, when we practice the church life, *dorea* is not enough. *Dorea* needs *doma*. Life and the riches of life must become that person's constitution. Why has the Lord kept us on this earth? Don't say, “So that we can retire and play more golf in Florida.” That is nonsense. Even don't say, “Because we are supposed to live longer.” Many of us are a brother of *dorea*, very rich in *dorea*. But this *dorea* has to become *doma*. If one day you become a “Brother *Doma*,” I will be so happy. Then you are no longer merely a person with gift, but rather you become a gift to others. Hallelujah! Twenty years ago you were “Brother *Dorea*,” and now you have become “Brother

Doma.” How wonderful!! Today so many brothers in every aspect have the potential to become Brother Doma. They are talented, they are very sincere to the Lord, they pursue, so in every way this dorea is growing into doma, from a person with the gift of life, to becoming a gift of constitution. It is in this way they will become a blessing to the Body.

We must realize this in order to practice the church life. We all need to grow. Because of this, verse 12 says, “For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.” The doma, or constituted persons existence, is for the perfecting of the saints. We all need to be perfected. I tell you, even with the human life there is the need to be perfected. There may be many persons with potential, but some will be perfected and some will never get the perfection. Once the perfection is there, then the talent, the ability, whatever is given by God, all become manifested. Since even the human life is like this, how about the spiritual life? We all have dorea, but this dorea needs to be perfected unto the work of one ministry. We are healthy when we realize that we are gifted and need to be perfected. We should pray, “Lord, perfect me.”

WALK IN LOVE, EVEN AS CHRIST ALSO LOVED US

Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

— *Ephesians 5:1-2*

Now, for our practice of the church life we need one more point. The Lord has produced the church, and now we are in the church life. How do we live in the church life? Paul said, “Walk in love.” This love can never be doctrinal though. It is too easy for us to greet a brother, “Praise the Lord!! Amen, brother! Hallelujah. I’m so happy you are here. I love you. Now go have your lunch.” Don’t laugh. This is how we often practice the church life. Did we lie when we said we love that brother? No;

we really do love that brother. But there is one thing: he lives his life and we live our life. Do we love each other? Yes. Are we for each other? Yes. But we all care only for our own interests.

You know our problem in the church life? We merely tell people, “God bless you.” We hardly practice, I bless you. How many times have we told different people, “God bless you!” We don’t need this kind of thing. God blesses us for sure, but the greater blessing comes in the same way that Christ blessed the church. How did Christ bless His church? He loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice. In the church life, as the saints love the Lord and desire to follow the Lord, all kinds of turmoil will be there, all kinds of environments are there, even all kinds of situations come. At these times it is not adequate to say, “The Lord be with you.” Rather, we must ask ourselves, “Am I willing to offer myself as an offering and sacrifice so that he can be profited?” That is the secret of the love in the church life. We love one another, and praise the Lord that we love one another, but this love is not a slogan. When you love the brothers healthily you would say, “For my brothers’ sake I would like to be an offering and a sacrifice so that they can receive the proper growth.”

So brothers, I want to repeat these three things to you. Firstly, for the church life, concerning your person, be with lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering. In practicing the church life, keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. Don’t talk about different things. Don’t make issues. Even the things the Lord spoke to you directly, you may need to let that be between you and the Lord. Don’t cause disharmony in the local church life. Then secondly tell the Lord, “Lord, I have *dorea*, now let me be perfected, so that in being perfected I can become a *doma*, a real blessing to the church.” And thirdly, love the brothers just as the Lord loves us. When I say, “I love my brothers,” that means I live for my brothers, I’ll die for my brothers, I’ll pay a price for my brothers, my existence is for my brothers, and my operations are for my brothers. May this word become the regulating and encouraging element so that the church life can become so healthy.

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