



*Oneness*  
AND THE  
*One Accord*

*Titus Chu*

Oneness & the One Accord  
by Titus Chu

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## PREFACE

Oneness. One accord. These are terms commonly used among us, but what do they really mean? What is oneness? What is its source? What is the significance of oneness and one accord in our Christian life and church life? How can we know if we have the genuine oneness, and how can we live in one accord?

This book, composed of messages given by our brother Titus Chu in Cleveland, Ohio, in September and October of 2002, sheds light on these matters.

In the beginning oneness had everything to do with God and His economy. Oneness existed in the Triune God and now has been enlarged through Christ into His mystical Body. The Lord prayed for the organic oneness in John 17. We see the fulfillment of this prayer in the early church life, manifested in the saints living in one accord in their prayer, continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and breaking bread from house to house with exultation and simplicity of heart.

The practical oneness and one accord are addressed in the epistles of Paul. Romans shows that the living in one accord is an issue of organic salvation. First Corinthians reminds us of our need to honor the Lord's servants who are exercising the one unique ministry. In Ephesians we are exhorted to endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. Philippians gives us an illustration of a healthy church life that lives out the reality of oneness between the saints and the Lord's servant by living in purity and joyfulness focused on the pursuing of Christ. Finally, in Colossians, we are charged to hold Christ as our Head, the One in whom is life and vitality and all that is necessary for us to live out the organic oneness of the Body.

May the Lord use this book to encourage us in our keeping of the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Our prayerful hope is that the Lord will gain an expression of His one Body issuing out of the oneness of the Spirit.



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## CHAPTER ONE

# **THE UNIQUE GOD AS THE GOD OF ONENESS AND HIS ONE ECONOMY**

### **AN INTRODUCTORY WORD**

Today there are many different kinds of problems among people. Everyone has his own view and understanding, and therefore, problems arise. There are problems in the family, on the job, within us, and in the church life. We may have problems with the young generation in the church or with the elders. Why do we have all these problems? As we will see, these all have to do with the matter of oneness.

### **THE ONE UNIQUE GOD AS THE GOD OF ONENESS**

To be one, and to have oneness, is a very profound matter. Oneness is so high, beyond our human understanding or concept. We may have our concept of oneness and one accord and may even joyfully abide in oneness and stand in one accord, until some element creeps in to destroy it. We may not have realized how fine, high, and precise it is to have one accord and oneness. It is so because it is of God Himself. One accord is difficult to realize, difficult to substantiate, and even more difficult to live out. Those who have been in the church life for a few years realize that it is difficult to be in one accord in the workplace, in the family life, and

even in the church life. Why? This is because one accord is according to oneness. If we have the genuine oneness, then there is the one accord automatically. As we shall see in this chapter, oneness issues out from the one unique God, the God of oneness.

### **One in His Existence**

In the whole universe there is only one unique God. He is the God of oneness. Genesis 1:1 begins, “In the beginning God....” This indicates that there is only one unique God. In the beginning we have God, not Gods. However, the Hebrew word for God is *Elohim*, a plural noun. Although a singular verb is used with this noun, the word for God is plural. In English, the Hebrew phrase would read, “We am.” How could this be? It is because in His existence, in eternity, God is not only the unique God; He is also the God of oneness.

Brothers and sisters, we have to realize that until this is understood, oneness and one accord will never be ours. There is only one God, but in Him are three hypostases—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. He is not three gods, but one unique God. When we say we love the Father, we also love the Son and the Spirit. When we say we enjoy the Spirit, we also enjoy the Father and the Son. This is like a cup with three handles. Whatever handle you take, you will end up with the same cup. An interesting matter is that the three never fight. When you enjoy the Spirit, the Father does not become jealous. When you begin to call, “Oh Lord Jesus!” the Spirit doesn’t get angry. The Father is not upset that the Son receives glory and honor. The Spirit does not say that without Him nothing works.

In the church life it is easy for us to get upset. We sometimes find ourselves in the realm of questioning who is right and who is wrong. We consider who said something right and who said something wrong, or who is ministering and who is not. But have you realized there is only one unique God? This unique One is a God of oneness.



### **One in Operation**

God is a God of oneness. In existence He is one, but what about His operation? God is trying to do something. He is operational to accomplish His economy. In His operation He said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . . . And God created man in His own image” (Gen. 1:26-27). This is interesting. Man was made “in Our image” and “in Our likeness.” Then the Bible says that God created man “in His own image.” God declared, “Let Us.” At the same time God created man “in His own image.” It says “Us,” because God is Triune. It says “His image,” because in creation we were made according to Christ. This shows that the one unique God operates as the God of oneness.

God is so one, and this oneness is in the heart of God. If we would say, “Lord Jesus, we want to be divinely one,” God would say, “Be one as We are.” How impressive it is that the Father is one with the Son, and the Son is one with the Spirit. How impressive that the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. The one unique God operates as the God of oneness. Even in operation, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as the one unique God, do the same thing. The unique Triune God has only one operation. He as the God of oneness desires that this oneness become the reality of all the saints.

### **One in Purpose**

In His purpose, God created man in His image. Yet the Bible says, “Male and female He created them.” Do you realize how profound God is? The one unique God, as the God of oneness, created man. But in our understanding, there are all kinds of men, all kinds of cultures, all kinds of languages, and other differences. God, however, sees us as one man. Therefore Genesis 1:27 states, “In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” “Him” is “them.” This indicates that the one unique God, as the God of oneness, desires only one incorporated, organic entity.

If we look at one thousand saints gathered together in one conference room, we can count one thousand individuals according to their individual living. But we can also say that there is only one man according to the new creation. In God's creation it was the same. He created only one, yet when He created only one, He created male and female. He created them. Why? This is because God desires one incorporated organic entity as His testimony and enlargement.

### **TEN VIRTUES OF THIS ONENESS**

Oneness is everything to God and to His economy. He is one yet three. He created many, yet one. He cares primarily for the matter of oneness. If a brother can be one with God, he can be one with the saints. A brother who is one with the Triune God can be one with the saints in the church life. In this oneness the Lord is fully satisfied. This is because the matter of oneness is everything to God and to His economy. Now we will consider ten aspects of this oneness.

#### **One Essence and One Element**

First, the one unique God, as the God of oneness, is of one unique essence and one unique element in creation, in time, and in eternity. Do we understand the difference between essence and element? It may appear that these two are the same thing. As I considered this before the Lord, I had this understanding. What is a cell? It is a basic element. What is a cell composed of? Its composition is the essence of life. Cells are the basic element for life. Only cells have the essence of life, and life cannot exist except in cells. If there were cells without life, they would be empty and die. The essence and the element can never be apart. The essence is the inward life, the inward energy. The cell is the outward element. The essence of oneness is the Triune God—a matter of Spirit. The element of oneness is Christ. With the Spirit you have the essence;

you have life. With Christ you have something solid with you.

The one unique God, as the God of oneness, is of one unique essence—Spirit—and one unique element—Christ. This is true in creation, in time, and in eternity. This will never change. In creation He was the Spirit and Christ. In time it's a matter of Spirit and Christ. In eternity it's still a matter of Spirit and Christ.

### **One Life and One Nature**

What about His person? We may ask, “God, who are You?” He is of one life and one nature. The Triune God has the same one life and same one nature.

### **One Existence and One Living**

In His being, God is of one existence and one living. The unique God has only one existence. We may not appreciate this that much. We must, however, realize that quite often our problems stem from the fact that we have a multiple existence with too many goals. We aim at too many things. So eventually oneness cannot be our reality. In God's being, He is of one existence, one living.

### **One Operation and One Purpose**

In His work, God is of one operation and for one purpose. The Triune God would tell you, “As the unique God I only have one operation, and I'm only after one purpose.”

### **One Substance and One Enlargement**

In His economy, God desires one substance and is for one enlargement. Our existence is the Father's existence, the Son's existence, and the Spirit's existence. There is one reason for our existence. God and we are doing everything today for one reason. Our existence is for His enlargement. We should not exist for many

reasons. We should not say, “I’m of the world, and I’m of the Lord. I have my future, and I love the church life. I’m with the brothers, and I’m also with my boss.” No. You only can have one existence. If you get a job, your job is for that existence. If you have a family, it is for that existence. Whatever you do is for the one existence of God’s economy. Just as God has only one existence, we also have one existence for His enlargement.

### **Applying These Ten Virtues of Oneness**

Do you understand these ten crucial matters? God has one essence and one element, with one life and one nature. He has one existence and one living, has one operation, and is for one purpose. God has one substance and one enlargement. And this oneness is Christ.

We have too many things that possess us, and we are after too many things. Speaking with a graduating college student is always interesting. The student may have many ideas and plans, but not oneness. You may ask him, “Dear brother, now that you are finishing college, what would you do?” He may reply, “I have applied to twenty different companies. If I don’t get a job, I will go to the FTTA. If the FTTA rejects me, I’ll stay in my locality and serve the Lord or become a full-timer.” Sometimes this is the reason there is little respect for a full-timer. The thought is that if no company wants you, and even the FTTA rejects you, you will become a full-timer and join the work. It is not that this thought is right or wrong, but there is something wrong with this person’s life. There is no oneness.

How many of us are so sure we are in oneness? Can we say, “I only have one essence—the Spirit. I only have one element—Christ. I only have one life to live by, with one nature. My living and my existence are one. My being is of one existence and one living. My work is of one operation and for one purpose. My economy is for one substance and one enlargement, and the totality of all this oneness is Christ Himself”? Can we tell the Lord, “Lord, I like to have

these ten ones. With these ten ones I am surely one in Christ”? Let us declare, “We have one essence, one element, one life, one nature, one existence, one living, one operation, one purpose, one substance, and one enlargement. And this oneness is Christ!” If we see this, our Christian life will become very meaningful.

In all our service and care for the saints in the church life, we must be in this oneness. Our spending and being spent for the saints should not be out of duty, but should emanate from this oneness of purpose. Why would a brother drive hours to take young people to a conference? It is because of his one essence of the Spirit’s leading. It is because of his one element of Christ. His willingness to pay a price for the saints is because he has one life and one nature. What is your existence for? We have one existence for Christ and the church. We have one operation and one purpose. What is our operation? Our operation should be to build up the church in our locality. What is our purpose? Our purpose should be that there would be a strong testimony in our city. When we come to all of these items, oneness become so real to us, and oneness is ours. We have one operation, one purpose, one substance, and also one enlargement. Eventually this very Christ is enlarged by all of us together.

In the God of oneness, we possess these ten virtues. Eventually this oneness is of Christ alone. If we depart from Christ, this oneness disappears. Again, oneness comes from Christ alone. We have a hymn that declares, “Our oneness is of Christ alone.” If we take away Christ, the oneness disappears. How can we be one with a brother? Christ. What is the oneness? Christ. We are not one according to our preferences or tastes. Our oneness is not because we are of the same race, age, or appearance. Our oneness is not because we have the same operation in the Body. No. Our oneness is the oneness of the Triune God. With the oneness of the Triune God there are these ten items. Suppose you were to ask God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, “Oh dear Triune God, how are you one?” The Triune God would tell you, “We, the Triune God, are of one essence, one element, one life, one nature,

one existence, one living, one operation, one purpose, one substance, and eventually We desire one enlargement!” We find nothing else with the Triune God. With the Triune God there is the oneness with these ten aspects, and this same oneness becomes the oneness among us.

### **THE SUBSTANTIATION OF ONENESS**

How is this oneness practically substantiated? At the time of the fall, it appeared that any hope of an expression of oneness on this earth was completely lost. But although man fell, Isaiah prophesied that a Son would be given to us, and His name would be called Mighty God and Eternal Father (Isa. 9:6). This indicates that the one unique God, as the God of oneness, would fulfill His desire through incarnation.

#### **Through Incarnation**

From the time of man’s fall, there have been six thousand years in which it seems that oneness has departed. Because of the fall, there has been a great distance between God and man. God in the heavens has been calling man on this earth, and some faithful men have been trying to follow Him, but there has still been no real oneness between God and man. However, Isaiah the prophet declared that one day a Son would be given to us, indicating that the one unique God, as the God of oneness, would fulfill His desire through incarnation. When the Son would be given, the Triune God would come. That’s why His name is called Mighty God and Eternal Father. The Son has come in incarnation as the “holy thing.”

In incarnation, the holy thing (God the Son) came by the power of the Most High (God the Father) through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). Thus the Triune God, who is the divine, mystical realm, was enlarged in the man Jesus. God as the divine, mystical realm became incarnated to be a man. In this man there is something divine. In this man there is something mystical. So this man, as the incar-

nation of the divine, mystical realm, lived a life in the divine, mystical realm on earth. This man became the first reality of oneness between God and man in essence, in element, in life, and in nature.

### **In Baptism**

In baptism, Christ proclaimed the one existence and the one living. God the Son, who took the form of fallen humanity through incarnation, terminated himself in baptism. He terminated the old creation in baptism and proclaimed the union of God and man. Then there was a testimony. The Son was baptized, the Father declared, “This is My beloved Son,” and the Spirit descended (Matt. 3:16-17). Such oneness of essence and living was exhibited on earth between God and man.

### **In Human Living**

Look at the Triune God, the unique God of oneness. This One who has one operation and one purpose is now carrying out His operation and purpose in the human living of the Son. When the Lord was on the earth, all that He did was according to the operation and purpose of the Triune God. The Son lived on the earth in full oneness with God the Father. That’s why He said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). He also cast out demons by the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28). Although it was the Son doing the work, the Father and the Spirit were also there. The Son witnessed the power of the one unique God, the God of oneness, as He was living out the human life. He also lived His human life with the desperation of producing the one universal man. He said, “I am pressed until it is accomplished” (Luke 12:50). He was ready to go to the cross so that something of God’s divine economy could be accomplished. He realized that through His death the one universal man would be produced as the enlargement of the unique God, the God of oneness.

### **In Crucifixion**

In crucifixion, Christ generated the one accomplishment by terminating all the negative things. All that was negative was taken away. The Son went to the cross with the presence of the Father (John 16:32) and offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14). In other words, when He went to cross, the eternal Spirit was with Him, and the Father was with Him.

Through the cross He terminated all the negative things. Whether we have been saved only a short time or for many years, all our negative things have been terminated. We should be so thankful that when the Lord died on the cross, all negative things were terminated. Therefore, we do not need to focus on these things anymore. They are over. All the negative things were crucified with the Lord on the cross.

### **In Resurrection**

Then finally in resurrection Christ produced the one enlargement. The Son became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45) and regenerated all the believers (1 Pet. 1:3), thus begetting the mystical Body of Christ. Now this very Triune God has become enlarged. Through resurrection, we were all brought into this enlarged divine, mystical realm. Praise the Lord for this.

Although we may have nothing in common with others by our natural being, our oneness is according to the Triune God. This is the accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ in resurrection. How marvelous that all races, languages, cultures, and all kinds of dispositions and characters were brought into resurrection life. We are one. We are really one. Our oneness is according to the ten virtues of the oneness of the Triune God. The unique God as the God of oneness became the enlarged God as the mystical Body of Christ. This oneness is beyond race, nationality, time, space, and all kinds of differences. Now God and we have the same essence, element, life, nature, existence, living, operation, purpose, and substance.



**THE CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S ONE ECONOMY**

The unique God, as the God of oneness, has a consummation of His one economy—the New Jerusalem. This holy city is composed of all the regenerated ones to become the unique expression of the one unique God as the God of oneness. All the impurities will have disappeared. Only the things out of this unique God bear the reality of oneness.

There is no more existence of any foreign element or fallen thing in that holy entity. There is no mention of any ethical, religious, or even high thing in that holy entity. Other than the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, there is no mention of persons, even of the apostle Paul, in that holy entity. The names of the twelve tribes indicate the inclusion of all the redeemed saints of the Old Testament (Rev. 21:12). The names of the twelve apostles indicate the inclusion of all the New Testament believers (Rev. 21:14). There is only the one unique God as the God of oneness expressed through that one city as the fulfillment of His one economy. In His one economy, God desires every positive eternal thing to come out from Him as the God of oneness.



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## CHAPTER TWO

### **THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE ONE UNIQUE GOD AS THE GOD OF ONENESS AND HIS ONE TESTIMONY**

#### **AN INTRODUCTORY WORD**

In the whole Bible there are only two places where the term “one accord” is mentioned in a positive sense. It is used once in Acts in connection with the church in Jerusalem, and once in Romans with Paul’s admonishment to the saints in Rome. In all the other epistles the matter of one accord is not stressed or is not mentioned. Rather, the matter of oneness is very much stressed. The words “one,” “oneness,” and “one accord” are three different Greek words varying in meaning. The Greek word for “oneness” or “unity” is *henotes* (Strong’s 1775), a noun form of the Greek word for “one,” *heis* (Strong’s 1520), which can refer to something singular in number or stress the essence or nature of a matter. So when believers are one, it indicates they are one in essence and in nature. However, when the term one accord, *homothumadon* (Strong’s 3661), is used, the stress is on the unity, the harmony, the communion, and the union. The thought here is not merely of constitution, but also of the exercise according to such a constitution. Thus, to be in one accord is to have the living, the display of oneness.

There is a great difference between Biblical teachings and examples. Paul, therefore, often teaches and stresses the matter of oneness. Yet, he does not teach the matter of being in one accord.

However, we do see strong examples of one accord with the church in Jerusalem. This local church demonstrated how crucial, practical, and exercised a local church should be. Paul did mention in Romans 15:6 that the saints should be in one accord in their giving thanks and praise to God. Yet this one accord is not related to what we do, but how we all can be filled in spirit and praise God together.

We need to know the difference between a teaching and an example. The Bible has many examples that are not teachings. Some examples you must follow closely, some examples you need to follow only at the proper time, and some examples you should never follow. For instance, God told the prophet Hosea to go be with a prostitute, but should we follow this example? No! However, we should be those who obediently follow the Lord, even if it is costly to us.

In the beginning of the church we have many examples of the saints being in one accord. They are in one accord in preaching the gospel, eating their food, abiding in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, exalting our Lord Jesus Christ, and being filled in spirit. This is all so positive. Yet this one accord was not from human effort. This one accord came about because the Triune God is the God of oneness and the One who produces the genuine one accord.

John Nelson Darby had this realization when he wrote:

All the Father's counsels claiming  
Equal honors to the Son,  
All the Son's effulgence beaming,  
Makes the Father's glory known.

By the Spirit all pervading,  
Hosts unnumbered round the Lamb,  
Crowned with light and joy unfading,  
Hail Him as the great "I AM."

(*Hymns*, #127, stanzas 4 and 5)

Mr. Darby saw God's economy intrinsically, in such a high, profound, and prevailing way. We have one God, yet He is Triune. The Father gives equal honors to the Son, the Son expresses the Father and makes His glory known, and the Spirit does everything around the Son with hosts unnumbered. Here we see one God, but in Him are three hypostases: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.

**THE PRAYER OF GOD THE SON  
ACCORDING TO THE UNIQUE GOD  
AS THE GOD OF ONENESS**

The Triune God operates together as the God of oneness. There are one essence, one element, one life, one nature, one existence, one living, one operation, one purpose, and one substance culminating in one universal enlargement. Praise the Lord! The Lord Jesus while on earth prayed for the reality of this universal enlargement. This enlargement is simply Christ's human life being expressed through so many saints who have been regenerated and who intrinsically have the capacity to live out this oneness.

**The Declaration of the Son**

In John 14:10 the Lord declares: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works." Here we see God the Son praying to God the Father, while God the Son is in God the Father and God the Father is in God the Son. This confirms that we have a unique God as the God of oneness. This oneness is not generated by outward behavior. Rather, any particular behavior results from the fact that such a oneness already exists, and this oneness exists in the realm of mutual love.

When we are willing to do anything to please our wives and children, we do not see this as a duty, because there is so much satisfaction in pleasing those you love. Your behavior reflects your

love. You will not put the same thought and energy into buying something for one of your in-laws, because they do not occupy that special place in your heart. You are not doing something merely because it needs to be done. The concern and attention involved in this kind of love may help us understand the concept of mutual abiding between the Father and the Son. There is such a union, such a oneness, between the Father and the Son. There is no way to separate them. The Father's desire occupies the Son, and the Son speaks out what the Father desires. So the Father who is in the Son does His work. This is the prototype. Such a prototype displays this very God, the God of oneness.

**The Prayer of God the Son in Life, in Living,  
and in His One Testimony**

The Lord Jesus prayed that we would enter into this same oneness that He and the Father enjoyed. How will this happen? We should know that three things are needed. First, we need life. Second, we need a healthy living. And third, we need to become a testimony.

John 17:11 says, "That they may be one even as We are." This refers to a oneness in life and nature. Because we have the same life and nature as God, we are able to love one another despite our age or cultural differences. Since the Father and the Son share the same essence and element, we brothers and sisters also share this same essence and element. This is why it becomes easy to love one another even though we are very different. An old man and a teenager have this one life in common, so they are able to enjoy each other, and this principle extends to all the different saints.

John 17:21 continues, "That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You." This refers to a mutual living. Although we may have the same life, how about having the same living? It is easy for one in the church life to live like an ancient Confucius, while at the same time another one lives like a modern-day hippie. So our living is in trouble. We may try to conform an-

other saint to our own preference by insisting that our way is proper and the other way is not, but this is not the secret of oneness. The secret must not be an American type, an ancient Confucius type, a yuppie type, a hippie type, etc. The secret can only be one thing: “That they may be one even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You.”

The most wonderful thing is that the same Christ can live in an ancient Confucius type as well as in a modern-day hippie type. The more we try to look like each other outwardly, even to the extent of changing our nose or the color of our hair, the more God would frown and say, “How pitiful! Oneness cannot come from that—from you. You must have Christ living in you.” In such a living there is a marvelous oneness. There is a kind of sweetness that comes out from all the saints regardless of their differences. Here Christ is lived out in many ways. No one should try to conform himself to others. It does not work anyway. The church life is not one of uniformity. The way some saints take care of hospitality or do various things may at times be embarrassing or uncomfortable, but that should not be the issue. The issue should only be the living out of Christ from within each of us, just as the Son lived out the Father and the Father was lived out in the Son. From this reality we can all be one, and in this reality we learn to bear the true testimony of oneness.

John 17:22-23 continues, “That they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one.” This refers to being perfected until a testimony is produced. Perfecting is related to the matter of life, that is, one’s life abilities or talents. Every life has its own talent or ability. This life needs perfecting. No one would say, “Oh, life will grow by itself.”

The popular story of Tarzan is about a man who lived in the jungle without ever being perfected. He only knew how to live among monkeys. He managed to grow up to adulthood because there was enough food to eat, but his life abilities or talents were never developed.

Many of the young adults among us have grown up from when

we knew them as children. We often embarrass them when we remind them of how we cradled them in our arms and played with them when they were young. Yet, today we see all these young ladies so well dressed with beautiful hair. This is because in the process of growth there was a living, and out of this living a testimony was produced.

So when the Lord Jesus prayed for us, He did so in life. And this life becomes the element to produce the oneness among us. So when girls in the world are so eager to wear clothes exposing their belly or to shave their heads, we have a life and a living that produces another testimony. We are not following the trends of the age, nor are we creating a trend of our own. We are enjoying the oneness that God now has with us and that we have with each other. Furthermore, we are allowing our talents or innate abilities to be perfected or developed by the Lord.

### **The Process for Fulfilling the Son's Prayer in Us**

The Son prayed in life to the Father that the Father's life and nature would bring the believers into the reality of oneness in the same way that the Father and the Son experienced such a oneness. However, for something so profound to happen, there needs to be a particular process that all the believers enjoy, realize, and substantiate according to this marvelous prayer. Let's consider the various aspects of this process.

### **Separation from the World**

Just as the Son of God was not of this world, so also we are not of this world (John 17:14). The world has nothing to do with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was crucified by the world, and we want nothing to do with this present evil age. So the first thing needed to keep the oneness in the church is to not be a part of the world.

For example, when seniors are about to graduate, they want to



go to the prom. The graduation ceremony itself is worldly, but the prom is even more so. Graduations are simply an outward display, not the real substance. The parents have supported the children during their studies and have made sacrifices so that their son or daughter could graduate. This is the real honoring. What then is so special about the graduation ceremony? Nothing; it is all for show. Yet, as if that were not bad enough, the parents usually get caught having to help out with the prom. Would it not be much better if the parents had a special dinner on prom night for their son or daughter and his or her friends? Then the parents could share the gospel sometime during the night while providing an exceptional meal. This way the young people would not have to be embarrassed or made to feel ashamed because they did not fit in with those people who want to dance and party all night. The high caliber people whom our sons and daughters know, who are looking for something dignified and noble to participate in, need this kind of uplifting and beneficial outlet. This is how we separate ourselves from the world.

When someone from my family got married, we requested that only a few people come. There was no fanfare. We had a simple gathering of those close to the family. Why? This is the way to be separated from the world. Then the wedding meeting was so spiritual and high. The testimonies the married couple gave brought tears to our eyes. This was something profound. And this is the way to have the one accord. However, if the world is present, there cannot be one accord.

### **Possessing the Spirit of Reality**

If we only avoid the world, this is still passive. We also need something very positive. We must possess the Spirit of reality, which will guide us into all reality (John 16:13). We need to shout, "I have the Spirit," until we are filled in spirit. Then we will not have any problems with anybody. If we have problems with others, it means we are not in spirit.

When I was young, different ones in the church life sometimes

would offend me. According to the teaching in the Bible, I felt as long as a certain brother was in the meeting, I should not take the Lord's table until I was able to forgive that person. Yet, the strangest thing would happen. We all would begin to sing a particular hymn. Suddenly, I did not feel any more anger toward that particular brother. In fact, this brother looked so pleasant to me, and I realized that I loved him. This occurred because I was brought to my spirit. Once we are in our spirit there are no more divisions, enmities, strife, or differences. They all disappear when we possess the Spirit of reality.

### **Sanctified in the Truth**

We have to be sanctified in the truth, and only the word of God is truth (John 17:17). Some of you young people, being very sharp, know this. But if I were to ask you how often you read or how much time you spend reading the Bible, what would your answer be? Possibly you do not know or are not careful in this matter. Yet, the Bible should be so much in you that you and the word become one entity.

How do you and the Bible become one entity? It is by not letting the word be objective to you. Instead, it is subjective to you. You know how to pray-read the word: "Paul, Amen! Paul, Amen! An apostle, Amen! Of Christ Jesus, Amen! Through the will of God, Amen! The will of God, Amen! Praise the Lord, the will of God, Amen! I give myself to the will of God, Amen!" Doing this allows the word to change your being.

What does it mean to say the word changes your being? It sanctifies you. It causes your taste to change. You even have a different fragrance. Your likes and dislikes change. What you were previously occupied with no longer seems to matter, because the word has caused you to adhere to something quite different.

This is the power of the word. Who can memorize four of Paul's epistles? Start with four of his shorter books: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Take notes, and saturate yourself with

these books, and your person will be different. You will become sanctified. You will learn to be in spirit through the word. This exercise will lead you into all reality.

### **Keeping the Lord's Name**

The hardest thing for a Christian to do is to simply keep the Lord's name. Why? This is because it is so easy to attach ourselves to a pastor, to a leading brother, etc. to whom we look for help. Yet all the brothers, no matter how gifted they may be, are only persons following Christ. The Lord is the only One we should constantly look to. Otherwise, if we rely on other human beings, we will discover lots of problems. Some may cause us to be for this or for that. We may follow what one brother or another says and forget to keep the Lord's name.

We must remember these four things: to not love the world, to be filled in spirit, to be sanctified by the word, and to keep His name, that is, to insist on and only declare the name of Jesus Christ. This is the way to practice the local church life.

We may have brothers in the church life who are very good. The first brother does not love the world, the second brother is filled in spirit, the third brother is sanctified in the word, and the fourth brother declares the name of Jesus. When they are together, everything is wonderful and there is a rich supply. But when the fifth brother says, "Let's go watch a movie," he brings everyone into something else. What should the other brothers do? It would be quite easy for them to get rid of this brother and keep their good fellowship. But the Bible tells us to love all the brothers. So instead of throwing the fifth brother out, they should try to help this brother by admonishing him and turning him to love Jesus, a much better alternative than going to the movie theater. This brother who received the help will then be so thankful. He is helped not merely because he was corrected, but because some brothers showed him love. This becomes the last item of the process for the fulfillment of the Lord's prayer in John 17.

### **Do All Things in Love**

Looking at John 17:26, we see how the Lord concludes His prayer, “And I have made Your name known to them and will yet make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” We need to see that all the previous items must be practiced in love. This is because the church life is a life in love. We can practice not loving the world, being filled in spirit, being sanctified by the word, and keeping the Lord’s name. But it is the intrinsic element of love that goes beyond doing what is right. It is love that becomes the real secret upholding the genuine one accord. Every father knows that his son may not be perfect, but he is not willing to throw him out. Why? This is because he loves his son. This love allows the son to grow up and develop properly. Likewise, in the church life it is in the sphere of love that we do not love the world, can be filled in spirit, are sanctified by the word, and keep the Lord’s name, exalting only Christ.

### **THE ONE TESTIMONY AS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LORD’S PRAYER**

After the Lord resurrected, what He had previously prayed became a reality in the church in Jerusalem. However, it did not happen automatically, but the saints exercised particular practices that brought out such a living testimony. Their practices were crucial in producing the one accord.

### **The Lord’s Exaltation in His Ascension**

In Acts 2:36 Peter proclaims, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.” Peter’s declaration is final, saying there is now One who is Lord of all. In Christ’s ascension there is One over all problems. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is reigning over everything.

### **Filling the Believers with the Holy Spirit**

Acts 2:4 and 17 tell us how the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. From the very beginning the Lord's desire was to fill the believers with the Holy Spirit. If we are dry, dead, without spirit, and not anointed, something is wrong. It does not mean the Lord has left us, but it does indicate the Lord must intervene on our behalf governmentally. In other words, He must use discipline to correct us. This is abnormal. Take, for example, your own children. You may have to spank them occasionally, but if this is happening every day, something is not right. So our normal growth before the Lord should be in spirit. The Lord ascended so that we could be in spirit.

### **Expressing the Organic Oneness through Variety**

These verses also show us that not only were the believers filled with the Holy Spirit, but they also spoke in different tongues. It had been predicted that their sons and daughters would prophesy, that their young men would see visions, and that their old men would dream things in dreams. Here we see variety both in the use of different tongues and in having different talents. One accord is not possible unless there is variety. When variety is not there, there cannot be any one accord.

Suppose we get a typical American, Chinese, and Korean together. Each one is so different! If they were all in the military, we could have them all marching in step through training. But without some way of getting them to conform outwardly, each one is too different. One person you would trust simply by looking at him, and another you wouldn't. One is so good in music, and another can't follow the notes. One brother is willing to be trained, and another feels he has had enough training. Everyone displays so much variety. Yet we can all still be in one accord. How? It is by not loving the world, by being filled in spirit, by being sanctified by the word, and by keeping the Lord's name, exalting only Christ.

Then we will see the manifestation of Christ in this kind of variety. This is the genuine one accord. It is very different from uniformity.

### **The Living Out of the Oneness through the One Accord in the Local Church in Jerusalem**

The impressive thing about the first local church is the fact that the brothers and sisters were in one accord. Even though the Jews who were saved on the day of Pentecost were from different countries and backgrounds, the Spirit was able to subdue every difference and even grant them the desire to have all things in common (Acts 2:44).

### **The Apostles and the Saints Continuing Steadfastly in Prayer with One Accord (Acts 1:14)**

Without the saints praying together until they touched God's heart, the stage for the pouring out of the Spirit would not have been set. The principle of steadfast prayer, as seen in the example of the apostles and saints spending ten days together to pray, is a principle we cannot neglect if we also want to have the one accord. This steadfast prayer indicates that those who were praying continued to do so until their spirits and also their souls were one with the Lord and with each other.

### **Continuing Steadfastly in the Teaching and the Fellowship of the Apostles (Acts 2:42)**

We are a blessed people if we know who the apostles are. They are those who are able to raise up the churches and supply them with the riches of Christ. In this past century the Lord gave Brother Lee to us in such a capacity. He raised us up and helped us through all the storms in the church life. He has been not merely a teacher, but a father, to us who knew him. Where would we be spiritually without his leadership, guidance, and direction? We may

say that such spiritual oversight is not necessary for our spiritual well being, but this is not true.

Even if we think we do not have an apostle to guide us today, we all should have elders. We should not be wild, declaring that today we are one with this and tomorrow we are one with that. We should not have an attitude of questioning, “Who are the elders anyway? Why must I listen to them?” If we do this, we prove that we are ignorant and do not realize what God has ordained for us. Without the elders we lose our protection. We must pay attention to the teaching of the apostles and never rebel against the apostles’ authority. This is why the church in the first century experienced the genuine one accord.

### **Continuing Steadfastly in the Breaking of Bread and the Prayers (Acts 2:42)**

We should forget our notion of what it means to break bread, because there was nothing legal or formal in the first century. Most likely certain saints came together to have dinner, and then they broke bread to remember the Lord. This seems clear from reading 1 Corinthians. We have our way today, and this tradition probably started with the Roman Catholics. But regardless of this, breaking bread and praying took place day by day.

For example, if I daily go to a brother’s house to have supper and we also break bread and pray together, surely our life is involved with one another. It is our daily life together that produces the one accord. However, when we are distant from the saints, it is difficult to have one accord. We may attend a conference and see some saint we have not seen in 20 years. So we exchange greetings, thanking the Lord that we are both still in the recovery, and we consider this to be one accord. But what kind of one accord is this? It is only when we and other saints are in and out of each other’s homes, eating, enjoying, praying, and fellowshiping, that genuine one accord exists. Such togetherness in living produces sweetness and one accord.

### **With Exultation and Simplicity of Heart (Acts 2:46)**

In order to have one accord, you must remain simple. If you are always considering whether or not you are in one accord, then you could never be in one accord. You have made it too complicated. What does exultation mean? It is when a person is happy. A happy person is a simple person. Someone who is simple can just declare, "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Amen! Oh Hallelujah!" If you are such a person, then when I am with you I can simply join in and become happy too.

But suppose I begin to ask questions like, "How many years have you been saved?" After you respond, I think, "Hmmm, I was saved before you were born." Or I may ask, "How many trainings have you been in?" You say, "Almost all of them." And I respond, "So why haven't you grown so well?" Do you believe there will be one accord? On the contrary, we will end up fighting.

Yet if I do not care how many trainings you have been in, or how many times you have read the Bible, or how long you have been saved, what then? We have one essence, one element, one life, one nature, one existence, one living, one operation, one purpose, one substance, and one enlargement. Amen! Now we are restful. There are no issues. Nothing is complicated. We do not have unnecessary talking. We only have the church life where we love Jesus. In this church life we only declare His name and enjoy one another while dining together with exultation and simplicity of heart.

### **THE GENUINE ONE ACCORD AND THE DANGER OF A FALSE ONE ACCORD**

The genuine one accord comes from the exaltation of Christ, through the filling of the Spirit, according to the apostles' teaching, and is lived out in the local church life. Otherwise, a so-called one accord may present a danger.

It may be fashionable today to speak of being in one accord.



However, history has warned us that those who tried to have one accord without having the spiritual substance to back it up produced not only serious problems, but severe persecutions, all in the name of preserving one accord. For example, the religious Jews rose up against Paul with one accord because of oneness according to their religion (Acts 18:12). The following points admonish us to be vigilant to safeguard the genuine one accord, rather than to force something on others according to our concept:

- The heavenly one accord cannot be an imposition, or it will lead to an inquisition, e.g., the history of the Catholic Church.

- The heavenly one accord is not a matter of uniformity without variety, e.g., the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.

- The heavenly one accord is not merely according to the same spiritual or human goal and commitment, e.g., many mission boards in Christianity.

- The heavenly one accord is not merely according to the same teaching apart from the teaching of God's economy.

- The heavenly one accord is not merely according to the same practices.

- The heavenly one accord is not merely according to the same common interests, such as race, language, social status, age, etc.



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## CHAPTER THREE

# **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIQUE DIVINE LIFE, AND LIVING THE LOCAL CHURCH LIFE IN ONE ACCORD WITH THE ONE SACRIFICE**

### **AN INTRODUCTORY WORD**

The church life is a life of oneness, and the living of the church life is a living of one accord. For this we need to see the unique God. He is a God of oneness and desires an enlargement of this oneness. When He was on this earth, He prayed that we would be one. This oneness was realized and substantiated in the church in Jerusalem. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and broke bread from house to house. They had the Lord's table from house to house, not weekly but daily. They had a daily church life enjoying the riches of Christ. They had fellowship to gain more of Christ, and they praised God. Their praising God caused them to become fruitful. All the people around them appreciated them because they had the fragrance of joyfulness.

### **TWO STRIKING STATEMENTS IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS CONCERNING THE CHURCH LIFE**

We must see that one accord comes from one sacrifice. Without one sacrifice there cannot be the one accord. One accord is not uniformity. One accord is not imposition. One accord is not to have

a common goal. One accord is not all bearing the same interest. One accord is not all being of the same race, language, or age. One accord is divine, organic, and in life.

**Paul Exhorts the Saints to  
Present Their Bodies as One Living Sacrifice**

There are two striking statements by Paul concerning the church life. “I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). To present our bodies as one living sacrifice is the hardest thing in the practice of the church life. To present our bodies is somewhat easy, but to present our bodies as one and only one living sacrifice is difficult. Out of one thousand people, there are one thousand desires. Some desire the Lord, some desire the out-resurrection, and some desire a good message. But here in Romans it says to present your body according to one desire, the desire to become a living sacrifice. Paul says this living sacrifice is our reasonable service. Service is to do something based on the fact that you are a living sacrifice. Your whole life is a life of sacrifice. Nothing will be for you; nothing will be for your profit. In the Old Testament, the offerings were sacrificed within one day, and God was satisfied. I have been on the altar, being burned by the Lord, for 50 years. For some reason, I still have not become ashes. To follow the Lord is to be a living sacrifice. It is not what you want, but what the Lord wants; not what makes you happy, but what makes the Lord happy.

To follow the Lord is not a religion. Paul says, “My desire is that you become a living sacrifice.” To be a living sacrifice is not easy. Only when you serve by being burned and consumed is it a reasonable service. We often talk about enjoyment. However, the reasonable service is not necessarily something we enjoy. To serve in parking during a conference is not enjoyable. Driving ten hours to attend a conference meeting only to sit beside a crying baby is not enjoyable. We may not be happy, but the Lord is happy, because

we are a living sacrifice; we are being burned. Whether we are ushering or attending a meeting, we are serving. Service goes beyond what we do. Service relates to how we are one with the Lord in what the Lord is doing.

**Reasonable Service Is to Serve Intelligently, Logically, Rationally, and in Harmony with the Highest Reason**

It may be easy to understand what it is to serve intelligently, logically, and rationally. But what is it to serve in harmony with the highest reason? To come to the meeting for Christ and not for yourself—this is to serve in harmony with the highest reason. We should listen to messages and receive the riches, not for ourselves but for Christ. This is the highest reason.

**Reasonable Service Comes from Being a Living Sacrifice**

The Greek word for “sacrifice,” *thusia*, bears the same root as the Greek word for “one accord,” *homothumadon*. One accord comes from our sacrifice, our death. We experience joy, but this joy is generated from our death, our sacrifice. Let me give an example. Five of us brothers serve closely in an area. All five of us are very different. We five fellowship together, pray together, and consider how to go on. For us to be in one accord, there is only one secret. All five of us have to be a sacrifice; we have to die.

We all desire to serve in the church life, and we all desire to be in one accord. One accord means that we have a common, mutual sacrifice. We all sacrifice ourselves together to attain the desire of the Lord. To have the one accord is not merely being together and loving one another. To have the one accord we must know the secret of death. Die to yourself. Don’t argue, don’t insist, and don’t aim at something flourishing or beautiful. The highest thing is Christ. For this Christ, for this highest service, we must all learn to put ourselves to death. Those who are in one accord are those who have died. One accord comes from the application of death.

**This Living Sacrifice Comes from  
Presenting Our Bodies as One Sacrifice**

The Greek word for present, *paristemi*, means “to stand with.” A real presenting, consecration, means to stand with the Lord’s interest. To stand with the Lord’s interest becomes the secret of the one accord. It is the secret of your going on in the church life and the secret to your spiritual growth unto maturity. Eventually, decisions need to be made. As a young man, will you stand with the Lord regarding whom you marry? In marriage, you make the decision, “I will marry a sister who loves the Lord.” Then the next decision is your career. Can you say that your career is for the Lord? You may be tempted to take a position offering a “great future” with lots of money in a place far away from the church life. With whom will you stand? Once you marry and have a career, eventually you will have children. Then your children come crying to you for things, for a better car and a bigger house. What would you say? To stand with the Lord is not at all easy. In your life, there are endless temptations and trials. Always ask this one question. “Am I standing one with the Lord?” To present your body means to stand one with the Lord. That will determine your life. If you stand with the Lord, the Lord will stand with you. If you stand with the world, the world will consume you.

The Lord stood with Paul (2 Tim. 4:17). This is extremely sweet. The one who stands with the Lord is also able to enjoy the Lord standing with him. The one who consecrates himself to the Lord is also able to enjoy the consecration of the Lord to him. Paul could say, “I am one with the Lord, and the Lord is one with me.” When we declare, “Lord, I am Yours,” the Lord will declare back, “I am yours also.”

**Paul Exhorts the Saints That They with One Accord  
May with One Mouth Glorify the God and Father  
of the Lord Jesus Christ**

Now we understand that the one accord comes from the common sacrifice. We all sacrifice ourselves. We all put ourselves to death. Then with one mouth we glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one accord is for praising God together. This is the manifestation of the top joyfulness. We could illustrate with university graduation. All the graduates are full of joy at their graduation, but those who are at the top of the class have joyfulness with celebration.

Many times we focus on being one, preaching the gospel together, laboring together, breaking bread together, and bearing fruit together. However, the real celebration comes from giving honor to God the Father and Christ our Lord. The one accord comes from one person, Jesus Christ. One accord comes with one substance, Jesus Christ. One accord only produces one goal, that is, giving glory to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the source of the one accord, Christ is the content of the one accord, and Christ should be the result of the one accord. If we take away Christ, there is no one accord. If we take Christ away, that one accord will become a division.

We may see that the Lord is doing something marvelous in another place, but for some reason what happens elsewhere could become a source of division, not a source of one accord. Why? Because we begin to focus on what we should do and what we should not do, how we should do something or how not to do something. We do not focus on Christ but on the thing to do. We should do things because of Christ, and we should love others because of Christ. The one accord comes from Christ. The content, the substance, is Christ. Eventually the result is Christ. Paul said that we should, with one accord and with one mouth, glorify God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The One Accord Comes from the Saints Having the Same Mind toward One Another according to Christ Jesus**

One accord comes from the saints having the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:5). Do you think it is possible to have the same mind toward one another? In the church life, all the saints should have the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus. There should be no selection; all the saints should be loved. This is contrary to us. Caucasians automatically love Caucasians. The Chinese love the Chinese, and the African Americans love African Americans. According to our preference, we love the brothers who are gifted, useful, talented, those who can be pillars and elders. However, if you want one accord, there is no preference. Paul says, “When you are in one accord giving the glory to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will have the same mind towards one another, the mind of Christ.”

The mind of Christ is that He didn't seek after the things that pleased Himself. On the contrary He bore our reproaches (Rom. 15:3). We should not make ourselves a higher class. I have sometimes heard people say, “We are in the flow; our local church is in the flow.” There is nothing wrong with being in the flow, and actually, we ought to be in the flow. But to talk like this is to make ourselves a different class. We do not know how to love the saints with the same love. Sometimes some brothers say, “I am one with the ministry.” If you are one with the ministry, I also am one with the ministry. But to be one with the ministry is not the issue. Christ is the issue. To say that we are one with the ministry puts other brothers on the spot. Are they not one with the ministry? We are dividing the Body. We are dividing the Lord's testimony. There is only oneness with Christ! Remember that one accord gives honor to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The mind of Christ is that each of us should seek to please his neighbor with a view to his building up. If we feel we are one with the ministry, we should help others be one with the ministry without



making any issues. We should be in the riches and help others be in the riches. We should read the books written by Witness Lee, and we should receive the riches in those books. However, we should realize that we are Christians, we are lovers of Jesus Christ, and the church bears the testimony of the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus alone. We all should be one with the ministry. We all should be in the flow. All the churches must have mutual fellowship. Yet at the same time, among us there should be no issue. If someone is not one with the ministry, I would pray with him. I would help him to be in the ministry so that we all can be one in the ministry. It is not a talk or a slogan, but a labor.

The mind of Christ is that each of us should not please ourselves, but instead, we who are strong should bear the weaknesses of the weak. Do not talk about what others do. In the church life, we should not talk about who has been to the theater and who has not been to the theater. We should only care for Christ. Instead of talking about others, we should read the Bible together, enjoy some riches together, and pray together. By our nurturing, all the other things would disappear. We would only know the Lord Jesus Christ.

One accord is totally a matter of our inward exercise, and not our outward action. It is for our brothers' profit and building up, while we patiently wait for their growth. It is critical that we see the need of substantiating the riches the Lord has given to us from Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. Even so, we should not make an issue, but we should patiently wait. We should labor, feed, nourish, and nurture the saints until we all can attain with some riches constituted into us.

**THE CHURCH LIFE IN ONE ACCORD COMES FROM  
EXPERIENCING AND SUBSTANTIATING THE GOSPEL  
OF GOD, WHICH IS THE ORGANIC SALVATION**

This gospel concerns only His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:3). According to the flesh, He came out of the seed of David. According to the Spirit of Holiness, He was designated to

be the Son of God in power out of the resurrection of the dead (Rom. 1:4).

### **The Gospel Is a Gospel of Holiness Realized in Spirit**

The gospel has power. A young man may be studying for his Ph.D. in a university. He is common, just like all the others. But when he believes in Jesus Christ, he becomes different. He is different because the power of the gospel makes him holy. The operation of the gospel makes him a holy person. When I receive the Lord, it is the Spirit operating. After I receive the Lord, the Spirit abides in me. Every time the Spirit is there, I realize I am holy.

### **The Experience of the Gospel of God Is the Power of Resurrection**

Through the gospel of God, we all become the called saints—*hagios*, the holy ones (Rom. 1:7). First, the gospel is just Christ. Second, when you touch this Christ you become holy. Third, whenever Christ is touched and realized by you, there is a calling. Calling involves three things. The Lord is calling us to meet all our needs. He is calling us to tell us His desire. Finally, His calling is with a purpose. Remember that calling meets your needs, calling speaks of His desire, and calling is related to His purpose.

### **THE LOCAL CHURCH LIFE IN ONE ACCORD COMES FROM THE ORGANIC SALVATION EXPERIENCED BY THE SAINTS**

The local church life in one accord comes from the organic salvation experienced by the saints in the local church. In other words, if there is no growth in life, there is no one accord. In chapter fifteen of Romans, one accord is mentioned. But from chapter one onward, there is the matter that you need to grow.

**All the Saints Must Experience  
the Organic Salvation in the Divine Life**

Formerly all the saints were sinners without exception. Yet now all the saints must experience the organic salvation with the divine life. We were all once enemies of God. Now, however, not only are we reconciled, but we are also being saved in His life (Rom. 5:10), and this life is the gift (“charisma”) of God (Rom. 6:23). All the saints, enjoying the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17). I am saved in His life; I reign in His life. All the saints, having been buried with Him through baptism into His death, are now walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). All the saints consecrate themselves as slaves of righteousness unto sanctification (Rom. 6:19). Sanctification refers to a process. All the saints who are enjoying the law of the Spirit of life are set free to walk according to the spirit (Rom. 8:2, 4). They have life and peace not only in themselves but also in the church life, thus producing the reality of oneness and one accord. Only when we are able to walk according to spirit can there be one accord. One accord comes from our walking in spirit. All the saints are heirs of God and thus joint heirs with Christ, that they may all be glorified with Him together (Rom. 8:17).

So remember, we were sinners, then we were reconciled, and now we are being saved in His life, we reign in life, we walk in the newness of life, and we are being sanctified by the work of the Spirit. Eventually we are being renewed, we have the Spirit of life, and we walk according to spirit. This produces the one accord. Do we realize that the one accord is not a thing to do together, but our growing up together? When we grow up together, the reality of one accord is ours.



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## CHAPTER FOUR

### **THE KEEPING OF THE MYSTICAL ONENESS ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS AND THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL**

#### **AN INTRODUCTORY WORD**

In this chapter we encounter a challenge to every local church: how to practically keep the mystical oneness of the Body of Christ. On the one hand, Paul presents the high revelation of oneness in his wonderful epistle to the Ephesians, and yet on the other, he emphasizes its outworking in such a place as the church in Corinth. This is surely something of God's arrangement, for every local church is, in experience, the church in Corinth. Regardless of what locality we live in, we can testify that the Corinthians' "abnormal" situation is actually the norm. Therefore we shouldn't be too bothered when we consider our problems, because it is normal to have problems in the church life.

When I first came into the recovery, I was unaware of this. To me, even the chairs in the meeting hall seemed to be sanctified. At that time, had I been aware of all the problems in the church life, I would have been greatly surprised. Over the years, however, I have witnessed many of the things found in Corinth among the churches, and I have come to realize that they are somewhat normal. What should concern us is not whether a church has problems, but how those problems are handled. If a servant of the Lord knows how to handle the problems properly, abnormal situations

can be turned to strength. If, however, the ones who are serving do not know how to handle situations properly, the problems can become the source of both institution and organization within the church. Any group that takes that line eventually develops into a denomination.

Recently I went to London to fellowship about matters concerning the Lord's work. While I was there I visited the city of Plymouth. During the nineteenth century, Plymouth was the place where John Nelson Darby and Benjamin Wills Newton, along with many other notable brothers, ministered among the so-called Plymouth Brethren. I wanted to see what remained of that blessed time in the history of the Lord's recovery. Eventually we found a place where the Brethren were still meeting and contacted one of the leading brothers there. When we asked him about his appreciation of John Nelson Darby, he replied he had not even heard of Darby. Instead, his word was that they were a group who "looked forward instead of backward." We learned from him that there were other Brethren groups meeting in the city, and that his hall was the one that cared for the young people. We then met with a group of older saints, who were burdened for those confined to nursing homes. One hundred and fifty years earlier, many high and glorious truths had been manifested among the Plymouth Brethren through the ministry of a number of servants who had been raised up by the Lord. Now it appears that little of that deposit remains among them. This helped me to realize that it is the church alone that is eternal, not anything or anyone else.

I hope we all will rise up with this realization and let everything else go. When I am gone, I trust that another will carry on, and that person also should have the expectation that someone else will be able to go on to carry forward what the Lord has committed to him. What is of eternity, however, is the church. Everything else will fade away. All the movements of the Lord and all the servants of the Lord are of time, but the church is eternal. Brothers and sisters, we have to realize how wonderful it is that we are in the church.

**THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF THE ONE UNIQUE GOD  
AS THE GOD OF ONENESS**

The church is God's eternal purpose. It is the goal of the Father's predestination, the Son's redemption, and the sealing of the Spirit (Eph. 1:1-14). The three are one God, of course, and should not be too strongly differentiated. For example, is not Jesus also the Spirit who dwells within you? The Bible, however, does make a distinction as to how the Father, the Son, and the Spirit function for the fulfillment of God's purpose. The Father predestinated us to be His church before the creation of the world, and in time the Son came to redeem us. Eventually we received the Spirit, who applies all that the Triune God is to us.

Seeing this, the apostle desired that we would substantiate this divine reality in our experience, so he prayed that God would grant us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:17).

**THE DIVINE OPERATION OF THE ONE UNIQUE GOD  
AS THE GOD OF ONENESS—  
CREATING THE CHURCH, THE ONE NEW MAN**

We often think that our positive virtues are good for the church. Perhaps one brother is very nice, another is very humble, and another is very zealous. Can our niceness, humility, and zeal be for the church? No. The church can only be built up with what is created in us as a part of the new creation.

Every saved person has two lives. Our first life is that which is begotten of our parents. We have received another life, however, at the time of our regeneration. At that time something divine came into us, an element that produces the church. This is the new creation, not in the sense of time, but in the sense of element and essence. What is of God is always fresh and new.

Young people are often told that they are the church's hope. There is a Chinese proverb: "He who is yet a student should be

esteemed more highly than he who has risen to power.” In other words, you cannot say how high a young person will rise. A student may even become the president, who knows? Therefore, according to this saying, you should treat every young person with respect. But being young does not automatically make you the hope of the church. We all must grow in the Lord, for the hope of the church is Christ Himself.

When you see a group of saints, do you see the church? This is only possible if you see Christ. If you only see an older brother, a younger brother, or a Chinese brother, then you are not seeing the church. You must see Christ in the saints. When you see Christ in all the saints, you see the church.

### **The Law of Commandments in Ordinances Has Been Abolished**

Ephesians goes on to tell us that in the church, as the new man, the law of commandments in ordinances has been abolished (Eph. 2:15). This indicates that in the church we should not place demands upon the saints. We should not give others the feeling that there are many requirements among us. All such things have been abolished! Instead of a demanding church life, we should have a church life where everyone is supplied and happy!

Joy is the mark of having Christ. What is the mark of having Christ among the saints in your locality? Joy! If the leading brothers bring the saints into ordinances and commandments, the free flowing enjoyment of Christ disappears. Nothing is more joyful than to be enjoying Christ with the saints in the absence of commandments and ordinances. We are free, we love Jesus, and we are in the church life! Hallelujah!



## **We Are Those Who Were Far Off but Now Have Become Near in the Blood of Jesus Christ**

When we instruct others in Christian matters, we should not lead them into the law. We should be free to feed one another, pray and read the Bible together, and do all things in joyfulness. Yes, we do confront many problems in the church life. But instead of reacting to them by introducing regulations, we should learn not to worry about them so much. Paul tells us we have all been brought near in the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). Whether you think one person is better or another is worse, each one equally shares in the blood of Christ as his portion. Because of the blood of Christ, we can be one, regardless of our problems.

Does anyone believe that he only needs the blood of Christ a little bit? All day long every one of us needs the blood of Christ to speak for us! In this blood we are all brought near. We all share the same status in the church because of the blood of Christ. You have the blood of Christ, and I also have the blood of Christ. In this blood we who were far off have become near.

## **Now Together We Can Receive the Gospel of Peace**

As those who are brought near in the blood of Christ, we can share the gospel of peace. In the church, our testimony should be that there are no problems among us. As we are enjoying the church life, we experience peace towards the brothers and sisters. Therefore, we should not produce reasons for disharmony. For instance, we should not look for differences among us, nor place expectations upon others according to our concepts. Christ has produced peace among us. When we raise issues, this peace disappears.

When we allow Christ to rule in the church life, enjoy the freedom to pursue Him, and experience the peace He has produced among us, we are enabled to come to the Father together in one Spirit (Eph. 2:18).

**THE DIVINE PRINCIPLE OF THE ONE UNIQUE  
GOD OF ONENESS FOR HIS CHURCH:  
ENDEAVORING TO KEEP THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT  
IN THE UNITING BOND OF PEACE**

The Greek word used for oneness in Ephesians 4:3 is *henotes*, the state of being one. This word is used only two times in the New Testament. Its first use is here, regarding the oneness of the Spirit. The second use is in Ephesians 4:13, regarding the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God. The Greek word for one in Ephesians 2:15 (one new man) is *heis*, which refers to being one in nature and essence. *Henotes* refers to the state or quality of being in one accord and being in harmony. Such oneness does not take away the distinctiveness of its members. Brother Lee indicates that this oneness is a unity without uniformity, a unity with diversity.

In Ephesians four we find the seven ones. There are one Body, one Spirit, and one calling (Eph. 4:4). We have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Eph. 4:5). Then we have one God, the Father, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:6).

In the Triune God there is this divine oneness for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. Our responsibility is to endeavor to keep this oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The oneness is already here. Now we simply need to keep it.

Instead of endeavoring to keep the oneness, we often raise issues, and issues lead to division, not oneness. We should not be for anything other than Christ. We should not be for young people, for old people, for Caucasians, for Chinese, for the sophisticated, or for the simple. Can we not just recognize that we all are His, and that we all love Him?

Some have the habit of questioning others until they find something with which they disagree. They may even do this with the thought that they must discover what others need to be corrected about, so they might be brought into their kind of oneness. Instead

of feeling we must produce a kind of conformity, we should recognize that God desires that we endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit that He has already produced. The sweetness existing between the believers is damaged when we place demands upon others or raise issues over things that differ. We do not need to endeavor to produce the oneness; our endeavoring rather should be to keep it. Let us endeavor to keep the oneness!

**THE TRANSMITTING OF THE ONE UNIQUE GOD  
AS THE GOD OF ONENESS—  
THE ONE UNIQUE MINISTRY**

How is this oneness transmitted to us? It is transmitted by the one unique ministry, by the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers (Eph. 4:11-12). This one ministry is so rich that it requires four categories of gifted members to carry it out. What all the ministers in this New Testament ministry produce is the oneness of the faith (Eph. 4:13). Over a period of 44 years, I saw how Witness Lee endeavored to produce this oneness. Over the ages, the ministers who carry this New Testament ministry have labored to transmit the faith into the believers so they could become joined to the Lord and to one another, and so they could grow until they together would become a full grown man. In this way, all the believers will arrive at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

**THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL**

In the apostle Paul we see someone who not only taught oneness, but also practiced it. In the church in Corinth many were claiming to be of Paul, while some said they were of Apollos and others. This is a very easy thing to do, even among us today. Paul made it very clear that Christ cannot be divided (1 Cor. 1:12-13). This is a great truth. I have no right to stand as a Chinese, and you have no right to stand as an American. One should not proclaim

that he is for this serving one or that serving one. One should not proclaim that he is for the young people, and another, that he is for senior citizens. Christ cannot be divided. All believers, by life and nature, are one. In addition to sharing the same life and nature, we should realize that no one has died for us except Christ, nor have we been baptized into any other name.

### **Honoring the Ministry of Others**

Paul realized the preciousness of his ministry, yet he honored the ministries of others because he knew only God could give the growth (1 Cor. 3:6-7). Few who serve the Lord ever gain this realization. Paul was clear that to divisively declare that they were of one servant or another was something of the flesh. He was clear enough to say that not only was he nothing, but Apollos also was nothing, for God was the one who caused the believers to grow. I am thankful that I have been able to labor among you, but any growth cannot be attributed to me or to any other servant of the Lord, for it is God alone who causes the growth. Therefore we are for Christ alone. If we see this, we will not make such issues in the church life. Our oneness is of Christ alone. Take away Christ, and there is no oneness.

### **Being Only One of the Many Ministers of Christ**

Paul also realized that no matter how rich and spiritual his ministry was, he was only one among many ministers of Christ. He further realized that whatever portion any minister had, it was for the church. Paul said, "So then let no one boast in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all are yours" (1 Cor. 3:21-22). I do not know how many are able to sincerely say this. Paul, however, was very clear that all the serving ones belong to the saints. Paul realized that no matter how rich his ministry was, it was only a part of the New Testament ministry. In other words,

Paul is yours, John Nelson Darby is yours, Watchman Nee is yours, and Witness Lee is yours. Whether in the east or the west, in the past, present, or future, all the manifested servants are yours. You should have the feeling whenever you see any serving one: “I am so happy he is mine!” You are not theirs; they are yours. Therefore do not say, “I am of somebody,” for that somebody is for you.

**Identified with Different Saints  
for the Sake of Oneness**

Paul identified himself with all in such a way that he might gain all. He did this for the sake of the oneness. To the Jews, he became as a Jew; to those under law, he came as one under law; and to those without law, he was as one without law, although not without law to God. He came as one under the law of Christ. He made an effort to identify himself with all the various saints. To the weak, he became weak. He became all things to all men that he might save some from all backgrounds (1 Cor. 9:19-23). For this cause, he was willing to forfeit his own identity. To our thought, a mature serving one should behave in a peculiar, “spiritual” way, perhaps lost in holy contemplation. Paul, however, was not like this. When he was with others, he dropped everything but Christ. He was truly a spiritual man. Such a person is able to practice the oneness. May we all take Paul as our pattern for the sake of oneness!



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## CHAPTER FIVE

### **THE LIVING OUT OF THE ONENESS AS LUMINARIES THROUGH THE ONE LIVING, ONE PURSUING, AND ONE FELLOWSHIP**

#### **AN INTRODUCTORY WORD**

Among all of Paul's epistles, only the book of Philippians reveals such a sweet relationship between an apostle and a local church. This is why Philippians is included in our sharing on the living out of the oneness. As we have seen, the oneness is revealed in Ephesians, but the practical living out of this oneness is most clearly seen in Philippians.

Paul tells us in Philippians that we live out this oneness as luminaries (Phil. 2:15). Corporately, the church is a shining lampstand (Rev. 1:11-12), but this corporate expression requires many luminaries for the display of its riches. The Lord Jesus indicated that we, as lights, are to be placed on the lampstand (Matt. 5:15). He, as the Light (John 8:12), lights us all so that we might together become a corporate expression of the light. Thus, as Christians, we should together shine as one light upon the mountaintop for everyone to see (Matt. 5:14). We should realize through these verses that the Lord does not intend the individual lights to shine alone, but desires that the individual lights would together shine as one corporate light. When Paul says we are luminaries in the book of Philippians, he indicates that every believer individually is a light, and yet each luminary lives in oneness with all the other luminaries. In Philippians,

Paul reveals how the many lights are able to be this one testimony.

First of all, Paul reveals that the believers are able to live out such oneness by having the same living. We must have one living. Second, Paul reveals that the believers are able to live out this oneness when each believer is pursuing Christ. In this way, each luminary pursues the same goal. Finally, all the believers, as the luminaries, are able to live out this oneness because they participate in the same one fellowship.

### **THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS IS PURE, FOCUSED, AND JOYFUL**

The book of Philippians possesses three notable attributes. First of all, Philippians radiates purity. Second, it can be characterized as being very focused; in it Paul does not seek to cover many different topics or to address many different issues. His one burden is that the saints would gain Christ. Third, this book expresses a particular joy. Purity speaks of someone's being or existence; focus refers to his living; and joy has to do with what he exhibits.

#### **Pure**

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi was different from his other epistles. Philippians was not written because the believers were confronting any major issues or problems. Paul wrote to these saints simply because the church there satisfied the Lord and made Paul happy. In this sense, Paul's writing to this church is very pure. There is nothing to divert the apostle from his basic message. Therefore, this book is one of the best for any who wish to grasp the secret of the Christian life. Whoever dives into these four chapters will find out how to be a joyful, energized, pursuing, laboring, fighting, and one-with-the-Lord Christian.



### **Focused**

Furthermore, this book is very focused. Paul's other epistles often deal with a range of topics. All of Paul's writings focus on Christ, of course, but some require more study than others. In his letter to the Ephesians, for instance, Paul covers the matter of the church in a variety of ways. While this provides a way for Paul to release many riches of the truth, one must exercise a sober mind to receive what is being revealed. His words to the Philippians, however, are easily grasped, for they all flow from a simple focus, which is the gaining of Christ. Because of the manner in which Paul shares to the church in Philippi, it is fairly easy to comprehend what is shared. Philippians comes to us like a well-prepared meal that is ready to be enjoyed, requiring little preparation on our part.

### **Joyful**

When a person is pure and focused upon Christ, what else can he be but joyful? Pure and focused people are happy people. Such joy cannot be manufactured; no matter how much someone tells you to cheer up, it will not produce cheerfulness in you. If you want to be happy, be pure and focused upon Christ!

The reason many saints are unhappy is because they are impure. Some feel they will never be happy until they become an elder. Others are waiting to be appreciated by the elders. Some sisters are seeking to become coordinating sisters. Some may even be upset because their songs were not included in the latest songbook. In other words, it is very easy to be impure and to miss the joy of simply having Jesus.

Another reason many are unable to experience joyfulness is because they try to do too much. They are concerned about how to be the most useful, and they become involved in many, many things. The Lord, however, is more concerned about whether or not we can simply love Him. If we can be so pure and simple for Christ, we will experience a life of joy. Such joy should be what

characterizes our church life. Ours should be a life that is genuine and focused upon Christ. Philippians portrays such a church life in which the saints are pure, focused upon Christ, and joyful.

### **The Organic Oneness of the Church Life**

The saints as luminaries are constituted out of the organic oneness they share with Christ, the apostles, and the other believers. The organic oneness we enjoy is not merely a oneness with Christ alone, or with the apostles alone, or with the other believers alone. It is a oneness among the apostles who are with Christ, and who are one with all the saints. This oneness is also with the saints who are one with Christ, with the apostles, and with the other believers. The true organic union is displayed in the book of Philippians. In such a church the saints rejoiced in this oneness together with Paul.

Such oneness can never come about as a result of harassment, of course. If I have to demand that you be one with me because I have served you, then the genuine oneness is certainly missing. The organic oneness that exists among us is a sweet reality. When I call a family member, for instance, I do not need to summon up some sort of effort to do so. Perhaps the conversation doesn't have much content in one sense, but in another sense, it has a wonderful, sweet content. In the church life, however, it is possible to have a lot of "content" in our fellowship, yet still be lacking in the sweet reality of this oneness.

Sometimes we harass those around us in the name of some principle of the Body. Brothers and sisters, the church life should be pure, and the church life must be focused upon Christ. We should not investigate others in order to point out our differences under the guise of fellowship. Instead of holding up the things that differ, we should enjoy the reality of our oneness by taking Christ as our unique focus. I should give you my Christ, and you should give me your Christ! Then we have communion with one another in life.

### **Philippians Portrays a Church Life in the Reality of the Organic Union with Christ, the Apostles, and the Saints**

The oneness illustrated in Paul's letter to the believers in Philippi is simply marvelous! The apostle had the believers in his heart (1:3), and they had him in their hearts (1:7). Paul was also in the inward parts of Christ Jesus, where he experienced Christ's longing after the saints (1:8). The saints also were full of feeling towards Paul as those who were in Christ Jesus (1:1). Furthermore, this kind of experience was not merely experienced by all of them as individuals; it was something that took place between Christ, the apostles, and the saints as one entity! You cannot practice this kind of oneness as an individual. In yourself, you are not sufficient for this. This practice of the oneness requires Christ, the apostles, and the saints. If we are to experience this reality, all three—Christ, the apostles, and the saints—must be present and involved.

We have a song, "O Lord, everybody's home," and yet we may not truly be "at home" with the saints. It is normal that we love the saints, yet for some reason we often fall into the trap of doing things out of duty or obligation, instead of out of love for one another. In all our relationships we should act and move according to the inward parts of Christ.

### **THE ONENESS AMONG THE LORD, THE APOSTLE PAUL, AND THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI**

Not one believer should live by himself. Every one of us should live in this "golden triangle" of Christ, the apostles, and the saints. In this way we are all joined together in one spirit and in one soul, struggling together with the faith of the gospel (1:27).

### **A Beginning of a Good Work**

Through Paul, Christ had begun a good work in the saints (1:6). Paul did not bribe any of them with promises of a better lifestyle if

they stayed in the church life, nor did he threaten any of them that they would go to hell if they were to leave. Nothing besides Christ was mentioned. The church there began after Paul had been imprisoned there (Acts 16). Paul and Silas were singing in jail, and then there was an earthquake, and everyone was released. The jailer was about to kill himself, but Paul and Silas intervened and he and his family were saved and baptized instead. There was no impure element involved; everything was just Christ. That was how the fellowship with the saints and the apostles and Christ began “from the first day.” Paul had the confidence to say that the Lord initiated this work, and He would also complete it.

### **The Saints Had the Apostle in Their Heart and the Apostle Longed after Them in the Inward Parts of Christ**

In verse seven of chapter one, Paul says that the saints had him in their heart, while in the next verse Paul says that he longed after them all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus. On the one hand, the saints truly had Paul in their hearts. They cared about him. They did not feel any pressure when he came to them, nor were they relieved when he left! Perhaps among us some might dread the thought of a brother visiting their locality, and even hope that something might intervene so that he might not come! We should have the servants of the Lord in our hearts. The servant of the Lord, however, remembers the saints not according to their outward circumstances, but according to the inward parts of Christ Jesus. His concern is in Christ’s consideration towards these saints. When the saints remember the apostles, it is love; when the apostles consider the saints, it is love plus what is profitable for them according to Christ. The apostles go into the Lord’s heart, and according to the Lord’s heart they remember the saints. This is truly a sweet oneness!

If any local church is bent upon doing something, yet in doing so disregards the servant of the Lord who raised them up, there is something wrong with that church. Every church should always

remember their source, and the servants of the Lord should always be one with Christ when considering those the Lord has committed to him.

### **Standing with the Apostle for the Advancement of the Gospel**

Because they had the apostle in their heart and stood with him for the furtherance of the gospel, the saints prayed for the apostle in his imprisonment. The saints prayed when Peter was imprisoned (Acts 12:12), and here in Philippians we are told that the saints prayed when Paul was imprisoned. Because of that prayer, Paul received and enjoyed a bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). In other words, the Lord began a good work in these saints and put them together with this apostle. Then they prayed for him, and through that prayer the apostle was supplied. Now Paul's desire was to hear that they were standing firm and struggling together along with the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). The faith of the gospel is personified here as something that is alive and struggling to advance.

### **Struggling Together**

To struggle together with this faith does not imply that great deeds must be done. It does imply, however, that much can happen even out of seemingly small occurrences when we stand with the gospel's operation. The gospel produces surprises. It may seem as if nothing is happening out of your labor, and then all of a sudden, something is manifested. For instance, many years ago I went to a certain small locality. Outwardly, we did not do much. In fact, we even went fishing. But because of that time together, some began to take this way of the church life. For these many years they have remained about the same, but now today there is a young man present with us whose father was caught during that time. Who knows what that young man will become in the Lord's hands? This is the faith of the gospel, and this is what we should be struggling

alongside.

Many, instead of struggling alongside the faith of the gospel, are “head counters” when it comes to the gospel, asking visitors in the meetings to stand if they wish to pray. Such an understanding cheats us. The gospel is always advancing. We need to struggle to stay up with it. The gospel is advancing, but are we struggling to advance together with it? If we struggle alongside the faith of the gospel, we will advance with it as it advances.

### **A Boast in Christ Jesus That Would Abound**

The saints in Philippi were even willing to participate in the same struggle that was in the apostle on behalf of Christ (1:29-30). He was in bonds and thus was limited, but the saints were willing and desirous to carry forward the apostle’s struggle for the Lord’s testimony. How encouraging this was to the apostle. Eventually his feeling was that the boasting of the saints would abound in Christ Jesus through his coming again to them (1:26).

In verses 26 and 27 of chapter one Paul writes, “That your boast may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my coming again to you. Only, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, that whether coming and seeing you or being absent, I may hear of the things concerning you, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel.” Paul uses two different Greek words for “coming” in these two verses. In verse 26, the word is *parousia*, which is used in reference to the process of the Lord’s coming and His presence with the believers (as in 1 Cor. 15:23), whereas the second word is the more common one, which was also used by the Lord to refer to His coming again (see, for instance, John 14:18). I believe these two words open a window for us to see something of the relationship this church had with the apostle. Though he was absent, he was with them, and he would be with them again physically, for they had him in their hearts.

The saints in Philippi enjoyed a oneness with the apostle Paul. As those who had him in their heart, they were waiting for him and longing for his arrival. And since they were struggling with him in the same struggle and had him in their heart, the apostle would certainly come to them. They were waiting for that day, and his coming to them would be the fulfillment of their expectation. Before that day, they were already somewhat experiencing the apostle's presence (*parousia*), as one who was in their heart. Eventually, however, his physical appearing would issue in a fullness of joy that would be enjoyed between the apostle and the saints. In the apostle's arrival, the saints' boasting would thus abound.

#### **THE ONENESS BETWEEN THE SAINTS IN PHILIPPI AND THE APOSTLE PAUL**

Thus, Paul was willing to remain among them for their progress and joy, even though he knew that to depart to be with the Lord was far better (1:23). On the one hand, Paul was ready to die, and he looked forward to being out of the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). Still Paul did say that to die was "far better"! It meant freedom from the limitations and frustrations of the flesh, and enjoyment of the Lord's presence in full. It is very rare in Christian history to find this kind of earnest desire to be with the Lord. Most consider how they might live longer, even giving as their reason the need to continue on for the church's sake. Isn't this a good reason? Particularly if you truly care for someone, you will want to remain to care for that person. Paul, however, really experienced a struggle in his choice between these two possibilities. A parent, however, would always seek to continue on with his children for as long as his children need him. Regardless how much he personally wanted to be with the Lord, his desire to see the Philippians grow and progress in Christ was greater. Therefore, he did not allow Caesar to put him to death. Paul's word here reveals that his environment was in the Lord's hands, not Caesar's, for the Lord is the true Ruler over all things. Paul seemed confident that

his appeal before Caesar Nero would achieve the desired effect, whether his release or his execution. The desire of this servant of the Lord was to continue upon this earth for the Philippians' progress and joy of the faith (1:25).

Brothers and sisters, the apostles should be in our hearts. I first met Witness Lee in 1953, and in 1954 I attended his Life-study of the Psalms. I realized at that time that this brother was a true servant of the Lord. From then on, until he passed away, he was in my heart. He is still in my heart today, and since his passing, I miss his presence. I am afraid, however, that some churches assess their situation and exercise according to what they feel is most needed, without realizing that in God's economy, the oneness is produced not by the saints within a locality alone, but also with the servants of the Lord. Therefore every local church should seek after the fellowship of the nearby churches and the fellowship of those who serve the Lord for their sakes.

If you only care for the needs of your local church without having the apostle in your heart, all the grace that the apostle receives for the churches' nourishment will not become your nourishment. You need to be with the apostles as they are experiencing this grace. Because the saints had the apostles in their hearts, they were able to participate in the grace that Paul enjoyed in his defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Let me give you an example. Once I walked into a place and discovered a book table, upon which was a book by G. Campbell Morgan, translated into Chinese. What interested me was the name of the person who was the translator, for it turned out he was a brother I had known while in Taipei. We both loved the Lord, but he eventually left the recovery, and hence he did not participate in the riches and the grace that Witness Lee released over the last 40 years. He remained a very good brother, but what he produced was a translation of a somewhat dated book. I appreciate his translation, but I tell you, brothers, I am so thankful that for more than 40 years I have been closely attached to Brother Lee. Thus, the grace that Brother Lee received, I also have partaken of. When he min-



istered on the four stages of life, I partook of that grace. When he ministered on the last Adam becoming a life-giving Spirit, I partook of that grace. When he ministered on pray-reading and calling on the name of the Lord, I partook of that grace. When he ministered on one city, one church, I was a partaker of that grace. When Brother Lee shared his Life-study of the Bible, I was a partaker of that grace. When he shared on the new way and the divine and mystical realm, I also partook with him of that grace. Brothers and sisters, I have participated in so many riches of grace simply because I had the apostle in my heart.

Eventually, we can see that such a church as the church in Philippi surely became the apostle's boast. I doubt that Paul could speak of the saints in Corinth with the same kind of joy. Perhaps their situation might prompt him to sigh "O Lord," whereas when he considered the saints in Philippi he would burst out with a "Praise the Lord!" Why is this? This is because the saints in Philippi were one with Paul in his struggle for the advancement of the gospel. I believe even Brother Lee had such an experience among the churches here. Every time there was a crisis in the Lord's recovery, there was a particular church to which he could go to restore his ministry among the churches. We should all desire to be such a church with such a church life that can afford the apostle the ground to operate freely to carry out the ministry the Lord has committed to him for His Body's sake. When the servant of the Lord sees such a church, he knows he has not run in vain nor labored in vain. Paul was willing to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and priestly service of the Philippian saints' faith (2:17-18). The apostle and the church in Philippi were rejoicing together, and in such a situation, the apostle was joyful that he had such a church to be poured out upon. In other words, he was willing even to die for them to produce such a mutual satisfaction in Christ.

**THE APOSTLE PAUL DESIRED  
THE SAINTS TO BE FULL-GROWN**

Even in light of all of this, Paul still desired that the church would go on further. His desire was that the saints would become as full-grown as he was, having the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus (2:5). Having the apostle's mind eventually becomes the substantiating of our oneness. Oneness is not a matter of our emotions. It is a concrete matter. A young man may tell a young lady that he loves her, but it could simply be a declaration from his emotion. Our love for the Lord, however, must be something solid. Therefore the apostle tells the believers that he has counted all things to be loss, and has even suffered the loss of all things, on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ (3:7-8). From this word the saints should have been able to realize that anything else they loved and pursued would hurt them.

**Counting All Things Loss and Suffering the Loss**

To count all things loss is one thing, and to actually suffer the loss of all is another. I would like to have asked Paul, "Have you really suffered the loss of all things? Don't you still wear clothing? Do you not have a place to sleep and food to eat?" And he might have replied, "Yes, in fact, many times I have had better than average clothing, nice places to stay, and good food to eat." How is it then that he could say that he had suffered the loss of all things? I believe Paul would reply, "I have many things, but in all these things the Lord has the right to say no. I am not caught by anything other than Christ."

Besides counting all things loss and suffering the loss of all things, Paul also told the Philippians that he desired to be found in Christ (3:9). This is very high. Most often, we are found in our naturalness. We are often found in things far from Christ. If not for His mercy and restraining hand, I am afraid that we could even be found in many sinful things. But commonly we are found in the

things we find comfortable, or in things that are for our self-interest. Paul says that to substantiate this oneness, we should be found in Christ. Paul's desire was that he would always be found in Christ. When you touched him, you would touch Christ. It would not even be that he would be found in the Bible, for you can be in the Bible and still not be in Christ. His intent was to be in Christ. Then when the saints were in his presence, they were in Christ's presence, for he was found to be in Christ.

**To Know Christ, the Power of His Resurrection,  
and the Fellowship of His Sufferings**

Paul also told the Philippians that his desire was to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (3:10). Not many know what it is to experience the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, for it involves being led into a place of death, where we experience the finality of death and then, out of that hopeless place, the uplifting of the heavenly Christ in resurrection. That resurrection experience, however, is not for our glory, but for our endurance in the fellowship of His sufferings. And what are Christ's sufferings? They are the sufferings for our growth. If we live for the church, we must be willing to enter into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ for the church's sake. If we have the saints in your heart, we must be willing to be led away to endure the sufferings of Christ for their sake. If we have the saints in our heart, we must be prepared to experience Christ's death and resurrection for their sakes.

When we consider any saint in our care, we should realize that the Lord has a goal in view for that brother or sister. Whether we serve many churches or just a few saints, there is a suffering that accompanies the process of their growth. How about their usefulness? How about their growth unto maturity and function as the Lord desires? The Lord requires some to fellowship with Him through sufferings for the growth of the believers. Such sufferings

result in the building up of His Body (Col. 1:24). The real oneness is not only according to a shared knowing of Christ, but also according to a fellowship in the experience of His death and resurrection for the sake of those with us.

Therefore our feeling of happiness when a new one comes into the church life should be tempered by an awareness that we will have to enter into further fellowship in Christ's sufferings if they are to grow properly. As you invest yourself in this new one, however, and as your headaches over him increase, you and he begin to grow more, and this oneness increases. Eventually Paul's anticipation was that there would be a particular reward for the person who paid this kind of price, and he expected that he would attain to this "extra" resurrection (3:11). This was Paul's hope, to which God in Christ Jesus had called him upward (3:14).

### **Pursuing to Lay Hold of Christ**

Paul told the Philippians that he did one thing: he pursued (3:13-14). He sought to lay hold of that for which he also had been laid of by Christ Jesus (3:12). In a good sense, this pursuing of Paul was his persecuting of Christ ever since being captured by Christ. The Lord had gained him, and now he was intent upon gaining Christ. Do you ever pray in such a way to the Lord? "Lord, bless me. Be with me. Carry me on. Lead me. If You do not, I will not let You go until You do!" Or do you pray, "Well, Lord, if You cannot be with me today, that is all right; perhaps tomorrow You can bless me with Your presence—I need a break anyway." That is not what Christ has gained us for. He has laid hold of us so that we might pursue Him even to the extent that we persecute Him until He fully gains us.

Paul's desire for the believers was that they would all walk according to such a mind as he had. If not, then their oneness would be shallow and unsubstantiated. We must have the mind of the apostle, which is to gain Christ, win Christ, persecute Christ, and pursue Christ, with the goal of becoming so one with Christ.

The substance of oneness comes by this kind of pursuing. Oneness is experienced by a group of people when they are willing to die as a sacrifice for the Lord, when they are willing to pursue and gain Christ, when they operate according to Christ, and when they are fellowshiping in the sufferings of Christ. Without these, there is no real oneness. We must together become imitators of the apostle (3:17). This is the secret of oneness in the church life.



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## CHAPTER SIX

### **LIVING OUT THE ONENESS BY HOLDING THE HEAD AS THE RICH SUPPLY**

#### **COLOSSIANS IS FOCUSED ON CHRIST AS THE HEAD**

I have been considering why the matter of oneness is not mentioned in the book of Colossians. It has been said that what the Bible does not say is often as important as what it does say. When I first heard this statement as a young man, it made no sense to me, for there is no way to even begin to list the innumerable things the Bible doesn't say. But it is significant that the matter of oneness is spoken of strongly in Ephesians, and yet it is not mentioned at all in Colossians. Oneness is mentioned in Paul's other crucial epistles, such as Romans and Philippians, yet when you come to Colossians, which is one of Paul's richest and highest writings, it is seemingly absent.

The book of Acts records the raising up of the churches, and the epistles reveal how these churches should go on. The first epistle that follows Acts is Romans, and in Romans the basic plan of God's full salvation is laid out. After this basic epistle we encounter some problems in the churches. Remember that every local church is a "difficulty center," and if those who are in the leadership do not know how to handle the problems, even more difficulties will be generated. Even when the responsible ones do know what they are

doing, however, every church, in principle, is a mess. Therefore do not come to the church life with the thought that you will find something perfectly wonderful. Even though the situation may be messy, however, the saints are still your brothers and sisters, and you cannot abandon them, no matter how messy they may be.

Let me give you an illustration. When I know a guest is coming to my home for dinner, I will make sure that everything is tidy. If I anticipate that he might take a tour of my home, I can promise every bed will be made, and that all the dirty laundry will be tucked away. I would liken that to our church meetings, but that is not our church life. The church meetings tend to be beautiful, but the church life—my goodness! If you visit my home as a guest, we will do our best to make the house presentable. Two hours after your departure, however, rest assured that everything will revert back to its true form as the members of the household carry on together as a family. That is the typical church life, as compared to the typical church meeting. If you think that all the saints are so lovely and holy, then you must still be a “guest” in the church. It is when you wonder, “How can this possibly be the church?” that you know you have really entered into the church life.

First and Second Corinthians are the first epistles that address specific issues within a church. These epistles reveal that the saints in Corinth did not know how to be with one another properly, nor did they know how to be with the apostles who served them. In Galatians, it was evident that the saints did not know how to be with the Lord, for they were rejecting Christ in favor of religious practices. Then following these three troublesome books there come three very positive epistles. The book of Ephesians tells us that this messy church is actually the apple of God’s eye, something He desired and planned in eternity past and something He is completing in time as the focus of His divine economy. The church in your locality is the expression of this universal Body. Then the book of Philippians brings us to a situation where the apostle and the saints are properly related. This is in sharp contrast to 2 Corinthians, where the saints were questioning Paul’s apostleship even though he had



raised them up, nourished them, and labored for their growth. For some reason, the Corinthian believers did not know how to appreciate the apostles properly, while the Philippian believers had a very healthy relationship with Paul. First Corinthians can be seen to contrast with Ephesians, and Galatians stands in contrast to Colossians, for in Colossians the person of Christ is preeminent and above all.

### **Genuine Oneness Issues Forth As Believers Hold Christ as Head**

In this second set of epistles—Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—the Lord progressively reveals how the oneness within a church is practically carried out among the believers. Therefore Colossians should contain the furthest development on this matter. Instead, however, it does not even use the word oneness. How is this possible? It is possible because in Colossians we are told that Christ must be everything. When we have Christ, enjoy Christ, possess Christ, experience Christ, and hold to Christ as the Head, the genuine oneness spontaneously issues forth. With Christ there is nothing but oneness. Oneness comes from Christ.

Thus, Colossians does not talk about oneness, but it does tell us what true oneness is. Hence when you read this book, you do not find any talk about the practice of oneness, but what you do find is the reality of oneness. Colossians reveals to us that oneness can be obtained by enjoying and experiencing this Christ. Colossians has three sections, which describe where we are now, what we enjoy in the place where we are, and what our experience is with this enjoyment.

Let me illustrate in this way. Before I came to the United States, I thought I knew what the United States was, but my concept was primarily drawn from movies. From watching movies, I knew that in the United States money was relatively easy to come by, for it never seemed an issue. Then one day I acquired my visa and actually came to this country. At that point, I began to actually enjoy the United States. When I first came, in 1963, a soft drink cost ten

cents, and a hamburger was little more. Yet because of my background, I was shocked that Americans would spend so much money on a soft drink. After being here for 40 years, however, I myself might spend a couple of dollars on a cup of coffee and not even finish drinking it, because I have enjoyed the riches here. The substance of the United States has become my reality.

With the Lord it is the same. Before we were saved, we heard things about Jesus. We heard of His doings and His teachings, yet we were far away from Him. Then one day we actually entered into Him through faith. At that point we began to enjoy Christ firsthand, and we began to actually participate in His riches, because our place, or position, had changed. Now, based on our new position, we are able to enjoy Christ directly. No longer do the things we hear about Christ seem to refer to someone who is far away from us. Now we enjoy Him as those who have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13).

After becoming an American I learned something further. Yes, I found, the riches are here, but it is not the way the movies portrayed it. To enter into the riches in America, you have to labor. You do not find money blowing about on the streets, as those old movies seemed to imply. America is a rich country, but in order to experience the riches in this country you must develop your “talent.” In other countries, parents may forbid their children from pursuing certain vocations such as the arts, but in the United States there is the philosophy that everyone should be happy and pursue what is within him. In this sense, I also have become an American, for instead of pursuing “profitable” fields such as engineering or mathematics, as many Oriental parents urge their children to do, I received my degrees in literature and library science. As an American, I have not only enjoyed the riches here, but I have also experienced the freedom to pursue. I use this as an illustration of how Colossians depicts Christ to us. We should enjoy the riches of Christ as those who have been placed in Him, and we should experience pursuing Him as those who are now enjoying Him.

**Christ Is the Person of the One Organic Body  
to Bear the One Testimony**

As we have mentioned, Colossians does not mention the matter of oneness. Rather, Colossians focuses upon Christ as the Head. Paul realizes that Christ is the Person of the one organic Body to bear the one testimony. I am very happy today that, even though my body may have problems, my head is doing fine. As long as my head is all right, I will be able to operate, for that is where my person is located. When a person succumbs to something such as Alzheimer's disease, he or she still has a head, but it has lost its vital function. Praise the Lord that He as the Head never grows old. He is always new, and He is always fresh. When we hold Him as our Head in the church, there is always life, and there is always vitality. Praise the Lord! When we hold Christ as our Head, we have all that is necessary for us to live out the organic oneness of the Body (2:19).

**Christ Is the Unique Source, Element, Substance, Nature,  
Sphere, and Living Out of the Reality of Oneness**

Have you ever experienced being in spirit, and not being able to love the brothers? When you are in spirit, every saint becomes lovely. When Christ is strongly operating among us, genuine oneness is present. We simply love one another. Christ is the unique source, element, substance, nature, sphere, and living out of the reality of oneness. When Christ is absent, the source of our oneness is gone. Any other kind of source in the church life becomes a source of division.

Our behavior as Christians is very interesting. When we see another believer, we are always happy, because we both have Christ. After discovering that each is a believer, however, the second topic that sometimes is raised often brings in division instead of oneness. Instead of asking about one's experience of Christ, the question arises as to which church he attends. Immediately Christ as the

source of oneness is lost, and the sweetness of meeting another believer disappears. When you encounter other believers, do not talk about things other than Christ. Speak of your current enjoyment of Christ in the word. Fellowship about what you have experienced of Christ through your prayer. Do not seek out the things that differ. There is no need to ask what version of the Bible you each read, or discuss what kind of music your group uses. Realize that it is Christ who is the substance of your oneness. If a believer loves Christ, pray with him. Share your Christ. When we are in Christ, with Christ, enjoying Christ, and living out Christ, spontaneously we are one.

### **The Position of the Saints in the Living Out of Oneness**

Paul wrote in Colossians 1:9, “Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” According to this verse the brothers were praying that the saints would realize that their position had changed, and that they were now qualified to be filled with the full knowledge of God’s economy. Paul also wrote to the Colossians that the Father had qualified them for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light (1:12). As those who appreciate that our place has changed, we must know that our new standing means that we can know God’s will, and we are now able to possess the allotted portion God has granted to us. Even more, as those whose position God has changed, we are able to conquer the enemy, for we have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love (1:13). This is similar to my being able to enjoy something much higher by leaving my poor country and entering into the United States of America.

Many professors are frustrated with their students when they do not seem interested in laying hold of what the professors have acquired. Consider how much more important it is to lay hold of

God's economy. Therefore the apostle is very burdened for us. We, who are common people, are able to understand and enjoy God's economy. We are able to enter into the full knowledge of God's will. God has allotted to us a portion of Christ to enjoy! Not only so, but we also can now defeat Satan as we stand in our new position in the kingdom of the Son of God's love. I hope many, from the very beginning of their Christian experience, will realize that they as believers in Christ can enter into these four things. As believers we can know God's will, possess Christ with all the saints, conquer Satan, and enjoy being one with the Son of God's love. This should be our life. Fifty years ago I began enjoying these matters as one placed in Christ, and today I am continuing to know, possess, conquer, and enjoy.

**Christ, the Son of the Father's Love,  
Is the Unique Substance  
for the Saints to Live in the Body Life**

The unique substance for the saints' living in the Body life is Christ, the Son of the Father's love. As the image of the invisible God (1:15a), the Firstborn of all creation (1:15b), the One who is before all things (1:17a), and the One in whom all things cohere (1:17b), Christ is the preeminent One in creation. As the image of the invisible God, He is the expression of God even in the visible creation. He is the One through whom all things were made, and He is the Firstborn of all things. If you appreciate a flower or a bird, you have to realize that the Firstborn is Christ. Eventually we should realize that anything without Christ is devoid of value. If there is any value in the universe, it owes itself to Christ. All creation is in Christ, through Christ, and eventually unto Christ.

Christ is also the preeminent One in the new creation. He is the Head of the Body, the church (1:18a). In other words, Christ actually is the Body. A body can be a body only because of its head. Once the headship is absent, a body becomes a corpse. It is Christ who is the life and reality of the church. Besides this, He is the

Firstborn from among the dead (1:18b). We were all dead in our offenses and sins. Because we were dead we had no sensation of life, and we had no reaction to the things of God. Then one day we were made alive. This happened because He was made alive first. We are the continuation of His resurrection, but He is the One who deserves the first place in all things, and He will have the first place in all things. He must have the first place in how you cut your hair, how you buy your clothes, and especially how you practice the church life.

In the new creation, Christ is also the One in whom all the fullness is pleased to dwell (1:19). There is no “fullness” in the old creation, for only in the new creation is Christ’s person expressed. In the old creation one can see Christ’s power and wisdom, but in the new creation the fullness of Christ’s person is manifested. In other words, in the new creation all of the divine attributes of Christ will be exhibited. As an example, since coming to this country, my weight has nearly doubled. What has happened? Don’t blame me; blame the rich food I have enjoyed. I have participated in all of the many riches here, so I have become something of the fullness of this country. However, Christ can say that He enjoys and embodies all the riches of the Triune God. He is the full expression of all that God is. In Christ the fullness finally has found a place to dwell. In Christ, God is pleased to be fully expressed.

In Colossians, Christ is not only the preeminent One in the old and new creations, but He is also for us to experience. In this regard, we are told that Christ has reconciled all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in the heavens (1:20). Before coming to speak tonight, I ate dinner alone, which is rare. As I ate, I had the opportunity to reflect and to consider things. One of the things I felt convicted by was my unworthiness. I am a sinner, am I not? Furthermore, I am full of shortcomings. After 50 years in the Lord’s recovery, at least I can say I am still here, but when I think of all that Paul accomplished and experienced in his years of service, I feel I have come far short in comparison. Furthermore, when I look at all you brothers, I also am aware that many of you come

late to the meeting, or with no exercise of the spirit, or preoccupied with the condition of the stock market, and so on. So before this gathering I prayed, “Lord, I am so ashamed.” Yet the Lord’s response was, “You have been reconciled to Me through My cross. I do not see any problem. In fact, I am very happy with you.” This is what it means to be reconciled. You may see yourself as ugly, yet He sees you as being beautiful. He even reconciled the heavens to Himself, for after Satan’s fall the heavens became contaminated. Therefore even the heavens required Christ’s reconciling work.

### **THE OPERATION IN THE LIVING OUT OF THE ONENESS**

As the One who reconciles all things to Himself, Christ is also the One who will present us holy, without blemish, and without reproach before Him (1:22). If I wanted to present one of you to myself, I could only do so according to my capacity. I can only raise up someone to a level that I myself have attained. Christ works with us according to His unlimited capacity. In order for Him to operate in us in His unlimitedness, however, we have to continue in the faith and be grounded and steadfast in Christ, with Christ, and unto Christ, who is the hope of the gospel (1:23). Hopefully we all would tell the Lord, “In the church life, I would like to focus on nothing besides You, Lord. You must have the preeminence among us as we practice the church life.”

What is the operation for the living out of the oneness portrayed in Colossians? First, Colossians reveals that the living out of the oneness comes about through the suffering of the apostles. Second, the living out of the oneness comes about through the struggling of the apostles. Third, it comes about through the living of the saints. Finally, the living that produces the oneness issues out of the saints being together.

### **The Suffering of the Lord's Servants**

The Lord told Paul that his suffering in his ministry filled up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the Body's sake (1:24). If you were to ask the Lord whether He alone was sufficient for the needs of the Body, He might answer, "I am all-wise, all-mighty, and all-preeminent, but I am not all-sufficient, for I need someone to suffer and pay the price for My Body's sake. I died so that the church could be produced. Now I need some willing ones to suffer so the church can be built up." This may seem surprising to many. After all, is not Christ's death enough for the church's building up? For redemption, Christ's death alone is indeed sufficient. For the building up of the church, however, it is not sufficient. In the church life, the serving ones must learn to bear with misunderstanding and even slander so that the saints might be built up. The suffering of the serving ones builds up the church.

The suffering exercise of the servants of God involves many things. Paul said that it was given to him to complete the word of God (1:25). In order for this oneness to be realized, the serving saints must suffer, and they must struggle in their person for the fulfillment of the word in their experience. The word "complete" refers to something subjective, not merely to something objective. It is not merely, "I finished writing down what God asked me to write." It is also, "I write what I have experienced and have come to know myself." Serving ones need to have the word fulfilled in their experience so that they may minister the word and fulfill their ministry.

Serving ones also have to work with all the saints, teaching and admonishing them while affirming the fact that Christ is in them as the hope of glory (1:26-28). Those who serve must encourage the saints when they seem hopeless, because Christ is in them as the hope of glory, and they must work with the saints point by point in their lives. If you want the saints to grow, you must be prepared to suffer, for you will have to labor to make up their lack and to fulfill the word. To work with anyone, even the seemingly perfect ones,



is a suffering. Every brother and every sister has problems. You have to focus them on Christ, who is in them as their hope of glory, and work with them, teaching, admonishing, and even warning them (1:28).

Should a brother fall in love with an unbeliever, for instance, the serving one has to warn him, “Brother, we are not God, and we cannot tell you whom to marry. But we can tell you that, according to the principle in the Bible, we should not become unequally yoked by marrying someone who is not a fellow believer.” To teach, admonish, and warn the saints so that they may grow in a healthy way is a suffering. If we do not know how to suffer for the saints in this way, they may only become good churchgoers. Saints will not be perfected if you do not know how to fulfill the word of God and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His Body’s sake. If you desire Christ to be the reality of the church as its oneness, you must practice such a life.

### **The Struggling of the Lord’s Servants**

Paul indicates that the serving brothers must not only suffer, but also struggle for the Body life. The apostle’s struggling was according to the operation of God within him (1:29; 2:1). He suffered for the saints’ growth, but he struggled for their building up. To grow is one thing, and to be built up is another. One’s growth comes more easily than one’s building up. This is why we need some that know how to struggle for the saints to be knit together in love (2:2).

When you suffer on behalf of an individual, you are usually aware of the issue you are confronting. When you struggle on behalf of the saints together, however, in principle you do not always know what you are doing or going up against, and that is why we say this is a matter of struggling rather than suffering. Someone who is struggling tries this thing and that, for he is determined to go forward at any cost and do whatever it takes for the church to be knit together in love and to enter into the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ. Therefore the serving ones must be pre-

pared both to suffer on behalf of the saints individually, and to struggle on their behalf corporately.

### **The Living of the Saints according to Christ**

Eventually, the living out of the oneness in the church is accomplished in the living of the saints. In order to carry out such a living, the saints must first realize what the world is, and avoid being carried off by it. According to Paul, the world can be identified as a philosophy, which is in turn an empty deceit (2:8). The elements of the world and the traditions of men are embodied in man's philosophies. Philosophies and traditions frustrate us from living in the oneness of the Body, for they distract and carry us off from the oneness.

Sometimes it is suggested that we should hold various classes in our hall in order to attract people for the gospel's sake. Perhaps some Chinese language classes could be offered for children, and the Lord could reach some of the parents. If some are burdened to do this, they should feel free to do so, but we should also take care that no element of the world is brought into the church life by such a practice. Without realizing it, the church could suddenly find itself focused on teaching children instead of on Christ.

In order to live this life, we also need to be aware of the danger of being carried away by the things God has ordained in the past, such as the need for circumcision, which was troubling some in Colossae (2:11, 13). When religion creeps in, we lose Christ as our focus. We must hold to Christ and Christ alone, or religious practices will divide us.

The church in Jerusalem initially experienced a wonderful church life. Recall how Peter told the lame one, "Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I have, this I give to you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). Peter had nothing else to boast in but Christ alone. He couldn't give the poor, crippled man any material thing, but he could give him Christ. Because Christ was the focus of Peter's living, there could be such a

testimony, and there could be such a healing.

Perhaps 20 years later, Paul arrived in Jerusalem and met with James, the brother of the Lord. There he was told that there were tens of thousands in the church who were zealous after the law, and he was persuaded to do something to convince the church there that he was also supportive of the law (Acts 21:18-27). I do not know why Paul went along with that, but if that had been accomplished rather than interrupted, I believe we would feel the ramifications of Paul's failure even today. My point is that the church in Jerusalem had changed. Perhaps the majority there felt that only those of Jesus' family should rule the church. After James the apostle (not the brother of the Lord) was martyred, many of those who had a strong testimony, like Philip, left Jerusalem and spread the gospel elsewhere, leaving the church somewhat open for the religious ones to rise up. History tells us that the situation in Jerusalem eventually became very chaotic, because they insisted upon keeping the old religious traditions. This is why Paul warned the saints in Colossae to beware of the elements of the world and the traditions of men, even though they may be something of the top religion ordained by God.

Then, on the positive side, the saints need to realize that they are not only buried, but also raised up together with Christ (2:12-13). Therefore, no believer needs to abide in such things as what not to touch, what not to eat, or what days to observe (2:16, 20-22). For instance, when the previous president was in office, the current president could do nothing but abide by the presiding president's orders and policies. Once the new president took office, however, he was no longer bound to abide by the past president's policies. The Colossian believers used to be under the rule of what God had ordained in the past, but now they had entered into resurrection. When I am in resurrection, everything is under my feet. Why should I keep this practice or that law? Christ is in charge now, and I am with Him in His resurrection. How Christ now rules is how I rule. How Christ exercises is how I exercise. Such a living matches Christ's desire.

We are now alive in Christ. We are living unto Christ, and He is alive to us. All the other things, even though they may be positive, are but shadows; Christ is the reality (2:16-17). The Sabbath may have been good, but it was only a shadow of Christ. The feasts may have been good, but they also were but shadows of Christ. Christ is the real Sabbath, and He is the real feast. The One whom they foreshadowed has come. I enjoy Christ now as my true Sabbath; I am totally at rest when I am in Him. Oneness should issue forth when we enter into the realization of Christ as the body of all the shadows. We do not need anything other than Christ. When we are at rest in Christ, we are not occupied with what promotes division among us.

### **Holding the Head, the Body Is Knit Together and Grows**

When we live a life in resurrection with Christ, avoiding the worldly things and dropping the religious things, we will find ourselves spontaneously living a life in oneness. As we hold the Head, all the Body is knit together and grows with the growth of God (2:19). In such a living, the bountiful supply of Christ comes through the joints (the ministering brothers) and the sinews (the rest of the members). This is a beautiful picture, for neither the joints nor the sinews attached to the joints can function independently of each other. How wonderful the Body life is! In this living, the members and the gifted ones function together to supply the Body.

As we hold the Head and receive the supply of Christ through the joints and the sinews, we also must seek the things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God (3:1). In the church life, do not look at anything other than Christ and the things pertaining to Christ. Then, as those who enjoy Christ as our life, one day we will be manifested with Him in glory (3:4). Enjoy the strength in the Body today, seek after the things where Christ is, and await His return. This is the message of the book of Colossians.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# **LIVING OUT THE REALITY OF THE BODY BY KEEPING THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT**

### **AN INTRODUCTORY WORD**

What is the difference between the oneness of the Body and the oneness of the Spirit? I think it is important to examine this question, because among the churches the phrase “the oneness of the Body” is used with different understandings. The phrase, “keep the oneness of the Body,” is not found in the Bible, but that does not mean that this oneness is not a fact (see 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12, 20; etc.). Witness Lee used 1 Peter 5:5 when referring to the oneness of the Body. This verse implies that the practice of the oneness is very much a local matter, for it is primarily in a locality that the younger ones learn to submit to the older ones. In 1 Peter 5:5, both the oneness of the Spirit and the oneness of the Body are evident. The saints share the same Spirit, and thus there is something of a practical oneness, something of care, of affection, and mutual accommodation and understanding, which is the spontaneous issue of the organic fact of the oneness of the Spirit.

### **ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT**

When Witness Lee spoke on the seven “ones” in Ephesians 4:4-6, he began with the charge to endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit in Ephesians 4:3, which is immediately followed by “one

Body and one Spirit” in verse 4. It is obviously true that the oneness of the Spirit is closely related to the fact that there is one Body. In this series of verses, what begins with keeping the oneness of the Spirit concludes with God Himself. For our practice and living, we have one Body, one Spirit, and one hope. For our substance and existence we have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. The eventual issue of all these ones is that we have one God and Father of all. But why does Paul say, “Keep the oneness of the Spirit,” instead of, “Keep the oneness of the Body”? It would seem more logical to charge the saints to keep the oneness of the Body, for there should only be one Body in practice.

Paul must have had a reason to write Ephesians as he did. He closely associated the Spirit with the Body in these two verses (4:3-4). Consider the alternatives. If the Spirit is stressed more than the Body, we could become overly spiritual. For instance, if Paul had written, “Keep the oneness of the Spirit,” without also stressing the Body, we might become spiritual floaters, with little regard to the practical building up of the believers. Those who stress the experience of the Spirit while ignoring the Body are actually like this. If, on the other hand, Paul had written, “Keep the oneness of the Body,” without any stress on the Spirit, we might become very institutionally minded. If we stress the oneness of the Body without also emphasizing the Spirit’s role, we could easily be transformed into a movement. That is why we must have a Biblical understanding of how to apply the term, “the oneness of the Body.” In the Body, our activity must originate from the Spirit in our spirit, rather than from something outward. In order to have the oneness of the Body in a proper way, we need to take care of the Spirit. As we are diligently keeping the oneness of the Spirit, we also need to have the Body in view.

For instance, whenever you exercise or experience your mingled spirit, you must understand that the Spirit in your spirit is for the Body. You cannot just love your spirit in your kitchen, thinking the Lord’s work in you is only for you. As one who is endeavoring to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, you

must be acutely aware of the one Body, for apart from the Body the oneness of the Spirit can never be realized. The substantiation of the oneness of the Spirit is Christ's one Body. In your Christian life you can never depart from these two, nor can you separate them. If there is to be an expression of the oneness of the Body, it can only come out of the oneness of the Spirit, for the Spirit is the source of all things spiritual, and the Lord's testimony is something spiritual.

### **THE ONE BODY AND THE ONENESS OF THE BODY**

These two phrases, "the one Body" and "the oneness of the Body," should not be thought of as being equivalent. They do not mean the same thing. The one body is an organic entity. When you look at the various saints, you see how we all differ outwardly. The fact that we all love each other is evidence of the organic reality of the Body. In a family the brothers may fight, but they will defend each other when threatened by an outside foe. Why do they do this? They are of the same family. It is the same in the Body. We all are one family, an organic entity produced in Christ's resurrection. In the Body, therefore, there is nothing negative, for the cross of Christ has dealt with everything. In the Body of Christ there is no nationality, no culture or race, no young or old, nor anything other than Christ.

In our experience, the organic Body of Christ is substantiated by the work of the Spirit. We were all regenerated in Christ's resurrection, and the Spirit who gave birth to us in our time and place is bringing forth the Body. Positionally, the Body is something heavenly and in resurrection, but in our experience the Spirit within us substantiates it. Therefore if we do not have the Spirit, we do not have the Body.

The purpose of our practical oneness in the Body is that God can carry out His economy. That is why we are here in the churches. We must be in resurrection and in spirit, and we must realize that the reason we are practicing the Body life is so that God can work

out His economy. Therefore, when we speak of the oneness of the Body, we must not forget the goal of our existence, which is to give God a way to accomplish His economy among us.

### **The Oneness of the Body Expressed in the Churches**

The oneness of the Body comes about when the reality of the one Body is lived out and expressed in the churches. When someone walks into a gathering of believers where people of many different backgrounds are singing and praising together, they see the oneness of the Body. The oneness of the Body is the practical living out of the one Body. However, since the phrase “oneness of the Body” is not mentioned in the Bible, we have to be careful when we use such a phrase. I would offer that we know we have the oneness of the Body when we are organic, in Spirit, in life, have Christ as our Person, and have the very operation of Christ among us. If we can say we have all of these, then I believe we can be confident that we are experiencing the Body as we ought to.

Notice that these criteria have nothing to do with any issue such as what translation of the Bible we should read, how we should dress, or what materials we should use for our spiritual nourishment. If we raise issues about these kinds of things, the oneness is offended. For instance, someone may come to the meeting, and I may ask him, “Brother, don’t you have a better shirt than that? Where is your tie?” Issues come in very easily among us. Sometimes when we come together, instead of being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3), we check with each other concerning whether or not we are using the “proper” method or material. By doing this, we raise issues that can damage the oneness. The more we do not make issues, the better. If someone only has a King James Bible, I can still read the Bible with him, even though I use the Recovery Version, can I not? And if someone does not use the same terminology as I do, can I not still pray with him?



I feel that one secret to living in the oneness of the Body is not to seek out what might uncover the things that differ. In my family, for instance, I tried not to know everything about what my children might have done wrong. My wife, on the other hand, promised them rewards for maintaining a certain standard of behavior, which required that they report to her about their conduct. I would rather not know all these kinds of things. If I inquired into everything you did in your daily life, I might find it difficult to fellowship with you. In many matters, for the sake of fellowship, it is better not to know.

When we keep the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the one Body will spontaneously be testified and expressed, and the oneness of the Body will be experienced by us. It is not a matter of effort in the sense that we must determine to be one. It is not that I must act a certain way to be one with others. When the one Body is substantiated in the Spirit, automatically the oneness of the Body becomes our experience, for the one Body is an organic fact made real in us through the Spirit.

### **Not Allowing Something Institutional to Replace the Spirit**

Some in church history have, out of their desire to keep the oneness of the Body, established something that led into organization. A. B. Simpson, for example, saw the Body and realized that denominationalism was a sin that divided the Body. Thus, he founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance. The good thing is that he realized that there should be no headquarters, which is why they called themselves an alliance. They tried to function as a fellowship, but after Brother Simpson passed away, what he established did become an organization. Today in the C&MA there is much administrative activity, but very little left of the riches given them by the Lord through His servant. What was of administration grew until it replaced what was of the Spirit. The same thing happened among the Plymouth Brethren. Eventually, in both movements, what was of the Lord was replaced by what was of organization. We

should never allow something of institution to creep in among us in the name of keeping the oneness of the Body.

### **Not Making Issues in the Body**

If we have the testimony of oneness in view, and yet have an improper understanding of the phrase “the oneness of the Body,” we may also easily fall into forms, rituals, doctrines, practices, and terminologies. For instance, in the name of keeping the oneness of the Body, we may feel we have to say “morning revival” instead of “morning watch,” “advance” instead of “retreat,” and so on. What is the difference, in reality? A dead person who advances remains dead, yet a living person can even retreat in life. Instead of nourishing one another and caring for one another in the Spirit, however, we may use such terms to gauge others’ oneness in the Body. For instance, to some the Recovery Version is a “gold bar” with the real gold to give to others, yet I am afraid it also sometimes becomes a bar to hit people over the head with. Should we not read the Recovery Version with its notes? Of course we should, and that is not the issue. The issue is how we use it. If we use something to check others with in the name of oneness, we will end up administering wounds instead of life. We should not accuse others of being “off” from practicing oneness along these lines. Instead of judging others, we should care for them according to the Spirit and life. Invite a person for dinner, and spend time to explain to him the new way, for example, if this is what you are burdened about. Then it is a feeding and not a beating.

For some reason, we like to use terms for what we enjoy. For instance, if I tell a certain brother, “I open my home to the saints,” he may reply, “Then you are practicing the new way.” And if I say, “I am reading the Bible with a brother, and sometimes we pray over a verse,” another will tell me, “You are pray-reading.” Then if I say I spend some time in the morning with the Lord, I am told, “Oh, you are having morning revival.” Eventually I learn a lot of terms, and even discover that I should say “morning revival” in-

stead of “morning watch.” If we are not careful, brothers, the practice of using such terms can result in our becoming a society that is very difficult for other believers to relate to. Instead of feeling one with us, they will tend to feel that we are very different, in spite of all that we share in common.

### **Not Replacing Christ as the Living Person and Reality of the Body**

If our understanding is improper, our emphasis on the oneness of the Body can lead to many things that will unintentionally and unconsciously replace Christ as the living person and reality of the Body. One brother I know of was brought into the lead not because of his spiritual stature, but because of his business background. Although he had little spiritual understanding, he was able to pick up enough of our spiritual terminology to function among the brothers. Because someone felt it might be good to bring in someone with expertise in management for the sake of the oneness of the Body, Christ was replaced. Anything other than Christ can cause the God-ordained administration of a local church to be replaced, and God’s administrative arrangement in a locality has much to do with the actual practice of this oneness.

Even spiritual things may not necessarily usher us to the present Christ. We should be aware of the possibility that they may bring us only to those things themselves and leave us short of Christ. For instance, Brother Lee’s ministry is rich and should bring us to Christ, but it is even possible for someone using his ministry to get caught with something other than Christ, as when someone uses something he ministered to judge others in the name of oneness. If we feel we must be in a particular “flow” in order to practice the oneness of the Body, something has come in that has unconsciously replaced Christ Himself among us. If we feel pressured to come up with proofs that we are in the oneness of the Body, then we are off from the oneness of the Body. We must focus on Christ.

The age of the church covers at least two thousand years. How

many believers have there been, in addition to those who are alive now? I believe there have been many millions of believers. But we live in time, and to us today, many of those who make up the Body are gone. John Nelson Darby, for instance, is no longer present with us. His riches have become ours, but he is no longer with us in person. The practice of the oneness of the Body involves those who are present with us today. Through all the churches on the earth today, the Body is expressed.

### **Administration Local, Communion Universal**

As revealed in the first chapters of Revelation, all the local churches are golden lampstands. From what was written there, it is evident that all the churches differed in both positive and negative aspects. The church in Smyrna was a suffering church, full of those who were ready to be martyred. The church in Ephesus was diligent and faithfully laboring, but they had left their first love. The last mentioned, the church in Laodicea, had become lukewarm although they still held to the proper teachings. Outwardly they were all golden lampstands, and they all expressed Christ. But in actuality they were very different, for each answered to Christ according to a very different set of circumstances. Every local church answers to Christ alone. Therefore every local church must be interacting and fellowshiping with Christ and must take Christ as its unique center, Head, and content.

Suppose I, as a brother from Smyrna, visited Ephesus and asked whether they were practicing and experiencing the same things we were. In contrast to such examining, the Lord tolerated the differences among these localities. Do not think He was only addressing the future history of the church; He was also speaking to those present seven localities. The Lord did not say that they all had to do the same thing; the Lord allowed all seven to have their distinctive exercise, although He certainly adjusted each church individually. Many of the things being practiced were not of Him, so He pruned them.

The local church and the ministry of the local church cannot be replaced, although no local church can be autonomous. As Brother Lee wrote, “Administration local, each answering to the Lord, communion universal, upheld in one accord” (*Hymns*, #824). In spite of the fact that each has a local administration that answers to Christ, no local church can be autonomous. The seven churches to which John wrote in Revelation had to fellowship together and work with one another. When we talk about one Body, however, the local administration seems to disappear in the eyes of some. According to their kind of model, every local church must be the same, doing the same things and working in the same way. Such a model is not in the Bible. What the Lord is doing in each local church must be honored.

When the oneness of the Body is spoken of, the focus must be on Christ, not on outward practices. When Christ is gone, the Body is gone, even if all the churches practice the same thing. Apart from having Christ as our unique focus, we have no way to experience the oneness of the Body. When the churches come together to fellowship, they should enjoy what they share in common, rather than search out differences among themselves. All the churches enjoy Christ, love the word, and preach the gospel, for instance. If we stress these with Christ as the substance, then the oneness of the Body is expressed among us.

Because the members of the Body are its constituents, when the oneness of the Body is exercised, it should be for the profit of the members. In other words, anything a church does should have the profit of the saints in view. Even though one brother in a church may operate very differently from another, as long as both operate for the saints’ profit, they are each operating according to the oneness of the Body. There is no right or wrong way in this regard. Whatever the saints do in your locality for your profit is right. Every decision that the elders make in their locality should have the profit of the saints of that locality in view, rather than something else.

My wife and I operate in a very different manner in our household, but I can assure you that we both operate with our children’s

welfare in view. When a meal is prepared, it is particularly for their profit, not ours. No good mother disregards her children and just cooks what she herself likes to eat. A good elder “cooks” what is good for all the “children.” The saints in a local church are not profited when elders only serve what they themselves appreciate with little regard for the actual needs of the saints. The elders exist for the profit of the saints in their locality.

Because the local churches are the expression of the Body of Christ, the oneness of the Body must take the local church as its basic unit. This is Watchman Nee’s word. It was he who said that when considering the oneness of the Body, you must take the local church as the basic unit. Therefore it cannot be that the matter of the oneness should ever be promoted in such a way that it produces divisions within a local church. Thus, someone who is for the oneness of the Body should never do anything that might result in division within a church. In Corinth, some said they were of Paul, some of Peter, some of Apollos, and some of Christ. That was terrible, for it divided that church. I am afraid a similar thing could still happen today. Is Christ divided? We are of Christ, not of anyone else.

### **The Fellowship of the Churches**

Then in practice, because there is only one Body, all the local churches must have fellowship with one another to bear the testimony of the oneness of the Body. Christ is the Head of the entire Body; He fills all and in all (Eph. 1:23). Brother Lee tells us that this means that Christ is all the members and Christ is in every member. So when He is the One walking in the midst of the churches, shining and trimming, He is actually the One in all the members, speaking in them, encouraging them, admonishing them, shining in them, and calling them. Therefore Christ and only Christ should be the essence, element, life, vitality, person, and operation of the Body. There should be nothing “extra.” Sometimes we like being associated with a certain prominent brother. We should not allow those

who serve the Lord to replace the Lord in our hearts. Paul's labor was to betroth the saints as pure virgins unto Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). The leading ones in the Lord's recovery fight for our purity towards Christ. If we would honor them, we should only care for Christ.

**Ministry for the Churches,  
Not the Churches for the Ministry**

The workers with their ministry are for the local churches, yet the local churches are not for the workers' ministry. Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were very strong about this. The ministry is for the churches; the churches are not for the ministry. The Lord has raised up workers to raise up the churches, and the churches must be properly related to the co-workers laboring among them. The brothers who labor among the churches do not seek their own gain, but the spiritual gain of those they serve. They labor to bring Christ to the churches and the churches to Christ. Therefore the churches should honor them. For their part, the co-workers should never demand or seek recognition for their labor, but it is fitting that we should appreciate their labor on the Lord's behalf.

A local church is not for itself alone, but rather for the Body of Christ, that is, it is for other local churches. The church in Columbus should be able to say, "Our church is for the church in Cincinnati, the church in Mansfield, and the church in Louisville." You should love other local churches as well as your own. We should practice caring for other churches. The churches in Ohio should care about the churches in all the other places. If we can all declare, "I am for the churches in Illinois, the churches in California, the churches in..." isn't this sweet? We are in our local church, but we are for all the local churches.

**The Spirit Alone Is the Essence,  
Element, and Substance of the Body**

When we do things in the name of the oneness of the Body, we must realize that nothing other than the Spirit can substantiate the Body. When we use the term “oneness of the Body,” however, we often have in mind a oneness in activity. Our following of certain activities can provide a form of oneness, but whether or not that form of oneness possesses organic reality depends upon how we carry those activities. Let’s suppose we are all in chapter two of Ephesians. We all read the chapter and the footnotes, and we use the Life-studies to further help us. Eventually we all are charged to construct an outline based upon what we have gained. Is this organic or not? It depends upon who we are. If we are organic, all such activities can be helpful. If we are activity-oriented, however, and only do things because other churches are doing them, then we are not organic. The Spirit alone is the essence, element, and substance of the Body. Keeping the oneness of the Spirit leads us into all things that are positive.

What are the things that are positive? The things mentioned in Ephesians 4:4-6. One Body, one Spirit, and one hope of your calling refer to the practical living of the Body. One Lord, one faith, and one baptism are the contents of the church life, which eventually lead us to one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all. Therefore by keeping the oneness of the Spirit and by the one Body with the one Lord, we are eventually brought into the reality of the one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. In these three verses all three Greek genders are present. “Lord” and “God and Father” are masculine, indicating something firm and unshakable. That there is only one Lord and one God and Father is never an issue that is challenged among believers. “Body,” “Spirit,” and “baptism” are all neuter nouns; they are neither male nor female in gender. They are simply spiritual truths. “Hope” and “faith,” however, are feminine nouns. Anything that is feminine is hard to handle. Are not sisters more easily offended than brothers,



in general? They are more delicate. Thus when we handle the matters of hope and faith, we have to be delicate. Out of the seven items mentioned, faith and hope are the two that we must primarily focus upon when the oneness is to be practiced.

### **One Faith and One Hope**

Faith receives and substantiates the spiritual things and is related to what we believe. Hope reaps and partakes of what faith receives and substantiates. This is how Brother Lee defined these two words. Hope, as that which reaps and partakes, is very much related to our living. The one hope referred to in Ephesians 4 denotes Christ formed in us for our transfiguration. When the Lord returns, we will be transfigured. We should not have other hopes besides this one. Even a positive thing such as the hope that fifteen churches might be raised up through the church in our place should not be our hope, for even that can lead to disagreements. If, however, we all are possessed by the realization that Christ is coming back, we will take care that we grow for that day. There can be no argument about our need to possess more Christ as our hope.

If the one hope denotes Christ being formed in us for our transfiguration, what does one faith refer to? It refers to Christ's person and work. Among us we have only one faith, which means that we have only one Christ as our Savior who has accomplished all things. Any other element added in will become the cause of division. When you fellowship with other believers, try to focus upon Christ and His work as the faith you hold in common. Avoid bringing up any other matters, such as where they meet, how they do things, or other matters.

Even among us we may ask what others hold to in addition to this one faith. For instance, I may inquire into your manner of morning revival. "Do you have morning revival in the Malaysian way, the Hall 13 way, or some other way?" If we find we both do it the same way, we feel we are one, but if not, then we are not in one accord. Brothers, let us focus upon Christ and His work as the one

faith. It is more difficult to maintain the one faith among us than it is to maintain the one hope. We all look to Christ's coming and we all know we must gain Christ for that day. There is no argument about our one hope. There is much that is brought in besides the one faith, however. When we discover differences in what we believe, such as what we must practice, then we are unable to be one with those who do not believe as we do. Whenever we add something more than Christ and His work into what we hold to as our faith, our fellowship with others can easily be broken. To keep the oneness of the Spirit, we must not deviate from Christ.

### **Keeping the Operation of the Spirit**

To keep the oneness of the Spirit is also to keep the operation of the Spirit. The Spirit is not only the regenerating Spirit, but also the life-giving Spirit, the supplying, transforming, anointing, leading, and liberating Spirit. When we enjoy the operation of the Spirit, oneness automatically issues forth. When the Spirit is carrying out something in one city, all the other churches should learn from that place what they have experienced. To recognize, appreciate, and enter into the fellowship of the Spirit's operation among the churches or within a church is to experience the oneness of the Body practically.

### **THE PRACTICE OF THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT WITH THE APOSTLES PETER, PAUL, AND JAMES AND THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

When you read about Paul and Peter in the New Testament, you find that they had a mutual respect for one another. At one point they even agreed that Peter would be among those who would go to the Jews, and that Paul would go to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9). It seemed, however, that Paul never held up his part of this agreement, for he was always going first to the synagogues to reason with the Jews about Jesus (see Acts 17:1-3). Peter never accused

him of breaking their agreement, for he never viewed the Jews as his “turf.” In fact, Peter also broke his agreement, for he worked among the Gentiles after his release from jail. For a number of years he labored outside of Jerusalem. Personally, I believe he was among the Gentiles. How else could his name have become an issue among the Corinthians, along with the names of Paul and Apollos? They both, however, seemed very happy with their “breach of contract.”

We may ask then, why did they “break their contract” concerning whom they preached to? Most likely they would reply, “Our oneness is not according to some agreement. Our oneness is of Christ.” When Paul heard that Peter was getting Gentiles saved, he probably responded, “Hallelujah!” And when Peter heard that Paul was preaching to the Jews, he probably felt gladness and joy, not frustration and annoyance. We should have the same feeling among ourselves. We should not care for our “turf” or our way.

Paul later publicly rebuked Peter for acting in a certain way before some came from James in Jerusalem, and then quickly trying to adjust the situation to appear more acceptable in their eyes (Gal. 2:11-21). Apparently the brothers in Jerusalem felt that Jews should not eat with Gentiles even in the church, and Peter was concerned about having to face such accusations when he returned there. So Paul told Peter, perhaps even as he was carrying his plate of food from one table to another, “Hold it right there!” And Peter had to take it. As far as we know, Paul never apologized to him about it, either. Perhaps after Paul spoke to him in front of everybody like that, Peter said, “Paul, thank you. You are right. Let’s go eat with the Gentiles.” That was quite a learning. We know that many years later Peter wrote of Paul in his own epistle in a very loving and positive way. The degree to which these two brothers were constituted with the humanity of Jesus is amazing.

How Peter reacted to the news that “some came from James” (Gal. 2:12) is a real indictment of James. Paul did not write that “some came from Jerusalem.” The trouble started when some came “from James.” Their coming introduced disharmony into a

scene of harmony. It is evident that Paul and James did not share the same understanding of God's economy. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem with the contribution for the needy saints there, he wasn't even received by James immediately (Acts 17:17-18). The second day after he arrived in Jerusalem, some brothers took Paul to see James and the rest of the elders there. James and the brothers with him probably took some time to consult amongst themselves as to what they should do with this man. One well-known Biblical scholar, F. F. Bruce, felt that James and those with him had the full intention to use the church in Jerusalem as a headquarters to control all the local churches, and they saw Paul as the only one standing in their way. Bruce even felt there was a possibility that those who advised Paul to go to the temple and take a vow may have done so to set him up for capture. This is probably too much, but think about it. This manifested apostle who had raised up many churches was now among them, and his view and teaching were definitely a threat to their designs.

I believe James was very sincere in his exercise; he is still referred to as "James the righteous." According to tradition, his knees were calloused because of all the time he spent in prayer. He had watched Jesus all his life, and undoubtedly he could tell many stories of the times they spent together and of the things Jesus had told him. In fact, he could probably tell more stories about Jesus than either Peter or John could. For instance, he could undoubtedly tell people how Jesus kept the Sabbath and all the feasts while He was growing up. To James, Jesus fully honored Judaism as the God-ordained religion. So he was probably sincere in his efforts to conform others to his view, and there may well have been also a large party in the church that believed that the church should be governed by those of Jesus' family. Meanwhile, perhaps Paul's thought was to be all things to all men, or perhaps he just succumbed to the strong Jewish atmosphere. He went along with their request that he sponsor the four men who were completing a Jewish vow, and he was eventually arrested just before that vow could be completed. Praise the Lord! Had Paul completed that vow, his

testimony that we should care for Christ and Christ alone would have been seriously undermined. Where would we all be today if he had gone through with that religious observance?

When Peter and Paul were together, they only had the Lord in view. When Paul and James were together, there was Christ plus Jewish religion. I believe that James felt every Jew who believed in Jesus should remain in Judaism. Paul told the Galatian believers that circumcision did not avail anything (Gal. 5:6). The focus of those in Galatia had returned to the law, and Paul strongly rebuked them and sought to turn them back to Christ. James' view would have been to encourage their return to the law.

Paul was one with the churches, even when they were not one with him. The Corinthian and Galatian believers went so far as to question his apostleship, but regardless of their condition Paul loved them and labored on their behalf. Instead of abandoning them, he loved them more, though they loved him less. Even today, sometimes a local church similarly may question someone's apostleship. The churches of Galatia and in Corinth had very little growth in life and were not focused on Christ. Therefore they had no ability to keep the oneness of the Spirit among themselves, let alone with the apostles. That is why they fought amongst themselves, even to the point that Paul had to warn them that if they bite one another, they might end up devouring one another (Gal. 5:15). Their discord indicates that these localities were occupied with many things other than Christ. Due to this, they were not able to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

We need to learn from our brother Paul. Even if we feel the Lord is leading us in a certain way, we should endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, and not make issues. May the Lord have mercy.