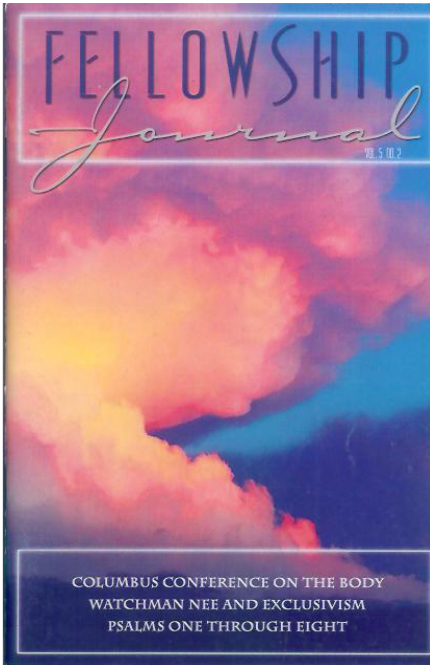


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THE BODY OF CHRIST

Message One:

THE REALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Many know of the term "Body of Christ," but few accurately know what it refers to, so it is important that we have a proper understanding of this great matter. Because of a lack of understanding, some misuse the term "the Body," just as some in China used the term "the people" in a way that did not represent the people and even did harm to the people!

THE CHURCH AS THE BODY, THE INCREASE OF CHRIST

The Body of Christ is the most important matter in the universe, for it is the increase and enlargement of Christ, and the fullness of the One who fills all in all! Thus it is not something that is easy to fully grasp or apprehend. In these three meetings we will touch upon the reality of the Body of Christ, how it is expressed, and how it can be practically lived out among us.

The first thing we need to realize is that the Body of Christ today is the church! The church today is the

reality of the Body of Christ. The word "church" refers to the outer expression of this reality, while the word "Body" denotes its essence. The "church" or "called-out congregation" (Greek, *ecclesia*) denotes more the outward aspect we see. Within this visible aspect, however, there is a life! For instance, I can see you, yet within you is a life that substantiates you as your inward reality. This is one way to think of the distinction between the terms "the church" and "the Body". Without the Body as the reality, any so-called "church gathering" would be something merely human and social. The Body of Christ is the inward essence of the church! Therefore, as those in the church life, we are in something that expresses the real yet mysterious Body of Christ! How marvelous this is!

CONSTITUTED WITH GOD'S OWN LIFE, EXISTING IN THE REALM OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Why is the Body of Christ so profound and mystical? Because it is constituted with God's very own life! The Triune God is the life and substance of the church as the Body of Christ. Whenever we touch

upon matter of the Body, we must realize that we are touching something that directly involves God Himself. The Body of Christ is constituted with God's divine life as its substance, and its realm is that of Christ's own resurrection. Have you ever realized that the Body of Christ is a realm? Watchman Nee and Witness Lee both have spoken this. Watchman Nee spoke of the Body of Christ as a realm, and Witness Lee spoke on the divine and mystical realm. These are not two separate realms: the Body of Christ is this divine and mystical realm constituted with God's life and existing in Christ's resurrection. Because the Body of Christ is such a realm, it is something we can live within and gain a rich supply from. In the realm of the Body of Christ, we can live a normal, healthy, heavenly life that is according to God Himself. In this realm, it is possible for us to be one with God.

How did we end up here in the Body of Christ? We were saved right into it! Christ's resurrection is the power that ushered us into this realm of the Body of Christ so that we might participate in it. Isn't it marvelous that, in spite of all our failure and defeat, we are able to rise up continuously to enjoy and participate in the church life? In this realm, Christ's resurrection is always operating. Many times we feel like telling the Lord, "I just do not see how it is I can still follow You or love You, or how I can be with the saints," yet there is an operating element that continually keeps bringing us back up and continually keeps bringing us together. We may be "professional

failures," and corporately we may even appear to be defeated, yet the Body is something in Christ's resurrection; the moment we were regenerated we were brought right into this resurrection, and into this Body. Praise the Lord, as members of the Body of Christ, we can live in a realm of resurrection! The Body of Christ itself is such a realm, and as those who possess Christ, we together manifest this Body.

INCLUDING ALL BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT THE AGES

The Body is something simply beyond man's natural concept. It is something that includes everyone who has believed from the church's beginning on the day of the Lord's resurrection onward. In other words, everyone who has received the Lord throughout history, including whoever was added this very day, is a member of the Body of Christ. One day, we will see all the believers who make up the Lord's Body—we shall see brothers Paul, Peter, John, Luther, Zinzendorf, and Nee...and as we greet one another on that day we will be able to say, "Hallelujah! How glorious that we are all in ONE BODY!"

In light of this, it should be clear that no subset of believers can claim that only they are the Body. The Body of Christ is inclusive! There is only one Body in this universe, and even as we speak, this Body is growing. Both in life (within its members) and in number (of believers), it is increasing. Even today, all around the globe people are receiving the Lord and being added to the Body.

And, regardless how different we are from one another...some, for instance, came here expectantly, some less willingly; some to enjoy the Lord's ministry, some perhaps even with impure motives...but it does not matter, for as long as we are believers in Christ, we all are one Body in the Lord, and as we all touch the Lord and open our hearts to Him, He is increasing within us, and the Body thus is growing!

How marvelous is the Body as God's masterpiece! We appreciate so many other things in our lives, do we not? For instance, you may appreciate your family dog. It may indeed be dear to you and your family, but how peculiar it would be if we appreciated so many other things that in no way can be compared to God's greatest masterpiece, the church! Others may even appreciate a teaching or a particular spiritual writing, but God would say, "If it is of value, it is only because it is for My masterpiece, the church, the Body of Christ!"

THE HIGHEST MEANING OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

If a person has not been elevated to the extent that he is one with the Body of Christ, he is missing the highest meaning of human life. The highest existence we can experience is to participate in the growth and progress of the Body of Christ, and to be surrounded with all its members so that all its "parts" may grow together unto the fullness of God! This is the real purpose of our human existence, and only such a life can truly be called marvelous.

As we have said already, the church as the Body is constituted with the divine life of the Triune God. Therefore, anything that is not of divine life is not of the Body. Often Christians say, "The body of believers I belong to" or "I respect this particular church-body," but there is only one Body, and this Body is constituted with the divine life of the Triune God as its substance. If in the church life we are not experiencing the divine life of God, we are short of the reality of the Body of Christ. We may be caught with some mission or practice, or seeking some mood, and thus miss the reality of the Body! We may still be able to say we are Christians meeting together, but to be together in a way that is not in or of life is to be apart from the substance of the Body of Christ

GOD ALONE ITS SUBSTANCE

Shaker Heights, a suburb of Cleveland, is named after a group of Christians called Shakers. The Shakers would literally shake their chairs in order to bring about a kind of release in their meetings, much like those who get together to speak in tongues do. They do such things because they are Christians, yet we cannot say that getting together in this way has much to do with the reality of the Body. Young people like to sing one type of song to achieve a certain atmosphere, and older people like to sing other kinds of songs to achieve another kind of atmosphere. Some want to see miracles when they gather, and others like to hear Bible teaching.

We have to consider that whatever others do, they do to God (Rom. 14:6). As long as the Lord has received them, who are we to judge? The big question regarding our being together should be: While we are singing a certain way, or while we are practicing whatever we practice, **is God our substance?** For instance, young people, when you sing at a young people's event, is God your substance, or is the music your substance? Since the church is the Body of Christ, we must always check with ourselves in whatever we do: **How much God is involved?** The substance of the Body of Christ is not a practice, but rather it is the life of the Triune God. Regardless the practice, the primary thing we should be concerned about is whether the life-element is present.

RESURRECTION OUR POWER TO LIVE THE BODY LIFE

We also need to consider the matter of resurrection being our realm. I have been participating in the Body life for fifty years now. We should realize that there is something marvelous about remaining in the Body life for such a length of time. How is it possible, after experiencing so many mistakes, so much failure, and falling down so many times, that someone like me could still be loving the Lord in the church life? If you claim you have always been a prevailing Christian, it is evident you have not even begun your Christian life, for you obviously have been laying on the ground the whole time, and this is why you never feel you have fallen! When

someone really pursues the Lord, he falls down a lot! Yet for some reason, we still find we are able to love the Lord and get up to pursue Him. Why is this? It is because as members of the Body of Christ, we are in the realm of resurrection.

KNOWING THE BODY BY KNOWING CHRIST

How can we be brought into the full realization of this realm that is the Body of Christ? It is not something that comes instantly, for the ultimate apprehension of the Body of Christ comes by means of the full knowledge of Christ (Eph. 1:17). If you do not know Christ, you do not know the Body, and the more you know Christ, the more you know the Body. Eventually, the full realization of Christ results in the full realization of the Body of Christ. There is no way to disassociate Christ from His Body!

Suppose you meet a brother. You will gain some impression of him from his bodily appearance, but it is those who know him best, his wife and children, who really enjoy his bodily presence. What they see coming out of him and what you see coming out of him will be two different things, for they really know him, and you do not. You may shake his hand and think, "My, what a big hand he has," and that is the extent of your knowledge of his body. To really know him as the one who is with you in body, you have to get to know him in his person. Otherwise, to you his bodily presence

will not have much meaning! It is usually not until after marriage that a person realizes that he or she never really knew their spouse! Before that time, their mate simply did not reveal who he or she really was, regardless how long they dated. After marriage, however, one discovers so many things about the other. They truly become "one flesh," because they really come to know the person they only thought they knew before.

Suppose a wife finds out that her husband does not like pork, and yet forces bacon on him every morning, insisting it is "the flow"! Spiritually speaking, many Christians do such things. Since the person rejects pork, his body does also. His body will say, "I don't want it," but it is not really the body, but the person who rejects it. If a wife wants to walk in perfect harmony with her husband, she will realize that this harmony comes not so much by abiding with his physical body as by engaging with the person of that body! She has to work with the inward being of her husband. If we want to enjoy the Body of Christ, know the Body of Christ, participate in the Body of Christ, and be totally one with the Body of Christ, we must fully know CHRIST. If you do not know Him, you can never be fully one with His Body. The one we pursue is Christ, and the more we enjoy Christ, know Christ, participate in Christ, and are one with Christ, the more we will certainly apprehend His Body.

NEEDED: A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION IN THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

How is it that we are able to apprehend Christ? By continually experiencing a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17). Let us suppose that we already know Christ to some degree. With that premise, we can talk about what wisdom and revelation refer to here. Wisdom is for understanding, and revelation is for seeing. If I am someone's friend, I already have some revelation concerning my friend, yet the more I **see** of him, the more I **understand** him or her. Likewise, based on my further **understanding**, the more yet I **see** about my friend. We know Christ, but we need to know Him more! For this we need a spirit of wisdom and revelation until we know Him in full.

Some say we should not talk about the Body, for to do so may cause division! But we know the Body by knowing Christ, whom we seek. Therefore, how much we need to have a spirit of revelation in the full knowledge of Him! To the degree we know and see Christ, we know and see His Body.

THE LORD'S INHERITANCE

Ephesians 1:18 tells us that the Body of Christ is constituted with the riches of the glory of the Lord's inheritance in the saints. What is it that Christ can inherit? He only can inherit what is of Him, for within us, only what is of Him has eternal value. We may offer other things to Him, but what He seeks is what

has been worked into us of Himself. Therefore, His inheritance in the saints is something glorious and heavenly! In the coming years, His inheritance must grow in us. We may offer ourselves to Him today and tell Him we love Him, but He will look at us and say, "What then is there for Me in you? What can I receive from you?" Eventually, may we all be able to say, "My life has not been in vain, for I have used it to gain Christ, and now I have a hope of glory, for He has gained a rich inheritance in me! When I first began to love the Lord, He could inherit but little, yet now in He has gained so much of His inheritance in me!"

THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF RESURRECTION POWER

The church as the Body of Christ is also constituted with the surpassing greatness of His power as the operation of the might of His strength for us to participate in (Eph. 1:19). Whenever we consider the Body of Christ, we must consider it a matter of divine life, and whenever we consider this divine life, we must realize the surpassing greatness of its power!

Sometimes I receive discouraging phone calls...in one place perhaps I hear that some sisters have risen up and are making issues within the church, or some such troublesome matter. However, I can testify that I am happy. How can I be peaceful and even joyful? It is because of this power. If I were to depart from this power, I would immediately become totally deflated. Perhaps instead of coming down

from my room in the hotel to speak to you all, I would tell the brothers to cancel the meeting or carry it themselves, because I would not even be able to rise up from my bed. Something very interesting, however, has been taking place. During the past fifty years that I have been loving and following Jesus, this power has been increasing in me. In the beginning, by this power I was able to overcome certain things, but today my entire person is elevated and uplifted by the heavenly operation of that power! There is a surpassing power, a power of resurrection, operating among us in the church life. In His Body we are provided with the might of the strength of resurrection power for our operation. In the church life, there is such a power elevating us all the time. This power is the power of Christ's resurrection!

HAVING CHRIST AS ITS HEAD

The church as the Body of Christ is also substantiated through the headship of the resurrected Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). In His resurrection, Christ has become our Head. Do we not have a wonderful Head? The word "head" does not mean so much the outward face as the inward accumulation of experience. After seventy years, I may not be so handsome, but I now have a good head on my shoulders! If our head is based only upon our face, then we would lose everything as we aged and lost our beauty. A head, however, denotes the person. At age 32, I had not so much consideration for others as I have today, even though

I was much more handsome at that age! Today, however, my “head” is much richer in virtue and experience. Christ, as the Head of the Body, is from eternity to eternity. Christ has supreme ability to take care of His Body, and does so with eternity in view. As Head of the Body, He possesses all divine attributes and all human virtue. How can the elders in a locality be peaceful? By realizing Christ is the Head of the Body, and not them! Yes, all the saints have problems, and cause headaches, but Christ is full of wisdom, and He as the Head is caring for your local church as the local expression of His Body.

THE FULLNESS OF THE ONE WHO FILLS ALL IN ALL

The church, the Body of Christ, eventually becomes the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 3:19). Only Christ is the realization of all positive things, all and any that bear lasting value. Christ is also the one who fills all positive things, and we as the church are the expression of this Christ who produces all that is worthy of existence in the universe. The Body of Christ is the fullness, the expression, of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23)!

If I know a man who is fifty years old, I see him as someone who has arrived at his complete stature and fullness. If I know someone who is only ten years old, I do not yet see that person as he will be when he is full-grown. He has neither arrived at his full stature or his full weight. He has a body, but his representation in his body is not yet complete.

One day, however, his body will achieve its fullness. The church as the Body of Christ is the fullness of the One who fills all the positive things and is in all positive things.

We have seen something now about what the Body of Christ is. When we begin to see the Body in such a way, we will realize how peculiar and unfitting it is for some to say such things as who is in or who is not in the Body, for the Body is something so very grand and inclusive!

ASPECTS OF THE BODY

THE NEW MAN

The Body of Christ, the church, is the new man created in Christ, having Christ as his life, element, and person to accomplish God’s eternal purpose.

According to Ephesians 2:14-15, the Lord abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances that He might in Himself create the two (Jew and Gentile) into one new man, making peace. The new man, the church, is something that has been *created*. According to the Bible, strictly speaking, man was *made* by being *formed* from pre-existing matter (the dust of the ground) and woman was also *built* from pre-existing matter (taken from Adam’s side). When God breathed into the human being He had made, man to become a living soul (Gen. 2:7). The new man, however, is totally new and has been *created*. Thus in the universe the crucial matters God has produced are man (male and female) and the new man. Man was made, woman

was built, and the new man, the Body of Christ, was created!

In a sense, every man has to say, "I am not out of nothing; I am out of dirt". Therefore, even the most heavenly person can become quite earthly! The church however, is something created from Christ alone! Therefore we must be careful that we bring nothing of our natural being into the church life, for the church as the new man will reject anything that is not from Christ. Our natural ability or attractiveness are of no use in the new man.

Someone may wonder why it is that he can manage three hundred people in a company, but cannot do such a thing in the church! It is not you who can do it, but the Christ in you, created of the essence and element of Christ, which is the new man—that which is of Christ in us is what God treasures.

**THE BODY OF CHRIST HAS BEEN
PRODUCED BY MEANS OF JESUS
CHRIST'S INDIVIDUAL PHYSICAL BODY**

The mystical, universal Body of Christ was produced through the death of Christ's physical body upon the cross. When the Lord died on the cross, His spiritual Body was produced, for through His death on the cross, all the believers were reconciled to God in one Body (Eph. 2:16).

Instead of being separated by enmities, all those who believe are now one church! Due to our many backgrounds it seems we would disdain one another or look down upon one another or totally disagree with one another. Instead, in His flesh Christ has slain the

enmities! Isn't this a great matter? If this were not the case, the only person we could be with in the church would be ourselves. Yet in the church life we find we are able to be together with so many who would normally have been far off from us, for Christ has made such a peace through His cross. Why are we able to love one another so readily? This is a great mystery, yet Christ has slain the enmity through the death of His physical body on the cross!

How foolish it is, then, to raise any issues that may re-introduce enmity among us! For instance, if one brother reads the King James Version of the Bible, and another reads the Recovery Version, they should not allow this to become a source of enmity. If some speak in tongues, and others do not, this should not become a reason some would begin to disapprove of others. Whenever someone raises an issue, we must learn to respond in love. The Lord died on the cross to accomplish a great reconciliation. How terrible a thing it is to introduce enmity into the oneness Christ's death produced! Yet even having been saved and reconciled, we are peculiar people. We must learn to abide in the peace Christ has accomplished. Even if a brother wants to beat you up, you have to say, "Brother, If you want to beat me, I am ready, come and beat me" and if a brother desires to fellowship with you, you have to say, "Brother, if you want to fellowship with me, I am ready, come and fellowship with me." We should harbor no feeling of ill will towards any saint, for we are all one Body in Christ.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Body, the church, is also the kingdom of God, constituted with all the saints as its fellow citizens. Among the members of the Body of Christ, no one should feel like a stranger or a sojourner. In the Body, we should treat all the other believers in Christ as fellow-citizens.

I first came to the United States in 1963. For some time I felt like a stranger and sojourner here, for I couldn't speak Chinese with anyone, and no one understood what it was to be from China. I was so happy whenever I met another Chinese person on the street that I would immediately go up and talk to him. Why did I do this? Because we were fellow-citizens. We must treasure our relationship in the Body of Christ; no fellow-citizen should be treated as an outsider. No one among us should be rejected if they do not practice or teach as we do, and certainly no one should go to a certain place to damage the harmony of the fellow-citizens meeting there, causing some to become strangers and sojourners!

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

The church is also the household of God, with all God's children as its members (Eph. 2:19). If you are married and have children, your abode includes you, your wife, and your children. If you are a grandparent, it would also include all your grandchildren! What gives a father the greatest comfort and enjoyment? It is when his household is gathered in his home. Recently I experienced

having all my family together at dinner, and I can testify how much contentment I enjoyed at that table, surrounded by my wife, my son, my daughters, my son-in-law, and my granddaughter. That was my household! When the Lord looks upon all of us together, gathered as His family, He is so satisfied. We should treasure one another in the household just as the Lord does.

BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

As God's house and God's temple (Eph. 2:21), the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20a). The temple is a matter of the Lord's testimony, and this testimony of the Lord is made possible by means of the labor of the apostles and prophets.

Who is your apostle? The person who raised you up is your apostle. Paul could say to the saints in Corinth he was an apostle, because their being in Christ was proof of his apostleship (1 Cor. 9:2). For the building up of the Body, we do need apostles and prophets to lay the foundation, for their work is governed by Christ as the cornerstone of this foundation (Eph. 2:20b). Anyone who is such an apostle and prophet must share the same goal, orientation and substance that Christ possesses, or else the building could not stand. If a cornerstone is granite, sandstone cannot be used for the foundation work; any foundation work must be of the same rock, and it must be aligned perfectly as an extension of the cornerstone. Christ is the

chief cornerstone, and the apostles' and prophets' work in laying the foundation must be of Christ alone.

It is upon this foundation that all the saints are fitted together and grow into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21)! My labor among you is for your growth, because the more you grow with the growth of God, the more there is the reality of the Body of Christ (Col. 2:19).

BUILT TOGETHER IN SPIRIT

How are the saints built together? This is something that takes place in spirit (Eph. 2:22). When the saints are built together in spirit, God has a dwelling place.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

The church, the Body of Christ, is also the Bride of Christ for His contentment and satisfaction (Eph. 5:23). As the Bride of Christ, the church's affection is for the Lord, and the Lord finds His satisfaction in her affections. To the church as the Bride, the Lord is the Head of the Body and the Savior of the church, sanctifying her by the washing of the water in the Word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:23-26). Why is the Lord the Savior of the church and the Head of the Body? Just so that we might become such a pure young lady before Him. As those who are going to marry the Lord, we should not have any spots or wrinkles! If a young bride had my seventy-year old face, we would all say, "What kind of bride is this?"

The Lord is not after a wrinkled, spotted bride; He desires a bride that is fully constituted with Him as the One who is always fresh and new. The longer we love the Lord, the less wrinkled and spotted we become! Outwardly we may become older-looking, but inwardly we are becoming this radiant Bride that He desires, by means of the washing of the water in the Word. Therefore, read the Bible, for it contains this "water of youth"! One day the Lord will marry those who have been prepared by this regenerating life to be His Bride. May the Lord be your beauty on that day as you take Him as your Savior day by day and as you repeatedly enjoy the washing of the water in the Word. Outwardly I may see in the mirror a wrinkled reflection, but inwardly I know that in my spirit there is no spot or wrinkle. My spirit is holy and without blemish. Oh, may we all grow into the reality of the Body and Bride of Christ!

Message Two

THE EXPRESSION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

In this message we will consider what the expression of the Body of Christ is. We realize that the Body of Christ is something universal, and something of God's own life. Everyone who has ever believed and been regenerated has his or her place in this glorious Body. Therefore, it may seem that the Body is something almost impossible to apprehend, for it is too great a matter. Yet as we

know Christ, we are given to know His Body, and the more we know Christ, the more we are able to know His Body. As we apprehend Christ in all His dimensions, we are granted a glimpse of His Body, and once we see the church as the Body of Christ, it becomes the controlling element of our lives.

Since the Body of Christ involves us as well as Christ, the church life often plays host to human failure and weakness. For instance, if things seem dead, we may blame the elders, and so on. The Lord, however, would say, "The real issue is whether or not you are laying hold on Me! Don't blame anyone else! Am I your reality, your sufficiency, your total satisfaction and enjoyment, your strength, your hope, your future, and your living?" When we have only Christ, we will begin to see the Body as the marvelous entity it is.

Young people like challenges. There are some new efforts being carried mainly by young people—one in the North Hills area north of Pittsburgh, one in Cleveland Heights near Cleveland, and one as a third hall here in Columbus near OSU. If in their labor they are merely aiming at increase or at being unique, that would indicate they do not see the Body. If they are trying to distance themselves from the "old" church life that has produced and supported them, that would be very foolish, for the saints they seek to distance themselves from are the saints who have raised them up, who finance them, and who have done what they can to encourage them. If they would feel, "you older ones are a liability to what we are

trying to achieve," that would be terrible, and we who are older must also be careful not to overly criticize the younger ones, for then no one would see the Body! The Body is marvelous. It is Christ in the saints. The younger ones would be wise to bring their new contacts to see where they have come from. They should introduce their new ones to the established saints and say, "These saints are our source. They may not seem very impressive, but they were able to raise *us* up!"

I know of a story of a young man in China whose parents were poor farmers, yet managed to send him to a university. His father even took multiple jobs just so he would not have to do anything but study. The son once asked his father to deliver something to him, and when the other students saw the uneducated farmer, they asked who he was. The young man was embarrassed, so he said, "O, he is just a family servant." How sad and how foolish. If he had instead said, "Let me tell you who he is! He is my father, who has sacrificed so much for my growth to provide me with this opportunity!" Wouldn't his fellow-students have appreciated his father and honored such a man? The entire university should have shown their appreciation, saying, "You are a great father, for you had such a high view for your son, and in spite of great obstacles, you have succeeded in carrying it out. We would like to honor you." The younger serving ones in these places should help their new ones appreciate where they have come

from. The older saints may not seem that impressive to you, but your ability to preach the gospel and raise others up has much to do with them! Therefore, honor them as your source.

ONE BODY EXPRESSED IN MANY LOCALITIES

Let us now speak further about this marvelous Body of Christ, the church! If you are saved, you are a part of it! You are joined with the Body organically and because of this you are one with all others who are also in this Body. What form does the expression of Christ's Body take? It takes the form of local churches! Every local church is an expression of the one Body of Christ. Those in a local church may feel they are just common people, but the Lord has raised them up to be His testimony! Paul said to the Corinthians, "there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many powerful, or not many high-born among you" (1 Cor. 1:26). We may not feel we are so much, and yet we are the expression of this universal, organic, unique Body of Christ! We, the churches, are His local expressions!

Every local church is the expression of the Body of Christ in that locality. Paul declared to the saints in Corinth, "Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually" (1 Cor. 12: 27). This does not mean that each local church is a Body of Christ, but rather that the same Body is expressed in each locality. It is not that each church can call itself a local Body of Christ, but

instead that each local church is the local expression of Christ's unique Body. The Body of Christ is the church in Dayton, the Body of Christ is the church in Columbus, the Body of Christ is the church in Cambridge...but does that mean that because He has a church in these three towns, Christ has three bodies? By no means! He does not have three bodies in these three towns, but rather three local expressions of His one Body. Even if there were thousands of local churches, there would only be one Body, yet with thousands of local expressions.

EACH CHURCH EQUALLY PRECIOUS

We must also see that each local expression of the Body is just as precious as every other local expression of the Body. It would be ridiculous to think that the Body in one locality is better than the Body in another. Anyone who thinks such a thing has not seen that each local church is an expression of the same one unique Body of Christ.

For the sake of analogy, let us consider a certain family. The parents live in Columbus, and the son lives in Cleveland. Therefore this family has two expressions, one in Cleveland, and one in Columbus. When I am in Cleveland, I can visit the son, and here in Columbus, I can see his parents. This family thus had two expressions: one in Cleveland and one in Columbus. Does their being in two locations mean that there are two families? Not at all; they remain members of the same family, yet that one family is

expressed in two localities. This analogy is imperfect, for divinely speaking, the Body of Christ is much more than this. In a good sense, the church in Cleveland IS the church in Columbus, and the church in Columbus IS the church in Cambridge, for they all are identically the Body of Christ. They all are of the same Christ, they all are with the same Christ, and they all are expressing, testifying and declaring the same Christ. Even if someone sought to "escape" from one locality to another, he would find they all are expressions of the same Lord.

**MINISTERED TO BY
THE LORD'S SLAVES**

How are the local churches able to go forward? This is very practical. The growth of the Body in the localities is made possible by means of the labor of the Lord's servants. Therefore, if any locality declares they are for Christ and yet denies the servants of the Lord, the Lord will not be able to see as much of His increase there. (And, if anyone who has been meeting as the church takes the stand that they are for some headquarters and no one else, they are no longer standing as the church.) A local church must always be open to receive help from the servants of the Lord. A certain brother has begun to visit a certain locality because the Lord told him to do this. If that locality refused him as the servant the Lord was sending to them, would they be able to grow as the Lord desired?

**THEY HAVE RECEIVED A STEWARDSHIP
FOR THE LOCAL CHURCHES**

In position, the servants of the Lord are considered the Lord's prisoners and the Lord's slaves (Eph. 3:1; Rom. 1:1). Yet as His slaves and prisoners, they have received a stewardship for a local church (Eph. 3:2). As Paul said, on the one hand we can say, "Am I nor free?" (1 Cor. 9:1). That is when I think, "I would like to take a vacation." There is a place I have read about that I have always wanted to visit, but the Lord tells me, "Fine. Vacation granted. Go there and preach the gospel!" Why? Because I am a prisoner of Christ Jesus. Those who serve the Lord should realize they have no future and can hope in nothing other than the Lord Himself. Everyone who serves the Lord is His heavenly prisoner! You will not find them in the local jail, but in the heavenly one!

Every prisoner of the Lord has received a stewardship for a local church. If we think the stewardship from the Lord is to get people saved for salvation alone, or to do some other work, we are wrong. Those the serving ones gain must be for the local church, for our stewardship is to raise up His local testimonies. We may feel, "Hallelujah! I have gotten twenty-five people for the Lord!" yet the Lord would ask, "Have you brought them into the church life?" He is happy when we bring people to salvation, but the stewardship He has committed to us has the local churches in view. Paul preached the gospel and raised people up, laboring day and night,

so that each local church might be a healthy testimony of the Lord. Once we have this in view, all our freedom is gone. Since this is the case, we may feel like quitting, but we are the Lord's prisoners, and do not have such an option. As the Lord's servants, His prisoners, we have not received a stewardship for a young people's work or a particular hall; we have received a stewardship for a local church. In our labor, we must be able to strongly tell the Lord, "I am not here to carry out a work; I am here to be blessed by You. Therefore, I desire to be Your prisoner, and to carry out this stewardship."

I hope you young serving ones would take this word to heart. The elders in your locality have the full right to commission you to produce a proposal for the church in your locality, and they have the full right to rip it up and tell you to do it again. Why? Because you are the Lord's prisoners, serving that locality. If you are forced to gather to fast and pray until the Lord makes this stewardship real to you, how marvelous that would be, and how blessed would that local church become! Who are the servants that cause the church life to become a reality? They are the prisoners of Christ, those who have received a stewardship for a local church.

THESE STEWARDS SERVE THE CHURCHES THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

The content of this stewardship is the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:3). In other words, as I exercise my stewardship before the Lord, I dispense Christ in the church life by

watching the saints and attending to their needs. A good waiter or waitress is attentive to those whom they serve. The local church is like a restaurant, and all the saints are those we are serving. The saints are just like those reading the menu, with the riches of Christ as its items. When the saints are ready, the elder or serving one should immediately appear, inquiring of them what it is they desire, and then insure that that particular "dish" is properly prepared and presented so that the saints are fully satisfied. We must learn to serve the saints according to their need, and according to all the items of the riches of Christ. Every local church is a dining hall, selling only one kind of food—Christ! Yes, Christ may be served in so many ways, yet it is always Christ we serve.

Some of us may be able to receive Christ however He is "dished up," yet not all are so easy to accommodate! For instance, I would be satisfied with only a baked potato if that was all the restaurant offered, but a potato can be served in many ways, and people sometimes have a taste for it fried, boiled, or mashed, as well as baked. We should not tell everyone in the church life, "Since the 'flow' is currently french fries, we cannot and will not serve hash browns"! A good steward knows how to dispense the mystery of Christ in many ways so that a healthy church life might be produced. Paul could say, "I am a heavenly steward, serving the churches this marvelous Christ in so many ways according to all His riches, so that all those in the church

life may grow and be satisfied." The mystery of Christ is the church, but when we speak of the church, we always must speak of Christ, for whatever aspect you speak of, the church has no way to be separate from Christ. This is certainly seen in Paul's writings.

**THEY ARE UPHELD BY
THE HEAVENLY POWER THAT RAISED
AND ENTHRONED CHRIST**

In labor, the ministers of Christ are upheld by the operation of His power as they announce the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel (Eph. 3:7-8). Some may love Christ and want to speak about Him, but they are not able to say much, for they do not yet possess much of His riches. For instance, a young saint may not be able to tell a friend much in detail about Christ's resurrection, or about the various aspects of the Lord's cleansing blood, or how the Lord's life operates within a person as it spreads into the spirit, soul, and body. That young saint may know some terms, but they are not backed up with revelation or experience. We need to go on in the power of Christ's resurrection to pursue Christ, so that we may gain more of His riches, and speak them out to others!

THEY SPEAK FORTH CHRIST'S RICHES

The riches of Christ are in resurrection and heavenly. Therefore to speak forth the riches of Christ requires that they be spoken forth in the power of Christ's resurrection. I only have one secret after all these

years, and that is whenever I attempt to speak forth Christ, I do everything in my power that nothing comes between me and the resurrecting, ascending, and enthroning power as the enabling strength. My secret is not that I can do it, but "O what a power that is operating in us!" Even though something may conspire to drag me down or drag the saints in the church life down, I announce the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel so that the saints may be strengthened in this power, as I myself am participating in it. And how do I know when others are being strengthened with this power? Because they are strengthened through the spirit into the inner man!

**THEIR OPERATION CAUSES THE INNER
MAN TO BE STRENGTHENED**

We have an outer man and we have an inner man. The outer man is decaying day after day, while the inner man is daily becoming fresher, more mature, and more solid. I may not be able to speak with the natural power of a younger man, yet my inner man within is much more prevailing than it was thirty years ago. I had a stronger outer man then, but now I have a stronger inner man. Who are the able ministers in the church life? They are those who are able to strengthen us into our inner man! After you read the Word with them or fellowship with them or hear them speak, your inner man is strengthened. All the local churches need such servants of the Lord. They are the prisoners of Christ, who possess a stewardship to minister the mystery of Christ by

announcing the riches of Christ in power, causing our inner man to be strengthened and more established. Do you like this? These are the kind of laborers needed within and among the churches. Sometimes saints tell me I ministered well, but I tell them they supported me well, for after I ministered, I also was strengthened into my inner man!

KEEPING THE ONENESS

In the local church life, all the saints are diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). What follows does not necessarily match our logic, for instead of “one Spirit... one Lord... one God,” Paul wrote first of all “there is one Body...” (Eph. 4:4). In other words, all the following items in our experience come about upon the basis of having this one Body, therefore we diligently need to keep the Spirit of oneness in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3)!

Sometimes we are asked, “Since you all believe in the same Christ, how come Christians meet in so many denominations?” The situation among believers is indeed abnormal, but we still have to recognize that in reality there is only one Body. Division is wrong, but we should not use it as an opportunity to say only we are right, and thus unconsciously separate ourselves from other believers. As long as we are in Columbus, we are part of the church in Columbus, as are all the other believers in this city. Even those who have traveled here for this conference are at this moment

a part of the church in Columbus! We are simply those in Columbus who bear the testimony of this one Body. Wherever we are, we bear this testimony of the Lord.

ONENESS IS NOT UNIFORMITY

What attracts us to the Body? It is not uniformity. It is oneness. It cannot be denied that there is an attraction to the power of uniformity, as when soldiers march line by line, shoulder to shoulder. That has its power, but the Body is not a matter of uniformity. Even within a local church, the operation of the Spirit within each saint does not manifest itself in the same manner. One brother may be very sober, and another may be very whimsical, but you can see Christ expressed in both saints. You see Christ expressed in His one Body not in uniformity, but in the oneness of all the very different saints.

A ONENESS IS CARRIED OUT BY THE ONE SPIRIT, THROUGH WHOM WE ALSO HAVE ONE HOPE

In the Body, only Christ is expressed, and this expression is carried out by the Spirit, for the church as the Body of Christ is carried out by the Spirit. The operation of the Spirit is what carries the church life. By means of the Spirit, we have one hope and one stand (Eph. 4:4). We stand as believers, living to the Lord, because we have a hope. Our daily life is regulated by this hope of our calling. If you know you are expecting to receive an award for something, you prepare for that day. You do not arrive at that ceremony

sloppily dressed or carelessly groomed, for you know such a thing does not match the “calling” of that award. Therefore, your “calling” causes you to live a certain way.

When we really see the Body, we see that it is the expression of Christ, and we spontaneously desire that the Spirit would be in control of all things within the church life. We desire to see that the Spirit would execute all things; that it would lead, govern, operate, encourage, and that all the saints would see their calling, for when we see our calling, we take care of our daily life. We see that the Lord has called us to be overcomers to bear His testimony.

ONE LORD

There is one Body with one Spirit and with one hope of our calling, and there is one Lord (Eph. 4:5a). Of course, without the Lord there would be no church, for the church was created by the Lord with Himself as the substance. For four thousand years, God waited for something of His substance to be His habitation. He gained Abraham, and then the nation of Israel, with the tabernacle and temple, but this was all still insufficient. He needed something heavenly and spiritual that would match Him as His abode. Therefore He created the church with Himself as the substance for His habitation.

No matter how nice your dog’s house is, you would not abide in his doghouse, for it would not match you. It was designed for your dog, not you. Therefore the Lord created the church to be His Body

with Himself as the substance so that He might be truly satisfied.

ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM

In the Body life, there is also the wonderful matters of one faith and one baptism (Eph. 4:5b). In this one faith, all the positive things were germinated. I can preach the gospel, love other believers, and pursue all the spiritual things regarding Christ because of the operation of this one faith. Furthermore, in this one baptism all the negative things are terminated! I was baptized as a young man with many others after receiving the Lord at a gospel meeting. I did not know much about baptism; only that it was something you should do if you wanted to follow Jesus. So I passed through the assembly line of quick baptisms with hundreds of others, hoping someone would at least pray over me, but no one did. Over the years, however, I have come to appreciate how much was buried in that water. My sin, the things I liked, the things I disliked, things that could occupy and possess me and take me away from Christ...all were terminated in that water. In the one faith we possess in this Body all the positive things were germinated, and in the one baptism all the negative things were terminated. Praise the Lord for this.

ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL

In this one Body, eventually we are brought to the full experience of this one God being the Father who is over all, through all, and abiding in us all (Eph. 4:6), telling

us, "You are My Body!" Hallelujah!

In light of all this, we have to say "Lord Jesus, I love the local churches." Where is it possible to practically endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace? The local churches. Sometimes we may argue over doctrines, but remember that the oneness Paul told the saints to endeavor to keep in Ephesians 4 is the same oneness the Philippians were striving together after (Phil. 1:27). This pursuing has God's eternal purpose and the enlargement of the Body of Christ in view. Beside this there is nothing else we should be together struggling after. Indeed, having any other "oneness" in view will result in division! If I insist that all the brothers with beards should keep the oneness by removing them, then that would produce problems. I may have reasons to advise a brother to shave, but I cannot insist upon it. Whenever we make such issues, we endanger the oneness. As long as we share the same one Spirit, Lord, faith, and hope, we should be satisfied. Don't make issues in the church life. Talking about who is "the apostle" we must follow, or insisting upon only certain publications...all such things only produce division. Remember, we are diligently endeavoring to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, because we are in one Body with one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is above us all, through us all, and inside us all. Therefore, try not to make issues over how doctrinally flawed or impractical things appear

to be in the church in your locality. As long as no divisive issues are introduced, we are in this marvelous oneness!

IN THE ONE NEW MAN, THE ENMITY HAS BEEN TAKEN AWAY

In the church life, there are no ethnic groups, no age groups and no social classes. To ask someone how they feel about a certain group of people in the church life is to ask a devilish question. When the Lord created the new man, He has slain all the enmity. In this Body the Lord has created there is a peace, with a marvelous oneness.

THE CHURCHES ARE BUILT UP BY MEANS OF THE GIFTS

Every local church needs to grow and be built up in love through the operation of some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers. The word Paul used was "some". "Some" is more than one. Some have asked, "Now that Brother Lee is gone, who is the apostle?" My response to this funny question is that even when Brother Lee was alive, there were others who were also laboring as apostles. He may have been the greatest among them, but there were then *some* apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some shepherds and teachers, and there still are. This word *some* takes a lot of pressure off those who are struggling to find their operation in the church life. For instance, if someone asks you whether you are a

prophet, you may say, "Well, there are some!" You do not have to answer yes or no. If you function as an apostle, you do not have to feel awkward to say so, for there are some! There is no need to abase yourself. In God's government, He has arranged what He has arranged. If someone asks whether you are this or that, whether you truly are or not, there are SOME. On the one hand, no one can say, "I am THE apostle," and on the other hand, no one can say, "I do not believe I will EVER be an apostle." It is very normal that the Lord should raise up some, but remember, it is a matter of operation and function, not status!

**THE GIFTS ARE GIVEN TO
PERFECT THE SAINTS UNTO THE
WORK OF MINISTRY**

What do these "gifts," or gifted members, do? They operate to perfect the saints unto the work of ministry. Whether you are one kind of gift or another, you must perfect the saints! Some of you have had a very successful labor on a campus. My question to you is, Do those you have gained really know the church? Do they realize they should receive the help of the servants of the Lord? To perfect others unto the work of ministry is not an easy matter. It is common to see a Christian work where many are being saved, yet few are being perfected. The new ones may love the Lord, faithfully come to meetings, and even "function," but do they see the Body of Christ? Do they see the local church? Do they see their need to be perfected? Do they see

God's economy? Do they see that their lives must be for Christ and the church? If not, then you know they have not yet been perfected.

Remember this: the perfecting of the gifted ones is *unto the work of ministry*. This ministry is the New Testament ministry, which is simply the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. If those you are caring for are not perfected unto the work of the Lord Jesus Christ's ministry, then your labor is **in vain**. Some of you who labor have the thought, "Titus is having a conference, but we should not bring our new ones." I heard one brother even say, regarding the nearby churches, "We cannot bring our new ones back to the oldness!" I was shocked. Brothers, it is your job to bring your spiritual children into the family life. You must perfect them to realize that we are not here to merely have a good time or to enjoy singing a certain kind of song. We must bring them to realize that *their life, their operation, must be one with the very ministry that Jesus Christ is carrying out upon the earth!*

Like the word "man," the word "ministry" is an inclusive word. It is one unique ministry, yet includes many, many ministers, whose labor is to perfect others unto the work of ministry, until we all arrive at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, with all saints "truthing it" in love. With the help of the perfecting gifts, we must learn to hold to reality in love, that we may grow up into Him in all things (Eph. 4:15). How do you know you have grown? And how do you know the church where you are has grown? It is when

you have come further to know HIM in your personal life and church life, it is not that you have gained more of someone's teaching, or more Bible knowledge. Yes, there is teaching and Bible knowledge, but we are not a Bible study church or a church of someone's ministry, we are here to bear the testimony of the Lord Jesus in localities as the expression of His Body in oneness, and we are able to carry this out by growing up into Him.

MEMBERS: BOTH JOINTS AND PARTS

The supply of Christ comes through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in measure of each one part (Eph. 4:16). The Bible portrays that as members, in every situation in the church life we are either a joint or a part.

I never understood this so well until the day I had to go see a chiropractor due to a problem with my shoulder. He told me the problem was with the joint, and after some painful adjustments, the function of my shoulder became normal again. Then I again had problems, and at that point he told me that I needed to strengthen the muscles that held my shoulder joint in place by doing exercises. It was then I saw the difference between the joints and the parts, and how they needed each other. In a certain situation you may not be the one functioning as the joint, but if you do not also do your "part," neither will the joint be able to function well to carry out his portion. As long as the parts are operating as they should, the joints will also be healthy. By the Lord's

mercy I can say I am here functioning as a joint. But there are many necessary parts which establish the operation of the joints. The joints and parts work together for the building up of the Body of Christ. Through this kind of operation, the Body is joined together and knit together through the operation of the joints and each one part. How good is such a church life! This is the expression of the Body of Christ, and this is the local church.

Message Three

THE PRACTICALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THE LOCAL CHURCH LIFE

In this message we will touch upon certain practical matters we must exercise if we are to have the Body life. The first has to do with putting on, the second has to do with honoring, and the third has to do with prophesying.

PUTTING ON THE NEW MAN

According to the Bible, we are to "put on the new man, which was created according to God" (Eph. 4:24). Many of us may feel like we have heard this before, so we must ask the Lord to grant us a fresh realization, for this is necessary for the practical church life. The truth contained in the word should never become old to us; it should always be fresh. A parent never grows tired of looking at his or her children, even though they are present day in and day out. We are covering something

that is related to our existence. We were regenerated and as members of the Body of Christ, we are now in the local church life. As those in the local church life, we must learn to put on the new man, which was created in Christ Jesus.

What is the new man? The Triune God is the essence, element, and substance of the new man, and Christ is the totality of the Triune God, so Christ is everything to the new man. Therefore, when we put on the new man, we are not putting on anything other than the Christ who is the person and life of the church as the new man. Therefore, as we are living in the local expression of the Body of Christ, the church life, Christ must become our covering and reality *through the many members*. This is the significance of putting on the new man.

I may be a quick brother, and another brother may be slow. We could try to “put” one another “on,” but regardless how we make allowance for each other or try to accommodate one another, it will not work! In this new man, it is not we but Christ who “works”. Yet if the Christ we experience is confined to ourselves, we still have not put on the new man. What is it to put on the new man? Something of Christ that I have must become “fellowshippable” and even intertwined with the Christ of another saint. It is in the joint-experience of the Christ we share that we put one another on in the new man.

Apart from Christ, there is no such thing as putting on the new man. The church life is not a life

in which we are colleagues. If the elders in a locality are together as colleagues, that can cause damage in the church life. Apart from this joining life, there are no natural reasons for us to be together. In the church life there is only fellowship, and through the fellowship of this joining life, there emerges an intertwined existence among us. In such an intertwining fellowship, it is possible for the saints to put one another on. The Christ in you works with the Christ in me, and the Christ in me works with the Christ in you. In this way, we two can become a blessing to the church, because we have learned to put on the new man.

THE REQUIREMENT: BEING RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF THE MIND

The first obstacle to putting on one another in this way is our mind. Therefore, we need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:23). We may consider the others with us in the church, and just consider our situation hopeless! Perhaps the brother with me is much younger than I am, and not nearly as experienced in the Lord. I will look at him and think, “How could we put each other on? What a joke!” If we are not renewed in the spirit of our mind, we will find something to object to in every possible relationship. One brother will appear too sober, and another will appear too flippant. To us, one saint will be too American, and another will be too Chinese. Yet the Lord tells us, “You are all one Body. I have placed you together so that you might put one another on!” We may feel as though

we are too entirely different from one another, yet the Lord has placed each one of us in the Body even as He willed (1 Cor. 12:18). Every parent may wish to give birth to an Einstein, but just as this is not up to us, neither is it up to us who the Lord places us with in the Body. With the Body of Christ, God decides. He has produced you a certain way, and He has molded another one in another way. You may have never realized it, but the Lord has made you the way you are with some other saint in view, just as He formed and placed that saint to be with you!

Consider two sisters. One is a dreamer, and the other is very pragmatic. Do they realize that the Lord has placed them together? Where you live, He has placed someone for you to put on, and He has placed you there for that someone to put on. Don't be bothered that you are so different. God is happy about it! We have no way to do this in our natural life, but it is possible when our mind is renewed. When the one sister looks at the other, she should not see a hopeless romantic, and when the other sister looks at her, she should not see a boring person with no imagination; both should see the other as someone who is in Jesus. Then they will be able to put one another on, through the renewing of the spirit of the mind.

No one will make you happy in the church life. Outside of Christ, no two people in the church life should appear satisfactory to each other! If we were able to agree with one another in everything, that

would not be a healthy thing in the church life! Often we need those who don't agree with us to cross us out and to cause us to be before the Lord. We all should reach such a stage, where we are not those who like one another according to our natural man, and are not together according to our natural man. Then everyone will be forced to come and be renewed in the spirit of their mind. When you see a brother or sister, it must be as the Spirit sees that brother or sister! When we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, all the saints appear beautiful to us.

Once we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, we will have a genuine concern for the saints. We will not be bothered if they are not as much a blessing to the church as they could be. We will struggle for their growth and blessing. At the same time, you will realize that their portion is something wonderful and you will appreciate them, and you will thus be able to fully put them on. You will no longer be dissatisfied with who they are, only that they have not reached the full realization of their portion. You will no longer wish that the saints were different, only that they would grow.

We all need to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. When we look at the saints, we should not care whether they appear to be too wild or too sober; God has placed each of them in the Body for us to enjoy. I am able to put on other saints because I recognize they have their ministries to bless the Body of Christ. We can put on this brother with his ministry, because all the members with all their functions

have their ministries to bless the Body of Christ. Isn't this marvelous? This is the church life. Everyone is your life-supply, and everyone becomes your blessing when you are renewed in the spirit of your mind.

MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER

Therefore, we need to practice being members one of another (Eph. 4:25). Siblings in a family can give us some insight into this. Much of the time it may not seem brothers or sisters have a lot of feeling for one another, but when the time comes, the bond makes itself manifest. When I was a young teen, my older brother and I were walking down a street, and we noticed a chauffeur polishing a big shiny car. I couldn't resist touching it, and when that man came after me and gave me a shove, my brother stood up to him, even though he wasn't much older than I was. Up until then, I had only considered my brother as someone who irritated me and bossed me around. Yet when push came to shove, he stood up for me, because we were family. Perhaps we do not show enough love for one another in the church life, or pray enough for one another, but when we really need it, we know that there is something there. In the Body of Christ, we are members one of another.

BE FILLED IN SPIRIT

How can we be real with one another in the church life? Paul noted that we should not be drunk with wine, but filled in spirit (Eph. 5:18)! If you want to know someone, there

are two possibilities, and Paul ruled out the first one. The first one is becoming drunk! After someone has had too much alcohol, they lose their inhibitions, and speak out whatever is on their heart. In a sense, Paul is likening being filled in spirit to being drunk with wine. When we are not filled in spirit, we put on a cloak and act hypocritically, being careful to keep our mask in place all the time (unless we are drunk with wine!) When we are "drunk" with the Spirit, who we really are comes out. There is a true spiritual man within us, but if we are not drunk in spirit, we live a guarded life and are often just performing. It is not appropriate to become drunk with wine, but it is very necessary in the church life to be filled in spirit! Do you want to have the church life? Be filled in spirit!

When the disciples were filled by the Spirit on Pentecost and speaking in tongues, the people thought they were filled with new wine (Acts 2:13). When we are so "sober," it is impossible to be released in spirit. Therefore we need to be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in hymns, songs, and spiritual songs. When we are filled in spirit, we will no longer lie to one another (Col. 3:9, 16). When we are not in spirit, we really do perform a falsehood when we try to live the church life. After we are filled in spirit, however, we will sing to the Lord and speak to one another in hymns, songs, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19)! There will be no more "covering up" of our spiritual inner man. Instead,

we will produce short songs of praise, longer songs of truth, or even deep hymns of consecration. We all need to experience such times of singing from our hearts to God.

When we are so “sober” in the church life, we look at all the brothers and feel they are too much to deal with. When we are “drunk” in Spirit, however, all the saints appear very lovely! We should practice this in the church life. Whenever we come together, we should give ourselves to praise, declare, shout, and even groan until we are all saturated. If the entire church life is like this, it will make no difference what the Lord asks of you in the new man, for you will love all the saints to the uttermost. No saint will appear troublesome. Every saint will be seen as a blessing. When the saints seem to be a problem to us, that is a sign that our mind has not been renewed, and that we are not filled in spirit.

When you go back to your localities, remember one thing: The Spirit decides your church life. How the Spirit fills you and operates decides how excellent is the practice of your church life. Therefore in every meeting there should be a lot of prayer, praising, pray-reading, singing psalming, and a lot of mutual enjoyment.

NOURISHING AND CHERISHING ONE ANOTHER

As those putting on the new man, we also need to nourish and cherish all the members of the

Body, just as Christ does (Eph. 5:29). Nourishing means feeding. Regardless how the saints are doing, they need to eat! No mother bases her family’s nourishment upon how well they behave! In the church life, we do determine that more attention to feeding shall be given to those who make the meetings, and deny nourishment to those who misbehave! If the saints behave, nourish them, and if they don’t behave, still nourish them. The saints in the church life need to be nourished.

One of the biggest problems we have faced is that for some time now, the saints have not been receiving enough nourishment in their localities. We will speak on this later. In all the church gatherings there should be nourishing, and there should be cherishing. To cherish the church means to care for it tenderly. Sometimes the Lord must speak a hard word to us in love. That is a form of cherishing, just as the encouraging and comforting words are after we experience a hard word. Too often we are a Mr. Moses, searching for something wrong. When the church life is short of nourishing, it will be short of strength, and when the church life is short of nourishing, it will not be warm. If we desire the church life to be full of warmth, we must practice cherishing one another. We all have problems. Some we are aware of, and some we are not, but rather than judging one another, we should learn to comfort one another. In the church life there should not be the exercise of the law.

**PUTTING ON
THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD**

Eventually, as we put on one another, we also need to put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11). This indicates that the many virtues of many other saints become our protection in the church life.

HONORING ONE ANOTHER

The second matter in the practical Body life we need to address is the matter of honoring how the Lord is in all the members. You may have some feeling about something, and I should learn to recognize and honor it. On the other hand, you should also recognize and honor my portion. Among us, there should be no rebelliousness, but rather an exercise of honoring one another.

Only a zealot claims that no one else has the real leading of the Lord besides himself. Therefore, religious zealots do not honor anyone. They say, "I know the way. If you do not follow it, you do not belong here." What kind of church life would that be? We are an expression of the Body of Christ, not a military organization. We do not have law-givers, instead we honor one another. We often do not realize how much the Lord is doing in the saints. We must not assume there is nothing going on inwardly in a saint, and thus feel free to direct them without any concern for what the Lord may be speaking in them.

If we honor the saints, we will stand with them and help them to

function and operate, so that they can carry out whatever the Lord is committing to them. Every member needs to be honored. We should not look down on anyone, thinking we are superior. If a member seems "rough," we should show more honor to it and care for it more. In the church life, honor all the brothers. Do not assume that only we have seen something, or that only we have found the Lord's "flow". Some among us honor only young people, saying they are the future. In spite of the fact that young people often don't know where they are going, we still should honor them! No particular group is the future. The whole Body is the future. The Body of Christ is the future of Christ, for it is organic, and it will have its organic continuation.

The Titus you see here today is not the same Titus that was present a number of years ago, because my body has replaced itself organically. Every cell that was seen then has been replaced by new life. So the Body continues. Therefore the Body of Christ is the future of Christ.

**HAVING THE SAME CARE
ONE FOR ANOTHER**

In order to experience the Body life, we also need to have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:25). In spite of what some think, I also am a member who needs your care! Our thought is often that we should mainly care for the new ones, for the younger ones, or for the weaker or needy ones. Yet everyone of us in the Body life needs care! Perhaps you cannot minister

a message to me, but you can still write me a letter or tell me you have been praying for me. That is care. We do need the mutual care. All the members should have the same care one to another, whether we are older or younger, gifted or not so gifted, desirous or cold...we all need the mutual care.

**SUFFERING WITH THOSE WHO SUFFER,
REJOICING WITH THOSE WHO ARE
GLORIFIED**

As those learning to honor all the members, we have to know how to suffer with those who suffer, and rejoice with those who are glorified (1 Cor. 12:26). We should never have the thought that those who are suffering somehow deserve it. Even if a brother in the church life steals and gets put in jail, we should not feel glad to be rid of him. What should we do? On the one hand, we should tell him to steal no more, and to love the Lord, and on the other hand, we should suffer with him. This is the Body principle, to suffer with those who suffer. I have a skin problem which requires that I wear long sleeves, even in the heat of summer. I would never consider that I should have my skin removed, just so the rest of my body might have more comfort! When one part suffers, we all suffer with it. This is the expression and outflow of love.

If anyone is glorified, we also rejoice with them in their glorification. This is even more difficult than suffering with those who suffer, for

it involves denying the self. In the church life, some members become manifested. When this happens, we should deny the self and rejoice.

**WE CANNOT SPEAK OUR WAY
OUT OF THE BODY**

We all must realize that no member can be cut off from the organic Body. Even if a member insists he is no longer a member, such a declaration does not break the life relationship (1 Cor. 12:15-16). Therefore, whoever says someone is not in the Body has never seen the Body. In Paul's example the ear felt disappointed it was not an eye, which is something that seems more indispensable. Therefore the ear said, "I am not of the Body!" Paul said that such a statement does not make the ear any less a member than it was before. Isn't it foolish to say someone is not of the Body? As long as a person is regenerated, he or she is a member of the Body. We must see the Body to the extent that we appreciate all the members. Regardless how they practice the church life, they are the Body of Christ.

EVERY MEMBER HAS ITS MINISTRY

Every member in the Body has a ministry. This was Watchman Nee's word. We must treasure all the ministries of all the members. Every member has a particular portion with which he serves the Body of Christ. Every part in the Body has its function, and every part has its portion, and none can

fully replace another. We cannot ask one member to be like another; for each has its own characteristic; neither should any member try to emulate another. The eye serves the Body by seeing, the ear by hearing, and so on. Each has its responsibility. When any member does not function as it should, the entire body suffers. The church life will suffer if some ignore their responsibility. Your characteristic and capability constitute your place, your position, and your ministry. No one else possesses the same place, the same position, or the same ministry. If all of us would rise up with this realization, how different the church life would be! Every member in the church life should be able to confidently say, "I have my ministry!"

We may not be able to say we have fully arrived in our ministry, but even as we are on the way to our full development, we can be a blessing to the Body. The ministry of every member is the supply it renders to the Body. It is not merely something for our own blessing; it is given to us for the sake of the Body. May every member of the Body who reads this fulfill their ministry to the Body!

PROPHESYING AND PROPHETS

The final matter we will consider in this message is likewise very crucial. In the first verse of First Corinthians 14, Paul says that all the saints should earnestly desire to prophesy (see also verse 24). In chapter 14, however, he also speaks to a group of gifted ones

who are prophets (vv. 29-33). When a person stands up to speak in the meeting, how then do we know whether he is speaking as a person prophesying, or as a prophet—or perhaps as someone learning to be a prophet?

THE NEED FOR PROPHETS

To prophesy as a prophet is not something everyone in the church is capable of. If you have not been trained and have not experienced Christ much, you will not be able to prophesy in a way that blesses the church. This is why Paul said everyone should seek to prophesy, yet even this kind of exercise does not mean that you are necessarily a prophet.

In America, there are handymen, and there are master craftsmen. A handyman can do many things well. If something is broken, he can fix it. A craftsman, however, is experienced and trained to produce a certain quality of product. A handyman can buy a cabinet kit at Walmart and put it together, but the result is not the same as what a craftsman can produce. We can liken this to the prophesying of a member, and the prophesying of a prophet. According to Paul's writing to the Corinthians, there should be some in every local church who are able to "craft" what is needed by the church for its continual building up. This does not mean that all the members should not exercise to prophesy; they should! Every portion is precious. There are certain "gifts" called prophets, however, and they, according to Paul, should function

by two's or perhaps three's in a meeting, as the others (meaning other prophets) sit by. The picture is of a group of prophets within a church who are learning and pursuing together for the sake of the building up of the entire assembly.

In the church life, everyone should seek to have the ability to prophesy, even if you are not a prophet. As to the prophets, however, two or three should speak, and the other prophets should discern. If something is revealed to one of the prophets sitting nearby, the first should be silent, for "all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (1 Cor. 14:31). According to the context, this "one by one" is not referring to all the "handymen" in the meeting, but to all the "craftsmen," or prophets. The ministering of the prophets must be with substance, life and riches. For the church life to be healthy, there must be a group of brothers who are functioning together as prophets.

TWO OR THREE SPEAKING

In a locality, it should be evident who these brothers are. This group of brothers should then come together to pray for the church and consider how to minister so that all the saints are nourished, equipped, encouraged, and comforted. They labor jointly. Paul noted that in Corinth everyone wanted to speak, so he first encouraged all the saints to seek to speak intelligibly (instead of in tongues). Yet still further, Paul said only two or three should speak. (In Chinese it says, "two or no more than three".) These prophets prepare

together, and then as they speak, the others are also there, listening and discerning, having prepared together. Therefore they are ready to speak if needed. If one suddenly loses his anointing as he is speaking, another sitting nearby is able to stand up and continue the speaking of the prophets. Or, perhaps one of them has seen something further based upon what has been shared and according to what they have been exercising over. They operate together according to the Lord's leading and anointing.

Therefore, in a church meeting there should be two "kinds" of prophesying. The first is that of the saints sharing whatever they have experienced or received of the Lord. This is marvelous! Then, there should also be a the prophesying of the prophets. If there are a sufficient number of saints meeting together, there should be a group of brothers who are prophets to meet the need of the church. Between them there must be a very good relatedness. They must share the same burden, commitment, and care.

All the churches today need the prophesying of the prophets. Otherwise, the churches will be undernourished. After our gatherings, there should be a sense that the Lord has spoken to us richly. Without the proper exercise of the prophets, this will be lacking. Let us go on for the building up of the churches today. May we all practice in such a healthy way that the Lord's testimony may be borne up among us. Hallelujah for the church life!

- Titus Chu

Watchman Nee's Rejection of the Exclusive Way

A Miracle

In August 1933 a miracle occurred related to Watchman Nee. Some might consider it an unfortunate event rather than a miracle. Nevertheless, it had far-reaching implications for Watchman Nee and the subsequent course of the Lord's recovery.

A young teenage sister was traveling by train from London, England, to Glasgow, Scotland. Freshly inspired to follow the Lord, she opened her Bible and began to read, unmoved by the glances of her fellow travelers. An older man, sitting opposite, inquired if she was a believer. "Yes," she replied enthusiastically; she belonged to Honor Oak Christian Fellowship. A few weeks earlier, she had been inspired by a visiting Chinese Christian. Chinese visitors to England were rare in those days; Chinese Christians even more scarce. The inquirer asked for more details. "His English name? Mr. Nee, Mr. Watchman Nee," she responded. A surprised expression passed over the man's face.

This "chance encounter" caused trouble. Had the teenage girl and older gentleman traveled in different compartments, the conversation

would never have occurred. Honor Oak Fellowship was a small assembly of believers under the ministry of T. Austin-Sparks. The older brother's circle of fellowship was not large either. He was a leading brother among the Exclusive Brethren, begun by John Nelson Darby. Their encounter was therefore highly improbable, hence the "miracle."

In 1933, Watchman Nee visited Britain at the invitation of this branch of the Plymouth Brethren. For two months he traveled and ministered among their meetings. Once however, he traveled to London on "personal business," including a visit to Honor Oak in SE London. That visit, known to the Exclusive Brethren through the teenage sister, caused problems for Brother Nee. Yet, we believe, it was God's sovereign arrangement.

A few days after the encounter on the train, a leading brother at Honor Oak, received a phone call. Questions were posed in rapid succession: "Do you know a Chinese believer, named Nee?" "Did he join the meetings there?" "Did he partake of the Lord's Table?" "Yes," he answered to each

question. Abruptly the caller hung up. "Someone's in trouble," he thought. The Exclusive Brethren consider participation in denominations a sin. Reception into their fellowship required one to forsake denominations, including their Lord's Table. Brother Nee had violated this taboo.

JAMES TAYLOR & WATCHMAN NEE

During the interval, Watchman Nee took a ship across the Atlantic accompanied by James Taylor, the undisputed leader of the exclusives. Taylor enjoyed their fellowship, "***We got on well on the steamer,***" he recorded; "***Nee was very free, making much enquiry, and communicating much as to the work in China.... He gave me a list of the meetings, also a list of the more useful brothers....***" Taylor wished to build upon the relationship begun in 1930, when a British engineer, Charles Barlow, visited Shanghai. Barlow's reports of the Lord's work in China had created a sensation among Brethren circles in the West. They felt that the Lord had



JAMES TAYLOR, SR.

produced a testimony in China which matched their own. A follow-up visit to China in 1932 by a delegation of six exclusive brothers further strengthened relations. A century after the Lord's move through John Nelson Darby, would He unite His two works of recovery into one global testimony?

In New York, Brother Nee ministered to gatherings of over 2,000 Brethren (W. Lee, p. 203). Taylor reported, "***Nee has been received here with open arms and had a very large – for New York – audience to hear him.***" The Brethren thought Watchman Nee's message was "***wonderful.***" But, for Taylor himself, it was "***in my judgment very defective doctrinally.***" That feeling was not shared by the saints, who joyfully received Brother Nee's ministry. Others eagerly anticipated his visit. Brother Nee was expected in Vancouver where (Taylor wrote) "***they are in raptures ...at the prospect of having him.***"

While in the US, Watchman Nee visited Dr. and Mrs. Stearns, his co-laborers in China. In his absence, the shocking news arrived by cable: "***Nee had broken bread with an independent company of Christians in London.***" On his return, Taylor confronted Watchman Nee with his indiscretion, only to discover he had also broken bread with Dr. Stearns (and other believers) in New Haven, CT. When challenged, Brother Nee "***made no admission of violation of principles.***" James Taylor was reluctant to press the issue, since, "***this might jeopardize the whole work in China.***" Writing to others, he stated,

“the whole Chinese position ...is so extraordinary, and so many Christians being involved, that if issue were taken in a formal way the enemy would get an advantage.”

Much was at stake, in particular the Exclusives' hope of uniting with the local churches in China, or perhaps absorbing them into their fellowship. A few days later, Watchman Nee left for Vancouver, where he ministered to a receptive audience before taking the ship across the Pacific.



W. NEE & DR. STEARNS, 1931

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN WEST & EAST

Back in China, Watchman Nee faced a dilemma. Joining with the Brethren provided a link with the Lord's prior recovery and a line of ministry stretching back to Darby. You ***“have opportunity of profiting by [what] God wrought during the last century,”*** Taylor wrote to Faithful Luke, no doubt echoing his admonition to Brother Nee. Moreover, he continued, ***“This ministry... is your heritage, my beloved brother, and that of all the dear brethren in China, ... and you are obligated to the Lord to embrace it, profit by it, and stand firmly by it...”*** On the other hand, the Brethren were characterized by exclusivity and a trend towards global organization.

An exchange of letters between the Brethren in the West and the brothers in Shanghai ensued. The exclusives sought to enlighten their Chinese brothers concerning Christian fellowship and to judge Brother Nee's actions, which (they claimed) ***“compromised the fellowship.”*** The final response, dated July 2, 1935, was signed by Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and four other brothers. In it, the brothers explained, ***“the kind of fellowship in which we believe and why we cannot join the ‘Closed Brethren’”*** (Nee, 26: 419). Concerning fellowship, the brothers stated, ***“The Bible has revealed.... We must receive one another as Christ also received us (Rom. 15:7).... This command is clear, unequivocal, and draws a very clear boundary”*** (Nee, 26:421). Moreover, the brothers drew a sharp distinction between sins

which severed fellowship (immorality and heresy) and 'sins' which did not. Among the latter, they included denominations and the incorrect interpretation of Scripture. They wrote " 'evil companions' [denominations] and 'evil doctrines' [wrong interpretation of prophecy] are not 'sins' which hinder fellowship" (Nee, 26:423). Their stand was inclusive, in that "the only thing we can do is to separate God's children from the children of the world. The Lord has not ordained us to separate God's children from each other" (Nee, 26:424).

Perhaps responding to an incipient organizational trend and Taylor's global ambitions, Watchman Nee wrote, "Some, seeing the vast land of China, are tempted to attain the **position of director over all of God's servants**. How good this seems from a human point of view We would say, however, that regardless of how man seeks after God's will, **the Holy Spirit is always the unique Executor. He never needs man to be His manager**" (Nee, 26:425, emphasis added). Watchman Nee rejected the concept of a human manager (director or executor) of God's work, with an "economic center for the work." Rather than relying on human organization, Brother Nee emphasized the role of the Spirit. He continued, "We need to exercise such faith in the lordship of the Holy Spirit that we will never form an economic center for the work We must allow the Holy Spirit to exercise His lordship in everything. No matter how we have sought after His mind, we are never His assistants" (Nee, 26:425). Finally they implored their brothers

in the West, "Would you be willing to lay aside your former prejudice ... and consider the matter in a fresh way...?" (Nee, 26:430-1).

THE EXCLUSIVES EXCOMMUNICATE WATCHMAN NEE

The Exclusive Brethren's response was swift and decisive. In a letter (dated August 31, 1935) to the brothers in Shanghai, they wrote, "We recoil from your ...suggestion that we should now set aside assembly principles and order, ...and thus surrender **the holy heritage which has been recovered in divine mercy in these last days for the whole assembly.**" They terminated fellowship with Watchman Nee and everyone associated with him, saying, "**We are unable to walk with you, or to receive from or commend to you. This, of course, applies also to all those maintaining links of fellowship with you.**" This ended the "China Episode," as the Exclusive Brethren called it.

What is the historical significance of these events? Had events unfolded differently, might the recovery have taken a different path? Could Watchman Nee and the local churches have joined the Exclusive Brethren? In our view, God sovereignly terminated all possibility of union with the Exclusive Brethren, thereby allowing His recovery to continue in China, untarnished by exclusive influences. Once the door was closed to Watchman Nee, however, thousands of Exclusive believers were deprived of Brother Nee's rich ministry which they had so briefly tasted.

THE EXCLUSIVE BRETHREN –
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

What became of the Exclusive Brethren in later years? Where are they now? Already a “closed society,” they became increasingly isolated and restrictive. Moreover, a teaching developed which reinforced their isolation. Even before the “China Episode,” **“many brethren adopted the idea that God always has one particular man for the moment, to whose utterances peculiar value must be attributed”** (F. R. Hole, p. 1, emphasis added). After that incident, this teaching became explicit and entrenched. God’s one spokesman accumulated titles, such as “today’s Paul,” “God’s Elect Vessel,” “the Man of God,” and “the Universal Leader.” The line of these “Men of Recovery” was traced

back to John N. Darby and forward through J. B. Stoney, F. E. Raven, and C. A. Coates to James Taylor Sr. and then his son, James Taylor Jr. Of course, this line excluded Watchman Nee and many other servants of the Lord. The ministry by these “Men of Recovery” was published through one central depot, which controlled literature among these Brethren. Today a residue of Taylor “exclusives” remains, isolated, inbred and irrelevant. For them, “today’s Paul” is a man named Hales who lives in Australia.

Seventy years ago, God sovereignly intervened to prevent the recovery taking the Exclusive way. Perhaps we should ask: Today is the Lord’s recovery in danger of taking the same path, albeit in a different guise?

- Nigel Tomes (References, p. 48)



Watchman Nee with ‘Exclusive Brethren’ in Shanghai, 1932

Psalms Training Abstracts

MESSAGE ONE

(The first of eleven messages given by Titus Chu in Cleveland, Ohio, December 21 through 26, on Psalms 1 ~ 24. The first two messages which follow cover Psalms 1 through 8.)

Many saints read the Psalms for comfort, but the primary purpose of the Psalms is to help us to grow. I hope many would study the points contained in these messages on the first forty-one psalms, for they correspond to the journey of life that will be ours as those who follow the Lord.

In his book, *Christ and the Church Revealed and Typified in the Psalms*, Witness Lee taught that many of the psalms draw from human sentiment rather than divine revelation, and therefore some are very high in value, while others are less valuable in comparison. I was puzzled over why this was so until I realized that the release of the wonderful revelation found in the “high” psalms requires the accumulated experiences of the previous psalms that seem less valuable. The high points that burst out depend upon the previous experiences! Without all the speaking out in the psalms, the psalmist never could have spoken out the high points. Even within psalms that largely seem to be full of “baby talk,” profound things often come forth!

Psalm 24 is the conclusion to book one; Psalms 25 to 41 primarily explain Psalm 24. This set of psalms represents the second stage of the growth in life (revival), because those in the first stage do not write psalms! A person in the first stage does not read the psalms, while a person of the second stage loves to read them, but does not know how to interpret or apply them! However, a person may live in the first stage for even thirty or forty years, not doing anything much that is sinful or worldly, going to meetings, and yet merely abiding in religion. Those who can really satisfy the Lord are those who have been revived to realize something about their situation and something about God and His purpose. Once you are revived, you begin to live a life no longer simply *according to* God, but a life *with* God. When a person lives a life with God, God becomes a part of his living. A revived Christian lives a life that is very much mingled with God and all that Christ is, has, and has accomplished. Therefore, he can grow in Christ, and enter into the realizations contained in the Psalms.

This process of growth does not come quickly, and it causes us to experience many different kinds of feelings, and different degrees of feelings. In the process of growth, feelings become very necessary! In every stage of growth, you enjoy something or are troubled by something. As you experience these things, you will speak to the Lord what is in your heart of your sentiments. Such words are not merely teachings! If all you have are teachings, then you are not a psalmist! Being a psalmist means being involved in this romance, this journey. The first forty-one psalms were primarily written by David. He was someone rich in affection. He often spoke out his feelings, but suddenly out would come something so real, and his experience would be uplifted and enriched by what the Lord revealed to him as he was in the midst of his experiences.

Many of these psalms reveal something of the third stage even as they are focused on the second stage of revival. Furthermore, the experience of the second stage often reaches back to the first of being in religion. Even Psalm 41 contains a flavor of self-defense, and yet with Christ there is no such thing.

PSALM ONE:

This represents the initial experience of a revived saint: "Now I see something! Now my life must be different!"

This person is no longer a "church goer". He now realizes how serious is the situation surrounding him. He is surrounded by sinners and mockers. He does not yet see how deeply this goes, even to be such a great sinful, material, religious system ensnaring people in their flesh, soul, and spirit. He only sees the situation of the people around him. Before he was revived, he lived among them with no feeling about any of this. Now, however, he is awakened to the situation.

He begins by proclaiming, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand on the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of mockers." The word for "walk" here is also used in Genesis 2:14, where it means "to flow." There is a trend in the world that carries people along with it. Many young people today are carried by the trends of fashion. The root of the word "wicked" ("ungodly" in KJV) means to be loose and purposeless. The revived saint realizes his life up to that point had been without purpose and loose, and he had simply been carried about by the trends of the world.

To "stand on the path of sinners" means to take their way. The sinners seek money, and just like them, the saved person in the first stage

also sought for money. Now that he is revived, he realizes he had been standing in the path of sinners! Now, however, he is no longer after a name or power or riches. (To sin is to do things apart from God. When Adam sinned, it did not mean he did something terrible; he simply acted without God's presence.) The revived person can no longer aim at what God Himself does not provide him with. He does not seek for the things those without God seek for.

Neither would the revived one "sit in the seat of mockers." The use of the word "seat" gives the thought of taking a place or position, such as when someone takes a seat in Congress. To have the seat of a mocker or scorner is to occupy the position of someone who despises God! Such a person says, "I can make it on my own. Who needs God?"

Instead, the revived one says his delight is in the law of the Lord (1:2). This sounds good, but it is nonsensical talk, because someone like this only brings himself under Satan's accusation. Yet he says he shall become as a tree planted beside streams of water (v. 3). "Planted" here can mean planted (never moved) or transplanted (moved in). He now sees his way is to be settled, not beside a raging river, but beside a small creek flowing in, silently, quietly, and beautifully. Psalm 46:4 tells us there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. The streams of this river eventually cause God's church to become so blessed. Once a person realizes what this person realizes, he does not seek any mighty flow or flood, but rather fears it, realizing the mighty floods might swallow him up and sweep him away from the source of blessing! Instead, he appreciates the gentle streams. May we all become such streams!

Becoming such a tree, everything he does prospers (v. 3). Remember, the definition of the term "prosper" in the Lord's view may be very different from what we think! It could mean getting a new car, or it could mean wrecking a new car. It could mean getting a PhD, or it could mean not being able to find a job even though you have a PhD.

He now turns to the ungodly, and says they are like chaff which the wind will blow away (v.4). He even brings up the assembly of the righteous in verse 5! Somehow he knows his part must be with this assembly. Eventually, however, he says it is Jehovah who knows the way of the righteous (v. 6). How sweet is this word! In the Septuagint the Greek translation of this Hebrew word is "ginosko." It can be interpreted to mean that God says, "Yes, I do know what is going to happen to you today, and what will happen with you tomorrow. You don't know what you are talking about, but I know where your journey will take you. Your whole life will be in My hand, for I alone know the way of the righteous."

PSALM TWO:

This psalm is the true introduction and center of the Book of Psalms. God's declaration in this psalm points the revived one away from his somewhat low view to Christ!

The first five verses depict what David must have been experiencing as a king watching the nations around him. For instance, right now during the Christmas season, people are absorbed in foolishness and vanity. Why do people always contemplate a vain thing (2:1)? Nobody may seem to be actually declaring war upon God, yet in practice they are. Does anyone do what they do out of love for God and His Anointed, either at Christmas or Easter? God, however, just laughs (v. 4) at all the attempts to frustrate Him.

God will make use of those who do not care for Him or His purpose. Before we see God and His purpose, there is no godly fear in us. Once we see Him and what He is about, however, a godly fear rises up. It is not that we are afraid of His wrath, necessarily, but rather that we have never seen God like this before! He becomes so real!

In verse 6, God declares that He has set His king upon Zion's holy hill. *This divine declaration reveals the desire of God's heart, His economy, and His work!* It is God's central declaration. The root of the word "set" (KJV) or "installed" (RcV) is "poured," as in the word used for the drink offering (having to do with the action of its being poured out). This must be why Darby translates it "anointed," which should be the best translation. It is a very profound word, for it signifies being totally poured out for God's economy. This King, this Christ, is totally poured out in every part and every aspect for God's economy!

God's king replies, "I will repeat the decree, God has said to me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You" (v. 7) When God speaks, the Son says, "What You have said, I repeat! I am in absolute agreement. I am Your Son, this day You have begotten Me." (The Lord desires to see such oneness among us as well!) The day spoken of here, according to Paul, is the day of Christ's resurrection (Acts 13:33). Yet, surprisingly in this psalm it does not seem to focus so much upon Christ's resurrection as it does upon His life-relationship with the Father, because the word *ben* is used instead of *bar* (and of the two, *bar* would have pointed more to Christ as the One carrying out the Father's economy). Even after Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension, the Father is declaring His life-relationship with His Son, and even as the Son exercises God's economy upon the throne, He exults in His intimate life-relationship with His Father.

On that day of His Son's resurrection, the Father says, "Welcome back! This day I have begotten Thee!" To Him, at that moment His life-relationship with His Son superseded that of His relationship with Christ for His economy. Our problem is often that we have this reversed: rather than enjoying our life-relationship as brothers, we often labor as comrades. One reason we witness so much tragedy in the recovery today is due to the fact that so many treasure the "bar" above the "ben"! I would like to tell many brothers who have written things about me that I love them, but I am afraid this would not satisfy them.

I hope God's declaration: "YOU are My Son..." would impress us with two things: first, that Christ must be our center, and second, that in all our experiences, sensation, and analyzations, we must realize that God cares for Christ more than anything else. Everything else is simply for us to gain Christ. That's it!

Then the psalmist says that the Lord shall give this Son the heathen for an inheritance (v.8). This "giving" is not a handing over, but the result of an overflow of content. In the Song of Songs, the Shulamite says that her spikenard gave forth its fragrance (1:12). This is the sense—out of the fullness, something comes forth. The giving of the heathen to the Son is the result of a marvelous organic process! The heathen have no "fragrance" in themselves, but as the Lord executes His judgment inwardly through His organic ruling, they (we) will become His inheritance, His overflow.

We are also told He will break them with a rod of iron as a potter's vessel (v.9). The kings and judges of the earth are admonished to be prudent and to serve the Lord with fear, and to rejoice with trembling! Normally the words "fear" and "trembling" do not go together with "rejoice," but we are told to be happy and yet to be fearful. Why? Because in verse 12, we are to kiss the Son. Here "Son" is *Bar*! The stress in this verse is not primarily upon the intimate relationship of life, but instead upon Christ as the One who is carrying out God's economy. He is revealed here to be the One who is executing God's government. That is why we must tremble. We all would like to kiss the Lord as the *Ben*, but few would dare kiss Him as the *Bar*. Whenever the Lord shows us He is going to work upon us, to discipline us, and to work all things together for our "good" in His economy, our tendency is to say, "I cannot take it! I do not appreciate it!" Instead, we need to learn to kiss the Son as He executes all things in love for our sakes. If we do not know how to properly appreciate Him and love Him as God's *Bar*, we may spiritually perish from the way. Therefore do not murmur, complain, or think yourself unfortunate when things happen to you. Instead, kiss the Son!- *Titus Chu*

Psalms Training Abstracts

MESSAGE TWO

Thus far we have seen that once a person becomes revived and really desires to grow in the Christian life, he needs some basic realizations. First of all, you must have a revelation of Christ. This is why God declared His king had been anointed in His holy mountain in Psalm 2. This, however, is still not enough. We have to go on to acknowledge God as our God, and that He is sovereign over all things in our life. Third, we must see the church. And, after we see the church, we must realize that we can never make it in the church life; we are in the church life as a refuge, not as an overcomer! We who are in the church life hide ourselves, because we realize what a problem we could be to the church life if we did not. After you have seen God, His sovereignty, the church, and something about yourself, then you are ready to receive the revelation of God's heart desire, which is declared in Psalm 8, after Psalms 3 through 7!

PSALM 3 Knowing God as Our God

Psalm 3 portrays the growth in life experienced by a person learning to "kiss the Son" in his circumstances under God's government. He has taken refuge in God, but his focus is still upon himself. Because of this, there is something not so pleasant contained in this psalm. Even after a person has given himself to God, some "marshy areas" remain hidden within him. Normally no one would be so bold to expose such things as David does here. You have to admire David for being so willing to expose what was really in him, for doing so he opens the way for truth to come out as well. He complains about his adversaries, how they murmur about him. To this David declares that Jehovah is his shield, his glory, the one who lifts up his head, the one who answers him from His holy mountain, and the one who sustains him even as he sleeps. He testifies that all his salvation is of Jehovah. Somehow, the Psalmist instinctively knows that the Lord's speaking to him is from His holy mountain. Thus, he intuitively realizes he has to be with God's people if he is to grow. No one taught him that he needs to be with the other believers; he just now realizes this. Therefore he declares, "May Your blessing be upon Your people." He begins by seeing God, but he ends up with God's people.

In the beginning of this psalm, David tells the Lord, “How many are my adversaries...” Adversaries are those who bother and annoy you. The adversaries mock us and challenge us, telling us that though we claim to be for the Lord, that our motives are no different than theirs; our change in living does not really reflect anything genuine. They are the ones who are near enough to you to say, after you become a Christian, “You know you want money. Don’t be a hypocrite. Play the lottery, if you think God is with you. You should win big!” Actually, after you become a believer, you find adversaries appear everywhere, from near and far. They will accuse you of an impure motive when you begin gathering with others in His name. For instance, they may ascribe to you the motive of seeking a mate, or of profiting your business. They do not attack your faith in a direct fashion, but rather for some reason they just do not want to believe you have really begun to follow the Lord because it is something real. If you did not care about the Lord, wouldn’t it seem your life would go easier for you? For some reason the moment you begin to follow the Lord in earnest, others just rise up in this way.

David says, “Many are those that say of my soul, ‘There is no salvation for him in God’.” This is the word of an adversary. “We’ll see how long his ‘salvation’ will last!” This insults us and vexes us, but after taking a “selah,” we come back to the Lord Himself in our spirit, saying, “O Jehovah, You are a shield around me...You are my glory.” (There are different words for glory in Hebrew. In Psalm 8:1 it is *hod*, meaning magnifying, an honorable decency. Others are *tsebi* in Isaiah 28:5, meaning excellent and beautiful; *tipharah* in Isaiah 60:19, meaning beautiful in glory; and finally *kahbod*, meaning an evidence of virtue. God doesn’t glorify me, but He honors and vindicates my decency. In this verse it is this word. When others are accusing you, that your real motive to come into the church life is to find a spouse or gain customers for your business, God comes forth and says, “No, he really is a Jesus lover!” God allows your real being to come out. There is a witness within arguing against their false reasoning, for God speaks with their conscience that the love exhibited for Jesus is real. The glory here is not God glorifying us, but rather it is God witnessing to what is honorable and real.) Thus the Lord is his shield, his glory, and the one who lifts up his head.

The psalmist also says that when he calls to Jehovah, Jehovah answers him from His holy mountain! The holy mountain speaks of God’s economy. When we begin to really know God, we find out that some prayers He answers, and some He doesn’t seem to respond to. What are the prayers He always responds to? Those that are according to His economy! He may or may not answer our prayer for a new car, but He

will always respond to our prayers that match what He is trying to carry out in His economy.

David still displays something natural about himself when he asks the Lord to strike all his enemies on the cheek, and to break all the teeth of the wicked. I do not know that I could ever write such self-exposing words, but David is such a poet, and afterwards he can still say, "Salvation is of Jehovah; Your blessing be upon Your people"! God has become so many items in this Psalm: He is our shield, our glory (a vindicating witness), the one who lifts up our head (giving us hope), the one who answers our prayer according to His desire, our strength, and our salvation.

PSALM 4 Knowing God's Sovereignty

Yet all these realizations of God are still not sufficient; we must also realize God is the Sovereign One, the One who enlarges us (KJV). Thus the psalmist writes, "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness, thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." God is for something that we need to see that is beyond our self. The psalmist testifies that his enlargement has come about while he was in straits, in distress. He speaks to those without, saying, "How long will you love vanity" and so forth, but suddenly he says something quite good: "Jehovah sets apart the faithful man to Himself." He realizes that the reason he is experiencing his distress is because he is a faithful man! Why does he have distress? Because he is faithful! Yet Jehovah hears when he calls out to him, and answers him. In his straits, he experiences being angry, for he is, after all, just a man. We can be angry, but we should not open the door to sin. "Be angry, yet do not sin; consider in your heart upon your bed, and be silent. Selah" (v. 4). We can get upset, for we do experience temper, but we should be able to rest in peacefulness at night. Instead of sinning, we should offer sacrifices to God! In other words, instead of offering ourselves less because of the frustrating things, we should offer ourselves more! Regardless of the distressing situations, we must tell the Lord even more, "I am Yours!"

The psalmist says, "Many are those who say, Who shall show us any good. Lift up upon us the light of Your countenance, O Jehovah." He has no teaching of the cross, but he has been experiencing the work of the cross. Thus on one hand he can say "my righteousness" and think he is a faithful man, or else he would never be qualified to endure such experiences, yet on the other hand he says, "Lift up upon us the light of Your countenance, O Jehovah." He knows there is something right about him, for he is experiencing something from the Lord, yet he also yearns for some light to show him what is going on. He cries out to Jehovah, "Show

your face, that I may see!” And even in this initial stage, the seeker is able to testify, “You have put joy in my heart...in peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Jehovah, cause me to dwell in safety.” Everything may be so difficult, yet God’s presence is with us. We may experience troubles, but we have God! He alone causes us to dwell in safety.

We should be so happy to be qualified to be in distress under the Lord’s enlarging, governmental hand. He will put joy in our heart more than when new wine of others abounds! In peace we will both lie down and sleep. Everything may seem difficult, but in peace we can lie down and sleep, for Jehovah alone is able to cause us to dwell in safety. Jehovah Himself is our protection.

PSALM 5 Knowing the Church

This person is now ready to know and appreciate the preciousness of the church, and of the saints in the local church. After the psalmist is able to lay down restfully within Jehovah’s government and under His protection, he “awakes” to the church life! He says, “In the morning You will hear my voice...I will watch...in the abundance of Your lovingkindness I will come into Your house” (vv. 3, 7). He laid down in peace, and it seems he rose up and had a good “morning revival,” but then he sees the sorry situation of mankind around him, and eventually he sees the Lord will spread a cover over those who take refuge in Jehovah; those who have come to His house.

The first verse of this psalm suggests those who see the church are those who are desperately seeking something of the Lord. He says, “O Jehovah, consider my moaning.” I hope we might practice every morning to let the Lord hear our voice (v.3), and even our cry (v. 2)! This is not merely a time of meditation, but of desperate meditation, resulting even in moaning. The psalmist says he will even set his words in order before the Lord, meaning that he will speak things out one after another. He has so much to tell the Lord! I tell you, if you want to see the church, then you must have a very strong personal life before the Lord! It is not enough to merely be put into distresses that enlarge you; you have to come to the Lord to fellowship with Him, and watch how the Lord would answer.

For some reason David cannot avoid getting in some digs at those around him. These references do not seem to fit in with the rest of the psalm. But this is a characteristic of Christians in general; it just seems as if we cannot live without judging others. Finally, however, David declares, “In the abundance of Your lovingkindness I will come into Your house; I will bow down toward Your holy temple in fear of You” (v. 7). He is

saying, "I will come into Your house and enjoy the church life, and I will revere and honor You as God in the church life". To live in the church life does require the abundance of the Lord's mercy and lovingkindness!

Then, as this one realizes he is in the house of the Lord, he also realizes how much he needs the Lord to lead him, and to make the way straight before him. Everyone around him is a liar (v. 6). From their inward part, to their throat, to their tongue, step by step, there is nothing good to be found (vv. 8-9). (These are those who become grave-diggers when they allow death to work on their inward parts, and then up through their throats until it eventually comes out on their tongues.) It is difficult to live the church life, because everything about us is not straight! Actually, one of the most difficult things for the Lord to gain in the church life is HIS WAY. It seems we often care more about custom and tradition than we care about the Lord having His way. How easily we grumble if something does not fit the accepted pattern! David spoke such a marvelous word for us all: We all should ask the Lord to make His way straight before us, and tell Him, "Lord, I don't care if we get together in the morning or the evening, or what form our gatherings take, as long as YOU can have YOUR way." If we do not have such a heart, we easily can become a "grave-digger" in the church life. David asks God not to hold such death-spreading tongue-waggers guiltless.

Yet he also says, "Let ALL who take refuge in Jehovah, rejoice!" (v.11) This "all" can even include those who were guilty of spreading death. It is easy to pass judgment and announce a verdict upon others, but we should have a heart to say, "Let us all take refuge in Jehovah, and rejoice! Let us shout for joy, for though we are all terrible, we are all under God's mercy!" David even can say, "may You spread a cover over them" (v. 11). Isn't this a wonderful request?

Finally, David says, "Your name will exult in You, for You will bless the righteous man, You will surround him with favor as with a shield" (v. 12). "Favor" here is the word, rather than "grace". It is something God has done for us with His purpose in view. It is not that the Lord graces us because we simply need grace; He graces us so that we might go on to the next stage of growth.

PSALM 6 Knowing Ourselves

This is David's first psalm of repentance. Of the seven psalms of repentance, the first book of forty-one psalms contains three. This psalm of repentance also represents the fourth experience in the initial stage of growth (the first psalm was the seeker's unlearned statement, and the

second was God's declaration pointing him to Christ). The first experience along the pathway was to know God, the second was to see His sovereignty, and the third was to see the church. Now, before the seeker can realize something further by way of revelation from the Lord, he must realize something about himself, and we can only really know ourselves after we experience God, His sovereignty, and the church life.

David had just been judging everybody. Now he beseeches God, "Do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your burning wrath. Be gracious to me, for I am languishing" (vv. 1-2a). To languish is to be in a very weak condition. Because he has been the target of those who would lay in wait for him, and because of the Lord's presence, he has come to realize he is a terrible person. He even says that all his bones shake! This must refer to the state of his soul. He is in extreme psychological distress.

The fact that he says, "For in death there is no remembrance of You" (v. 5) reveals that he must have thought he was about to die. He is so repentant that he says he even makes his bed to swim, and dissolves his couch with his tears! (Poets have a license to exaggerate!) How does David handle the situation? He asks Jehovah to return and deliver his soul. Often when a person is weak, he condemns and abases himself, but even in this situation David has a high view. He tells the Lord, "I may die, which is of little account in itself, but if I die, who will be left on the earth who thinks upon You as I do? And who will be able to give thanks to You when I am in Sheol? Will You then be able any longer to enjoy my thanks? Therefore, return, O Jehovah! You must allow me to live so that I may have more time to remember You and thank You!"

David says the Lord heard the sound of his weeping, rather than the sound of his prayer (v. 8). Out of this, Jehovah is able to do something further. Even in his extremity, David has insisted upon being one with God. I like his argument: "God, if I die, who will there be alive upon the earth so able to recall so much about You as I can?" Eventually, David has the assurance God has heard his prayer (v. 9). As is often the case, David spends some time in this psalm to berate his enemies and other workers of iniquity.

PSALM 7 Knowing God's Heart Desire

Finally we are ready to know God's heart desire. Psalm 7 represents the fifth experience of the initial growth of life. Although the seeker has not yet grown out of the natural being, he has seen that Jehovah is his God, the one in whom he can trust. At this point his hope is portrayed in the phrase, "Awake for me" (v.6). His prayer has finally become one with

God's heart desire. Even so, he does not fully know this matter, so he still needs to come to Psalm 8. In Psalm 7 he sees something, but for some reason it has not yet elevated his sphere of experience. God can say to him, "David, you have really grown, and you have been enlarged, but you have not yet become elevated in your sphere." He is like a man who can now take a test on the subject and pass it, but he himself is not yet in it. We should not be discouraged by this, however, because in our experience every time we go through these matters, we become richer and clearer. We never grow out of the experiences represented by Psalms 3 through 7, and yet they produce a longing, which opens the way for God to bring us to a greater and higher revelation.

This psalm begins with "O Jehovah my God, in You do I take refuge. Save me from all who pursue and deliver." He calls Jehovah his God. "Jehovah" stresses the relationship between God and man, while "God" denotes His being the sovereign, almighty One. When we call Him "God," we are speaking of the One who rules over the universe; when we call Him "Jehovah," it refers to His relationship with us. In his relative maturity, the psalmist can say, "Jehovah my God."

The key portion here is contained in verses 6 and 7: "Arise Jehovah...and let the assembly of the peoples surround You, and over it return on high." Again, as often is the case in the Psalms, the pearls are found in the middle of a lot of vindictive human feeling. Remember, however, that without all this "self-talk," the real things could not come forth! When he says, "let the assembly of the peoples surround You, and over it return on high," it is nearly unbelievable. He is suddenly praying that the Lord would display His supremacy by being over the assembly, the church. It is as if David is saying, "It appears You are not in control in the eyes of others, but let the church surround you, and as the one over the church show Yourself to be marvelous!" Through the church, the Lord must show that He is God! It is hard to believe the psalmist could have really understood the words he wrote in this song. God's desire, His will, is to have a people. His desire is to see us "surround" Him, and that through us He would gain the preeminence over everything. In this brief phrase, we see God's heart desire, His purpose, and it will eventually be accomplished!

In verse 8, he tells us Jehovah will exercise judgment on His people, His church. At the end of verse 17, he tells us he will sing psalms to Jehovah most high. In between, we have no idea why he has to say all he does about the wicked man travailing in iniquity, which is something obvious. He tells us the evil man digs a pit, and then he himself falls into the hole he has dug. It is hard to understand why all these verses are in the

psalms. We can see, however, that David is struggling to please God as he observes the situation around him, so he says “Let them all kill themselves. As for me, I will sing psalms to the Lord.” We have to love David. Sometimes he speaks whatever he feels, but we must appreciate how sincere and desperate he was before the Lord. Such a heart gave the Lord a way to speak out His revelation.

PSALM 8

In Psalm 8, David speaks out something that issues out of his spiritual growth. In Psalm 2 he was inspired and could declare something that matched God’s declaration, but in Psalm 8 his revelation is something that comes forth from the process he has passed through. His utterance in Psalm 8 is an echo to the desire in God’s own heart. In Psalm 7 he asked the Lord to return on high, but now in Psalm 8 he can indeed say the Lord’s name is excellent in all the earth.

He acknowledges now that the Lord is able to establish praise even in the mouths of babes and sucklings. He sees that he should not try so hard to overcome his problems; instead, he should simply become a baby and allow the Lord to establish his strength, and then he will be able to praise the Lord. He also sees in his present state that he is under the preserving hand of the Lord. This causes him to marvel, “What is man, that You should be mindful of him, or the son of man, that You should visit him?” Who are we that the Lord should think on us? We are a sorry mess, full of unruly sentiments, and yet we are upheld in our pursuing by continual “visits” from Him. How peaceful is David in such a state! He realizes everything is in the Lord’s keeping hand. It is here that David speaks of Christ, saying, “You have caused him to rule over the works of Your hands, You have put all things under his feet.” The writer of Hebrews realized this must be Christ (Heb. 2:6-8).

How marvelous. He has a God who can establish strength in a baby and a suckling, and a Lord who rules over all things and yet remembers him. “Oh Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth!” At this point this saint who has been growing in life can say not only “Jehovah my God,” but can also say “O Jehovah our Lord.” He has really grown. Witness Lee taught that Psalm 2 reveals Christ is the center of the divine administration, while in Psalm 8 Christ can be seen possessing this lordship and kingship to rule over all things with His Body. In ourselves, we are not qualified to attain to such a height, but Christ includes us. In Psalm 2 we are attracted to Christ and our focus is set on Him; in Psalm 8 we have been brought into an understanding of where we really are. Therefore, after this psalm follows six psalms describing “what is man”.

Verses six through eight are really a repeat of Genesis 1. This Psalm is so uplifting. We really are a hopeless people, yet one day this very God incarnated to become one of us, to include all of us. Then, while He was made temporarily “a little lower than the angels,” he was able to die and then be raised from the dead, so that He is now crowned with glory and honor...and we are part of it! When He ascended, we ascended with Him (Eph. 2:6). There is now a new creation! The old creation is over, and now we have a new situation, with Christ as the Head, and we are part of Him. Everything is accomplished by Christ and everything is under Christ, and we partake of Him and are joined to Him in both His experience and in what He has completely accomplished. Hallelujah! - *Titus Chu*

*The second of eleven messages given in Cleveland, Ohio,
on December 21 through 26, 2005.*

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“Watchman Nee’s Rejection of the Exclusive Way”

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