YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAINING

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in Anaheim, California in November 1976.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FULL GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO THE HEAVENLY VISION

In these chapters of the young people's training, we all must see a heavenly vision. We need God's unique vision. In Acts 26:19 Paul said, "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." As we shall see, the background of this heavenly vision was the Jewish religion.

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

This background was present in Matthew 16, where we have a revelation of Christ and the church. The Lord Jesus did not come to the heathen, pagan world. He came to God's people, a people who had the Holy Scriptures, who worshipped in God's temple, and who offered the sacrifices according to God's divine regulations. These people were very scriptural. None of the first followers of the Lord Jesus were pagans. They all were religious people who had a background in the Scriptures, in the worship of God, in God's law, and in the general knowledge of God. Suddenly, the Lord Jesus appeared and called some of them, and they followed Him. One day the Lord took His disciples "into the parts of Caesarea Philippi" (v. 13), far away from the temple and the holy city, to the border of the Holy Land. After bringing them there, He asked them a question: "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" (v. 13). After the disciples gave some answers, the Lord said, "But you, who do you say that I am?" (v. 15). Why did the Lord ask them this question in "the parts of Caesarea Philippi"? The fact that the Lord took His disciples there strongly implies and indicates that He is absolutely different from the typical religion. The Lord Jesus is the living Christ, the living Son of the living God. He is not a part of dead religion; He is altogether different from religion and stands outside of it. The revelation of Christ as the Son of the living God was not given in the sphere, in the realm, of the Jewish religion. The Lord brought the disciples away from everything "holy"—away from the Holy Land, the holy city, and the holy temple. The Lord seemed to be saying, "You may think that all these things are holy, but I shall forsake them all. Those who want to follow Me must come away from the background of religion."

With this as the background, Peter answered the Lord's question by saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). This word was not a teaching or a tradition. It was a direct revelation from the heavenly Father. It did not derive from the Jewish religion, the holy temple, or the holy city, but was something fresh and new. It did not originate with human thought or religious concepts; it came directly from the living God. After Peter spoke these words, the Lord said, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (v. 18). Here we see Christ, the Son of the living God, and the church built upon Him as the rock. Hence, in this chapter we have Christ and the church. Although it is wonderful to see Christ, this is not adequate. We also must see the church. Christ is only the rock, but the church is the building.

Verse 18 says that the gates of Hades will not prevail against the church, and in verse 19 the Lord said, "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens." Here we see the gates of Hades on the negative side and the kingdom of the heavens on the positive side. Christ and the church will bring in the kingdom of God and will cast down and defeat the gates of Hades, the authority of Satan. This is the heavenly vision concerning Christ and the church. The vision that Christ and the church will bring in God's kingdom and defeat the kingdom of Satan is given outside of religion. It is not a matter of culture, ethics, or morality. Rather, it is the very Christ, the Son of the living God, with the church to bring in the kingdom of the heavens and to subdue the gates of Hades. We all must see this.

THE LORD'S APPEARING

MAKING SAUL A WITNESS

Acts 26 is also set against the background of the Jewish religion. In verse 17 the Lord said that He would deliver Saul from the people to whom He would send him. The word *people* in this verse does not refer to mankind but to the Jewish people, the religious people. In the Jewish religion there was a young man named Saul who had a strong will and who was faithful to that traditional religion. He was very zealous for the religion and tradition of his forefathers. While he was on the way to damage the church, doing his best to persecute it, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and knocked him to the ground. Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute" (v. 15). The background here is not that of paganism but of the

typical religion. Saul was zealous for God according to the traditional religion, but he was persecuting the church of Christ and opposing God's economy. Although he was so zealous for God, he did not realize that he was part of the greatest deviation from the central line of God's revelation.

After Saul had been knocked down, the Lord called him, saying, "Rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you" (v. 16). Often the Lord knocks us down and then tells us to rise up. At these times the Lord may say, "Don't lie there—rise up. If you rise up, I will make you a minister and a witness, not a religionist. I will make you a witness of what you have seen." The Lord seemed to be telling Saul, "You have seen Me speaking to you from the heavens. Now go and witness to people of this. Witness to the priests, the elders, and the scribes. Formerly, you said that I was killed and buried, but now you must witness to the fact that I have been resurrected and am now living in the heavens."

In verse 16 the Lord told Saul that he would be a witness both of the things in which he had seen Him and of the things in which the Lord would appear to him. The Lord said that He would reveal other things to Saul, not in the way of teaching but by means of His appearing. In whatever the Lord appeared to Saul, Saul was to witness of that to the people. This is not a teaching, a doctrine, or a religion; it is absolutely a revelation of Jesus. All that the apostle Paul later ministered was something in which the Lord had appeared to him. He was not taught by the Lord; rather, he had revelation that came from the Lord's appearing. After his experience on the way to Damascus, Saul could say, "I have seen the living Jesus in the heavens. I will go tell people what I have seen. My seeing comes from the appearing of this living Lord. He charged me to minister those things in which He has ministered to me, and He even promised to appear to me again and again. Every time He appears, I see something. Then I go out and witness to people about what I have seen." Being a witness is not a matter of teaching and knowledge but of appearing and vision. The things in which the Lord appears to us are the things that we must minister to others.

THE LORD'S CHARGE

In Acts 26:18 the Lord charged Saul "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." This is the work that you young people should do today. Do not preach the traditional gospel of Christianity. Rather, open the eyes of this generation that they may turn from darkness to light. The first thing we must do is to help others to see. In order to do this, we ourselves must have the vision and see the heavenly things. We must see the things concerning Christ, not by being taught but by having Christ appear to us. After you have seen the vision, you need to contact people, telling them that Jesus has appeared to you and that you have seen Him. Do not preach the low, traditional gospel. Many who have received this poor gospel are still blind and in darkness. Do not teach people religion—open their eyes that they may turn from darkness and Satan to light and God. By turning in this way, they will be released from the evil power of darkness, which is the authority of Satan, to God. As a result, they will receive forgiveness of sins and a portion among those who are sanctified. All the saved and forgiven ones are saints, and all the saints have a portion (Col. 1:12). According to Colossians, the portion of the saints is simply Christ Himself. Christ has been allotted to us, and we all share a portion in Him. What is our portion? It is neither the heavens nor the earth but Christ. Thus, Christ is the common portion of all the saints. Unbelievers do not have a positive portion. Their portion—the lake of fire—is negative. Our portion—Christ—will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Those who turn from Satan to God will not have a portion individually but corporately and collectively with all the saints. This means that they will have a portion among those who are members of the church life. We cannot have such a portion alone; we can only have it among the saints, among those who are sanctified by faith.

THE FULL GOSPEL

In Acts 26:18 the full gospel is presented. The complete, perfect, whole gospel is found here: to open people's eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, be sanctified by faith, and enjoy the common portion of the saints to have the church life. In this one verse there are seven points: (1) to open people's eyes, (2) to turn them from darkness to light, (3) to turn them from the authority of Satan to God, (4) to help them receive forgiveness of sins, (5) to help them to be sanctified by faith, (6) that they may have a

common portion among the saints, and (7) be in the church life. Have you ever heard such a gospel? This is the gospel that the young people must preach to this generation. Do not preach the poor gospel about going to heaven—preach the uplifted gospel revealed in Acts 26:18.

THE NEED FOR PRAYER

It is quite easy to point out all the seven facets of the gospel found in this verse. But now you need to go to the Lord and pray, saying, "Lord, open my eyes. I don't need knowledge, Lord. I need my eyes to be opened. Lord, turn me from anything dark. I don't want to remain in darkness. Lord, turn me from darkness to light." This is spiritual reality. When we are in it, people will realize it when we contact them. You also need to pray, "Lord, turn me from the authority, the dominion, of Satan to Yourself. I must be a person who is absolutely in God. God is my sphere, my realm, my kingdom. I must be in God." If you pray like this, you will become another person. I can assure you that you will be different. If necessary, even fast and pray about these matters, saying, "Lord, I want to have my eyes opened like they have never been opened before. I don't want to be opaque. I want to have eyes like the four living creatures in the book of Revelation." The living creatures have eyes everywhere, without and within. We need to be like this. Then when we contact people, they will realize that we are crystal clear. We are not opaque like others are. Others may be good, ethical, religious, moral, and even scriptural, but they are opaque. When people contact us, they must immediately sense that we are crystal clear. This is not preaching—this is witnessing. We must be this kind of person.

We also need to pray, "Lord, grant me a full and thorough forgiveness of all my sins. I want to have a clearance of sins from the top to the bottom. I would leave nothing that has not been dealt with. Lord, I also want to be fully sanctified. I don't want to be merely a forgiven person but also a sanctified person. Then I will be able to enjoy my portion, the all-inclusive Christ." Day by day we enjoy Christ as our portion, not in an individualistic way but by enjoying Him among the saints. Who and where are the saints? They are those who are sanctified in the church. The saints are the church. When we get into the church, we get among the saints. Oh, how we must pray over these seven matters! Pray desperately to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I want to experience the gospel that You revealed to Paul as mentioned in Acts 26:18. I want to experience this full, complete, perfect, and thorough gospel." This

gospel not only covers God's kingdom but also Satan's kingdom. It includes the rich Christ as our portion and all the saints as the corporate Body, the church of Christ. How we need to experience this gospel!

If we experience the whole gospel, we shall not merely be a preacher—we shall be a witness. I can guarantee you that whenever you pray this way, the Lord Jesus will appear to you, and His appearing will give you a vision. Then you will see certain things. In all these chapters we need to see a vision. I cannot give you anything. We all must touch the throne of grace. Does the Lord still need to knock you down? Are you that stubborn? There is no need to be so stubborn. Rather, we should say, "Lord, I'm here. You don't need to knock me down. Lord, I'm here touching Your throne of grace. Open my eyes and turn me thoroughly from all darkness to light. Turn me from the authority of Satan to God and grant me a thorough forgiveness of all my sinfulness. O Lord, sanctify me that I may enjoy You as my portion among the saints in the local churches."

PAUL'S RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND AND THE LORD'S APPEARING

In Galatians 1:11-16 we also see the religious background of the revelation of Christ in Paul's experience. In Galatians 1:13 and 14 Paul says that he persecuted the church of God and advanced in Judaism, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of his fathers. In these verses Paul seems to be saying, "You know of my conduct. I was exceedingly zealous in the religion of my fathers, surpassing many of my equals. As far as religion was concerned, I was on top. I even persecuted the church, doing my best to lay it waste and to oppose God's economy. But one day the very God who separated me from my mother's womb was pleased to reveal His Son in me." All we need is this revelation, this vision.

I am concerned for many of you because our situation today is exactly the same as that in the ancient times. We all have been influenced by the background of Christianity. I am fearful that as you do a work among the young people, you may carry it out in a religious way. When you preach, you may preach the traditional gospel of Christianity. In these days we all must see something. We should no longer bring old traditional Christianity into our gospel preaching. Rather, we must cast away the old things and say, "Lord, show me something by appearing to me. Lord, You appeared to Paul and he

saw something, and You told him that You would show him more through Your appearing to him. Lord, appear to me so that in Your appearing I may see something and then tell people of what I have seen." It is not adequate simply to read this chapter. You must pray to the Lord. I can assure you that if you go to Him, He will be open. He is in the heavens, but to Him heaven is the same as earth, for He is everywhere. While Saul of Tarsus was going his way, the Lord Jesus, who was in the heavens, appeared to him. Today the Lord is open to us all. Simply come to Him, saying, "Lord, I have never heard such a gospel before. Lord, open my eyes and turn me from all other things to Yourself." I assure you that if you pray this way, He will appear to you immediately. In His appearing you will see something. This appearing will make you a witness. Then, as you contact other young people, you will not merely be a preacher but a witness.

You will be a witness telling people of what you have seen in the presence of the living Lord. It pleased God to reveal His Son to us that we might preach Him. Our preaching must be the issue of what we have seen. We do not preach doctrine; we minister and witness of what we have seen in His appearing.

GRACE GIVEN

TO LESS THAN THE LEAST

In Ephesians 3:8 Paul says, "To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel." Probably we all hold the concept that the apostle Paul was a specially selected one. But here he says that he was less than the least of all saints. If one who is less than the least can have such a vision, then certainly all of us can have the same thing. Do not say, "I am not an apostle, especially not the apostle Paul. Thus, I could never see as much as he did." Paul said that he was less than all of us. Paul said this because he opposed God's economy. In Paul's understanding, the one who opposed the most was the smallest and the least. Since he was the most opposing, he became even less than the least. Peter, John, Andrew, and Matthew were with the Lord Jesus, but Paul was far away. No one else opposed Christ and the church as much as Paul did. Therefore, this one who was the farthest away and the most opposing became the least and smallest one. In Ephesians 3 Paul seemed to be saying, "Dear brothers in Ephesus, don't you realize that I was once far, far away? None of

you was as far away from Christ as I was. Because I was the farthest away, I am less than the least of all the saints."

Anyone who is closer to Christ than Paul was is greater than he. Since we are all close to Christ, we are more than qualified to receive the vision and get the revelation. If the one farthest away from Christ could receive the revelation of Jesus Christ, then why could we not receive it also? We should be encouraged by this. Do not be disappointed. I am familiar with the subtlety of the enemy. When I was young, I excused myself saying that the verses in Ephesians 3 were wonderful, but they were only for the apostle Paul, not for me. Since I did not care for these verses, I missed the grace. But one day I woke up and saw Ephesians 3:8, and I believed it. I jumped up, shouting, "Hallelujah! I am bigger than Paul. To one less than I, grace was given. If he could receive this grace, then why can't I? I'm more qualified than he was." I can testify that since that day the vision has always been with me. If we would see this, we would all be like the apostle Paul. I am not saying that you should presume to claim your apostleship. No, what I mean is that as far as qualification goes, we all are greater than Paul. Thus, we must pray, "Lord, whether I understand it or not, Ephesians 3:8 says that Paul was less than I am. If grace was given to him, then, Lord, You must also give this grace to me. Standing on Ephesians 3:8, I claim the grace."

We need this grace in order to see and enjoy all the riches of Christ. We must go to the Lord, the source of the heavenly vision, and see something. There is no other way except to pray. If you pray, you will be different, and the Lord will have a way. Many eyes will be opened, and many young people will turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God and will enjoy forgiveness, sanctification, and the common portion among all the saints in the proper church life. Ephesians 3 indicates that the riches of Christ are for the producing of the church. Therefore, in this portion of the Word we have Christ with all His riches and the church as God's instrument to shame His enemies, the principalities and powers, and through which God will make known the manifold wisdom of His economy. Pray-read all the verses mentioned in this chapter in a serious, weighty way. Say, "Lord, I mean business with You. You have given grace to one who is less than I, and now You must give grace to me. Lord, I mean it. Lord, cause us all to experience the riches of the unlimited Christ and to have the church life which comes out of this enjoyment." If you pray like this, something will happen. The Lord is

real, living, present, practical, and available. If you mean business with Him, He will mean business with you. I know what I am talking about.

Do not follow the trend of today's Christianity. Rather, forget about it. We have a new, heavenly trend. In Revelation we have the seven local churches. If you will pray-read all these verses and live in them and witness according to them, the issue will be the local churches. In the local churches we have the practical church life. The enemy, Satan, hates the Spirit because the Spirit is the reality of Christ. Today Christ is realized as the Spirit, but some are fighting against this, saying that it is heresy to teach that Christ is the Spirit. Moreover, Satan also hates the local church and causes some to rise up against it. Most Christians only care for the universal church, but to have only the universal church is to have a vanity fair. While most Christians care for the universal church, they insist on perpetuating the denominations and free groups. Due to this, there is no local church. Instead, there is the vanity fair of the so-called universal church and all the denominations and groups. Where is the church? It can only exist when the saints realize that all Christians in a particular locality must be one. This is the local church.

Are you young people burning today? If you are, then I challenge you to pray with all these verses. If you pray, something will come out, and you will see the vision of the full gospel and become a witness of what you see of the Lord to today's young generation. You all must fellowship about this chapter and pray about it both individually and corporately until you are transfused by the Lord with such a heavenly vision and are burdened for the Lord's move among today's young generation to bring a number of them into the Lord's testimony.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TWO MAIN ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY TODAY

In this chapter I am burdened to share with you the two main aspects of the Lord's recovery today. As you are preparing to do a work among the young people, you must know what the Lord's recovery is. Today we should not follow degraded Christianity. In order to avoid this danger, we must know where we stand and what our commission is. In brief, the two main items in the Lord's recovery today are the recovery of the experience of Christ and the recovery of the proper practice of the church life. In other words, the Lord's recovery today is simply the recovery of Christ and the church. When we speak of recovery, however, we do not mean recovery in a doctrinal way. We are not interested in teaching about these things but in practicing them. We are in the practical recovery of the experiences of Christ and of the proper practice of the church life. We are not concerned with so many doctrinal points but with the adequate and full experience and practice.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

Many of us were in Christianity for years, but, apart from salvation, we heard little about the experience of Christ as life in a subjective way. There were no such terms as *the enjoyment of Christ* and the very common term *the experience of Christ.* We never even entertained the thought of such things. Rather, we were told, correctly, that Christ died on the cross, that He resurrected from the dead, that He ascended to the heavens, and that He is now sitting at the right hand of God. However, whatever we were taught concerning Christ was altogether in the realm of the mind. Christ was preached as the Savior, and many believed in Him and were, in a sense, saved. But Christ was still in the heavens, and we were still on earth. At the most, we had been saved through His name. Although there is nothing wrong with this, there is a tremendous lack. For years, I was never told that the very Christ in whom I had believed was dwelling in my spirit. But the fourteenth chapter of John says clearly, strongly, and emphatically that Christ, our Savior, is in us. In John 15 He Himself said, "Abide in Me and I in you." When I first heard that Christ was abiding in me and I in Him, I could not comprehend it, and I

exercised my little mind to try to figure it out, asking how Christ could abide in me and I in Him. I immediately examined whether I was in Him or not, but I simply could not figure it out. Nevertheless, the main emphasis in nearly all the Epistles is that this wonderful Christ is in us.

CHRIST AS THE SPIRIT INDWELLING OUR SPIRIT

For years, I was unable to answer the question of how Christ could be in me and I in Him. But one day the Lord opened my eyes, and I saw that after His resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Today Christ is not only sitting at the right hand of God in the heavens; as the life-giving Spirit, He also dwells in our spirit. Second Timothy 4:22 says, "The Lord be with your spirit." If the Lord Jesus were not the Spirit, how could He be with our spirit? Even if we did not have the clear word of 2 Corinthians 3:17—"The Lord is the Spirit"—we would be able to conclude that the Lord must be the Spirit from the fact that He is now with our spirit. First Corinthians 6:17 says something even more definite: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." According to your experience, do you realize that you are actually one spirit with the Lord?

CHRIST'S MAKING HIS HOME IN OUR HEART

Ephesians 3:16-21 reveals that Christ is making His home in our heart. How marvelous it is that we can experience Christ to this extent! When I was in Christianity, I heard nothing about experiencing Christ in this way. Gradually, through the help of some books, I came to know that Christ abides in me as my life, my righteousness, my holiness, and my sanctification, and I began to experience Him in a subjective way. But it was not until after many years of reading, study, and experience that I saw from Ephesians 3 that Christ is not only my life, but also He makes His home in my heart.

Christ's making His home in our heart is His taking full possession of our inner being. Our heart is a composition of our mind, will, emotion, and conscience. As Christ makes His home in our heart, He saturates our entire inner being and possesses it. This is a great thing. Our mind, will, emotion, and conscience become the dwelling place of Christ. Eventually, according to the New Testament, as far as our inner being is concerned, Christ will become one with us. We all must experience Christ to such an extent that we are one with Him not only in our spirit but also in our whole heart—in our mind, will,

emotion, and conscience. This must not be a mere doctrine to us; it must be our experience.

Let me relate a pitiful story of something that happened just several weeks ago. One night after a meeting, two teenagers came to the front of the meeting hall to deal with me. They said, "You teach that Christ became the firstborn Son of God. Haven't you read John 3:16, which says that He is the only begotten Son? Why do you say that He became the firstborn Son? Also Hebrews 13:8 says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." How pitiful! This is typical of the situation in Christianity today. These boys have a little knowledge of the Bible and think they know something.

Others condemn us for saying that Christ has changed and that God has been processed. They claim that God and Christ could never change. What about the incarnation? Before the incarnation the Son of God was God. He only had divinity, having nothing of humanity. He did not have flesh, blood, and bones. But by incarnation He put on human nature, becoming a man of blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14). After He became flesh and lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years, He died on the cross, shed His blood, and was buried. Three days later He was resurrected. He had had the form of the flesh, but after His resurrection this form was changed into that of the Spirit. Was not this a change? Those in Christianity only care for their little knowledge, not for experience. But a little knowledge is dangerous. In the Lord's recovery we are not fighting for terminology or doctrines. Why do we say that our God has been processed? I realize that, theologically speaking, it may sound strange to say that God has been processed. But according to the truth, God has been processed. He was God, He became flesh, and He was crucified on the cross, died, and was buried. Was that not a process? If it was not, then what was it? Through the process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit, not only with the divine nature but also with the human nature.

At this point it is well to quote some excerpts from Andrew Murray's masterpiece, *The Spirit of Christ*. These quotations are taken from chapter 5, entitled, "The Spirit of the Glorified Jesus":

We know how the Son, who had from eternity been with the Father, entered upon a new stage of existence when He became flesh. When He returned to Heaven, He was still the same only-begotten Son of God, and yet not

altogether the same. For He was now also, as Son of Man, the first-begotten from the dead, clothed with that glorified humanity which He had perfected and sanctified for Himself. And just so the Spirit of God as poured out at Pentecost was indeed something new...When poured out at Pentecost, He came as the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, the Spirit of the Incarnate, crucified, and exalted Christ, the bearer and communicator to us, not of the life of God as such, but of the life as it had been interwoven into human nature in the person of Christ Jesus...Christ came not only to deliver man from the law and its curse, but to bring human nature again into the fellowship of the Divine life, to make us partakers of the Divine nature...In His own person, having become flesh, He had to sanctify the flesh, and make it a meet and willing receptacle for the indwelling of the Spirit of God...From His nature, as it was glorified in the resurrection and ascension, His Spirit came forth as the Spirit of His human life, glorified into the union with the Divine, to make us partakers of all that He had personally wrought out and acquired, of Himself and His glorified life...And in virtue of His having perfected in Himself a new holy human nature on our behalf, He could now communicate what previously had no existence—a life at once human and Divine. From henceforth the Spirit just as He was the personal Divine life, could also become the personal life of men...And the Holy Spirit could come down as the Spirit of the God-man—most really the Spirit of God, and yet as truly the spirit of man.

By this we can see that at least one other brother has seen this matter.

EXPERIENCING A "DIFFERENT" CHRIST

The Christ whom we experience is not as low as the Christ preached in today's Christianity. In the Lord's recovery we do experience a "different Christ." Years ago, someone in Hong Kong condemned me, saying that I preach another Christ. I wrote a rebuttal saying that Christ certainly is different. For instance, in the Gospel of John Christ is the Lamb (John 1:29), but in Revelation He is the Lion (5:5). Is the Lion the same as the Lamb? Certainly not. Furthermore, with respect to the burnt offering, a type of Christ, in Leviticus 1 Christ is first likened to a bull, then to a goat, and last to a turtledove. Are all these the same? It would be ridiculous to say that they are. In Himself, Christ is not different, but in our experience He is different. In Christianity, people mainly experience Christ as their Savior. They know little more concerning Him.

According to Leviticus, some may experience Christ just as a little turtledove. Others, however, may experience Him as a goat, and still others experience Christ as a huge bull like the apostle Paul did. What is Christ in your experience—a pigeon, a goat, or a bull? Only the poor people offered a pigeon as a burnt offering to God. That is good, but it is poor. Likewise, it is good for you to experience Christ as a pigeon, but it is rather poor. Thousands of Christians have only received Christ as their Savior. Some others have progressed to experience Christ as their life. Gradually, I have discovered that Christ is everything to me. He is not only my Savior, my Redeemer, my Lord, my God, and my life—He is my everything. Even just in the book of 1 Corinthians we see that Christ is power, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, the deep things of God, the foundation, the Passover, the Head, the Body, the rock, the food, the drink, the second man, the last Adam, the firstfruits, and the life-giving Spirit. Oh, Christ is everything! Later, I began to see that this all-inclusive Christ is making His home in me. Now I not only take Him as my life and as my person, but I give myself to Him as His dwelling. We in the Lord's recovery must experience Christ to such an extent that He can make His home in our heart. As you contact other young people on the campuses, you must be those who live by Christ and experience Him day by day. You must take Him as your life, as your person, and as the One who dwells in your whole being.

THE WAY TO EXPERIENCE

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST

How can we experience Christ? Although experiencing Him may sound mysterious, it is actually very practical—as practical as electricity. If you would experience Him as the One making His home in your heart, you must pray to see the vision that Christ today is the Spirit. Most Christians, not knowing their human spirit and Christ as the life-giving Spirit, only care for doctrine. They do not know that today our Christ is everything. Christ is the all-inclusive One. He is God, the Creator, the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Lord, the light, the life, and so forth. I simply do not have the adequate utterance to express all that Christ is. Christ is wonderful. He is God, and He became a man, bringing God into humanity. Eventually, He also brought humanity into God. This does not mean that He made man God. Rather, it means that He brought humanity into divinity. Today He is the God-man. Recently, some have opposed the use of the

term *God-man*. But in the selections we have quoted from Andrew Murray, we see that he also used this term. In Christ is the real God and the real man. Today He is the all-inclusive Spirit. From my experience I know that this is so. Thus, I am strong to proclaim, not in a doctrinal way but in an experiential way, that the very Christ in whom we believe is everything to us. Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption, our love, our patience, and our endurance. He can be everything to us by His being the all-inclusive Spirit.

In the history of the church, various well-known writers have commented on the matter of Christ as the Spirit. It is helpful to include here some quotations from their writings. In his *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* John Peter Lange makes this comment on 2 Corinthians 3:17:

"But the Lord," to whom their heart thus turns, "is the Spirit." Many artificial explanations had been given of this verse. Without noticing those attempts which have been in direct contradiction to the meaning of the words and the scope of the context, we find here such an identification of Christ and the Holy Spirit, that the Lord to whom the heart turns, is in no practical respect different from the Holy Spirit received in conversion. The fellowship of Christ into which it entered, when it turned to the Lord, was in truth the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Christ is virtually the Spirit, inasmuch as He communicates Himself in conversion, and at other times by means of the Spirit; the Holy Spirit is His spirit; the animating principle of the Lord's indwelling and influence in the hearts of believers is this Holy Spirit...But such a virtual identification of Christ and the Spirit can have reference only to Christ in His state of exaltation (comp. 1 Cor. 15:45).

Augustus H. Strong has this to say in his *Systematic Theology:*

The Scripture representations of this intercommunion [among the Father, Son, and Spirit] prevent us from conceiving of the distinctions called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as involving separation between them. This intercommunion also explains the designation of Christ as "the Spirit," and of the Spirit as "the Spirit of Christ," as First Corinthians 15:45: "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit," Second Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is the Spirit."

In the same place Strong quotes another writer as saying,

"The personality of the Holy Trinity are not separable individuals. Each involves the others; the coming of each is the coming of the others. Thus the coming of the Spirit must have involved the coming of the Son."

In his book entitled *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament,* Henry Barclay Swete says this:

The Spirit in its working was found to be in effect the equivalent of Jesus Christ...where the possession of the Spirit of Christ is clearly regarded as tantamount to an indwelling of Christ Himself...'the Spirit of the Lord' and 'the Lord, the Spirit' (i.e. Christ in the power of His glorified life) are viewed as being in practice the same. Men who lived within a short space of time after the Ministry, the Ascension, and the Pentecost realized that where the Spirit was Christ was, and what the Spirit wrought was wrought in fact by Christ. Even in the word spoken by His Spirit through the prophets they recognized the voice of Christ. Though the Spirit of Christ, through whom the glorified Lord comes to His Church and sees as with eyes of flame and works and speaks, is neither the human spirit of Christ, nor the pre-existent Logos who was made flesh, yet it is so absolutely one in will and thought with the Divine-Human Christ that Christ is still in the Spirit present and at work on earth, dwelling in men and revealing Himself to them after a manner more expedient for them than if He were still visibly in their midst. Whether this equivalence is due to the perfect interpenetration of the Lord's glorified humanity by the Spirit, or to His oneness with the Spirit in the mystery of the Divine Life, neither St. John nor any of the New Testament writers has taught us; the question did not lie within their scope, and possibly does not lie within the grasp of the human mind. The Spirit alone searches the depths of God, and where the Spirit is silent as to their contents it is hazardous and indeed vain to speculate.

THE NEED OF PRACTICE

The central and crucial line in the Bible is that Christ is everything to us. The Lord Jesus today is the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit. Our only need is to give ourselves to Him, to love Him, to live by Him, and to take Him as our life, our person, and our everything. We need to practice this. If you are a husband and are about to speak to your wife, you must be sure that in your speaking you take Christ as life. If not, you should not say anything to her, even if it is something good. The Bible says that we do not need anyone to

teach us (1 John 2:27). We have Christ's life with His nature in us as the regulating law, and we also have His person, the life-giving Spirit, indwelling us as the anointing. If we would forget religion and dead teachings and care for this all-inclusive Spirit, living by Him, taking Him as our life and person, and giving ourselves to Him for His dwelling, we would truly be one with Him.

However, because of religion, people have selected various points found in the Bible and have passed them on as doctrines in their books. I have read many books about overcoming sin, but in my experience none of the methods advocated in those books ever worked. Eventually, after more than fifty years of experience, I have concluded that nothing works except the all-inclusive Christ as the life-giving Spirit. As long as I live by Him and take Him as my life, my person, and my everything, I have no need to overcome sin. He is the way. I do not need to seek holiness. Holiness is mine because Christ is mine. If the married sisters try to submit to their husbands, it will never work. The only thing that works is Christ as the life-giving Spirit. There is no need to retreat into your private room and pray. No, as you are about to do anything, stop and examine whether you are taking Christ as your life, whether you are living by Christ at that very moment and are taking Him as your person. You should say, "Lord, be one with me. I take You, Lord, as my life, my person, and my everything." If you practice this, there will be a great difference in your daily living. You will have victory, holiness, and life.

We in the Lord's recovery today must experience Christ in such a living and practical way all the time. This should not be a doctrine. It is a shame to be in the Lord's recovery and yet not live by Christ. If some in the recovery do not live by Christ, we must pray for them that they might be brought into the real, living, daily, and even momentary experience of taking Christ as their life and person. What a shame to simply have knowledge and doctrine and not to live by Christ! How wonderful and glorious it would be if we did not know so much, yet we all lived by Christ. Are you about to argue with the brothers? Stop and ask, "Lord, am I living by You and taking You as my person?"

TURNING TO THE SPIRIT

There is only one place where we can experience Christ—in our spirit. The mind, the emotion, and the will do not avail in this matter; only the spirit avails. We must constantly turn to our spirit. Some may ask how we can know

whether or not we have turned to our spirit. Although it is difficult to say what the spirit is, you do know quite well what your mind, emotion, and will are. As long as you are not in the mind, emotion, and will, then you must be in the spirit. If you are a married brother and are about to talk with your wife, examine whether or not you are in the mind, emotion, or will. If you are in none of these places, then you must be in your spirit, and you can freely converse with your wife. There are only four chambers of your being in which you can dwell: the chambers of the mind, emotion, will, and the inner chamber of the spirit. If you are in your spirit, then you may say to your wife, "Dear, I'm not in my mind, emotion, or will. Therefore, because I know that I'm in the spirit, I have the confidence to talk to you." I am certain that you could never attend a movie in your spirit. Try to lose your temper in your spirit. I doubt if you can do it. Whenever we get into our spirit, all the bugs and pests are exterminated. The most effective pesticide is our spirit, the unique place to experience Christ.

Young people, you need to experience Christ and to practice living by Christ. If you do a work among other young people without living by Christ, it will be a shame. To talk to people without taking Christ as your life is a disgrace. We all must learn to live by Christ. I do not care whether or not you are able to preach the gospel. I only care for one thing—whether or not you are living by Christ. As long as you live by Christ, your preaching of Christ will be prevailing. But if you attempt to carry on a work without taking Christ as your life, as your person, and as your everything, it will be a shame to the Lord's recovery.

LIVING IN THE PROPER CHURCH LIFE

Now we come to the second aspect of the Lord's recovery today—the practice of the proper church life. The genuine experience of Christ always issues in and demands the church life. The more you experience Christ, the more something within requires that you live in the proper church life. Satan is subtle. Throughout the centuries he has concealed the real experience of Christ, making Christ altogether objective, an object of human belief and worship. But once we experience Christ in a genuine and living way, He will require us to get into the church life because the dispensation of Christ into us is for the producing of the church. God dispenses Himself into us as everything for the purpose of gaining His corporate expression, which is the church.

The experience of Christ is somewhat hidden and mysterious, but the practice of the church life is quite complicated. How confused is the situation today regarding the church. Look around you. Where is the church life? We can see the Catholic Church with all its idols, images, and pagan things. The so-called Catholic charismatic movement even tolerates the worship of Mary, exposing the impurity of that movement. Consider all the denominations. They only have division and confusion. Every denomination is a deviation from God's center lane. Some denominations are larger and others are smaller, some are farther away and some are closer, but none of them is in the center lane. What about the free groups? They are too free. When the members of the body are so free, the body is dismembered and ceases to be a body. As we survey the situation of today's Christians, we see that there is no real church life. Hence, there is a need of the recovery of the genuine church life.

TWO REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROPER CHURCH LIFE

In order to have the proper church life, we must have two main things: Christ, the life-giving Spirit, as the content, and the standing on the ground of oneness in localities. In Anaheim we are not standing on any doctrine; we are standing on the oneness of the Body. Wherever we are—in San Francisco, Cleveland, New York, or any other city—we must be one. If we stand for doctrines, we shall be divided immediately, for one will have his concept, another his opinion, and still another his view. But when we take Christ as our life, as our person, and as our everything, this Christ within us will require the proper church life. In fact, the Christ in us will become the church life. Christ both requires and becomes the church life.

Eighteen years ago, some young learners under my training in Taiwan were influenced by a certain ministry of spirituality. As a result, they began to declare that they had seen the vision concerning Christ and that they wanted nothing to do with the church, saying that they cared only for Christ. We had the full assurance that this was not something of the Lord, and after a period of time their number gradually decreased. If we do not experience Christ, we shall have nothing, and if we experience Christ but do not want to have the church life, we shall also become nothing. Having Christ without the church is like having the head without the body. If there is no body, then there is no

head. We must have both. What would you do if there were no church life in the United States? If there were no church life, I would feel that it would be useless to go on living. I cannot live without the church life.

We have seen that in order to have the church life, we must have the real experience of Christ and the proper standing on the ground of oneness in localities. Because we have seen this vision, we do not have any divisions. God's intention is to have a corporate expression. According to the book of Revelation, each of the local churches was in its own locality, and there was never more than one church in a locality. For example, the church in Ephesus was in Ephesus, and the church in Smyrna was in Smyrna. The church in Smyrna equaled the city of Smyrna. Revelation 1:11 makes this very clear.

THE PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE

In Revelation 19:7-9 we are told that the Lamb's wife has made herself ready and that the marriage dinner of the Lamb has come. One day, the bride, the wife of the Lamb, will be ready. But if there were no church life on earth today, how could the bride be prepared? It would be impossible. Could the bride be prepared in the Catholic Church or in the denominations? No! Could she be prepared in the free groups or in the charismatic movement? Certainly not! I believe strongly, not because I am in it but because I have seen the vision, that the Lord intends to spread His recovery to build up the proper church life throughout the world so that His bride might be made ready.

The wife of the Lamb in chapter 19 of Revelation is smaller than the wife in chapter 21, for the wife in chapter 19 is the bride during the millennium, composed of only the overcoming believers, and the wife in chapter 21 will be the wife in the new heaven and the new earth after the millennium in eternity, consisting of all God's redeemed. This means that at the end of this age, the church will be ready but not in a general way. Rather, a small number, the remnant, the overcomers, will be ready. It is a shame to be in the Lord's recovery and yet not be an overcomer. Everyone in the Lord's recovery must be an overcomer. To be an overcomer means to overcome degraded Christianity.

We must leave religion and get into the Lord's recovery of the full experience of Christ and of the proper practice of the church life. If we do this, whenever we come together, we shall be the testimony of Jesus. This will be a

shame to the enemy and a preparation for Christ's coming back. I believe that the preparation of the bride for the Lord's coming back is in the church life. This is why I have the complete confidence that nothing will be able to suppress the Lord's recovery. The recovery is like a ball filled with heavenly pneuma: the more you hold it down, the higher it rises. I hope that you will bring these two items into your prayer, saying, "Lord, show us the consummate experience of Yourself and the real, practical church life. Lord, we shall live in this and die for it." May we all see the vision that the Lord's recovery today concerns the experience of Christ and the practical church life.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTACTING PEOPLE BY DEMONSTRATING THE SPIRIT

The Bible clearly reveals that God's purpose is to work Christ into His chosen people so that they might be the members of His Body, which, in this age, is expressed in many localities. If we have a heart to mean business with the Lord, then we must have a clear vision concerning Christ and the church. When we speak of a vision concerning Christ, we do not mean Christ in a doctrinal or theological way; we mean Christ in our experience. We must see a vision of the Christ whom we can experience fully in a very subjective way. We do not need messages concerning the doctrine of Christ; we need Christ in our daily experience.

CHRIST, NOT RELIGION, BEING ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

Do you know what religion is? Religion is something that is related to the things of God yet is without the experience of Christ. Anything related to God and to the worship of God that does not have the experience of Christ is religion. In a sense, religion is quite good. It is not related to Satan, to sin, and to the world, but it is related to God and even to the worship of God. There is nothing wrong with Judaism. However, Judaism has a great lack—the lack of the experience of Christ. Today's Christianity must also be categorized as a religion because it is related to God and to the worship of God, yet in it there is very little experience of Christ. If you still cling to things that are good, scriptural, and related to God but that do not have in them the proper experience of Christ, then these things are a religion. God does not want religion. What God desires is Christ and something in Christ. Are not the orthodox Jews worshipping the true God? Certainly they are, for they worship God according to their Scriptures. Nevertheless, God rejects their worship because Christ is not in it. Only the Christ experienced by us in our worship and service will make our worship and service acceptable to God. In Christianity today there is a great deal of work and service, but there is very little Christ. As a result, the work and service in Christianity are not so acceptable to God. In His eyes, it is not of much value. Whatever we are,

whatever we do, and whatever work we engage in must be with Christ. Without Christ, they mean nothing. If we do not have Christ in our life, our life is empty. If we do not have Christ in our service and worship, they are valueless to God. We must have Christ, not in doctrine or teaching but in our experience. If we have Christ in our experience, then whatever we are and do will be valuable in the eyes of God.

God's purpose is to work Christ into His chosen people so that they might become the members of Christ. Being a member of Christ requires life. Every member of my body certainly shares the life of my body. Any part of my body that does not share the life of my body is not a member of my body. To say that we are the members of Christ means that we have the life of Christ and that Christ is in us. The very Christ who is in us makes us His members. If we lack Christ, we may be members of a society or of Christianity, but we cannot be members of the living Body of Christ. Every member of the living Body of Christ has Christ in him. The Christ in us is not the Christ on the cross or the Christ in the heavens but the subjective Christ.

THE ISSUE

OF OUR EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

According to God's governing principles and laws, everything in this universe has an issue. If we experience Christ in a subjective way, the issue will be the church life. No chapter of the New Testament is stronger than Ephesians 3 in speaking of the Christ in our experience. In verse 8 Paul says, "To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel." Paul does not say that he received grace in order to preach the doctrine of Christ, the theology of Christ, or the teaching of Christ. Rather, he received grace in order to preach the riches of Christ. Without experience, we cannot taste of or participate in the riches of Christ. We can only share in these riches by our experience. The riches of Christ need our experience.

In verse 17 Paul says that the Christ who is unsearchably rich is making His home in our hearts. Is this not a matter of experience? The Christ of the unsearchable riches is making His home in our hearts. What is the issue of this? It is the church, which, at least twice in this chapter, is mentioned after Christ. Verse 10 says, "In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through

the church." This indicates that the riches of Christ produce the church. The experience of the riches of Christ issues in the proper church life. Furthermore, after speaking of Christ's making His home in our hearts (v. 17), Paul says that we shall be filled unto all the fullness of God and that to Him will be glory in the church (vv. 19, 21).

The church is the issue of the experience of Christ and comes out of the experience of Christ. Even our limited experience of Christ verifies this. When we have a little experience of Christ, not in doctrine but in reality, we desire fellowship with other Christians. This fellowship is simply the practical church life. I have never met a Christian who has experienced Christ and yet who does not seek fellowship with other Christians. But I have met hundreds and even thousands of believers who, after having had some experience of Christ, are eager to be with other saints. If I meet Christ in the morning, this experience will send me to the church meeting in the evening. Many Christians today do not care for the church life because they do not have the real, genuine, and practical experience of Christ. I was born, raised, and educated in Christianity. Everything I was taught came from Christianity. But before I was saved and had the real experience of Christ, I had no desire to talk to the other so-called church members. However, from the day I was saved and Christ came into me, I enjoyed having fellowship with others about the Lord and the Word. I liked talking with them and praying with them. This was the desire for the church life. The more we experience Christ, the greater will be our desire for the church life.

THE NEED FOR A VISION OF THE CHURCH

We all must see a clear vision of the church. The church is simply the expression of the Body of Christ on the proper ground with the experience of Christ. The proper ground of the church includes two aspects. Every local church must be genuinely one in its locality, and every local church must be in fellowship with all the churches throughout the world, because all the churches are the one Body of Christ. If we say that we are a local church but do not care for the other churches, we immediately lose the ground of the proper church life and become a local sect, a division in the Body. We all should ask the Lord to grant us the seeing of this vision. If we do not have this vision, we shall be a wanderer, a traveler in Christianity, journeying all the

time. Today you will be in a certain so-called church and, when you are no longer happy with it, you will leave and travel elsewhere. After a time you will leave the second place and begin to wander again, constantly looking for something newer and better. But whatever new thing you find will become old after a period of time, and once again you will be unhappy. Many of us can testify of this. In the early years of my Christian life, I traveled through three so-called churches. But praise the Lord that I finally came into my destination—the church. I have been in the church for over forty-four years, and I believe that, for eternity, I shall not travel again. This assurance is entirely dependent upon whether or not we have seen the vision regarding the genuine church life. The genuine church life is the expression of the one Body of Christ with the experience of Christ as its content. Also, the church must be genuinely one locally and be in fellowship with all the churches on earth.

If we see this vision, we shall be bound by it and shall be built practically into the church. It is very difficult to remove material that has become part of a building. If you can be pulled out of the church, it means that you have never been built in. When we are built into the church, we are built in for eternity. Once material has become a part of a building, it is wasted. Formerly, a certain board might have been quite useful, but once the carpenter has worked on it, making it part of a doorpost, it is wasted. On the one hand, to be a post in God's building is our destiny, and on the other hand, it wastes us. We can no longer be useful for any other purpose. I thank the Lord that I am only useful for His building and that I have been wasted for any other purpose. Many of us can testify that we have been wasted for Christ and the church life. To be in the church life is a great thing. I am a small man, not even worthy to say that I am less than the least, but whenever I consider the Lord's recovery in which I have a share, I feel that I am great. Whenever I speak of the Lord's recovery, I feel glorious.

THE MOST CRUCIAL POINT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Probably most of us have heard something concerning our human spirit. However, I am concerned by the fact that not many actually live and work in their spirit. They simply do not practice this. They have this concept in their mind, but it is not fully, actually, and thoroughly practiced in their life and work. We have seen that God's purpose is to work Christ into us in order to

have the church life. Where is the Christ who has been wrought into us? He is in our spirit. Do you realize that the Christ who has been wrought into your being is in your spirit this very moment? If you do, it will certainly affect the way you speak to others. Do you talk to others from your spirit? The most crucial and central point in the New Testament is that Christ, as the embodiment of God the Father, is now in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). This is not a doctrine. We have been born again by God with Christ as life. To be born means to gain a life. Without life there can be no birth. When we were reborn, we received another life besides our natural life. The life that we received at the time of our regeneration is the person of Christ as the life-giving Spirit. Since the time of our regeneration, Christ as the life-giving Spirit has been in our spirit. We all must see this and believe it.

WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Both Romans 8:4 and Galatians 5:16 speak of walking according to the spirit. We must walk according to the regenerated spirit that is indwelt by Christ. According to the Greek, the word *walk* means to live, to do things, to behave ourselves, and to have our being. Thus, we must live, behave, and have our being, not according to culture, custom, or even according to the Bible in dead letters but according to our spirit indwelt by Christ. Oh, how we need to see this!

How pitiful is the situation in the religion of Christianity! Week after week, people listen to messages, but they never hear a message telling them to live and have their being according to the spirit. When I was in Christianity, I never heard one message on Romans 8:4. The Scriptures tell us to be patient, and I tried my best to be patient. But after a few hours I failed. When my mother asked me what I was doing, I did not dare to answer her quickly. After a few hours, my patience was exhausted. The Bible also charges us to be humble. I took this word and tried to be humble. But I was born proud—how could I be humble? For someone whose name is pride, trying to be humble resembles a monkey attempting to behave like a man. When I was in Christianity, I never heard that the very Christ who is my life and my Savior is now in my spirit, and that when I walk according to my spirit, it means that I walk by Him, enjoying Him as everything to me. There is no need to try by ourselves to be patient or humble. We have a spirit according to which we can walk.

If you consult the people on the street, you will find that they do not have a spirit regenerated and indwelt by Christ. Their spirit is dead, and Christ is not there. But praise the Lord that our spirit has been quickened and regenerated with Christ as life and that the wonderful Christ who is the life-giving Spirit dwells in our spirit. I am a great person because I have such a wonderful spirit. We all need to walk according to this spirit. Do not try to be patient or humble. Simply walk according to the spirit. In Romans 8 we find no commands about husbands loving their wives or wives submitting to their husbands. We only have the wonderful spirit. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit (v. 16). This indicates that the two spirits have been mingled together to become one compound spirit. By this spirit we can be conformed to the image of the Son of God (v. 29). No matter how hard we try, we could never by our self-effort be conformed to the image of the Son of God. But this compound spirit can conform us to His image. There is no need for us to strive or exercise our self-effort to accomplish anything. We simply need to have our being according to this wonderful spirit.

GOD'S MYSTERY

REVEALED TO OUR SPIRIT

Ephesians 3:5 says that the mystery, which was not made known to men in other ages, "has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit." God's hidden mystery is not revealed in the human mind but in the spirit. Our spirit is the place and the organ in which and to which God's mystery is revealed. If we remain in our mind, we shall be far away from God's revelation, but if we turn to our spirit, we shall discover that the revelation of God's mystery is here. If you stay in your mind to analyze the church, you will find yourself in a maze. But if you turn to your spirit, after a few minutes you will have the vision of God's mystery.

DEMONSTRATING THE SPIRIT

In the New Testament we have an excellent example of a man in the spirit—the apostle Paul. He was a person absolutely living, walking, behaving himself, having his being, and working for the Lord in the spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:4 he says, "My speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Paul did not speak in persuasive words but in the demonstration of his spirit. Demonstrating our spirit does not mean that we approach people and say,

“Praise the Lord! You must realize that I am now demonstrating my spirit!” Yes, demonstrating the spirit requires a release of the spirit, but it should not be done in such a peculiar way. I do not believe that the apostle Paul always spoke loudly or that he was constantly shouting. Demonstrating our spirit in our speaking means that we speak from our spirit and not from our mind. Every form of speech is a type of demonstration. If I speak out of my mind, my speaking will be a demonstration of my mind. But if I speak from my spirit, whether quietly or loudly, my speaking will be a demonstration of my spirit.

Do not think that in order to demonstrate our spirit we must shout. Sometimes, when we are under pressure or oppression, we must shout. But most of the time, there is no need for this. Some have approached people on the campuses, saying, “Praise the Lord!” When they were asked what they were doing, they loudly said, “Amen!” When others said that they did not understand what they were talking about, the brothers replied, “Turn from your mind to your spirit.” If you behave like this on the campuses, the work will be killed. People will not understand who or what you are and will think that you are crazy. This kind of foolish activity will drive them away. Demonstrating our spirit means to speak from our spirit. Whenever we do this, people will realize that our speech is living and weighty. They will recognize that there is something of God in our utterance because as word after word comes from our spirit, Christ will come out of our spirit in our utterance. This is the demonstration of the spirit.

We all were born, trained, and educated to use our mind. Throughout our entire life, we have practiced using our mind. Thus, whatever we say comes out of the mind.

We do not have the habit of speaking from our spirit. Now that we have been regenerated in our spirit, Christ is living in it. But we are still not accustomed to using our spirit. In our speaking, we express our mind, but we do not demonstrate our spirit. Frequently, the sisters cry when they speak, indicating that their speech issues from their emotions. Whenever a sister weeps in this way, she demonstrates her emotions. There is no need for the sisters to demonstrate their emotion by speaking loudly, for by their tears it is easy to tell that they are speaking from their emotions. When these sisters calm down and cease demonstrating their emotions, they can begin to speak from the spirit. This kind of speaking always touches my spirit. My spirit

echoes in response to their spirit, and we have fellowship. This is the demonstration of the spirit.

PAUL, AN EXAMPLE OF WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

In 1 Corinthians 4:21 Paul says, "What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of meekness?" By reading this verse we realize that Paul was a person who truly walked in the spirit.

According to 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, Paul could even attend a church meeting in his spirit when he was not physically present. In 1 Corinthians 5:4 he said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you and my spirit have been assembled." Paul seemed to be saying, "You are gathering at Corinth, and I am here in Ephesus. But when you gather together, my spirit meets with you." How much Paul lived in his spirit! In his spirit he could exercise authority in the name of the Lord Jesus to execute the Lord's judgment upon a sinful brother. By this we see how strong in the spirit he was.

In 1 Corinthians 16:18 Paul says, "They refreshed my spirit and yours." Paul's spirit was refreshed by the saints in the church. This reveals that Paul continually lived, walked, and worked in his spirit for the church life.

Second Corinthians 2:13 says, "I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother." Paul also mentions the human spirit in 2 Corinthians 7:13, where he says, "Because of this we have been comforted. And in addition to our comfort, we rejoiced more abundantly over the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you." Paul told the Corinthians that they did a good thing in refreshing the spirit of Paul's co-worker Titus.

Second Corinthians 12:18 says, "I entreated Titus and sent with him the brother. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not walk in the same spirit? In the same steps?" Paul and his co-workers were in the same spirit. This verse does not say that they were one in the Holy Spirit but in the human spirit. The apostles constantly lived, walked, moved, worked, and spoke in and from their spirit. Therefore, they experienced Christ and had the proper church life.

THE WAY

TO EXPERIENCE CHRIST FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

Only by living and walking in our spirit can we experience Christ for the genuine church life. This is not a matter of studying the Bible or of reading books. Sometimes books will function as eye openers and render us some help by opening our mind. But our final decision must be made in our spirit. When I first came into the church life, I spent several weeks wondering and watching. I was constantly thinking and considering in my mind. Eventually, after a long period of time, I became finalized in my spirit. I said, "This is all. Now I forget my consideration and my thinking and make my final decision in my spirit." I can assure you that there is only one way to experience Christ for the church life—it is to be in your spirit. Wherever you are—at home, at school, or on your job—you need to be in the spirit. If we would pray, we must be in the spirit. If we would function, we must be in the spirit. If we would have fellowship with the saints, we must be in the spirit. If we would preach the gospel to sinners, we must do so in our spirit. The key is to be in spirit.

The Christian life, the church life, the Lord's work, the proper ministry—all must be in the spirit. Talk to the brothers in your spirit. Try to lose your temper in your spirit. Whenever we turn to our spirit, our temper vaporizes. When we turn to our spirit, there is no hatred, only love. When we turn to our spirit, it is no longer the self but Christ. In our spirit there is another world, another sphere, another realm, another kingdom. When we are in spirit, everything is different. Although we are small, we can be in one of two kingdoms: the kingdom in our mind or the kingdom in our spirit. Whenever we are in our mind, we are in one kingdom, but whenever we turn to our spirit, we are in another kingdom. Strictly speaking, we need very little knowledge. We just need to realize that we must live, walk, move, and work in our spirit. We must be burning, zealous, boiling, and aggressive, not in our emotions or in our natural being but in our spirit. Only this aggressiveness is effectual.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO FULFILL GOD'S DESIRE

The church life is not only great for our enjoyment; it also is great in God's desire. From eternity past, God planned to have this. His enemy, Satan, has

been frustrating Him from achieving this goal. I have the deep sense that today is the end time. At the close of this age, God has revealed His heart to us. We cannot say that we have not seen His heart's desire. His desire is that a group of His chosen people would practice the real church life with His Christ. We are here on earth for this. It is worthwhile to give all we are for this. If I had ten lives, I would give every one of them for this cause. I would spend one life in Africa, another in Europe, and another in Australia.

As you go to the campuses, do not carry on a so-called work of Christianity. Go there to be people living, walking, moving, and working in the spirit as a true testimony of Jesus. We do not preach the gospel simply because we love sinners and want to see them saved from hell to heaven. This is the concept of poor Christianity. Our burden is to preach the gospel in order to bring people into a glorious vision, into the participation of Christ, and into God's standard in the church life. What goal is higher than this? If you are an ambitious young person, you must take this as your ambition. Our eyes need to be open to see what a wonderful person is the Christ whom we experience in the church. This wonderful Christ is for us to have the proper church life. In the church life today we have a foretaste of the full taste to come in the New Jerusalem. How great it is to experience Christ and to live in the church life!

CONTACTING PEOPLE IN A NORMAL WAY

When you go to the campuses, do not shout, saying, "Don't you know that I am here? I have come with Christ from the church." If you do this, others will think that you are mentally disturbed. Be a normal person, a proper human being with a stately and weighty humanity. You even need to be shining with Christ. But do not declare anything or label yourself in any way. Simply be a common and normal person who can easily contact others and be contacted by them. If you live, walk, and behave in the spirit, then you will be a common person. Do not attempt to be holy, angelic, or spiritual. Rather, be a neat, clean, normal human being. You all need to practice this. Do not make yourself peculiar or contact people in an abnormal way. Do not conduct yourself like a preacher. Often, preachers are not very human. Consider how peculiar are the monks in Buddhism and Catholicism. They dress in strange garments and, by so doing, label themselves. We must let people see how human we are.

As you read the four Gospels, you will see that when the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was a common person, living a normal human life with a weighty humanity yet without being peculiar in any way. His humanity was clean, high, right, and shining. If we also are like this, there will be no need to label ourselves. When we speak to people, they will realize that we are human and common. But they will also recognize that we have a certain something, and this will cause them to respect us. Although you may be just nineteen years old, your professor will consider you to be quite weighty.

THE NEED TO HAVE A BURDEN

We also need to pray to be burdened, saying, "Lord, burden me with Your commission. Burden me with Your move and Your economy." If you would all go to the Lord and pray like this, after one prevailing prayer you will be burdened. You will be burdened with the Lord's present economy and with His commission to go to people. In order to work for the Lord we must have a burden. I believe that you all can testify that I truly have a burden. When I speak with a burden, I do not speak vanity. I do not like to speak without a burden. Young people, you must go to the campus with a burden. This burden should not simply be the burden of the gospel construed in the terms of Christianity but the burden of God's up-to-date move. We have a heavy burden and the clear understanding that the Lord desires to accomplish His recovery in this age. The only way He can do this is to gain the young people. The Lord's up-to-date economy is to gain young people, not only in this country but in all the leading countries for His recovery. Pray to be burdened with this commission. You should all be able to say, "The purpose of my life is not to be a scholar or a doctor. My life is for the Lord's up-to-date burden. I do have a burden. For this burden I study and work. For this burden I am what I am today." Pray that you might become burdened in this way. It means a great deal to have a burden like this.

If I had come to this country without having this kind of burden, I would have given up by now. But since I am burdened, nothing can quench me. I do not care about the opposition, attacks, and rumors. I only care for the burden with which I am burdened. I can testify that the Lord honors this burden. Whenever you have been burdened by Him, He will honor that burden. This is why I have said many times that this work is not mine; it is something wrought by Him. The attacks are not directed against me but against the Lord's move. One day the opposers will know that they have been attacking

His economy. This work is not a work accomplished by a man; it is a work according to the divine burden.

When you go to the campus, go with such a divine burden. Do not shout at people, but in your spirit remind Satan that you have come with a burden. Many times I have spoken to Satan, saying, "Do not touch this work. This is being done according to a burden from the Lord. This is not something of me but of the Lord." After you pray to the Lord and speak to people, you need to talk to Satan, telling him to stay away from you because you have a burden from the Lord. Get this burden and go with it.

GO PRAYING

As you go to do a work among the young people, go praying. Although you may not have much time to pray privately in your room, you can still pray at every moment. Pray to the Lord about the chosen ones, saying, "Lord, give me Your chosen people. Lord, You are sovereign. I believe that among all these students there are a number who have been chosen by You in eternity past but who have not yet been called. Lord, give me Your chosen ones." As you pray in this way, you must believe that the Lord will give them to you, granting you the proper people whom He has chosen for His purpose in eternity past. I can give many testimonies concerning this. I can testify that in the Lord's work I have never selected one co-worker. The Lord gave me so many co-workers. Ask the Lord to give you His chosen ones. He is sovereign in this matter. Simply be one with the Lord in the spirit. You are not going to the campus to do your own work, to carry out a work started by you. No, you are going there with the Lord to do a work originated by Him. Therefore, you can ask Him to give you His chosen ones, and He will do it.

THE NEED FOR A LIVING, SENSITIVE SPIRIT

As you contact people, you must have a very sensitive spirit. You need a spirit that is living, capable, and full of spiritual sensitivity. When you contact people, you must exercise your spirit to sense them out. If you do this, you will be able to recognize their need. Eventually, you will learn the different needs of people. For example, you may meet a person who is a Christian in name but who has never experienced salvation. There will be no need for him to say that he has not had this experience. At a certain point in your contact with him, you will sense that he is this kind of person. After sensing his need,

you will be able to help him by feeding him, by supplying what he needs. There will be no need to say, “Friend, I sense that you have not been saved. I will exercise my spirit by the grace of God to help you experience salvation.” If you do this, he will think that there is something wrong with you. A good doctor does not reveal very much to his patient. The less a doctor talks, the better. When you sense the need of someone, there is no need to tell him. Instead, supply his need unconsciously, helping him to have the proper experience in life. Use the instant wisdom that the Lord will give you. Perhaps you will give a testimony either of your experience or of the experience of others. The testimony of your experience of salvation may help him.

Perhaps you will meet someone who has experienced salvation yet who has little interest in the Lord. In other words, he does not love the Lord. He is open to you and enjoys talking to you, but he does not love the Lord. You must look to the Lord for the wisdom how to help him to be stirred up to love the Lord, to be constrained by the love of Christ. I am certain that the way of preaching doctrine will not work. Do not say, “Friend, Jesus loves us, and we all must love Him.” This is preaching, and it will not avail. Mainly what will work is fellowship with testimonies. I cannot give you a method. You must look to the Lord and exercise the wisdom that He will give you. This is similar to driving a car. In driving, you must be alert and flexible. No one can tell you ahead of time everything you must do in your driving. Rather, you must drive flexibly and alertly.

The way we contact people depends upon how living our spirit is. If our spirit is constantly living and has a living consciousness and intuition, we shall have the wisdom we need. Sometimes people have come to me when my spirit was occupied or exhausted. Although I listened to them, I had no clear sense and no wisdom. All I could sense was numbness. When I was asked how I felt, I had no feeling whatever because my spirit was not keen. But when my spirit is keen, like a sharp knife, I can tell what someone intends to say after they utter only one sentence. The spirit knows. In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul says that the spirit knows all things. You need to exercise your spirit. Every time you go on campus, you must go with a living, aggressive, and alert spirit. However, do not expose the fact that you have such a spirit. This all depends on your experience. Without experience, you will have nothing with which to search people. Knowledge and preaching do not work. Never take the way of preaching or of passing on knowledge. You must serve people by exercising

your spirit with the wisdom given by the Lord. Then you will know how to feed them and to take care of their needs. We all must learn this.

From 1940 until the early part of 1943, I was in my hometown caring for the church there. Every Monday morning the shepherding ones came together for training. I asked them to present all the difficult cases, and I told them how to take care of them. We all learned from this, and this practice of caring for people was prevailing. Contacting young people is not simply a matter of telling them that the Lord Jesus is the Savior and of asking them to come to the church meeting. This will not work. You all have to learn the proper way—to be living in your spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR

FRUIT-BEARING: THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL ON THE HIGHEST PLANE

In the first three Gospels the Lord Jesus charged His disciples to preach the gospel, to teach the nations, and to baptize them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). In the Gospel of John, however, the Lord Jesus did not charge His disciples in this way. Rather, in John 15 He revealed to His disciples the secret of life. This secret of life is so mysterious and abstract that no human words can adequately utter it. Thus, the Lord Jesus used the vine and its branches as a symbol of this mystery of life.

BEARING FRUIT BY THE OVERFLOW OF THE INNER LIFE

It seems that the vine with its branches is simple to understand. Everybody knows what a vine is. But in this symbol something mysterious and secret regarding life is indicated. The branches abide in the vine, and as they abide, they bear fruit. This fruit comes from the overflow of the inner life. My burden in this chapter is to point out that to have the proper and genuine spreading of the gospel, we must have the overflow of the inner life. This one, unique life is in three sections: in the vine, in the branches, and in the fruit. The fruit is on the branches, and the branches are on the vine. Although there are three sections, these sections are not different in life or in nature. In life and in nature they are absolutely one. The vine, the branches, and the fruit are different only in form. The vine has one form, the branches have another form, and the fruit has still a different form.

Why did not the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John charge His disciples to preach the gospel or to teach the nations? It is because the Gospel of John is the Gospel of life, and life does not require preaching or teaching. No one can produce fruit by preaching to a tree. How foolish it would be to go into an orchard and preach to the trees regarding fruit-bearing. No one would be foolish enough to do this, exhorting the trees to be diligent to bring forth fruit. When some read this, they may say, “Does not Matthew 28 tell us to teach the

nations? Is there not preaching mentioned in Mark 16 and in Luke 24?" Do not twist my words. I have not said that there is no preaching or teaching in the other Gospels. But do not neglect the final Gospel, the Gospel of John. Everyone realizes that the final word is the decisive word. Although we may speak a great deal, our final word gives our decision. Among the four Gospels, John, the Gospel of life, is the final one. Life is final. You may have many things, but if you do not have life, it all amounts to nothing. In John 15 there is no teaching or preaching.

GOD'S DISPENSATION

We need to see the things of God's mystery in His dispensation. We do not use the word *dispensation* in the sense of an age but with the meaning of *economy*, referring to God's dispensing administration. God's economy is to dispense Himself into His chosen and predestinated people. Our work must not be on the low level of today's Christianity. Our preaching of the gospel must be on the highest level, which is to minister life, even Christ, to people. This is the preaching of the gospel on the highest plane.

THE FATHER EXPRESSED IN THE SON AND THE SON REALIZED AS THE SPIRIT

The Gospel of John reveals that the Son is the declaration of the Father. This matter is found in chapters 1 to 13. In John 14:8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us." Philip seemed to be saying, "Lord, we desire to see the Father. If You show Him to us, we will be satisfied." In chapters 1 through 13 the Father was expressed, declared, to the disciples. But the pitiful thing was that although the Lord Jesus had been with them for more than three years, they did not yet realize that He was the declaration and expression of the Father. John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Hence, the Father is declared, expressed, in the Son.

After pointing out to the disciples in 14:9-13 that He was the Father expressed, beginning in verse 16, the Lord Jesus told them that He would ask the Father to give them another Comforter, the Spirit of reality (v. 17). The Lord Jesus indicated here that when the Spirit of reality came, He would not only be with the disciples but also in them. The Lord seemed to be saying, "Although I have been among you, I have been unable to get into you and

abide in you. Now I shall ask the Father to send another Comforter, the Spirit of reality, that He may abide in you.'' The worldly people do not know this Spirit because they cannot see Him. But the Lord Jesus said, "You know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you" (v. 17). We cannot know the Spirit by our physical senses or by our mind; we know Him by our inner sense. How do you know that today the Spirit of God is in you? Have you seen or touched the Spirit? No, it is by our inner sense deep within that we know that the Spirit of God is in us. Often our mind will raise questions about this, and our emotion may be contrary, not liking the Holy Spirit. Have you not experienced this? Many times my emotion has said, "I don't like the Holy Spirit. You should give Him up." On many other occasions our will has decided not to follow the Spirit. However, no matter what our mind thinks, our emotion says, or our will determines, we simply cannot get rid of the sense deep within us. This sense is deeper than our mind, emotion, and will. We can never convince Him. The more we fight against Him, the more He speaks to us. Did you have this experience before you were saved? Of course not. But since the day you were saved, you have had something within you that would never give you up. How marvelous and wonderful it is that He would never leave us! The world does not know Him, for it cannot see Him, but we know Him because He abides in us. Who can deny that the true believers in Jesus have this abiding Spirit?

The "He," the abiding Spirit, in verse 17 is the "I" in verse 18. Verse 17 says, "He abides with you and shall be in you," and verse 18 says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you." Here the Lord seemed to be saying, "He will come to abide in you, and I will not leave you as orphans. His coming is just My coming. He is I." Following this, the Lord said in verse 20, "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." Who is in us—the "He" of verse 17 or the "I" of verse 20? The answer is that both are in us as one. The "He" of verse 17 equals the "I" of verses 18 and 20. By all this we see that the Father is expressed in the Son and that the Son is realized as the Spirit.

THE SPIRIT EXPRESSED THROUGH THE BRANCHES

In John 15:1 the Lord said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman," and in John 15:5 He said, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Not many Christians have seen that in the Gospel of John the Father is expressed in the Son, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and the Spirit is

expressed through all the branches. The Spirit, who is the reality of the Son, now expresses Himself through all the branches in fruit-bearing. Hence, the fruit brought forth by the branches is the expression of the working and moving of the indwelling Spirit. In John 15:8 the Lord said, "In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." Eventually, the Father is glorified in all the fruit because the fruit is the expression of the Spirit, who is the reality of the Son in whom the Father is expressed.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL BY IMPARTING LIFE TO OTHERS

What does it mean to preach the gospel? It is to bring forth fruit. Bearing fruit is not merely a matter of preaching or teaching; it is a matter of imparting life to others. The proper and genuine gospel preaching is not merely a type of preaching or teaching; it is the imparting of the very life that is within you to others. This is a matter of life. Suppose you are a dried-up branch. To be dried up is to lack life. As a branch, you should share the abundant life of the vine. But to be dried up means that you lack the life of the vine and are unable to bear fruit. Because you do not have life, there is no overflow of the life of the vine within you. But if you abide properly in the vine, then the life of the vine will fill you up. The life that has filled you up will then overflow into others. This is fruit-bearing, and this is the genuine and proper gospel preaching. I look to the Lord that we all might see this.

OUR NEED TO ABIDE IN THE LORD

We need to abide in the Lord. To abide in the Lord means that there is no insulation or distance between us and Him. There must be nothing between us and the Lord. When we abide in Him, He as life will flow into our whole being and will fill us up. As a result, life will overflow from within us.

In this chapter the Lord Jesus is serious, saying, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away," and, "If one does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up" (vv. 2, 6). If a branch does not bear fruit, the Father will cut it off. Does this mean that we shall perish? Do not apply this thought to this chapter. In John 15 there is no thought of being saved or lost. Many Christians emphasize only one thing—being saved to go to heaven. According to some of them, if a saved person does not do well, he will lose his salvation and perish in hell. John 15, however, is in another realm, having

absolutely nothing to do with going either to heaven or hell. To be dried up and cut off first means to be cut off from the enjoyment of the riches of Christ. When a branch is cut off, it loses the enjoyment of the riches of life. Second, to be cut off means to be severed from the fellowship with all the other branches. When you are on the vine, you not only abide in the vine but also in the fellowship with the other branches. However, if you are cut off from the vine, you will lose this fellowship. Third, to be cut off means to be cut off from your function. When a branch is cut off, it loses its function. Finally, to be cut off means to miss God's eternal purpose. A branch that has been cut off from the vine cannot possibly fulfill God's eternal purpose.

It is possible to preach and still be insulated from Christ. I knew of a brother who beat his wife at home and then stood up to tell people that Jesus loved them. It seemed that Jesus loved everyone except his wife. For years, I sat under a great teacher of the Bible. He was a good talker. But when people went to visit him, after speaking with them for a while, he excused himself, picked up his pipe, and smoked. Do you think that as he was smoking his pipe he was abiding in the Lord? His pipe smoking must have been an insulation. Although I sat under his teaching for years, I never received any life supply from him. While some may preach and still be able to smoke or attend the movies, genuine gospel preaching is the overflow of the inner life. In order to have this overflow, we must abide in the Lord. Even a negative thought can insulate us from the flow of life. We know this from our experience. You may preach and teach, but if you do not abide in the Lord, you will never bear fruit by the overflow of the inner life.

When we abide in the Lord, we become a part of the Triune God. Are not the branches a part of the vine? If we, as branches, abide in the Lord, then we are a part of the Triune God. When some of the critics hear this, they will accuse me of teaching evolution into God. What slander this is, and what blasphemy to the Lord! We do not teach any kind of evolution.

As you contact people on the campuses, you must have the deep sense and the full realization that you are abiding in the Lord. When you talk to people, you must talk to them by abiding in Him. In the previous chapter I said that we must talk from our spirit. Now I am saying that we must talk by abiding in Him. We need to practice this. Tell the Lord, "Lord Jesus, I am going to the campus. Help me to abide in You right now. Lord, You promised that if I abide in You, You would abide in me. My abiding is Your abiding. Lord, I will

go abiding in You." If you abide in the Lord, in your speaking will be the Lord's speaking. Never contact people without abiding in the Lord. Do not speak a word to anyone without abiding in Him. If, as I am speaking, I do not have the assurance that I am abiding in Him, I should stop speaking, for whatever I would say would not be the truth, the reality, but a falsehood. All human words, even if they are true, are falsehoods because there is no reality in them. But when I abide in the Lord, He speaks in my speaking, and my speaking is His speaking. This is the imparting of life, the overflow of life from within.

NOT A MUSHROOMING DEVELOPMENT

BUT THE SLOW PROCESS OF LIFE

With this as a basic concept, let us consider some other matters. We all have some peculiar concepts. If we are not concerned about the preaching of the gospel, we simply do not care for it at all. But when we are stirred up and burning, we take the thought that after a short time we shall bring many to the Lord. If, after a period of time, we have not brought anyone to the Lord, then we are disappointed. Many of us have known this disappointment in the past. But consider the fruit-bearing of a fruit tree. The fruit is not brought forth overnight; it takes time. It takes at least several months for fruit to be borne. Gospel preaching is fruit-bearing through the overflow of life. It cannot be a mushrooming development. Rather, it must be the result of the slow process of life. Do not expect that if you contact people for a short while, you will catch many of them. This is a mistaken concept. Do not suppose that after reading these chapters of the young people's training, you will know the secret and that you will bring many to the Lord. There will be no mushrooming development. Instead, you will bear fruit in due time.

Most fruit-bearing trees bear fruit once a year. For example, peach trees and apple trees bear fruit once a year. This is according to the natural law. Do not expect that you will be able to bear fruit any faster than this. We all must make a deal with the Lord, saying, "Lord, I don't want to dream anymore. Grant me the overflow of life that I may bear fruit once a year." It takes time to bear fruit, but it should not take more than a year. I look to the Lord that next year at this time we shall come together with some produce to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast that comes after the harvest.

THE NEED TO CONTACT PEOPLE

You all must go to reach people. Whether you have the overflow of life or not, you must still contact people. If you do not reach people, you will have no way of knowing where you are. But when you contact them, you will be exposed and become desperate, saying, "O Lord Jesus, how can I go on? Lord, I have discovered that I am empty." If I were to tell you that you are empty, you would probably be offended. You must go and discover this yourself.

More than forty years ago, I learned a principle in the church life. Everyone has an opinion. Usually those who do nothing are the ones who criticize those who do something. For example, someone who does not know how to cook may be the first to criticize the cooking of others. In the church life I have followed this principle: whoever criticizes others for the way they do a certain thing must do it themselves. If a brother or sister comes to me criticizing others, I say, "You are the best one to do it. Since you criticize others, you should do it yourself." The first time I learned this principle was when a brother came to me, saying, "Brother Lee, those responsible for the cleaning are not doing a very good job." I replied, "All right, you do it." When he declined, I said, "You have been caught, and now you must do it. If you are unwilling to clean, then don't criticize others." Eventually, the news spread throughout the church not to criticize anything or anyone to Brother Lee. This one principle, which I still practice today, has silenced all the gossip and subdued all the opinions. The point is this: when you do something, you get exposed. If you do nothing, you will think that you can do a great deal. But when you attempt to do something, you discover that you cannot do the slightest thing. Therefore, go to reach people and discover how needy you are.

We all need to devote more time for contacting people. One evening out of the week should be used for your personal affairs, three nights for the church meetings, and the three remaining nights for contacting people. In addition to these three nights, I hope that you will use every lunch hour for this purpose. Make an appointment with people to have lunch or dinner with them.

CONTACTING PEOPLE

BY ENTERING INTO THEIR SITUATION

When we contact people, we must be able to enter into their situation and condition. This is difficult. In his Gospel, John records at least nine cases of

the Lord's contacting people. In each instance, the Lord reached people in a different way. He never used only one way of reaching people. He reached people with God's unique purpose, but He did not do so according to His disposition. Rather, He contacted them according to their situation and condition. In John 3 the Lord knew that Nicodemus would come to Him. He did not visit Nicodemus at his house, because He knew that this would have been inconvenient for him. He realized that Nicodemus was timid, fearing that others might learn that Jesus had come to see him. Thus, the Lord remained home, waiting for that timid gentleman to come to Him. The case of the Samaritan woman was different. According to John 4, the Lord "had to pass through Samaria" (v. 4). Having arrived at the well of Sychar, He waited there for the Samaritan woman to come to Him. This is a marvelous example of how the Lord Jesus entered into someone's situation. This is the basic principle of incarnation.

Incarnation means that God comes to man in man's condition, reaching people by entering into their situation. The Lord did not stay in heaven and command people to contact Him. No, He became a man and entered into our situation. Having become a man, He conducted His outreach by constantly coming into the condition of people. He did not just go to the people themselves, but He entered into their situation. He knew that the Samaritan woman would be thirsty; hence, He waited for her at the well. When He met her, He did not say, "Have you been saved? How long have you been a Christian? What church do you go to?" The Lord did not ask any of these religious questions. Rather, He said, "Give Me something to drink" (v. 7). By this simple word, He touched her heart, for she was wholly occupied with the matter of drinking water, even coming out at noon, an extraordinary time for drawing water. When you go to reach people, do not contact them according to your tradition, background, or disposition. Look to the Lord, that, with His help, you will be able to enter into their condition and situation.

Consider the example of the impotent man in John 5. In chapter 3 Nicodemus came all the way to the Lord, and in chapter 4 the Lord Jesus met the Samaritan woman midway. But in chapter 5 the Lord went all the way to the impotent man. Once again we see that the Lord reached people by getting into their situation. In John 5 the Lord came to a man who had been impotent for thirty-eight years. The Lord did not ask him, "Do you read the Bible?" If He had said this, the sick man would have responded, "Get away from me! I don't care about the Bible." Without entering into a person's situation, you

cannot touch his heart and feeling, and he will never respond to you. The Lord said to this man, “Do you want to get well?” (v. 6). The impotent man was, of course, very interested in this.

Often we talk to people without getting a positive response because, according to our tradition or disposition, we ask questions such as, “Do you know the Bible?” or, “How many years have you been saved?” Do not ask these questions until you have contacted them many times. Only after a certain time should you consider asking a question like this. Some have contacted people saying, “How long have you been saved? Where do you go to church? Don’t you know that we have a wonderful church? Come and meet with us.” Many brothers, and especially sisters, are like this. Many sisters have a hot heart. A hot heart always makes people foolish. Whenever people have a high fever, they talk nonsense. To speak to people in such a “hot” manner will not elicit a positive response, for that is the speaking according to your likes, background, disposition, or taste. Learn to reach people by getting into their interests.

Suppose you meet a student who likes mathematics. If you show an interest in this, he will certainly respond to you. Perhaps you will meet someone whose interest is the movies. You should not say, “Don’t go to movies. That is sinful in the eyes of God.” If you do this, you will offend him and cut him off immediately. It is better that you enter into his situation of attending the movies. This does not mean that you should go to the movie with him. No, you must exercise wisdom, perhaps asking him to tell you about a recent movie he has seen. He will certainly respond to this. In such a case, it is wise to take a neutral position. Look to the Lord to give you a good word to speak to him. It may be that at a certain point in your conversation, you will be able to touch his life. But be careful not to touch it too much. This type of wise conversation will attract him and cause him to like you. Perhaps the first one or two times, you will not say a word about Christ or the gospel.

Some may argue with me over this, saying that I lack the power of the Holy Spirit. But I know what I am talking about. Your concept of the power of the Holy Spirit will only frighten people. Any farmer can tell you that a fruit tree first buds and then blossoms. This budding and blossoming come a long time before the bearing of fruit. There must be several stages before fruit is borne. Do not expect to do a quick work. Rather, you must spend time with people. According to my experience, I do not like to catch people from off the street.

The street people are not good subjects for proper fruit-bearing. Instead, you should concentrate on your neighbors, relatives, or classmates. Contact them progressively again and again at least once or twice a week. After every contact with them, you must pray for the ones you have contacted. In your prayer you must pray for their situation. This prayer is easily answered by the Lord. The Lord Jesus said, "Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you," and "Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (15:16, 7). This refers to the prayer for fruit-bearing. According to the context of John 15, the asking here is the prayer for fruit-bearing. We must pray, saying, "Lord, what about that young man and his situation? Lord, I bring him and his situation to You. Lord, You must come into his situation and do something. Open up the way for me to contact him again." Perhaps the next time you see him, the situation will be exactly as you have prayed.

When Peter preached in Acts 2 and 3, his message suited the situation of his audience. This was also true of Paul when he spoke to the philosophers in Athens. In Acts 17 Paul gave a gospel message to the Greek philosophers. His way also was to get into the condition of those philosophers. We must learn how to reach people by getting into their condition and situation. Although this is difficult, we must learn it by way of practice. We simply have to do it. A basic principle in learning things is to learn by practicing. Practice with a sincere heart, looking to the Lord for His leading. Then you will learn, and you will know what I am talking about.

I was not taught these things by others. More than thirty years ago, the burden was upon me, and I simply began to learn by experience. Out of the seven days of the week, I spent at least four days visiting people. By doing that work, I learned how to reach different kinds of people. The secret is to get into their situation and condition and to speak something that touches their interest. When you do this, they will respond immediately. Because you have entered into their condition and have touched their interest, they will never reject you.

Let us consider the example of Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-9). The Lord Jesus did not wait for him to come; rather, He went purposely to see Zaccheus. As the Lord was walking along the street, Zaccheus climbed up a sycamore tree in order to see Him. He was a short man, but he obtained the living support. When the Lord came to him, He looked at him, and Zaccheus invited the Lord to come into his house. When the Lord came there, He did not preach a

message. He simply said, “Today salvation has come to this house” (v. 9). By this simple word, Zaccheus, a tax collector, was saved. The Lord did not say to Zaccheus, “Don’t you know that God is triune? As a Jew, you know the Lord. But I must tell you that Jehovah is Jesus. I am here.” This kind of preaching does not touch people; it kills them.

KNOWING PEOPLE

I encourage you to fellowship with one another over this matter of contacting people. In this way, you will learn together and, after a year, some of you will become very experienced in reaching people. This is the best way to know people. Today you are carrying on the work of the gospel, but one day many of you will be elders in the churches. In order to be an elder, you must know people; otherwise, you could never be a proper elder. If you do not know people, you cannot adequately bear the responsibility in the church life. Through many years of practice, I have come to know people. If you know people, you can determine a person’s interest after he has spoken only a few sentences. You can easily tell what kind of person he is. Furthermore, you will know how to do something to arouse his interest. First a person’s interest must be stirred, and then he will open to you. We must learn this.

My burden in these chapters is twofold: to help you to see the Lord’s recovery and to help you to be burdened for bearing fruit so that through your entire life you would continue to bear fruit. Do not say, “What about the day of Pentecost when three thousand were saved? I want that kind of power.” Although we may still need this power, the proper and normal preaching of the gospel is by the overflow of life. We have realized this as a result of studying history and the biographies of many saints.

BEGETTING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN

To bear fruit is to beget children. Every fruit you bear is a child you have begotten. In 1 Corinthians 4:15 Paul says, “Though you have ten thousand guides in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” Paul called Timothy his “genuine child in faith” (1 Tim. 1:2) and Titus his “genuine child according to the common faith” (Titus 1:4). The New Testament does not give the names of the children of the apostles, but the Holy Spirit purposely identifies two of Paul’s children in the faith. Paul had a family of at least two children, Timothy and Titus. God does

not care as much for our physical children as He does for our spiritual children.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE KERNEL OF GOD'S GOSPEL— THE INDWELLING CHRIST

Colossians 1:24-29 is a profound portion of the Word. In this chapter we need to look into the depths of this portion of the Word.

SUFFERING FOR PRODUCING AND BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST

In Colossians 1:24 Paul says, "I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church." Here we see that Paul was rejoicing in his sufferings, for his sufferings were making up what was lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the building up of His Body. The Lord Jesus had two kinds of sufferings: the suffering for redemption and the suffering for producing and building the Body, the church. Not many Christians realize that the Lord's sufferings are of these two categories. None of us can have any share in His suffering for redemption. To say that we can participate in this suffering is to speak blasphemy. No, He only is the Redeemer, and His suffering for redemption was accomplished uniquely by Him. We are neither qualified nor positioned to share in the Lord's suffering for the accomplishment of redemption. In typology, on the day of atonement, only the high priest, who made atonement for the people, was allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies. The high priest was a prefigure of Christ as the unique One capable and qualified to accomplish redemption.

Although we cannot participate in Christ's suffering for redemption, if we are faithful to Him, we must share in His suffering for the producing and building up of His Body. Paul was a pattern for us in this matter. Immediately after his conversion, he began to share in this suffering of Christ, partaking of the suffering of Christ for the sake of His Body.

This is against the theological concept that nothing related to Christ can be lacking. According to this concept, whatever Christ is and does is fully complete. But here is a word telling us that at least one thing related to Christ

is lacking—His suffering for the producing and building up of His Body. For the producing of His Body, Christ suffered a great deal. Because this suffering has not been completed by Christ Himself, there is the need for His faithful ones to make up this shortage. Paul did not suffer for redemption; he suffered for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ.

The apostle Paul was a pattern for the believers to follow (1 Tim. 1:16). We must consider Paul as a pattern, not as someone who was so high that no one else can be like he was. Because Paul was set up by the Lord's mercy to be a pattern for us, whatever he was, we can be also. We must believe in the Lord's mercy. If the mercy of the Lord made Paul a pattern, then His mercy can accomplish in us the same thing that it did in Paul. Thus, we all can attain to the same standard.

OUR GOAL IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL

What is our goal in preaching the gospel? It is not simply to save sinners from hell. Our goal is to obtain material for the building up of the Body of Christ. When I was in Christianity, I heard many messages encouraging us to preach the gospel. We were always asked to consider God's love, pity, and sympathy for the pitiful sinners, and were told to have the same feeling toward them. Sometimes preachers would say, "Thousands are going to hell every day. Isn't your heart touched by this?" Some would be inspired by this preaching and, with tears, respond to the altar call to become preachers and ministers of the gospel. The term *soul winning* is very common in today's Christianity. But what is the purpose of soul winning? It is very rare to hear that soul winning is for Body building. Paul's goal in preaching the gospel was the building up of the Body.

If you only preach the gospel for the sake of winning souls and rescuing people from hell, you probably will not suffer very much. In fact, you may find yourself welcomed in many places. However, if you take the building up of the Body as the goal of your gospel preaching, you must be prepared to suffer, especially at the hands of religion. Religion does not agree with the building up of the Body.

Were not the Jews during the time of the Lord Jesus and the apostles the people of God? Did they not daily offer up sacrifices to God? Did they not have the temple, which was built according to God's revelation and

instruction? The answer to all these questions is yes. But suddenly, Jesus came. He did not care for the temple like the Jewish religionists did. When His disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple, He said, "There shall by no means be left here a stone upon a stone, which shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24:2). Who could have dared to say this? If you had been there and had spoken these words, the Jews would have killed you. This was the reason they persecuted the Lord Jesus. In the book of Acts we see that those in the Jewish synagogues accused the apostle Paul of being a "pest" (24:5). Wherever Paul went, he caused trouble and division. Wherever he went, there was no peace; he was opposed by the religious people, by the so-called people of God.

It is the same today. If we only preach the gospel for soul winning, for saving souls out of hell, we shall be welcomed everywhere. Some Christians have even lied about us, classifying us with those in cults and evil, blasphemous movements. In today's Christianity there is no conscience or moral standard. In 2 Corinthians 6:8 Paul says that he had both evil report and good report. If, as you serve the Lord, you only receive a good report, I would question your faithfulness to the Lord. If you are faithful to the Lord, today's Christianity will give you a bad name. Apparently, religion is for God; actually, it is wholly against His economy. Nothing is more subtle and damaging to God's economy than religion. Winning souls does not affect religion; rather, it helps it a great deal. But whenever you talk about the building up of the Body, religion will be cut into pieces.

Consider what Paul did when he was Saul of Tarsus. He was a leader in his religion, laboring and doing everything possible to derive benefit from that religion. However, on the way to Damascus he was caught by the Lord. After his conversion, whatever he did amounted to a tearing down of religion. Paul was bold. The Lord Jesus had annulled the Sabbath day, but Paul was bold to annul something more important to Judaism—circumcision. In the Jewish religion nothing is more vital than circumcision. According to the record in Acts, the Jews condemned Paul for teaching people to discontinue the practice of circumcision. If Paul had only been concerned for soul winning, he would not have offended people. Paul did not say, "I must keep the doors open for so many others. I shouldn't say a word about circumcision or the Sabbath. I should not say anything against the Jewish religion. For the sake of soul winning, I must maintain a good relationship with the Jewish people." If he had only been concerned for soul winning, he could have practiced this.

But since he was for the building up of the Body, there was no way for him to do this. Therefore, for the purpose of producing and building up the Body of Christ, Paul shared in the sufferings of Christ.

A MINISTER

ACCORDING TO THE STEWARDSHIP OF GOD

Colossians 1:25 says, "Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God." There is a difference between a preacher and a minister. A preacher preaches doctrine, and a minister ministers Christ. A minister resembles a waitress. A waitress in a restaurant not only gives you a menu but also serves you, that is, ministers food to you. In Greek the word *minister* is the same word as for a serving one. A minister is a serving one who ministers Christ to you.

In this verse Paul said that he became a minister "according to the stewardship God." The King James Version says "according to the dispensation of God." Although the translation "dispensation" is correct, its meaning has been ruined, for it is commonly understood to refer to a certain age. In its place, we use the word *stewardship,* the anglicized form of the Greek word. It is difficult, however, for people to understand what this stewardship is. God has a stewardship, which is to dispense Himself in Christ into the believers so that they may become His members and be built up as His universal Body to express Him. Paul was a serving one ministering Christ to others according to this stewardship of God.

COMPLETING THE WORD OF GOD

In the same verse Paul also speaks of completing the word of God. My burden in this chapter is mainly on this point. The King James Version uses the word "fulfill" in place of "complete," but that is not the meaning here. Another rendering given in the margin is "fully to preach the word of God." As we contact people, we must progressively, continually, and gradually preach the word in full. To preach the word fully, or to fully preach the word, is to complete the word. Among so many Christians today, there surely is a great need of this completing of the word. Recently, a magazine stated that in the United States there are fifty million regenerated Christians. How many of them know God's purpose in saving them? Very few. In Christianity the word

of God has been preached, but it has not been preached in full. The preaching of today's Christianity has not completed the word of God. Thus, there is an urgent need of this completion.

THE KERNEL OF GOD'S GOSPEL

What is the kernel, the central and vital point of God's gospel? If you would address this question to a hundred Christians, probably not one of them could answer accurately. Consider an almond seed. If there is no kernel within the seed, it means that the seed does not have the life germ. The kernel of any seed is the life germ of that seed. What is the life germ of the gospel we preach? In order to answer this question we must consider verses 26 and 27.

These verses say, "The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints; to whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The word of God that needs completion is this mystery. Christians preach the word of God, but hardly any tell people what God's mystery is. The word of God preached in His gospel is not about escaping hell and going to heaven; neither is it about peace, joy, and a happy life. As far as the kernel of the gospel is concerned, all this is extraneous. What is the kernel of the word of God? This kernel has been overlooked and neglected to such an extent that in Paul's time there was the need to complete the word of God. It is the same today. What is the word that needs to be completed? It is "the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations." This mystery is concealed, hidden. If it were not hidden, it would no longer be a mystery. The mystery concealed from the ages and from the generations is the word of God that must now be completed. This concealed mystery, which has been made manifest to God's saints, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The kernel of God's gospel is Christ in us. The kernel is not Christ Himself; it is Christ in us. If Christ were not in us, He would not be the kernel, for He would still be outside the shell. Heaven is not the shell; we are the shell. When Christ gets into us, He becomes the kernel. Although I have heard the preaching of the gospel for years, I have never heard a message saying that when someone believes in Jesus Christ, He will not only save him but also come into his spirit and remain there as his life. Most of the preaching in today's Christianity is not like this. Hence, there is the need of the completion of the word of God.

THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST BEING THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Some of my friends have advised me, saying, “Brother Lee, don’t say that Christ is the life-giving Spirit. If you say this, many Christians will be offended.” Twelve years ago, before I gave a series of messages that were later printed as the book, *The Economy of God,* a friend of mine advised me in this manner, saying, “The Bible says that Christ is the life-giving Spirit. You are not unscriptural for saying this. But if you say that Christ is the life-giving Spirit, you will offend people.” I replied, “Brother, since you have said that this is according to the Scriptures, will you please give me the liberty to speak it? My burden is on this very matter. If you do not allow me to speak on this, I shall be jobless and have nothing to do. I am familiar with other doctrines of the Bible, but I have no burden to speak on them. My unique burden is to minister Christ as the life-giving Spirit. I know that Christianity will rise up against this. If there is no opposition, I will be surprised.” My friend was offended. A couple of weeks later, I gave those messages on the economy of God. His advice was an encouragement to me because it stirred my spirit and showed me the need of the completion of the word of God.

If Christ were not the life-giving Spirit, how could He be in us? Recently, a few brothers met with the leading ones from an opposing group. They condemn us for saying that Christ is the life-giving Spirit. The brothers asked them how Christ could be in them if He were not the life-giving Spirit. They denied that Christ was in them but said that the Holy Spirit, who represents Christ, was in them. What twisting! There is not a verse in the Bible saying that the Holy Spirit represents Christ in us. They accuse us of damaging the person of Christ. According to them, Christ is only the Son, and the Son can never be the Spirit. However, when the brothers asked them about 2 Corinthians 3:17—“The Lord is the Spirit”—they had nothing to say. We are not fighting over doctrine. I have the adequate experience to support what I am saying in this chapter. If my Christ were not the life-giving Spirit, how could I live by Him today? Our critics say that Christ is only a person sitting on the throne in the heavens and that the Holy Spirit comes into us to represent Him. From where do they get this teaching? And they condemn us for being heretical! Who is heretical—those, like us, who believe the Bible according to the clear black and white letters, or those who twist the Word of God? In a sense, I sympathize with our critics because they are under the

influence of traditional concepts. We are not arguing for a doctrine. We are for Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Some from the same opposing group argued with our brothers, saying, "Luke 24 says that after Christ was resurrected, He came to His disciples with a body of bones and flesh, and His disciples touched Him. How can Witness Lee say that after His resurrection Christ became a life-giving Spirit? Doesn't he believe Luke 24?" They thought that they had won the case. But a little knowledge is dangerous. I believe Luke 24 more than they do. I have published a book stating that the resurrected Christ possesses a physical body, not a natural physical body but a resurrected one. Therefore, according to their explanation, they have the problem. Christ possesses a physical body of bones and flesh, but He came into the closed room where His disciples were. How did He get in? Do not attempt to understand the Bible according to your limited mentality. How can a Christ with flesh and bones be in us? We cannot explain this.

Every truth in the Bible has two sides. Nothing, not even a thin handkerchief, can exist without having two sides. Robert Govett has written a booklet entitled *The Twofoldness of Divine Truth*. More than twenty-eight years ago we translated this booklet into Chinese. From the side of Luke 24, which we fully believe, the resurrected Christ possesses a physical body of bones and flesh. This is not a natural body but a resurrected body. On the other side, the Bible also says that Christ today is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). How can we reconcile this? I do not know and I do not try. I cannot reconcile it, because I am not God. I simply believe both sides. Our critics may be right, but they are right on just one side. They should not condemn others because of their shortsightedness and lack of knowledge. Rather, they should reread their Bible, not deleting any verse or adding any words. If they take away anything, they will miss the blessing, and if they add anything, they will receive the curse. We should simply take the pure Word whether we understand it or not.

There are many things in our human living that we do not understand. Every day I eat a variety of foods, but I understand very little about them. If I did not eat any food until I understood it, I would have been buried long ago. I was born before I knew anything. Even now, I do not know how I was born. There are many things that we do not know. Do you know in what part of the universe you are today? Let me say a word to our critics: Your knowledge is

too limited. If you think that you know everything about the Trinity, you are foolish. We cannot adequately understand the Trinity, because it is altogether a mystery. Nevertheless, it is an undeniable fact that, as revealed in the Bible, Christ is in me. But how can He be in us as long as He possesses a physical body of bones and flesh? I do not know. But I do believe He has a physical body. He is now in the heavens with a resurrected physical body, and He will come with a physical body. Every eye will see Him. There are many things in the Bible that we simply cannot reconcile. Since Christ is already in us, why does He need to come? Forget reconciling, take the pure Word, and care for your experience. We are fighting against any doctrine that tells people of a Christ who cannot be experienced. The Bible reveals a Christ who can be experienced by us continually. This is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

BECOMING FULL-GROWN IN CHRIST

In Colossians 1:28 and 29 Paul, speaking of Christ, says, "Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; for which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power." Paul's desire was to present every man full-grown in Christ. The word *full-grown* is related to *in Christ*. When a man is full-grown in Christ, he is qualified to be presented to God. We become full-grown by growing, and we grow by having more life. In John 10:10 Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly." To have life is to be regenerated, and to have life abundantly is to grow into maturity. Once again, we come to the crucial point of Christ's having to be the life-giving Spirit. If He were not the Spirit of life, how could He be our life and life supply? It would be impossible. We are not fighting for doctrine; we are fighting for Christ's reality. This reality, the reality of Christ's being in us, has been overlooked and neglected for centuries. This is one of the main items of the Lord's recovery today.

THE NEED OF FIGHTING

In Colossians 1:29 Paul says that he labored, "struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power." Paul was laboring, struggling, fighting. If we simply preach the gospel for the sake of winning souls, there will be no need to fight. Many people think that I am stupid for offending people. But in the eyes of the Lord, I am wise. If I did not offend anyone, then I would be the most stupid one. In order to minister Christ for the completion

of the word of God, there is the need of fighting. Because Satan is so subtle, we cannot avoid this. Satan uses many things to preoccupy people. Even religion is an instrument used by Satan to occupy man. Thus, we must fight against the traditional concepts of today's religion. We must tell people that Christ is not only objective but that our Christ is very subjective. He who is joined to Him is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Not only is He the life-giving Spirit, but we are one spirit with Him. How subjective this is! This is the crucial point that we are fighting for.

THE CRUCIAL POINT—THE INDWELLING CHRIST

During the past fourteen years in this country, I have not charged the sisters to submit to their husbands. I did not pass on such a teaching. Years ago, I did this, but it was unsuccessful. Always the sisters would say, "Brother Lee, what you told me to practice was only good for two days. What shall I do now?" I gave them a further teaching on the same line. That teaching was like an injection of a drug that only lasted a short time. After a few days, the sisters would return for another injection. Eventually, I quit doing this. I said to the Lord, "Doesn't Your word say that wives should submit to their husbands?" I read Ephesians 5 to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I didn't preach the teachings of Confucius. I taught Your holy word in Ephesians 5. Is this not Your word? I have been preaching this for years without any success. What is the matter?" The Lord said to me, "Stupid child, didn't you see that Ephesians 5:18 says to be filled in spirit? After that it says that wives should submit and that husbands should love." If you have no gasoline in your car, then you may have to push it. But if the gas tank is filled with gasoline, then you can drive without any effort. Never again will I be one who pushes; I am an enjoyer, enjoying the unlimited divine gasoline. When we are filled in our spirit with Christ, then we have something with which to submit and to love. This is the way to complete the word of God.

The crucial point in this portion of Colossians is the indwelling Christ. Paul was made a minister according to the economy of God to complete the word of God—to make the crucial matter of Christ's being in us clear to everyone. This is to complete the word.

As you meet Christians today, you will discover the need for such a completion of the word of God. Christians know that God created the heavens and the earth, that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, that He was crucified

for their redemption, and that after three days He was resurrected. We also believe this. They also know that the blood of Jesus washes away their sins. We know this and believe it at least as much as they do. However, among most Christians one thing is missing: the fact that Christ is in us this very moment. This Christ is not simple. In order to complete the word of God we must emphasize the crucial matter that Christ is the life-giving Spirit.

THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

This life-giving Spirit is the compound Spirit. Many have never heard of this term. Thus, you must help them, through the study of typology, to see the holy ointment, which was a compound of various spices (Exo. 30:22-33). This ointment was a compound of four spices mixed with olive oil. Formerly, the oil was merely the oil, but after the spices had been added to it, the oil became a compound. One of the spices signifies the death of Christ and another the resurrection of Christ. If you read carefully, you will see that all the spices indicate the human nature of Christ. This implies that in the compound Spirit there is the humanity of Jesus as well as His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. This is the all-inclusive Spirit who gives life and who is Christ Himself. During the past years, many messages have been delivered along this line.

THE MINGLING OF GOD AND MAN

In typology, the meal offering contained oil mingled with fine flour (Lev. 2:5). Even the King James Version uses the word *mingled* in Leviticus 2. Many have criticized us for using the word *mingle*, saying, "How could God lose His nature and be mingled with our nature?" It is stupid to argue this way. When the oil mingles with fine flour, the oil does not lose its nature. When tea is put into the water to form tea-water, the tea and the water do not lose their nature. It is foolish to say that they do. Although they are mingled, they remain two different elements.

Nevertheless, some Christians are offended by this completion of the word of God. Because they do not have the completion, they miss a great deal. Instead of having the whole seed with the shell and the kernel, they only have some part of the shell. They condemn us for being heretical, for having the kernel as well as the shell. If you oppose what I am saying, you will miss the blessing. I can testify that I have come here with much blessing. I have not

suffered any loss, but you may suffer a loss. In all the messages given during the past years, I have been doing nothing except completing the word of God. Many can say that they have never heard these things before. The reason is that there was a great lack. Now, thank the Lord that in His recovery we are seeing the completion of the word of God.

THE NEED FOR REVELATION AND LEARNING

You can never complete the word of God in a full way in a short time. Although I have given hundreds of messages over the past twelve years, the word of God has still not been completed. Do not expect to do a quick work. Rather, preach the gospel in the way of completing the word of God. To complete means to cover every point. If I would only speak of the kernel and not the shell, this also would be incomplete. We need to be complete on every side and in every aspect, point, and element. Only then will the word of God be completed. When you reach people, do not expect them to be saved overnight. Even after they are saved, they will need completion. Do not be disappointed at this word. You all need much learning. There is a great deal that you need to know: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the devil, sin, redemption, the effectiveness of Christ's prevailing blood, objective and subjective righteousness, objective holiness, subjective sanctification, the redemption of your body, how Christ dwells in your spirit, and the difference between the spirit and the soul. Without exaggerating, I can say that there are many, many items you need to know.

When you contact people, do not preach to them; instead, reach them by getting into their situation, circumstances, and condition. If you contact a person in this way, you will realize what part of the Word he is ready for. If he is not ready to hear of redemption, do not mention it. If you would tell him about it, he would not accept it. Be like a doctor who dispenses different kinds of medicine. When a "patient" comes to you, you must exercise your discernment to know what medicine is suitable for his condition. After several days, you may need to change the medication. We must learn and practice this, for, in the long run, this will avail.

Do not follow the way of the Jesus people. Only a few years ago, thousands were baptized in the ocean; but where are they now? The Lord desires a living testimony. As long as He has some to be His living testimony, it does not matter whether the number is large or small. We must gain those who are

practically available for the Lord's recovery. If we see that the Lord's desire is to have a living testimony, then we shall not expect to see people saved so quickly. Rather, we would prefer to work on them, completing in them the word of God.

After a certain time, you will realize that the one on whom you are working is ready for a particular point. Then you will help him in that very matter. In order to do this, you must have some learning, some revelation, concerning God, Christ, the cross, redemption, the divine life, rebirth, and many other things. Do not think that there are too many things to learn. Often when you contact people, you will realize that you are short in a particular matter. Some years ago, we prepared our hymnal containing one thousand and eighty hymns. Although this is a large number, when we are in a certain situation, we realize that we do not have a proper hymn to meet it. But if we are rich in songs, then whatever the situation, we shall have a suitable hymn for it. Likewise, if your revelation and learning in the Lord are rich, you will be able to afford people help in any kind of situation.

BEARING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN AND CARING FOR THEM

People cannot take things in once for all. Those who acquire a college education spend at least sixteen years in school: six years in elementary school, three years in junior high school, three years in high school, and four years in college. If you want to obtain a masters degree or a Ph.D., you will need even more time. According to Paul's pattern, we should not only help people to be saved, to be forgiven of their sins, and to be regenerated; we must also help them grow. A mother not only gives birth to her child but cares for her child daily for at least eighteen years. Do not cling to the concept that as long as a person is saved, everything is all right. This is like a mother neglecting her child as soon as he is born. If you do this, you are cruel and have no kindness. We must love our babes and care for them.

Paul says, "Though you have ten thousand guides in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). He even speaks of Timothy as his "genuine child in faith" (1 Tim. 1:2). We all should adopt this concept. Those who are converted, being our children, should be precious to us. If, beginning now, we are all impressed that this is the Lord's way of outreach in His recovery and practice this way, a

year from now we all shall have a child in faith. It is a human desire for married people to want children, but in the eyes of God this is not as crucial as having children in faith. Children in the flesh are only good to cross us out. I crossed out my mother time and time again, and I have been crossed out many times by my own children. Praise the Lord that there is another kind of child—a true child in the faith. A child in the faith is dear and precious. I hope that in a few months many of us will be "pregnant" and that by the end of the year many will give birth to a child. If the Lord delays His coming back, you may deliver a child in faith every year. Later, some of them may become elders in the churches or ministers of the Word in the Lord's recovery. How wonderful this would be!

We must practice this way. Humanly speaking, we need much learning and, spiritually speaking, we need a great deal of revelation. Then we shall be able to help people and to feed them. If you have this learning and revelation, you will know the proper time to give the supply to the one on whom you are working. I hope that many of you will practice this way, not only by yourselves but in groups, coming together to pray, to fellowship, and to learn. I believe that the Lord will afford us the grace we need. Then in His recovery we shall have a solid foundation for a proper increase.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PURE REVELATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD (1)

In the last five chapters we have pointed out that in the Lord's recovery we preach the gospel for the purpose that God might gain what He desires. God desires that a group of His chosen people would experience Christ subjectively in a full way. This experience of Christ is not for religion but for the proper church life, for the expression of Christ as the centrality and universality of God's economy. This is the Lord's recovery. The recovery today is of two main items: the experience of Christ and the proper church life. The recovery is not concerned with the objective knowledge of Christ for the doctrine of religion but with the subjective experience of Christ for the practical church life. This always arouses the hatred of the enemy. Satan, the devil, the subtle enemy of God, instigates religious people to oppose us, attack us, and spread rumors against us. These rumors are mainly concerned with the doctrine of the Trinity and the church. The opposers accuse us of being heretical in these two matters. The critics accuse me of teaching heresy regarding the Trinity. They say that Witness Lee teaches that the Son is the Father and the Spirit and that this teaching is modalism. A definition of modalism is found in our booklet entitled *Modalism, Tritheism, or the Pure Revelation of the Triune God according to the Bible.*

THREE VIEWS OF THE TRINITY

Throughout the past nineteen centuries, all the leading Christian teachers touched this matter of the Trinity. During the centuries, three main schools of teaching concerning the Trinity have emerged: modalism, tritheism, and the pure revelation according to the Bible. Modalism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not all eternal and do not all exist at the same time but are merely three temporary manifestations of the one God. Tritheism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three Gods. To which of these schools do you belong? Are you a modalist? I beg you to have nothing to do with modalism, for that extreme view is a heresy. It is also a great heresy to teach that there are three Gods. Probably a great many of you in the past

unconsciously held the idea of three Gods. Before coming into the church life you might have held this view.

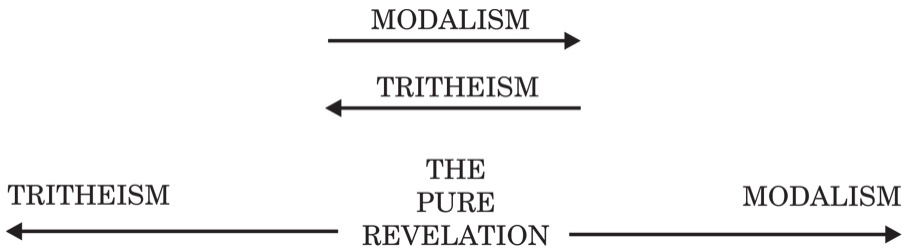
In 1965 a brother came to visit me. He had opposed me in Hong Kong because I pointed out that the Bible says that the Son is the Father and that the Lord is the Spirit. He was the first to condemn me for this. All the rumors concerning my so-called heresies came from him as the source. This brother expected that I would no longer say that the Son is the Father and that the Lord is the Spirit. When I asked him how many Gods he believed in, he definitely answered, "Three Gods!" I immediately responded, "You should never say this. This is certainly heretical." When he asked me about Psalm 82:6, which says, "You are gods," I pointed out that the word *gods* in this verse does not refer to God but to angels. I cite this example to prove that there actually was a person who told me that he believed in three Gods. Although many so-called fundamental Christians would not dare say this openly, within them they hold the concept of three Gods.

THE LAW OF BALANCE

According to the natural law in God's creation, there is the law of balance. Nothing can exist without having two sides. For example, the earth exists because of two forces: centrifugal force thrusts the earth away, and centripetal force holds it back. This is the balance of power. All the truths in the Bible also have two sides. This is even true of the matter of justification. Although many Christians have only one side of justification, the side of justification by faith, the book of James clearly says that justification is not only by faith but also by works (2:17-26). In order to hold a truth properly, we must hold both sides of it. The pure revelation of the Triune God occupies a central position between the extremes of modalism and tritheism.

In Catholicism there is the great heresy which says that the virgin Mary is the mother of God and that we must worship her. There is some scriptural ground for claiming that Mary is the mother of God because the Lord Jesus, who is God, was born of her. It is absolutely correct to say that Mary was the mother of the Lord Jesus. But to claim that because Jesus is God and because Mary is the mother of Jesus, that Mary is then the mother of God is to go too far and to reach a heretical extreme. It is scriptural to say that Mary is the mother of Jesus, but it is heretical to say that she is the mother of God. The principle is the same with respect to the Trinity. Because the truths in the

Bible have two sides, there are two aspects to the Trinity: the aspect of the one-in-three and the aspect of the three-in-one. Modalism is an extreme on the side of the three-in-one. There is, of course, ground in the Scriptures for the side of the three-in-one, but modalism, going to an extreme far beyond the confines of the Bible, neglects and even annuls the side of the one-in-three. Modalism has gone beyond the confines of the Scriptures concerning the aspect of the three. Hence, it is a heresy on the extreme of the one. Tritheism is the opposite extreme. Tritheism stresses the side of the three and neglects the side of the one. It also has scriptural ground because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit certainly are three. But tritheism, like modalism, also goes beyond the confines of the Bible and becomes a heresy. Therefore, both modalism and tritheism, being extremes, are heresies. The diagram below will help us to visualize this:



The Bible is not at either of these extremes; it stands in the center, testifying the twofoldness of the truth of the Trinity. In this matter, the Scriptures are balanced. The Bible, true to the principle of balance in God's creation, is balanced and in the center; it does not go to an extreme. Are you sure that regarding the truth of the Triune God you are in the center?

A CHILD BORN, A SON GIVEN

Now we need to see the pure revelation of the Triune God in the Bible. Let us first read Isaiah 9:6. "A child is born to us, / A Son is given to us; / And the government / Is upon His shoulder; / And His name will be called / Wonderful Counselor, / Mighty God, / Eternal Father, / Prince of Peace." According to this verse, a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us. The words *to us* indicate that this is not a doctrine but an experience. If I give you a watch, the watch given to you is not a doctrine but a gift for your experience. In the Bible there is no such thing as the doctrine of the Trinity. There is the doctrine of justification by faith, but there is no doctrine of the Trinity. Every mention of the Triune God is for our experience. In Isaiah 9:6 the Triune God

is mentioned as a child born to us and a Son given to us. Hallelujah for this "to us"! Do not twist these words. A child is simply a child, and a Son is simply a Son. When the Bible says a child, I believe a child, and when the Bible says a Son, I believe a Son. This verse also says that "His name will be called Wonderful." He is called Wonderful because we cannot understand Him thoroughly or speak of Him adequately. He is unspeakable, ineffable. If we could understand Him fully, He would no longer be wonderful. Furthermore, this verse tells us that His name is "Counselor." Following this, He is called "Mighty God" and "Eternal Father."

THE CHILD BEING GOD,

AND THE SON BEING THE FATHER

Any healthy mind would understand that *Mighty God* must refer to the child and that *Eternal Father* must refer to the Son. As no one would twist the words *child* or *Son*, no one twists the name *Mighty God*. Every Christian believes that the child Jesus born in the manger at Bethlehem is the mighty God. No Christian twists this part of the verse. Anyone who does not believe that the child born in Bethlehem is the mighty God is not a genuine Christian; rather, he is an unbeliever. Although he might be a Jew, he is not a Christian. Based upon the same principle, we must also believe that the Son is the eternal Father. In brief, the child is God, and the Son is the Father. Who can twist this? One day, Martin Luther declared that as long as he stood with the Bible, no one could condemn him. Although I would not compare myself with Martin Luther, I also say the same thing. As long as I stand with the pure word of the Bible, no one can accuse me. If anyone accuses, he does not accuse me; he accuses the Bible. I do not teach about Isaiah 9:6 or interpret it—I simply quote it.

Isaiah 9:6 reveals clearly that the child is the mighty God and that the Son is the eternal Father. This is not merely a word written by Isaiah; it is an utterance inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit says that the child is called the mighty God and that the Son is called the eternal Father. Why does the Holy Spirit speak this way? The reason is that the child came for the purpose of bringing God to us. The little child Jesus came to the human race to bring God to man. Was He a child or God?

Certainly He was both, for the child and God are one. Because He is the mighty God, when people contact Him, they contact God. The child was the

embodiment of God and brought God to man. The principle is the same with the Son. The Son brings the Father to us. Without the child, no one can touch God, and without the Son no one can reach the Father. The child brings God to us, and, in the same principle, the Son brings the Father to us. Do you want to contact God? You have no way except through the child Jesus. Do you want to reach the Father? You have no way except through the Son (John 14:6). When we receive the child, we have God, and when we receive the Son, we have the Father.

OUR GOD AND FATHER

Here we see the basic truth that God is not only our God but also our Father. God's being God to us is mainly a matter of His creation, but His being the Father to us is mainly in regeneration. As God's creatures, we need to have God as our God. But as the children of God, we need God to be our Father. We are not merely God's creatures having God as our God; we are also His children having God as our Father. Today is God only God to you and not the Father? Many times I say, "O God, my Father, I worship You." When I say, "O God, my Father," I imply that I am a little creature, yet I have been regenerated to be a child of the Father. I am not only a little creature of God; I am also a child of the Father. This absolutely corresponds to the basic truth in the New Testament. In the Old Testament God is rarely called the Father. The few times that this is mentioned are found mainly in Isaiah. However, in nearly every Epistle in the New Testament, the writers speak of God the Father. The apostle Paul also says, "God our Father" (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:2). Praise the Lord that we are not merely creatures of the creating God but also children born of the begetting Father! Today our God is not only the creating Creator; He is also the begetting Father. This is the basic truth of Isaiah 9:6, and no one can argue with it. I believe that the Lord Jesus was the child, and I believe that He was also the Son. As the child He brought God to us, and as the Son He brought us to the Father. Thus, our God today is God the Father.

I invite you to exercise your spirit and your mind over Isaiah 9:6. This verse first says that a child is born to us and that His name is the mighty God. Then it also says that a Son is given to us and that His name is the eternal Father. Oh, Jesus is both! He not only brought God to us, but He also brought us to the Father. How balanced He is! He was not only the child but also the Son. This is wonderful. As you believe that the child is the mighty God, do you also

believe that, according to Isaiah 9:6, the Son is the Father? Do not say that this is Brother Lee's teaching. It is not fair to say this. You must say, "Isaiah 9:6 tells me that the Son is the Father." This is not modalism. It is the pure revelation in the Bible. I beg our critics to exercise their conscience concerning who is heretical. Who is heretical—a man who believes exactly according to the pure word of God or those who twist this verse? Be fair! I like to be honest and exercise my conscience. I beg you to exercise your conscience and to be fair. Can you honestly say that Witness Lee is a heretic when he points out that, according to Isaiah 9:6, the Son is the Father?

I would like now to quote a portion from the transcription of a tape recording of a discussion held regarding us. The speaker is the author of a tract against us:

Anyway, Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...and the government shall reign upon his shoulders...his name shall be called the Wonderful Counsellor, the Prince of Peace, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father." There Jesus is called the Father, right? So, He is the Father. That's Isaiah 9:6. Now, we don't normally say this because *tradition is involved.* Jesus is called the Father; He must be the Father.

After admitting the truth, the speaker then begins to twist this verse:

We were taught that there should be another interpretation of the Hebrew word. Instead of everlasting Father, it should be Father of eternity, the originator...a figurative term in that case, the one who begot eternity, the one who set it forth. And so...as you look at the Bible, it does reveal these two distinct persons, so Jesus can't be the Father. Many verses they give you on this subject you have to look at very carefully. It can't be. It is impossible this way.

Hence, the speaker concludes that it is impossible for Jesus to be the Father.

ONE DIVINE FATHER

I do not care how some twist this verse or how they interpret the word *Father*—as the everlasting Father, the Father of eternity, the eternal Father, the Father who begot eternity, the Father of creation, the Father of Israel, the Father of some invention, or the Father of the age to come, as

indicated by the footnote in a version of the Septuagint—He is the Father, and no one can deny that He is the Father. Do you believe that besides the divine Father of the Godhead there is another divine Father? Because the critics cannot keep away from this verse, they do their best to twist it. But no matter how much they twist it, they cannot eliminate the word *Father*.

In this universe there is just one divine Father. How can there be two divine Fathers? The critics say, "The Father in Isaiah 9:6 is not the Holy Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit. This Father is the Father of the age to come, the Father of Israel, or the Father of something else." But do you believe that the Father in Isaiah 9:6 is separate from the unique Father of the Godhead? We need to put out a booklet entitled *What a Heresy—Two Divine Fathers, Two Life-giving Spirits, and Three Gods!*

Nearly every truth in the Bible has more than one verse to substantiate it. Isaiah 9:6 is confirmed and strengthened by John 14:7-11, where the Lord made it clear to the disciples that He and the Father are one. In John 10:30 He told the Jews the same thing. Who can deny that according to the pure revelation of the Bible, the Son is the Father? Do not listen to the traditional talk. Others may care for their tradition, but we only care for the pure revelation according to the Bible.

THE LORD'S BEING THE SPIRIT

Concerning the Lord's being the Spirit, let us turn to 1 Corinthians 15:45, which says, "'The first man, Adam, became a living soul'; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." Undoubtedly, the last Adam here was Christ in the flesh. This last Adam became the life-giving Spirit through the process of resurrection. First Corinthians 15 deals with resurrection. Because Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit through resurrection, He is now the life-giving Spirit. Who can deny this? The pure, clear word says that Christ today is the life-giving Spirit. The critics and opposers also twist this verse. Some of them say, "The spirit here is not the Holy Spirit. Rather, it is the human spirit of Jesus." Certainly, this is not Christ's human spirit, for before He died, He had a human spirit already. There was no need for Him to become the human spirit through death and resurrection. Praise the Lord that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul had the wisdom to say that the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. Do you believe that besides the Holy Spirit there is another Spirit who gives life? Who would dare say this? No

matter how you interpret the word *Spirit* in 1 Corinthians 15:45, you must admit that the Bible says that this Spirit is the life-giving Spirit. According to the New Testament, only the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who gives life (2 Cor. 3:6; John 6:63). There cannot be two life-giving Spirits. The opposers' not believing that Christ today is the Holy Spirit implies that, for them, there are two life-giving Spirits. They say that the life-giving Spirit in 1 Corinthians 15:45 is another Spirit besides the Holy Spirit. According to their interpretation, there are two life-giving Spirits. This is more than heresy! I appeal to your conscience and ask you to be fair. Who is heretical—a man who believes the pure word according to 1 Corinthians 15:45, saying that Christ today is the life-giving Spirit, or those who twist this verse and thereby imply that there are two life-giving Spirits?

As I considered the possibility of putting out a booklet on the heresy of two divine Fathers, two life-giving Spirits, and three Gods, I prayed regarding the title. I was concerned that I might condemn others unfairly. But the more I prayed and considered, the more I realized that this title would not be unfair. Many unconsciously believe that there are two divine Fathers and two life-giving Spirits, and some, although not all, have three Gods. And they dare to say that I and the churches are heretical! Because of all the lies and rumors, we have been forced to issue a refutation. The critics base their talk upon the Nicene Creed. Actually, their talk is their interpretation of the Nicene Creed. I do not care for that creed—I only care for the pure word of the Bible. As long as I stand with the Bible, no one has the ground to accuse me of being heretical.

Some have advised me not to say that the Son is the Father and that the Lord is the Spirit. But the more they advised me, the stronger I became in speaking what the Bible says. According to the Bible, I said that today our Christ, who is the Son, who became a man, who died on the cross for our sins, and who resurrected from the dead, is not only the Son but also the Father and the Spirit. When we have Him, we have the Father, and when we call on Him, we receive the Spirit. First John 2:23 says, "Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also." If the Son were not the Father, how then could we have the Father whenever we confess the Son? Furthermore, Acts 2:17 and 21 show that if we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, we receive the Spirit. This is not a matter of doctrine but of experience. If you consider your experience, you will realize that when you believed in the Lord Jesus and received Him, you received the

Father, and that when you call on the name of the Lord Jesus, you receive the Spirit. In this chapter I am stressing the facts in the Bible to prove that whatever the Lord has shown us through the years and whatever we minister is absolutely according to the pure word of the Bible. Do not approach me with your traditional knowledge. I do not care for that. Do not use your concept to argue with me. You must point out the verses in the Bible that correspond to your concept.

I would ask you all to study the book *Concerning the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.* In this book I quote a number of great Christian teachers who have said that Christ, the Lord, is the Spirit. The foremost among them is Andrew Murray. Church history testifies that many great teachers, especially from ancient times, have said that in our experience Christ is equal to the Spirit.

Second Corinthians 3:17 says, "The Lord is the Spirit." Who can twist this? Recently, I heard of someone who twisted this verse by saying that the Lord here is God, not Jesus Christ. But no matter how the critics attempt to twist the truth in the Bible, the Bible remains the Bible. It is ridiculous and even stupid to deny that Christ today is the Spirit. If you deny this, it means that you do not believe the Bible. If you believe the Bible, then you must say, "Lord, thank You for being the Spirit."

THE COINHERENCE AND COEXISTENCE OF THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT

Some of the critics say, "Matthew 3:16-17 says that the Son was standing there, that the Father was speaking from heaven, and that the Spirit was descending upon the Son. All three took action at the same time. Surely by the way you speak you don't believe this." Our answer is that we believe it more than our critics do, for we believe the Bible according to the pure word. We believe whatever the Bible says. I can point out many verses which say that the Father, Son, and Spirit are there at the same time. Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." All three, the Son, the Father, and the Spirit, are here. In Ephesians 3:14-17 Paul bowed his knees unto the Father, praying that He would strengthen the saints through His Spirit so that Christ might make His home in their hearts. Here we see the Father, the Spirit, and Christ. This is the Triune God.

What is the error in modalism? Modalism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not all eternal and do not all exist at the same time. Rather, it claims that the revelation of the Son ended with the ascension and that after the ascension the Son ceased to exist. Modalism has gone too far, not believing in the coinherence and coexistence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Unlike the modalists, we believe in the coinherence and coexistence of the three of the Godhead; that is, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit all exist at the same time and under the same conditions. We also believe that all three are eternal. Isaiah 9:6 says that the Father is eternal, Hebrews 1:12 and 7:3 indicate that the Son is eternal, and Hebrews 9:14 speaks of the eternal Spirit. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not temporary but are eternal.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PURE REVELATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD (2)

This chapter is the continuation of the previous one.

THE SON PRAYING TO THE FATHER

Some may wonder how, if the Son and the Father are one, the Son can pray to the Father. For example, the Son prayed to the Father when He was in Gethsemane. How could the Son do this if He is the Father? In this regard, let us consider Genesis 31. Verse 11 says, "The Angel of God said to me in the dream, Jacob; and I said, Here I am." In verse 13 the Angel of God said, "I am the God of Bethel." Is He the Angel of God or God Himself? We simply cannot explain it. Moreover, Exodus 3:2 says, "The Angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a thornbush." In verse 6 of this chapter the Angel of Jehovah said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He is the Triune God. All fundamental Christian teachers agree that the Angel of Jehovah was the Lord Jesus in Old Testament times. According to traditional theology, the Lord Jesus is only the second of the three in the Godhead. But here we see that the Angel of Jehovah is the Triune God. He is not only the second of the Triune God but the first, the second, and the last. In Exodus 3 we have four—the Angel of Jehovah, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Are these four or one? You may say that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is just one God. Then, at least we have two things here—the Angel of Jehovah and God. Are these two or one? How would you reconcile this? Do not try to reconcile it, but simply accept the fact.

Let us also turn to Zechariah 2:8-11: "Thus says Jehovah of hosts, After the glory He has sent Me...for he who touches you touches the pupil of His eye...I am now waving My hand over them,...and you will know that Jehovah of hosts has sent Me...I am coming, and I will dwell in your midst, declares Jehovah...And you will know that Jehovah of hosts has sent Me to you." This word is spoken by "Jehovah of hosts" (v. 8). But in this passage Jehovah of hosts said, "Jehovah of hosts has sent Me" (vv. 9, 11). The "Me" in verse 8

refers to Jehovah of hosts, but who is the “He” who sent Jehovah of hosts? Furthermore, in verse 8 Jehovah of hosts mentioned “His eye.” Whose eye is this? Please explain it to me. The “I” in verse 9 refers to Jehovah of hosts because this is the word of Jehovah of hosts. However, this verse ends with the words “Jehovah of hosts has sent Me.” This means that Jehovah of hosts sent Jehovah of hosts. Jehovah of hosts is “He,” and Jehovah of hosts is “I.” Hence, Jehovah of hosts is both the Sender and the sent One. How do you explain this? If Jehovah of hosts could send Jehovah of hosts, the One being both the Sender and the sent One, then why cannot the One be both the praying One and the hearing One? In one of his books, Andrew Murray says that the best prayer is the prayer of the Christ who dwells within us to the Christ who sits on the throne. Christ prays to Christ. In this verse it is clear that the same One is both the Sender and the sent One. This is the pure revelation of the Bible, and there is no need for us to try to figure it out.

There are a great many things that we do not understand. Where is your spirit, and where is your soul? If you cannot even figure out your inward parts, how do you expect to figure out the infinite, marvelous, wonderful Triune God? When you get onto the campuses, you may meet some critics who will only tell you one side of the story, and that side is not even the best side. It is the traditional side, not the side of the pure revelation. My burden is to present to people the pure word of the Bible. If they would oppose this and suffer loss, the responsibility is theirs, not mine. Whether they believe this or not is up to them.

We have seen that all the truths in the Bible have two sides. This is all the more true with respect to the Triune God. The Triune God has the side of the three being one and the side of the one being three. There is no need to reconcile them. If you look at the back of my head, there are no holes. But if you look at the front of my head, you will see seven holes. Some may say, “Seven holes,” and others may say, “No holes.” Both are right, but both are unbalanced. We should not forget either the front or the back. Rather, we must stand at the center and be balanced. We believe both aspects of the Trinity. From the side of one, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one. Some may slander me by saying that this is unitarianism or the concept of “Jesus only.” I do not care for unitarianism or for “Jesus only,” I only care for what the Bible says. Poor Christianity has many vain doctrines but very little experience. Although we take the side of one, we also stand strongly with the

side of three, believing that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all eternal and that They all exist at the same time. This is truly coinherence.

THE ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Throughout the centuries many great teachers have attempted to reconcile the two aspects of the Triune God. In doing so, they have invented certain terms. For example, they invented the term *person* and spoke of the three persons of the one God. Humanly speaking, as a convenience in explaining the Trinity, we may temporarily borrow this term. But we should not stress it. It is illogical to speak of the three persons of the one God. Let us see what Augustine has to say on this matter. Augustine was accused of being a modalist because he was unable to find human language to adequately express the mystery of the Triune God. Augustine said,

Our Greek friends have spoken of one essence, three substances, but the Latins have one essence or substance, three Persons...provided that what is said is understood only in mystery, such a way of speaking was sufficient...We say three Persons, then why do we not also say three Gods? Or else, on account of their ineffable union these three are together one God, why not also one Person; so that we could not say three Persons, although we call each a Person singly, just as we can not say three Gods, although we call each singly God, whether the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit? Is it because Scripture does not say three Gods? But neither do we find that Scripture anywhere mentions three Persons.

The term *three Persons* does not exist in the Scripture but is added by men in their interpretation. Since they cannot say that the three—the Father, Son, and Spirit—are three Gods, what else can they say? So the designation *three Persons* is used. Actually, to use the designation *three Persons* to explain the Father, Son, and Spirit is also not quite satisfactory, because *three Persons* really means three persons. Therefore, Griffith Thomas, famous for his exposition on the book of Romans and for being one of the founders of Dallas Theological Seminary, says in his book *The Principles of Theology*,

The term “Person” is also sometimes objected to. Like all human language, it is liable to be accused of inadequacy and even positive error. It certainly must not be pressed too far, or it will lead to Tritheism...While we are

compelled to use terms like “substance” and “Person,” we are not to think of them as identical with what we understand as human substance and personality...The truth and experience of the Trinity is not dependent upon the theological terminology.

The terms such as *substance, essence, subsistence,* and *person* were all invented for, or adapted to, theological usage. Very few English-speaking people are familiar with these terms. These terms are used because, as Griffith Thomas says, we do not have language adequate to explain the mystery of the Trinity. However, the more terms you invent, the more trouble you will have. Not long ago, I read a mimeographed article written against us by some opposers. On one page, this article says that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three separate and distinct persons in the nature of one God. Toward the end, the article says that these three persons should not be made so separate that They become three Gods. I laughed when I read this. The writer of this article cannot reconcile his own words. On one page he says that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three separate and distinct persons, but on another page he says that we should not make Them “too separate.” How separate is “too separate”? To what extent are the three persons separate? As you separate the three, you will have three Gods. The manner of speaking employed in this article causes entanglements. It is better to adopt the attitude taken by Martin Luther, who said,

Those who neglect the Scripture and approach such questions with confidence in their own mental power are the teachers of God, not His pupils...If reason disturbs you here and questions arise like those of the Turks: Are there, then, two gods? Answer: There is only one God, and still there is the Father, and the Son. How is this possible? Respond with humility: I do not know.

As much as possible, we should avoid words such as *person, substance, essence, subsistence,* and *hypostases.* Do you understand the word *hypostases* adequately? Some say that it means “persons,” but this is their interpretation. *Hypostases* is an ancient Greek word denoting the elements that constitute a philosophy. Hence, *hypostases* actually means “substances.” Some of the early teachers, in their attempt to define the Trinity, borrowed this term and said that within the Trinity there were three elements or hypostases. But if you trace the history of language, you will see that *hypostases* does not refer to persons. This is the theologians’

interpretation to match their concept. Hence, do not bring in this term, for it will just cause trouble. Rather, simply say, "Hallelujah, our God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." Isaiah 9:6 says that the Son is the Father, and 2 Corinthians 3:17 says that the Lord is the Spirit. According to our experience, if we have the Son, we have the Father, and if we call on the name of the Lord, we receive the Spirit. Today the Lord surely indwells us as the life-giving Spirit. It is sufficient to say this much. There is no need to argue for any doctrine. However, many only care for traditional knowledge and doctrine, not for their experience or for the pure word of the Bible.

ABIDING IN GOD

First John 3:24 says, "He who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him." *Abides in Him* means to abide in God, and *He in him* means that God abides in us. The remainder of this verse says, "And in this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us." There is no doctrine in this verse. Rather, it is altogether related to our experience of God. The experience of God can be so deep and subjective that we abide in God. It is not merely a matter of knowing God or of speaking about God; it is absolutely a matter of abiding in Him. This concept is unreligious. In no religion do you find a word saying that we can abide in God. To say that we know God, worship God, serve God, consecrate to God, sacrifice for God—all this is possible according to the human religious concept. Man does have the concept of serving God, worshipping God, doing things for God, being zealous for God, loving God, living in the presence of God, and speaking with God face to face. But, besides the New Testament revelation, there is no human word saying that we can abide in God. This concept is revolutionary. Man can abide in the Divine Being, the creature can abide in the Creator and, in turn, the Creator can abide in the creature. It is not merely that the Creator loves us and takes care of us. This concept can be found in the realm of human, religious thought. But whoever thought that we fallen human beings could abide in God and that God could abide in us? This is a great matter. How do we know that we abide in Him and that He abides in us? This verse says that we know it by the Spirit whom He gave to us. Notice that it does not say, "He will give us," but, "He gave to us."

HAVING THE FATHER

BY CONFESSING THE SON

Let us now turn to 1 John 2:23. This verse says, “Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also.” According to this verse, if you reject the Son, you do not have the Father. If the Father and the Son are not one, then why would we not have the Father if we reject the Son? This also is not a doctrine but something realized by experience. This verse does not say, “If you reject the Son, the Son is gone.” Why does it not say this? Because the Son brings us the Father, just as the child brings us God. Therefore, when you reject the Son, you lose the Father. This verse also says, “He who confesses the Son has the Father also.” This is a strong proof that the Son is the Father. Otherwise, why do you have the Father by confessing the Son? The Son’s being the Son is for us to experience the Father and to gain Him for our enjoyment.

THE ANOINTING

First John 2:20 says that we have an anointing from the Holy One, and 1 John 2:27 says, “The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you.” The anointing is not a thing; it is an action. We know that this anointing is something living and acting because it teaches us. From all these verses in 1 John, we see three main things: that we abide in God and that God abides in us; that if we confess the Son, we have the Father; and that there is an action called the anointing abiding in us to teach us. The ointment is moving, acting, and doing things within us. We not only have the ointment; we also have the anointing.

Unless we have experience, it is difficult to know the Bible. Why does the first Epistle of John, which speaks of our abiding in God and God’s abiding in us, use the word *anointing* in chapter 2? The Spirit’s intention was certainly to refer us to the ointment mentioned in the Old Testament. In order to understand the writings of John, you must refer to the Old Testament. For example, John 1:29 speaks of the Lamb of God. In order to understand this, you should not go to Webster’s dictionary but to the Old Testament, which is the proper lexicon to use in understanding the terms found in the New Testament, especially those used by John. In his first Epistle he employs the word *anointing*. The Old Testament definition of this term is in Exodus 30.

THE TYPE OF THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL

In Exodus 30:22-25 Moses was told to take four of the finest spices—myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia—and add them to a hin of olive oil to make a holy anointing oil. Verses 25 and 26 say, "It shall be a holy anointing oil. And with it you shall anoint the Tent of Meeting." All the furnishings and utensils in the tabernacle were to be anointed with this holy anointing oil (vv. 26-29). Whoever touched these anointed furnishings and utensils would be made holy (v. 29). Furthermore, Moses was told to anoint Aaron and his sons so that they might serve the Lord as priests (v. 30). In this chapter is the source of the word *anointing* used by John.

This anointing oil is a compound of five elements. The basic element is the olive oil. All Bible scholars agree that, in typology, olive oil signifies the Spirit of God. In the original olive oil there were no spices; it was purely oil with nothing compounded into it. This indicates that the Spirit of God was merely, purely, and singly the Spirit of God and that nothing yet had been added to it. But Moses was told to add four spices to the olive oil. This indicates that some things have been added into the Spirit of God. After the Spirit of God had been thus compounded, it was no longer merely or singly the Spirit of God. Four elements, represented by the four spices, have been added into the unique Spirit of God. This means that something of God's creature—signified by the number four—has been added into the Spirit of God. Something of God's creature has been compounded into God the Spirit.

Four items were compounded into the one olive oil. The number one always denotes the unique God, and the number four symbolizes God's creature. Thus, this oil compound signifies that humanity, God's creature, has been compounded into God to make the number five. The number five signifies responsibility. Consider the four fingers and thumb on your hand. Why do you have four fingers and a thumb? You have them for bearing responsibility. The four fingers signify humanity, and the thumb signifies the unique God. The four fingers need the thumb, and the thumb needs the four fingers. Likewise, we need God and God needs us. We may tell Him, "O Lord God, without us, You are lacking something." And, of course, without Him, we are lacking. How we creatures need God! When we have Him, we have four plus one.

The amount of myrrh was five hundred shekels (v. 23). The number five hundred is composed of one hundred times five. Both the cinnamon and the calamus, however, are two hundred fifty shekels in amount, and cassia, like

myrrh, is five hundred shekels. The cinnamon and the calamus, each being only half a unit, together make a complete unit. Therefore, these four spices are actually three units. In biblical numbers, three signifies the Triune God. Among the Triune God, the second was split on the cross. Here we have three times a hundred multiplied by five. This indicates intensified responsibility.

In the Bible myrrh signifies the sweetness of the death of Christ. It is a symbol of the precious, lovable death of Christ. Unlike the death of any other human being, the death of the Lord Jesus is lovable and sweet. But, as the myrrh signifies, the sweetness of His death comes out of His suffering.

What does cinnamon signify? Cinnamon is a spice that gives a sweet savor to cooked food. Thus, cinnamon is the sweet flavor of the effectiveness of the Lord's death. Myrrh is the sweet death, and cinnamon is the death used as a spice. Cinnamon is added to our "cooking," that is, to our life. If in our daily life and walk we do not have the Lord's death added in, it will be bitter. There will be no flavor to our daily living. If the flavor of the Lord's death is not added to our living, our conversation with our wives or with the brothers and sisters will be bitter. We need cinnamon, the flavor of the Lord's death.

Calamus is a reed that sprouts out of the mud into the air. Undoubtedly, this signifies the Lord's resurrection. Thus, we have the sweetness of the Lord's death and the flavor of His resurrection. In whatever we do and say in our daily living, we must have the flavor of the Lord's death and the sweetness of His resurrection added to it.

Cassia signifies the flavor of the power of the Lord's resurrection. The power of the Lord's resurrection is also added into the Holy Spirit. All these four elements have been compounded with the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Holy Spirit today is not the mere single Spirit; He is now a compound of divinity and other elements compounded together as one unit.

THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

Today the Holy Spirit is the compound Spirit. This enables us to understand John 7:37-39. We need to quote these verses: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But

this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." The Spirit mentioned in these verses is the compound Spirit. The Spirit of God was there from the very beginning (Gen. 1:1-2), but the compounded Spirit "was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." This means that at that time Jesus had not been crucified and resurrected and had not ascended to the heavens. He had not yet been glorified. It was not until Jesus had been crucified and resurrected and had ascended to the heavens that the compounding of the anointing oil was accomplished. Since Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit has been the compound Spirit.

What is included in this compound Spirit? Everything is here. The compound Spirit includes the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. In the compound Spirit we have the number one, the Creator, and the number four, the creature. This Spirit also includes Christ's death and resurrection. It contains the effectiveness of the death of Christ and the power of the resurrection of Christ. Recall that the measures of the cinnamon and the calamus denote the splitting of the second of the Triune God on the cross. How much is contained in the compound Spirit: the divine nature, the human nature, the Creator, the creature, the Triune God, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification!

God is wise. If He merely taught us about this, it would be difficult for Him to explain it. Everybody knows that a picture is better than a thousand words. How much easier it is, for example, to look at my head than to describe it in writing. Likewise, due to our weakness, it is difficult for God to tell us what the compound Spirit is. Therefore, in His wisdom He used the picture, the symbol, of the anointing oil in Exodus 30. If you would know the compound Spirit, you must consider the compounded anointing oil in this chapter. This is not a doctrine; it can be confirmed by our experience. This holy anointing oil that abides in us contains God Himself and the humanity of Christ. It contains the killing power to cross us out, and it also has the resurrection power to enliven us. Furthermore, it contains the intensified ability to bear responsibility. All this is here in this Spirit. When we have this compound Spirit, our daily living, our daily "cooking," becomes filled with sweet spices.

Christianity today is truly poverty stricken. Christians lack both the proper knowledge and the adequate experience. But thank the Lord that through the

past fifty years He has not only shown us many things, but He has also caused us to experience them. I experienced the compound Spirit before I saw the light regarding this matter in the Scriptures. One day, after having considerable experience, I read Exodus 30 again, and everything became clear. When I first began to say that the death of the Lord Jesus is included in the Spirit, one of my co-workers, being a little cautious, said that it is not so right to say that the Lord's death is included in the Spirit. That was in 1954. I took this brother's advice and spent much time with the Lord, asking Him what term I should use. The Lord said that it is better to say that the effectiveness of the Lord's death is included in the Holy Spirit. I told the brother that from then on I would not say that the death of Christ is included in the Holy Spirit but that the effectiveness of the death of Christ is included in the Spirit. At that time I had not seen Exodus 30. This chapter was not opened to me until approximately eight years ago in Los Angeles. After receiving this light from the Bible, I gave definitions of all the items related to the anointing oil. Since that time, I have had more utterance to speak of the compound Spirit.

THE "RAW" GOD AND THE "PROCESSED" GOD

In the past I never used such terms as *processed God* or *raw God*. These terms sound strange to religious ears. Most of these terms came as a result of the enlightenment regarding the compound Spirit. Anything that has been compounded has been processed. If it has not been processed, then how could it be compounded? Our God has truly been compounded. He is no longer "raw"; He is the compounded God, the "processed" God. Before the olive oil was compounded, it was raw, but after it was compounded, it was no longer raw. Based upon this fact, I have the boldness to say that before Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the Spirit of God was not processed. However, after Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the Spirit of God became processed. This word is unacceptable to the ears of theologians. In the Lord's recovery the Lord has surely shown us something deeper. Most Christians do not have this experience or this knowledge.

DEALING WITH PEOPLE REGARDING THE TRIUNE GOD

When you meet other Christians, it is better not to touch the issue of the Trinity. What should you do if they raise this question? First, do not argue with them. Listen to all their points, take them down, and ask them to explain

the matters to you. The more they talk, the more they will be snared. Do not play politics and do not say a word in reply. Rather, you should say, “I will consider these matters. I certainly would like to study the truth with you. May we get together for this purpose? If what you have told me is right, I will take it. If what I have been taught is wrong, I will repent and give it up. I hope that, by the mercy and grace of God, you would have the same attitude. None of us should have the assurance that we are clear concerning such a thing as the Divine Trinity.” Take all the points home with you, pray, fellowship with others, and seek the Lord’s leading concerning how to contact them again.

When you see them again, do not argue over any points. Simply read to them certain verses or give them some of the booklets that are suitable. Sometimes you need to read certain paragraphs to them, perhaps even asking them to read. If they argue, do not argue back, but say, “I would like to see what the pure word of the Bible says.” If they continue to argue, then listen to their arguments. Take time and be patient. Perhaps during your next contact with them you will read Isaiah 9:6 or 1 Corinthians 15:45. Do not fight with them, but maintain the good attitude of a learner, of one who wants to study the pure revelation in the Bible. I believe that this will open the door and give an opportunity for the Lord to do something in their conscience. Of course, you need to pray a great deal about this. However, do not spend all your time with this kind of person. If you do that, you will be snared by the enemy. At most, you should only spend a fourth of your time with the opposers. All the rest of your time should be spent on the positive ones. Nevertheless, we would not give up the critical ones but patiently contact them again and again. As they consider the pure revelation concerning the Triune God, they may lose their peace and sense the need to reconsider their belief. Do not argue or fight with people, but have a good time with them. You need to pray much for them. If not many are convinced, at least a small number will be helped. They will at least begin to question the charge that we are heretical. They will no longer have the peace or assurance to say that we are heretics. You need to show them that although what we believe may be different and even against tradition, it is according to the pure word of the Bible. We all must conduct ourselves in this wise manner.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PROPER STANDING OF THE CHURCH

In these chapters we have seen that the Lord's recovery today is concerned with two main items: the full experience of Christ in our spirit and the practical church life. In the more than half century since 1922, the enemy has not ceased to attack the Lord's recovery. During the past years in the United States, the attacks have always been on two points—the Spirit and the ground of the church. The enemy has tried his best to defeat us regarding the Spirit for our experience and the church ground for our practice. Here we see the subtlety of the enemy. The points the enemy attacks are the crucial spots. If the enemy would attack any particular place, that spot must be vital. Therefore, we have been burdened to cover these two matters.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this chapter I am burdened to cover the matters of the practical church life and the proper ground. There are many verses that we need to mention. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, "I will build My church." The church here, which is built upon Christ as the rock, is the universal church. However, when the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 18:17, "Tell it to the church," He was referring not to the universal church but to a local church to which we can go. First Corinthians 10:32 speaks of "the church of God," and 1 Corinthians 11:16 speaks of "the churches of God." Here we see the church, singular, and the churches, plural. In addition, we have some illustrations of the church: the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (13:1), the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), and the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2). Galatians 1:22 and 1 Thessalonians 2:14 both speak of the churches in Judea, that is, the churches in the Jewish territory of Judea. Furthermore, Romans 16:4 mentions "the churches of the Gentiles." Hence, we first have the churches in the Jewish land and then the churches in the Gentile world. Acts 15:41 refers to the churches in Syria and Cilicia, two Gentile provinces of the ancient Roman Empire. In addition to Syria and Cilicia, the New Testament speaks of churches in three other provinces of the ancient Roman Empire: Asia, Galatia,

and Macedonia. First Corinthians 16:19 speaks of "the churches of Asia"; Galatians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 16:1 refer to "the churches of Galatia," and 2 Corinthians 8:1, to "the churches of Macedonia." In 1 Corinthians 4:17 we find the phrase *everywhere in every church*. Acts 14:23 says that the apostles appointed elders in every church. Romans 16:16 mentions "the churches of Christ," and 1 Corinthians 14:33, "the churches of the saints." Therefore, we have the churches of God, the churches of Christ, and the churches of the saints.

THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

As we have pointed out several times, every truth in the Bible has two sides. This is also true with respect to the church. The church has two aspects: the universal aspect and the local aspect. Universally, the church is uniquely one. Locally, however, the church is expressed in many localities. Therefore, the one universal church becomes the many local churches. God is expressed in Christ, Christ is expressed in the church, and the church is expressed in the local churches. If there were no Christ, then God would not be practical to us. We would be like the Jews who hold the doctrine of God but who do not have Christ. As a result, God is merely a term to them; He is not practical. The practical God is the God expressed in Christ, because Christ is the practical expression of God. Apart from Christ and outside of Christ, no one can have God. But if you have Christ, then you have God. Where is Christ? Doctrinally speaking, you may answer, "Christ is in the heavens." But if Christ were only in the heavens, how could we contact Him? In that case He would be doctrinal to us, but He would not be practical to us. Surely we must say that today Christ is in the church. Whenever you touch the church, you touch Christ. If you have the church, then you have Christ. By the word *church*, I do not mean a bungalow with a high tower and a bell; I mean the real church, which is the expression of Christ.

WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

Although many Christians are talking about the church, we must ask them where their church is. Most Christians do not dare say that the church is in the Roman Catholic Church or in any of the denominations. Fifty years ago, they might have had the boldness to say this but not today, because the light of the truth is shining in the darkness, and eyes are being opened to see that Catholicism and the denominations certainly are not the church. Neither

would anyone have the boldness to claim that a free group is the church. Free groups are free groups, not the church. An apple is an apple, and a peach is a peach. You cannot call a peach an apple, for everything must have its own name. The denominations are the denominations, the free groups are the free groups, and the church is the church. Therefore, we are still left with the question, where is the church?

Many, finding it difficult to answer this question, may reply, “The church is heavenly and spiritual, and all Christians are in it.” This sounds good, and I have heard it time and time again. In the past, people who spoke with me did not dare say that the church is in Catholicism, in denominations, or in the free groups. They had been enlightened to see that none of these things is the church. Therefore, they said, “The church includes every saved one, so it must be heavenly and spiritual; it is not on earth.” But I want something practical. Do not talk about money if you do not have even one dollar. I would rather you give me a dollar, than talk vainly to me about a million dollars. Therefore, with those who say that the church is merely heavenly and spiritual, I always pose this question: “Where is your church? You say that the church includes every saved one. Are you not a saved one? I am certain that you are a dear brother. According to your definition of the church, every saved one is in the church. Where is your church right now?” As I speak to them in this frank manner, they dare not say, “My church is the Methodist ‘church.’” In ordinary conversation they might say that they go to the Methodist “church,” but when it comes to the truth concerning the church, no one dares to talk like this. Anyone who talks in this way would immediately lose his case. Deep within, they know that neither the Methodist denomination nor any other denomination is the church. Finding it difficult to answer my question in a definite way, many have said, “Brother Lee, the church is heavenly and spiritual. But we are still in the flesh on earth. Although we are saved and belong to the church, the church is not here today. It is impossible to have something so heavenly and spiritual on earth today. We must wait until we go to heaven. Then we will all be spiritual, and we will be practically in the church.” My answer to this is very simple: “Brother, if this is the case, then let us no longer talk about the church. What is the use in doing so? According to your definition, there can be no church on earth today but only in heaven in the future.” After hearing this, they have said, “Oh, I don’t mean that.” Then I responded, “Please tell me what you mean by saying that the church is heavenly and spiritual and that it cannot be found among humans on earth.

Doesn't this mean that there is no church on earth today? You have said that the church includes all the believers. Since this includes you, please tell me where the church is. I don't want doctrine. I'm like a hungry person who wants something to eat. I'm not asking for a fancy dinner. Just give me a slice of bread. You say that the church is heavenly. That is the nature of the church. But where is the church located? Brother, by your own word, it is clear that, speaking in a practical way, you are not in the church. If you were in the church in a practical way, you could immediately tell me where the church is. You could say, 'This is the church where I am.' Brother, we must be practical."

THE LOCAL EXPRESSION OF THE CHURCH

Do not be cheated by today's Christianity. In Christianity there is a great deal of vain talk, especially regarding the church, but little of this talk is practical. According to the revelation of the New Testament, the church, the Body of Christ, is expressed in the local churches. If you do not have the local church, you do not have the church. God is expressed in Christ, Christ is expressed in the church, and the church is expressed in the local churches.

Read the New Testament again. The first mention of the church is in Matthew 16:18, where the Lord said, "I will build My church." As we have already pointed out, this is the universal church. The last mention of the church is in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 1:11 we read of seven local churches in seven cities: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Here the church is not universal but local. Instead of giving us teaching regarding the church, the Bible gives us illustrations of seven local churches in seven specific cities. All the names of these cities are given in one verse. By this we see that every local church is equal in jurisdiction to a city. The letter to the church at Ephesus is a letter to the city of Ephesus. Thus, the church in Revelation is not the universal church but the city church, a local church. God's intention is to produce the church through Christ and to have it experienced in a practical way and expressed in the local churches. In the New Testament two points are very clear: that the church is practical in the local churches, and that every local church must equal the city where the church is. In other words, every locality must have just one church.

ONE CITY, ONE CHURCH

This is similar to God's governing principle in marriage, the principle of one wife for one husband. If a husband has more than one wife, that is fornication, confusion. Just as every husband should have one wife, so every city should have just one church. If a city has more than one church, that is spiritual fornication and confusion. As the Body of Christ, the church is uniquely one in the whole universe. When this church is expressed in any particular city, it must be uniquely one in that city. If it is not uniquely one in each locality, there will be division and spiritual fornication. If a man has several other women in addition to his wife, those women are concubines. Only the proper one is his wife. The others are women related to that man, but they are not wives; they are only concubines. Likewise, every city, as a "husband," must have one church. Concerning this truth, there is not a shadow of doubt in the Bible. The clear truth in the Bible is one city, one church.

Once again I say that, after mentioning the universal church in Matthew 16:18, the Lord in Matthew 18:17 turned to the matter of the local church, the church to which we can go to have our problems solved. Following this, in Acts, the church is mentioned in relation to a locality, for example, the church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch. In Romans 16:1 we read of the church in Cenchrea, and in 1 Corinthians 1:2 of the church in Corinth. Acts 14:23 says that the apostles appointed elders in every church, and Titus 1:5 says that elders were appointed in every city. Because the church equals the city, the elders of the church are the elders of the city. In any one city there should be just one eldership. As we have already pointed out, in the last book of the Bible the churches are mentioned in relation to localities. What John saw, he wrote in a book and sent it to seven churches in seven cities. Sending the book to the seven churches was equal to sending it to the seven cities where the churches were (Rev. 1:11). This is the clear revelation of the Bible. The church in the universe is one, but this church must be expressed practically on earth in the localities where the saints are. In every locality there should be just one church, just as every husband should have just one wife.

But look at the situation today. One "husband" may have many "wives." When I first visited the city of Las Vegas, I saw a sign near the city limits giving the population, approximately ninety thousand, and also boasting that in Las Vegas there were more than ninety so-called churches. In other words,

there was a “church” for every thousand people. It seems that the gambling city of Las Vegas wanted to have the reputation of being a city filled with “churches.” But they were actually boasting of their spiritual fornication and of their confusion. If you were a Christian in Las Vegas, to which of these ninety “churches” would you go? If you did not attend any of them, would you establish another one, the ninety-first? This is division, and division means confusion. In the eyes of God, confusion is fornication. Fornication means that the saints are not related to one another according to God’s governing regulation. Whenever a man is related to a woman apart from the restriction of God’s governing principle, that is fornication. This fornication produces confusion, and confusion means division. Today the entire situation of Christianity is a matter of division. Who can deny this?

Consider the situation in Orange County, especially in Anaheim. People have told me that Anaheim is famous for three things—for schools, parks, and “churches.” In the eyes of God, these “churches” are not churches but confusions, fornications. Perhaps some will say to us, “What about your coming to Anaheim? Did you not add another to the present number? Is this not a further addition to the confusion? You say that we are divisions and that you are the church. You are too proud in saying this. Are we not Christians also? Then how can you say that we are not the church?” We need to answer this question very carefully so that our eyes might be opened fully. When we say that we are the church and not a division, others accuse us of being a cult. They say, “The local churches claim that they are the church and that all others are not the church. Doesn’t this mean that they are a cult?” On this matter we need light. Some of you, being under the influence of these accusations, may say to yourself, “Aren’t we all Christians? Why then do we say that we are the church and that they are divisions, not churches? Perhaps it is not fair to say this. Maybe Brother Lee has gone to an extreme. Perhaps some of those outside the church are better Christians than we are. For instance, they may pray more than we do and be more godly in their daily living. Many of them are gentle, nice, meek, and kind. But some of us are sloppy and rather loose. How can we fairly say that we are the church and that they are not?” I have often been confronted with this kind of talk.

Let us consider a wife, properly married to her husband. Later, her husband becomes related to five other women. Suppose that the first one, the proper wife, is rather crude but that the second is kind, the third quiet, the fourth diligent, the fifth generous, and the sixth loving and spiritual. All these other

women are much better in certain respects than the wife. But tell me, among these six, who is the true wife—the nice one? the quiet one? the diligent one? the generous one? the spiritual one? The answer to all this is, "No!" The first one, although she is crude, is the genuine wife. On what basis do we say that she is the proper wife? The basis is not what she is but where she stands. The question to ask is this: Is her position that of a wife or that of a concubine? If her position is that of a concubine, no matter how good she is, she is not the wife, because she does not have the position of the wife. If one of the other five women would go to a law court, no judge would ever say, "Because you are nice and kind, I recognize you as the proper wife." No, the judge would render his decision according to who had the right position, the basic ground. Therefore, the first woman, although she does not possess the virtues of the others, would be recognized as the true wife.

I would encourage you to spend much time to study two books we have put out: *Further Talks on the Church Life* and *The Practical Expression of the Church.* In addition I would ask you to study the messages given along this line printed in *The Stream*. These materials clarify the true situation and expose the subtlety of the enemy. I can assure you that what the Lord has given us as the ministry in His recovery has been thoroughly considered. Whatever we minister is carefully weighed. Furthermore, all these things have been practiced in China for years. Hence, we have the complete assurance that what we are doing here is of the Lord and that this is the Lord's recovery.

Do not be influenced by any subtle talk. If you encounter criticisms that you cannot answer, refer them to the elders, and we shall deal with these criticisms together. Our critics accuse us regarding two main items—the Trinity and the church. Therefore, we all must know the truth regarding these two matters. We must know the situation and have the proper weapons to fight the battle.

THE MEANING OF *HERESY* IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Suppose you meet someone who accuses us of being a cult and of being heretical. Do not be offended by him or lose your patience. Rather, remain open and ask him to give you all the points and definitions. The more he gives you, the better. Take down all the points and, with others, pray and fellowship concerning them. Perhaps at some time the Lord will give you the opportunity to help that one come to a proper understanding of what heresy is.

Many Christians know that *heresy* refers to something negative, but not many know the real meaning of *heresy*. In these days I have been burdened to put out a tract on the subject of the true meaning of *heresy*. If you consult a dictionary, you will discover that *heresy* is an anglicized Greek word—a Greek word brought over into the English language. Do you know what heresy is? To know what heresy is, we must go to the New Testament and understand the meaning and usage of this word in the Greek language. We cannot derive the meaning of the word *heresy* simply by studying a lexicon. We must know both the meaning of the Greek word and its usage in the New Testament. The Greek word *hairesis* is used nine times in the New Testament (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14; 26:5; 28:22; 1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20; 2 Pet. 2:1). The adjective form, *hairetikos,* is found in Titus 3:10. In most of the occurrences of the word *hairesis* the meaning is "sect." For example, Acts 5:17 speaks of "the sect *(hairesis)* of the Sadducees." In Acts 24:5 Paul was accused of being "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." Here, a small number from the Jewish religion followed Jesus to form another group, which was considered by others as a sect. Paul uses the word *hairesis* strongly in Galatians 5:20, ranking sects with works of the flesh, such as fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, and sorcery. Immediately before speaking of sects, Paul mentions "enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, divisions." Hence, outbursts of anger, factions, divisions, and sects are related to each other. First we have outbursts of anger, then factions, and after factions we have divisions. Following these are sects. This means that if we strive and fight with others, the result will be divisions that issue in sects. Thus, in this verse Darby translates *hairesis* as "schools of opinion." To have a school of opinion means to hold an opinion that causes you to be separated and divided from others and to form into a sect.

The word *hairesis* is also used in 2 Peter 2:1, which says, "There arose also false prophets among the people, as also among you there will be false teachers, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them." According to this verse, heresy is a teaching that leads you away from the faith in the Lord. Therefore, considering all the nine occurrences of this word in the New Testament, we may say that *heresy* first means the causing of divisions that form sects in the Body of Christ, and second it means the holding of a teaching that seduces people and leads them away from the Lord, the Savior. Therefore, to set up a division that issues in a sect and to seduce people away from the Lord are both heresy.

Once we are clear about the meaning of *heresy* according to the New Testament, we can help others realize that they cannot so lightly accuse us of being heretical. If anyone forms a division that issues in a sect, he is heretical. Furthermore, if anyone does not believe that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God incarnated to be a man, that He was crucified on the cross for our sins, shedding His blood to redeem us, and that He was resurrected and is now in the heavens as well as in us to be our life, then whatever he teaches regarding Christ must also be heretical. We can tell all the opposers that we believe in the Lord Jesus according to the Bible. We hold to all the crucial points: that He is the Son of God, that He became a man, that He died for our sins, that He shed His blood for our redemption, that He was resurrected, that He is now in the heavens, that He is also in us to be our life, and that He is coming back to meet us. Since we believe all this, no one who is fair can condemn us as heretical. It is absolutely unfair to do this. Nevertheless, some may still say, "You damage the person of Christ by teaching that He is the Father as well as the Son." This brings us back, once again, to the matter of the Trinity.

We say that Christ is the Father and the Spirit because of Isaiah 9:6, 1 Corinthians 15:45, and 2 Corinthians 3:17. We believe whatever the Bible says. Although others may not agree with us, it is not fair to condemn us for believing what the Bible says. Therefore, the difference between us and others is not a matter of heresy but of different interpretations, of different opinions. They follow the traditional teaching concerning the Trinity, and we believe in the pure word of the Bible. Hence, there is a discrepancy. If others say that we are heretical, then how about them? It may turn out that the very ones who accuse us of being heretical are themselves heretical. However, because they are dear brothers, we do not wish to condemn them. In like manner, we ask them not to condemn us. If you fellowship with others in this way, you may be able to help them see that it is neither right nor fair to accuse anyone who believes what the Bible reveals concerning Christ of being heretical. Furthermore, you may need to show them that many fundamental teachers, including some who helped to formulate the orthodox creed at the Council of Nicaea, were condemned at one time for being modalistic and at another time for being tritheistic. They were condemned because, as they defended the truth against the heresy of tritheism, on occasion they appeared to be modalists; and as they defended the truth against Sabellianism, a form of modalism, they appeared to be following tritheism. However, the whole of Christianity would not condemn these noted teachers as heretics, for they

were honest in believing both aspects of the revelation of the Triune God in the Bible.

We believe that the Son is the Father and also that the Lord is the Spirit. But we still believe the other side of the Triune God—that all three of the Godhead exist at the same time and that among Them there is a real coinherence for eternity. Although we cannot reconcile these two aspects of the Trinity, we absolutely believe them both. Therefore, it is not fair to accuse us of being heretical. Rather, our opposers are in danger of being heretical because they place too much stress on the side of the three and neglect the side of the one. This brings them to the verge of the heresy of tritheism.

You need to present the matter to the critics in this way. Perhaps, while maintaining a good attitude toward them, you will be able to give them some further education and to clear up the sky concerning the truth. Truth is truth, fact is fact, and falsehood is falsehood. As long as we stand with the Bible and as long as we have a spirit to be one with the Lord, eventually the situation will be cleared up, and the sky concerning the truth will be clear. Whether or not others accept the truth is their responsibility. We are not responsible for that. Our burden today is for the Lord's recovery. Do not be deceived or distracted by the opposers. Take down all their points and fellowship concerning them. Study and learn the truth with them. I believe that we all shall be helped by this and that the Lord will gain more ground for His recovery.

A DESCRIPTION, NOT A TITLE

With respect to the church, we have no title. The term *local church* is not our title. When we speak of the church in Anaheim, the church in Los Angeles, and the church in Hong Kong, it is the same as saying the moon in Anaheim, the moon in Los Angeles, and the moon in Hong Kong. The phrase *the moon in Hong Kong* is not the title of the moon; it is simply a description of the moon. Likewise, *the church in Anaheim* is not our title; it is our description. When the moon appears in Taipei, it is called "the moon in Taipei," and when the moon appears over Paris, it is called "the moon in Paris." The words *local church* are simply a term describing the nature of the church. Today we are not standing merely for the universal church but also for the local church. The nature of the church not only has the universal aspect but also the local aspect. Therefore, we need to make it clear that the words *local church* are not a title.

Never say, “I attend the local church on Ball Road in Anaheim.” To make the words *local church* a title is to turn us into a local church sect and to cause us to become a local church denomination. We do not practice any sectarian church but the local church. When people ask you to share with them about the church, patiently explain to them that we have no title whatever. We are simply the church. When we are in Anaheim, we are the church in Anaheim; when we are in New York, we are the church in New York; and when we are in Stuttgart, we are the church in Stuttgart. In whatever locality we find ourselves, we are simply the local church there. We have nothing to do with anything denominational.

CHAPTER NINE

THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE DESIRE OF GOD'S HEART

In this chapter and in the chapters following, we turn to the matter of the reality and practicality of the church. We are not concerned with the church in doctrine or merely with the church in revelation but with the church in reality and practicality. However, in order to see the reality and practicality of the church, we must have a clear revelation concerning the church. We need to see what the church is. I am especially burdened to help those who have recently come into the church life to see what the church is and to know the church's reality and practicality in the Lord's recovery today. Everyone in the church life should be familiar with these matters.

The term *church* has been damaged, polluted, and spoiled by its usage in Christianity. When many people hear the word *church,* they think of a cathedral or of a bungalow with a high tower and a bell. What a shame to understand the church in this way! The church is not a material building. Some have been helped, especially by the teaching of the Brethren, to know that *the church,* according to the Greek word *ekklesia,* means the called ones meeting together. This is correct, for the church is a gathering of God's called ones. However, this understanding of the church is much too superficial. The church revealed in the New Testament is far more profound than this. Hence, we must turn to the holy Word to see the revelation concerning the church.

THE DESIRE OF GOD'S HEART

Before we do this, we need to have some fellowship regarding the fact that the church is according to the desire of God's heart. I realize that the phrase *the desire of God's heart* is not found in the Bible. But in Ephesians 1:5 and 9 we have the terms *the good pleasure of His will* and *His good pleasure.* When I was young, I was very troubled by this phrase. I asked myself, "What is the good pleasure of God's will?" Now I would address this question to you: Do you know what the good pleasure of God's will is? Ephesians 1:5 not only speaks of God's will but also of the good pleasure of His will. Today, especially in this country, everyone desires pleasure. Holidays

are days of pleasure. People attend sporting events in the pursuit of pleasure. If we desire pleasure, then certainly God does also. Only something dead or nonliving has no such need. A wooden table, for example, has no need of pleasure because it is not living. But every living thing desires pleasure. In fact, the more living you are, the more pleasure you need. A child of seven requires more pleasure than an old man who can hardly breathe. Often a child is naughty simply because he is seeking pleasure. The degree of our livingness determines how much pleasure we need. Because God is certainly the most living One, He surely needs the most pleasure. If we, as fallen sinners, require pleasure, then how much more does God, the living One, have a deep need for it? When I was in Christianity, I heard over and over again that we were saved because God loves us. Frequently, the preachers quoted John 3:16. I was merely told that God loves sinners and that He desires to bring them into His heavenly mansion. But I was never told that God has a pleasure.

Unlike the book of Romans, which begins from the perspective of man's fallen condition, the book of Ephesians does not begin from man's side but from God's side. The book of Ephesians reveals what God needs. God needs pleasure, and this pleasure is according to His will. Do not understand this word *will* in your way. Here it does not mean that God has a strong will; rather, the meaning here is somewhat similar to a wish. God has a good wish, a desire. He longs, desires, to taste something. God's desire is a good desire, a good will, and His pleasure is of such a good desire. This is exactly what is meant by the words *heart's desire*. The biblical term for *heart's desire* is *the good pleasure of His will*. The good pleasure of God's will is simply the desire of God's heart.

What does God desire? The heart's desire of God is to have the church. It is not to have a group of saved sinners but to obtain one entity—the church. All students of the Bible agree that the entire book of Ephesians is on the church. In the book of Ephesians the church is described in at least seven or eight aspects. In this chapter we need to cover all these aspects. I wish to impress you all, especially the young people, with the fact that the desire of God's heart is to have the church. The church that is in His heart is too wonderful. It is so wonderful and profound that not even the apostle Paul in writing the Epistle to the Ephesians had the adequate utterance to describe and define it. No human language can adequately portray the wonderful entity in God's heart.

SAVED TO BE IN THE CHURCH

In the past we received the help to be saved, and afterwards we were taught to improve our behavior. All this is good, and I do not find fault with it. But is this all? Some Christians are known as "deeper life" Christians. I do not know whether they are actually deep or not, but they at least try to help others to know the deeper life. However, there are different applications of the term *deeper life*. The holiness people consider their holiness as the deeper life, and the tongue-speaking people consider their speaking in tongues as the deeper life. Others refer to the deeper life as the "second blessing." Still others understand the deeper life as something mysterious and mystical. However, I have never heard anyone apply the term *deeper life* to the church life. Although there are many schools of doctrine in Christianity, there is no school called "church life." Today's Christians have missed the mark and are still missing it. God's goal is not simply to save sinners and then to improve their behavior and deepen their life. God's goal is to have the church. If, after you have been saved, you have only improved your behavior and become deep in life, you are just useful for some kind of exhibition. But God does not want such an exhibition. He does not desire individual Christians—He wants the church. When we built our meeting hall in Anaheim, we purchased a vast quantity of materials. Our intention was not to have a huge pile of materials—it was to build a meeting hall. Likewise, the desire of God's heart is to have the church. Oh, we all must see this! We have been saved for the church, not for any other purpose. We were not only saved for the church but saved to be the church.

I am concerned that many of you are still not clear concerning the purpose of your salvation. You must clearly see that you have been saved for the church. This vision must direct, control, and guide your whole life. You have been saved to be part of the church. Now let me ask you this question: Do you daily live as a part of the church? Doctrinally you recognize that you are a part of the church and that you have been saved to be in the church, but practically do you live as a part of the church? When you go shopping, do you shop as a part of the church? In our daily living we may not live as a part of the church. Doctrine is one thing, and practicality is another.

How pitiful is the situation among Christians today! Since the Lord has brought His recovery to this country, Christians have been talking about the church. Many say, "Why do you say that you are the church and that we are

not the church?" Perhaps after discussing the church, some pastors may go out to play tennis. On the one hand, they argue that we teach wrong doctrine with respect to the church, and, on the other hand, they forget about it all and go to play golf or tennis. Today who cares for the reality and practicality of the church? Practically speaking, who are the ones in the local churches? We need to apply this question to ourselves. In your home life do you live as a part of the church? Once again I say that we have been saved to be the church.

THE RECOVERY

OF THE PRACTICAL CHURCH LIFE

Years ago I was taught that we were saved that we might be holy, and I read a number of books about holiness and about how to be holy. However, I never read a book on how to be the church. I ask you to read your New Testament again. If you do so, you will see what a strong emphasis there is in God's divine revelation on this matter of the church.

Although many Bible teachers say that the book of Ephesians is on the church, to them this is merely theology. If you examine their practical living, you will see that they do not care for the church at all. But how about us? We must be impressed that the Lord's recovery today is ultimately the recovery of the church life. What Christianity has missed, the Lord is recovering. This is not a doctrine. Today the Lord is recovering the church life. As long as there is no practical church life, the Lord does not yet have His recovery. Although so many positive things are holy, scriptural, and spiritual, none of them is the goal. Again I declare that the goal is the church.

In Acts 2 we have the record of the first local church, the church in Jerusalem. Verses 41 through 47 reveal that those Christians were the church. Although they did not have the doctrine of the church and perhaps did not even have the word *church,* they were the church in their living. Day and night they lived the church life. They may not have talked about the church or taught about it—they simply were the church. During the time of Acts 2, the Lord had gained what He had been seeking. But not too long afterwards, this goal was gradually blurred and lost. Now, at the end of this age, the Lord has come to recover this lost goal. Thus, we are not here for holiness, spirituality, evangelical work, or for any kind of movement. We are here for the church. This is God's desire. God wants a real, actual, and practical church, not a

group of people talking about the doctrine of the church. Since I have been enlightened concerning this, no one has been able to deceive me.

If you have ever seen the church in a transparent, crystal-clear vision, no one will be able to cheat you. Young people, as you go to the campuses, you must go with the vision of the real and practical church. Then, no matter what others say to you, you will be clear. You will have x-ray vision; you will be able to see through things, and no one will be able to rob you. But if you do not have this clear vision, you may be influenced by the enticing words of certain Christians. However, once you have seen the vision of the church, no one will be able to seduce you. The more they talk, the clearer you will become, and you will say, "Oh, I see the little serpent under this person's tongue!" Only by seeing the vision of the church can we overcome this enticing, serpentine talk.

THE CHURCH AS THE SONSHIP

Let us now consider the various aspects of the church unfolded in the book of Ephesians. First, the church is revealed as the sonship. Ephesians 1:5 says, "Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." This sonship is the church, or the church life. The sonship to which we, the chosen ones of God, have been predestinated is a blessing in the divine life that we might enjoy the church. This sonship came into being at the time of the Lord's resurrection. In His resurrection the Lord Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, was born to be the firstborn Son of God. Acts 13:33, containing a quotation of Psalm 2:7, says, "That God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.'" The words *this day* refer to the day of resurrection. On the day of resurrection the only begotten Son of God in the flesh was begotten by the Father to be the firstborn Son of God. Prior to this time, the Son of God was the only begotten Son of God, but in resurrection He became the firstborn Son of God.

We are told clearly in the Bible that in the Lord's resurrection not only He Himself was begotten, but all God's chosen ones were born (1 Pet. 1:3). The only begotten Son was uniquely one. Besides Him, there was no other. But the only begotten Son was, in resurrection, born to be the firstborn Son. This implies that there are other sons. Hallelujah, we are the other sons! I am certain that I am included among the many sons of God. The words *many sons* are found in Hebrews 2:10, which says that the Father is "leading many

sons into glory." God the Father has many sons, and God the Son has many brothers. The "many brothers" are mentioned in Romans 8:29, which says, "Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers." On the day of resurrection the Lord Jesus brought us all into sonship. According to Hebrews 2:11 and 12, Christ's many brothers are the church: "Both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them *brothers,* saying, 'I will declare Your name to My *brothers;* in the midst of the *church* I will sing hymns of praise to You.'" The many brothers of Christ, who are the many sons of God in the divine sonship, are the church. This concept is very deep.

The church is the corporate sonship, the totality of God's divine sonship. This implies that the church must be a corporate entity which has the very nature of God. *Sonship* implies both nature and source, for *sonship* indicates the source and nature of the church. The source and nature of the church are God the Father. In the Bible the name Father always denotes the source and nature. In a family the father is the source with the nature. All children come out of the source of their father and have their father's nature. The church is a corporate entity issuing out of the source of God the Father and having the nature of God the Father. We in the church have the nature of God the Father. Our nature is divine because we have come out of that unique source, which is God the Father Himself.

Since I came to this country, I have often asked the brothers what their national origin is. There were some who have told me that their origin is British, others Danish, and still others Spanish. Now we must ask what the church's origin is. The origin of the church is God the Father. A person's origin is expressed in his face. But does the church have the appearance of God the Father? Do we truly bear His expression? We have not only the origin, the source, of the Father as our appearance but also His nature as our content. The divine nature, which is God Himself, is the very nature of the church.

Today many talk and argue concerning who is the church. Look at yourself: Do you look like a part of the church? Instead of this, you may resemble a turtle. Your way of going out to play tennis gives you the appearance of a turtle. How can we call a turtle part of the church? Even if you would label a turtle as part of the church, the turtle would still not be part of the church. Many times I have said to myself, "So many of the poor people on earth walk,

work, and live like turtles, yet they claim to be the church." Who are the church? The Christians who have come out of the origin of God the Father, who bear the appearance of God the Father, and who are filled and constituted with the divine nature of God the Father—these are the church.

Again I say, if you have seen this vision, no one will be able to deceive you. If others attempt to cheat you, simply smile at them and say, "Dear one, you simply don't know what you are talking about. You resemble a turtle who labels himself as part of the church. You are trying to sell me the wrong cargo. I want to buy that which has its origin in God, not something on the low level of a turtle. I have seen the vision of the church. Don't try to cheat me with your cheap cargo. Now let me tell you what the church is." By speaking this way in the past, I received a bad name because all those who approached me about this matter were exposed. However, do not apply this word to others—apply it to yourself. You say that you are in the church, but what kind of a person are you? Do you live like a turtle, or like someone whose origin is God the Father? Are we being constituted with the divine nature, or are we still in our Chinese, Japanese, or American nature? The church is not a composition of Chinese, Spanish, and Americans. It is a corporate entity filled and constituted with the divine nature of God the Father.

When you hear that the sonship of the divine nature is the church, you may reply, "How can we be such a being?" First, we need to be regenerated, and then we need to be transformed. We were born of a national origin, such as Chinese, Japanese, American, Spanish, or British. But this is no longer our origin. Today our origin is God the Father. We have been born of His nature, and now His nature is doing a transforming work within us. His nature is not only the begetting nature but also the transforming nature.

THE CHURCH AS GOD'S FAMILY

The book of Ephesians also reveals that the church is the family of God (2:19). The sonship and the family are closely related. If you are not in the sonship, you do not belong to the family, because the family is based upon the sonship. While *sonship* indicates source and implies nature, *family* denotes our household life. Our life should not be an individual life but a family life. Although I do not like to see the brothers and sisters get married when they are still teenagers, I like to see them get married at a proper age and then become parents of two or more children. This is family life.

Family life kills your individualism. I am concerned for some among us. Although they are good brothers and sisters, their individualism has never been killed. Do you know what can kill your individualism? First, your husband or wife, and then your children. When you get married, you gain someone who kills your individualism. Day by day in the family life of the church we are suffering the killing of our individualism. Have you ever sensed that, in the church life, you are under someone's killing? Some of my children have said, "Daddy, you have too many children. I wish I were just by myself and didn't have so many brothers and sisters, because they all bother me." Praise the Lord that the church life is a family life!

God the Father has no intention of having individual sons. His intention is to have a family, and we are His family. Although we all belong to the family, some naughty ones do not like to remain with the family. Instead, they prefer to be off somewhere by themselves. Some of you may still hold to your preference of being away from your brothers and sisters. You enjoy being isolated. But if you consider the human situation, you will see that mankind does not depend upon individuals but upon the family. The church is God's family. God's unit is corporate; it is not the individual. He does not want you to be an only son. You cannot be His only son, for He already has His only begotten Son. You must be a member of His family.

In Greek, the word for *family* or *household* is the same as the word for *house*, or *dwelling place*. Thus, the church is God's dwelling place, God's house and home (1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6). Today the family is different from the house, but in the New Testament the house and the family are one. In some cases it is difficult to determine whether to translate the Greek word as "house" or as "household." Both are correct. In God's eyes, the house is the family, and the family is the house. Individually, you and I could never be God's house. God's house is a corporate matter, not an individual one. If we say that we are the church, then we must examine ourselves to see whether we are God's house, God's dwelling. If we say that we are the church of God, then we must be God's dwelling place. Many talk about the church, but they do not have the reality of the church.

The reality of the church is that it is God's residence. God dwells there. Do we have the residence of God among us? If we do not, then we are not qualified to say that we are the church. We are a so-called church, but we lack the divine residence.

THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

In relation to the Father, the church is the sonship and the household. Now we must see what the church is in relation to Christ. All Christians know that the church is the Body of Christ (1:22-23; 5:30). Christ's Body is the church. This term, however, has been used in a very loose way. After coming to this country, I heard a lot of talk about "Body ministry" and the "Body life." What was described as "Body ministry" eventually turned out to be something absolutely different. Others said that they had the "Body life." But I wondered where the Head was. The New Testament clearly says that the Body is one with the Head. If we do not have the Head, we cannot have the Body. Without the Head, you would have something similar to the Body, but it would not be the Body—it would be a corpse. If we claim to be the Body, then we must ask where the Head is. In our church life do we have the Head? The Head certainly must be Christ. In our church life do we truly realize that Christ is here as the Head? Many who claim to be the Body, but who do not have the Head, are like a corpse that is somehow still active—a body without a head still acting as if it were alive. This is a monstrosity. If someone were walking around in the meeting without a head, we would all be terrified. But the situation in today's Christianity is that of many active bodies without the Head. Are we truly under the headship of Christ? We do have the awareness and the application of the headship of Christ among us. Many times the brothers are unable to do certain things because of their awareness of Christ's headship. They realize that only Christ, not any of them, is the Head. We dare not make certain decisions because we realize that only He is the Head. We must honor Christ's headship and apply it to the practicality of today's church life. If the Head is removed, the Body is finished. But when we have the Head, we have the Body also.

The church as the Body implies life and function. The Body is a living organism. If it does not have life in it, it can no longer be the Body. Without life it would either be a corpse or an organization. A body must have life. A body also implies function. Hence, the Body of Christ has three things—the Head, the life, and the function. My body functions even when I am sleeping. A dead body, however, does not function at all. If we say that we are the church, then we must realize three things concerning the Body: headship, life, and function. I hope that you all will take in this word.

Although we may have the life of the Body, we may not live by that life. The human body has a life, and it certainly lives by this life. If the body does not live by the life in the body, then it must be sick. For the body to be sick means that a part of the body does not live by the life of the body. Many Christians are talking about the church as the Body, but they are sick, not living by the life of the Body. To say that we are the church, the Body of Christ, means that we live by the life of the Body, which is Christ Himself. Suppose you go to a brother to have some fellowship with him or to deal with him. As you do so, you must realize that you are in the Body and that you must live by the life in the Body. You should not fellowship with that brother or deal with him by your own natural life but by the life in the Body. Perhaps not many among us have the full realization of this. We need to realize that we must live and act by the life within the Body. This is not for us to be holy, victorious, or spiritual; it is for us to be a part of the church, a part of the Body.

Whenever we consider the matter of the functions in the Body, our heart aches. So many have been drugged and damaged by the tradition, background, and environment of Christianity. When they come to the meetings, they sit there under the influence of Christianity, expecting some hired ones to function for them. Although this is the practice in Christianity, it is not the church in function. In the church every member functions. As I am speaking, my whole body is functioning. If my diaphragm did not function, I would not be able to project my voice very far. If my legs did not function, my whole body would sense it and suffer because of it. But many members sit in the meetings without functioning and even without any inner sense regarding this. This proves that they have been drugged by Christianity. In our meetings, everyone must function. No matter how many come together, even if it be more than a thousand, everyone must function. Even if you do not bear a large responsibility in the Body, you still must function. If we are sincere in saying that we are the church, then we all must function as members of the Body.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S COUNTERPART

The church is also Christ's counterpart, His wife (5:25-27, 32). The church as the counterpart of Christ implies satisfaction and rest in love. Every husband needs satisfaction and rest, which are found in love. The brothers who are husbands can testify that our satisfaction and rest can only be in our wives. If we say that we are the church, then we must ask if Christ has His rest

among us. This is serious. Do not be so quick to claim that you are the church. To be the church is to render to Christ the adequate satisfaction and rest in love. Christ needs such a wife. The church is not merely a gathering of God's called ones. It is a satisfaction and rest to Christ in love.

THE CHURCH AS THE TEMPLE

To God the Spirit, the church is the temple. First Corinthians 3:16 says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" The believers as a corporate unit in a certain locality are the temple indwelt by the Spirit of God. Hence, to God the Spirit we are the temple filled with Himself. It is not simply a matter of having the manifestations of certain gifts, such as healing and speaking in tongues. It is a matter of having the corporate indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is the reality of the church life.

THE CHURCH AS THE ARMY

To the enemy, Satan, the church is an army (Eph. 6:11-13). Being the army is not an individualistic matter. At most, you and I can only be soldiers. But all the soldiers must be formed and constituted into an army. Whenever we are detached from the army, we are in a very dangerous situation. We must have the protection of being in the army. Because many Christians today are not in the army, they are constantly under the attack of the enemy. The church is absolutely a corporate entity. All the aspects of the church that we have covered—sonship, family, Body, counterpart, temple, and army—are corporate entities.

THE CHURCH AS THE NEW MAN

In addition to all these aspects, the church is also the new man (2:15-16). The church as the new man is for our living. Hallelujah, on earth there is such a new man living here! To the Father, the church is the sonship and the family; to the Son, the church is the Body and the counterpart; to the Spirit, the church is the temple; to Satan, the church is the army; and for our living, the church is the new man. Praise the Lord that we are the new man! Individualistically, we are not the new man. God has one corporate new man—the church.

After seeing all these aspects of the church, can we still be individualistic? I can testify that after I saw all this, my individualism was killed. I have seen

that the church is absolutely a corporate entity. With respect to the Father, to the Son, to the Spirit, to the enemy, and for our living, the church is a corporate entity. Hallelujah, the church is the sonship, the family, the Body, the counterpart, the temple, the army, and the one new man!

CHAPTER TEN

GOD'S WAY TO BUILD UP THE CHURCH

Matthew 28:19 says, "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Although you might have read this verse many times, perhaps you have never realized that it is related to the building up of the church. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." But how does the Lord build up His church? The answer is in Matthew 28:19. The way to build up the church is to baptize the believers into the name of the Triune God. The Lord had a purpose in charging His disciples to disciple the nations and to baptize them into the Triune God. This purpose was not that people might escape hell and go to heaven; it was that they might be built into the church.

THE MATERIAL AND THE WAY

We need to take the divine Word as a whole. If we are careful, thoughtful, and logical readers, when we read in Matthew 16:18 that the Lord Jesus will build His church, we should immediately ask about the way the Lord builds His church. In order to build something we must have both the material and the way. The material for the building of the church is mentioned in Matthew 16:18. Here the Lord told Peter that he was a stone and that He would build His church upon Himself as the rock. However, the way to build the church is not found in this verse. Throughout the years, many great Christian teachers have spoken about the builded church in Matthew 16:18, but I doubt that even one of them has spoken about the way to build the church. Once again I say that the way is in Matthew 28:19.

Only after the Lord had passed through crucifixion and resurrection, accomplishing full redemption, did He reveal His way to build up the church. His death was the termination of the old creation, and His resurrection was the germination of the new creation. By His all-inclusive death on the cross, Christ has terminated everything of the old creation, including ourselves, our flesh, and our natural life. Do not care for your feelings about your strong self or your corrupted flesh. Care for the fact that the Lord has terminated all the old creation. Hallelujah, we have been terminated! But if there were only death without resurrection, the situation would be hopeless. Praise the Lord

that following termination we have germination! Today I am happy and living because I have been germinated. The Lord's charge to His disciples in Matthew 28:19 is based upon these glorious facts.

BAPTIZED INTO THE PERSON OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Many years ago, I was invited to speak at a mission called "Go Ye Mission." As I was considering the title of that mission, I wondered whether those dear ones realized what these words actually meant. Their concept of the Lord's words, "Go ye," was to go to the mission field to rescue fallen sinners so that they may be saved and go to heaven. The Lord Jesus, however, did not command His disciples in this way. Rather, He charged them to disciple the nations by baptizing them, not only into water but into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The baptism spoken of here is not a matter of sprinkling a few drops of water on someone's head. This baptism is the putting of believers into the person of the Triune God.

A name always denotes a person. When I call a brother by name, I get the person. Hence, to baptize people into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit means to immerse them into the divine person. Matthew 28:19 does not mention three names; it speaks of baptizing people into "the name." This name is the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, denoting the person of the Triune God. To baptize people into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is to baptize them into the divine person of the Triune God.

The water used in baptism is a sign, not only of the death of Christ but also of Christ Himself. Romans 6:3 says, "Are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Most Christian teachers emphasize the baptismal water as signifying the death of Christ. They do not stress that the water also signifies the person of Christ. When we immerse people into water, we put them into the death of Christ and simultaneously into the person of Christ. Galatians 3:27 says, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." If we put this verse together with Matthew 28:19, we see that to be baptized into Christ is to be baptized into the name, the person, of the Triune God.

Because Christ today is the pneuma, it is easy to baptize people into Him. Nothing is easier than getting into the air. We are in the air all the time, and

the air is also within us. Physical air is a symbol of the divine pneuma. Christ today is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Now Christ the Lord is that pneuma, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). Because Christ is the very pneuma, Spirit, air, we can easily be immersed into Him. We all have been put into the divine person of the Triune God. The reality, the substance, the essence, of the divine person of the Triune God is the Spirit. God is Spirit (John 4:24). The divine pneuma is the very essence and substance of the Triune God. When people are baptized into the name of the Triune God, they are put into the person of the Triune God, which is the essence, the substance, of the Divine Being. We are not immersed into the substance of the Triune God so that we may go to heaven or merely so that we may be holy or spiritual. It is so that we may be the church. The Lord Jesus builds up His church by putting us into the Triune God. I can testify that I am undoubtedly in the Triune God. Do you have the confidence that you are in the Triune God? Do you have the boldness to declare this? As long as we are in the Triune God, we are the church.

TRANSFORMATION BY THE FLOWING OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Being put into the Triune God is not a small matter. It implies that we are prepared and positioned to let God come into us. The more the Triune God gets into us, the more He transforms us.

The best illustration of transformation is petrified wood. The water flows through the wood to carry away the essence of the wood and to replace it with the element of minerals from the water. In this way the wood is petrified, transformed. Hallelujah, we all have been put into the Triune God! Now the Triune God as the living water is flowing in, through, and out of us. As He flows through us, He carries away our “wooden” substance and brings in His golden essence. In this way we are transformed.

TRANSFORMATION BEING FOR THE BUILDING

This transformation is for the building. Recently, some brothers and sisters have asked me how they can be built up. To be built does not mean to love one another in a natural way—that is to be one not in the Spirit but in the flesh and in the natural life. This is absolutely wrong. The way to be built is to be transformed. Our natural element must be carried away. Although I may never embrace a certain brother or love him according to the natural,

religious concept, he and I may be fully built together by having our natural element carried away and replaced by God's golden essence. As this golden essence, the building factor, permeates both of us, we are built together.

The Lord Jesus builds the church first by baptizing us into the Triune God. By being immersed in the Triune God, we are positioned to drink of Him. First Corinthians 12:13 says, "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit." Then as we daily drink of the Spirit as the divine water, He flows within us, and this flow of the divine life carries away our natural life, our "wooden" nature, and replaces it with God's golden essence.

Never think that hugging one another and loving one another in an outward way is a sign of the building. No, that is not the building. The building is the oneness in the golden nature. The more we are transformed, the more we shall be built up. If we have not been transformed, even our love is a kind of "honey." Shallow, superficial Christians think that this type of love is oneness. No, this is not oneness. Oneness means that the pure golden essence of the Triune God is wrought into our being to replace our "wooden" element. This is the way the Lord builds us into the church. May we all see it! Forget what you have gleaned from your background and what you have understood according to your natural concept. We need to see the heavenly light.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

FOR THE ONENESS OF THE BELIEVERS

In John 17 the Lord prayed that the believers would be one. John 17:21-23 says, "That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one." It is difficult to recite or remember these verses because the concept here absolutely transcends our natural understanding. According to the Lord's word in these verses, we are to be one even as the Father and the Son are one. Here the Lord prayed in this way: "That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us." Oneness means that we, the believers, are all in the "Us." This "Us" is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Real oneness is the oneness in the Triune God.

John 17:22 says, “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them.” The glory which the Father has given the Son is the sonship with the Father’s life and divine nature (5:26) to express the Father in His fullness (1:18; 14:9; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3). The Son has given this glory to His believers so that they also may have the sonship with the Father’s life and divine nature (John 17:2; 2 Pet. 1:4) to express the Father in the Son in His fullness (John 1:16). This concept is far beyond our natural thought. It is easy to grasp the idea of loving one another. However, it is difficult to define glory. Glory is the sonship with the life and nature of God to express the Father in His fullness. True oneness is in this glory. This oneness is deep and profound. In it there is no ground or room for the self or the natural life. During the past nineteen centuries, the Lord has been desiring to have this oneness among the believers.

John 17:23 says, “I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one.” I doubt that anyone today understands what it means to be perfected into one. If I asked the leading brothers in this area if they are truly one, they would have to admit, because much of their being has not yet been transformed, that they are only one to a certain degree. But they are on the way of being perfected into one. To be perfected is to be “petrified,” transformed, that is, to have your natural essence carried away and replaced by the divine essence. This is the way to be perfected into one. This oneness cannot be found even between most husbands and wives. But the Lord Jesus prayed for it, and we are in the process of attaining it.

THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH—GOD WROUGHT INTO HUMANITY

The extent of the reality of the church life we possess depends upon the degree to which we have been perfected into one. Often we sing the words *We are one*. But how much are we actually one? It all depends on how much we have been transformed by the Triune God and even with the Triune God. It is not a shallow or insignificant thing to claim to be the church. The church is not merely the divine person or merely human beings. The church is the Divine Being wrought into human beings. This is deep. When some Christian teachers hear of this, they may oppose it and say that it is some kind of mysticism. But this is not mysticism or philosophy; it is the truth in the depths of the holy Word.

ONENESS BEING THE CHURCH

My intention in this chapter is to point out that the Lord builds His church by baptizing people into the person of the Triune God. In the Gospel of John we see how we are put into the Triune God. John 14 reveals that the Lord Jesus is one with the Father and that He is also the indwelling Spirit, in whom we all have been baptized and in whom we all can be perfected into one. We have seen that in John 17 the Lord prayed that all His believers would be perfected into one. This oneness is the church. The Lord's perfecting us into one is His building up of the church.

The Lord builds the church first by immersing us into the Triune God and second by perfecting us into one through the process of transformation. Again I say that transformation is the flowing into our being of the divine essence and the replacing of our natural element. The way to build the church is not to try to get close to one another. This is organization, the equivalent of putting wooden boards together to make a table. Organization is a matter of putting people together, but, according to the Bible, building is a matter of our being transformed into the image of the Triune God. We all must be transformed into His image. The degree to which we can be built up with the brothers depends upon the degree of our transformation. By our natural life we cannot be built into one. If we would have genuine building, we must be transformed by the divine person and even with the divine person. The issue of this transformation is oneness, and the enlargement of this oneness is the church. The church is the oneness among those who have been transformed from the natural being into the divine image. Although we remain human, we have been transformed into the divine image, for the divine image has been wrought into us. As a result, we are the church. Consider again the illustration of petrified wood. Because the mineral essence has been wrought into the wood to replace the wooden essence, the wood eventually becomes a stone. This kind of transformation is for the building of the church.

NOT PSYCHOLOGY BUT TRANSFORMATION

More than forty years ago, I did a great deal of admonishing. For example, I saw that one elder was very bold and that another elder was very timid. Due to this, they were not one. Therefore, I visited the bold one and looked for the opportunity to say a word. When the right opportunity came, I said, "Brother, in the church life we are a group of brothers. Some like you are rather bold,

and others, like Brother So-and-so, are timid. But we all must be one. Brother, I hope that from now on you will not be so bold and that Brother So-and-so will not be so timid." The brother nodded his head in agreement and said, "Brother Lee, I am always bold. I was born this way. What can I do about it? I will look to the Lord that by His grace He will help me not to be so bold anymore." I replied, "That's fine, brother. I will pray for you." I conducted myself like a good pastor. After a few days, I visited the other brother and waited for the opportunity to speak a word to him. At the proper time, I said, "Brother, it is wonderful in the church life to be humble, slow, and patient. But it is quite another thing to be timid." Then the brother said, "Brother Lee, I was born a timid person." To this I responded, "Since you realize that you are timid, you must pray to the Lord that you may become strong and bold." Upon hearing this, the brother said, "Yes, I will pray that I may be strong and bold." Again, I behaved like a good pastor. However, the following week the bold brother was still bold, and the timid brother was even more timid. My way did not work. Later, I tried another way, telling the bold brother to be bold and the timid brother to be timid. Eventually, they were transformed and said, "Brother Lee, you told us to be bold and you told us to be timid. But something within has changed us." Through experiences like this I learned that I was pastoring a church, not building up the church.

In the seminary the ministerial students study psychology. Although I never went to a seminary, in the past I did practice a certain amount of psychology. The word I ministered was the word of psychology. Although psychology may enable you to pastor a church, it will not help you to build up the church. The way to build up a church is to put people into the person of the Triune God and to help them drink of the one Spirit that the flow of the divine life within them may carry away their natural essence and replace it with the divine essence. However, the more we pastor people in a psychological way, the more difficulties we shall have. Psychological pastoring merely feeds the natural life and nourishes it. I hope that we all shall see that the building of the church is the working of the divine person into our being. This produces oneness. In these days we are being perfected into one.

THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT IN THE ONE BODY

According to Ephesians 4:3, this oneness is the oneness of the Spirit. The Spirit is the reality of the person of the Triune God. The name denotes the person, and the reality of the person of the Divine Being is the Spirit. Hence,

the oneness of the Spirit denotes the oneness of this divine person wrought into us.

This oneness is called the oneness of the Spirit, and this Spirit is the Spirit in the Body. Thus, Ephesians 4:4 says, “One Body and one Spirit.” This means that the Spirit is not only for the Body but in the Body. In one Spirit we all have been baptized into one Body (1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit is in the Body, not just in individual members. The seven “ones” in Ephesians 4 are not mere doctrine. “One Body and one Spirit” means that this one Spirit is wrought into our being and constituted into our being so that we may be constituted into one Body. The Body is the constitution of the one Spirit. When we say, “One Body and one Spirit,” we mean that the Body is the constitution of the one Spirit, that the one Spirit has been wrought into the being of the one Body. Eventually, because the Body is the constitution of the one Spirit, we can say that the one Body is one with the Spirit.

To build the Body is to have the Spirit wrought into us and constituted into our being to saturate and permeate every fiber of our being to make us one with the Spirit. The church is the very constitution of the divine Spirit. The one Body and the one Spirit are not two separate entities. No, the one Body is one with the Spirit, and the one Spirit is one with the Body. This is the reason that there must not be any division in the church. Is the Spirit two or one? The Spirit certainly is one. Therefore, we can have only one Body.

THE ELIMINATION OF DENOMINATIONAL NAMES

But look at how many so-called “bodies” there are in today’s Christianity. In the city of Anaheim alone there are more than fifty “bodies.” Many Christians refuse to eliminate these divisions or to forsake their denominational names. The name Presbyterian must be eliminated, and the name Baptist needs to be forsaken. Many treasure names like Baptist and Presbyterian. Some Southern Baptists would say, “First the Lord Jesus and second the Baptist Church.” They care not for the Body but for their denomination. They are unwilling to renounce their denominational names. Rather, they would bear these names to be many divided denominations. Nevertheless, there will be no denominational designations, such as Baptist and Presbyterian, in the New Jerusalem. If not today, then at least in eternity, all the denominational names, which denote divisions, will be eliminated.

ONE HOPE OF OUR CALLING

Ephesians 4:4 also says, “Even as also you were called in one hope of your calling.” This one hope of our calling is for the one Body. Only those who truly live in the Body with the one Spirit have this genuine hope. Those in denominations, being on the wrong ground, do not hold this one hope in a genuine way. The Body, the church, has this genuine hope, but the denominations have some other hopes. I am certain that one day the denominational friends will see the names they treasure being cast away. But what is our hope in the one Body and in the one Spirit? The hope of our calling is to be in glory, to be in the divine inheritance in the New Jerusalem. This is the ultimate consummation of the church. Today’s church life is the Body, and tomorrow’s glory with the divine inheritance in the New Jerusalem is the hope of this Body. The coming New Jerusalem, where every denominational name will be renounced, is the hope of the Body. We are hoping for the New Jerusalem. But those who love the denominations may be disappointed to see the termination of their denominations. All their denominational names will be abolished then.

ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM

Ephesians 4:5 says, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” The way to get into the one Lord is by faith. We were born in Adam, not in Christ. The way to get into Christ is to believe into Him. In many instances the Greek words translated “believe in” should be rendered “believe into,” according to the meaning of the Greek preposition. For example, in John 12:44 the Lord Jesus said, “He who believes into Me does not believe into Me, but into Him who sent Me.” Hence, we were in Adam, but we have believed into Christ. Praise the Lord that faith has brought us into Christ! When we have faith, we have the second birth. We had our first birth by being born of our parents, and we have our second birth by the faith through which we believe into the Lord. To have the one faith is to be in the one Lord.

Ephesians 4:5 also speaks of “one baptism.” According to the New Testament, baptism has two aspects. The first aspect is termination, and the second aspect is germination. We have been baptized both into the death of Christ and into Christ Himself (Rom. 6:3). Being baptized into Christ’s death is termination, and being baptized into Christ is germination. By the one baptism our history, our biography, in Adam has been terminated. Baptism

ended our history in Adam and simultaneously ushered us into a new life. Therefore, by the one faith and the one baptism we are brought out of Adam and transferred into Christ. Now I can proclaim, "Hallelujah, I am no longer in Adam—I am wholly in Christ our Lord." Where are you? You must answer, "I am in Christ." Because Christ is not divided, we who are in Christ are one. Because we are one in Him, the church is one. The church is not divided, because the church is in Christ, and Christ cannot be divided.

ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL

Ephesians 4:6 says, "One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." The Father is not only above us and through us but also in us. We cannot systematize this. While the Father is above us, He is through us, and while He is above us and through us, He is in us. Simultaneously, He is above us, through us, and in us. Here we have oneness. I lack the adequate utterance to speak of all these mysteries. The oneness we have in the Father is the church. The church is the oneness in the Father, who is above us, through us, and in us. The reality of the church is the divine person being wrought into us until we are wholly saturated and permeated with His divine essence. Here we have the unique oneness. This oneness is the church. When you miss this oneness, you are no longer the church. The church is not a group of Christians meeting in the air. The church is the oneness of the divine person wrought into the believers.

THE RICHES OF CHRIST AND THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

In Ephesians 3:8 Paul says, "To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ so that the church might come into existence. The church comes out of the riches of Christ. Along with the term *the unsearchable riches of Christ* the book of Ephesians mentions "the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (1:23). Few Christians know the difference between the riches of Christ and the fullness of Christ. The riches of Christ are all the items of what Christ is—life, light, holiness, righteousness, and many other items. These are the riches of Christ that we are constantly enjoying. The fullness of Christ is the church, the Body, the issue of the enjoyment of the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are somewhat objective, but we ourselves are the fullness of Christ. In our natural man we are not the

fullness of Christ, but when we enjoy the riches of the transforming Christ, we become the fullness of Christ.

Consider, for example, a husky American man. This man is the fullness of the riches of America, for he is the issue of the enjoyment of American beef, chickens, eggs, corn, milk, apples, and many other foodstuffs. If he had never enjoyed all these riches, he would not be a strong, husky American. This American is not the riches of America but the fullness of America. Likewise, as the Body of Christ today, the church is the fullness of Christ. This fullness comes out of our enjoyment of the riches of Christ.

After mentioning the riches of Christ in Ephesians 3:8, Paul prayed to the Father, saying, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith" (3:16-17). Christ's making His home in our heart is His spreading into our being through our enjoyment of Him. Eating Jesus is the way to experience this. As an American man consumes so many chickens, eggs, apples, and grapefruit, he becomes the composition of all these riches. However, there is still the need of digestion. These riches must be assimilated into his being. We need to enjoy the riches of Christ and to assimilate all He is into our very being so that we may not only be transformed into the constituent of the church but also be built into one Body. This is what it means to be the church. The church is uniquely one. If we would see what the church is, we need grace. Once we have seen this vision, we could never be cheated by any wind of teaching (4:14).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FLOW AND THE PRACTICALITY OF THE CHURCH

A GENERAL SKETCH OF THE REVELATION OF THE BIBLE

The revelation in the Bible is a complete whole. The Bible begins with God (Gen. 1:1) and ends with a square city (Rev. 21:10, 16). God is the origination, and the square city is the consummation. Hence, considered as a whole, the revelation in the Bible is a revelation of God issuing in a city. If you do not have this bird's-eye view of the Bible, the thousands of verses will seem like a thick forest to you, and you will get lost amidst them. You will not know what you are reading or where you are going. You will have no way of knowing what the Bible talks about. If you get into all the details of things such as frogs, locusts, and horns found in the book of Revelation, you will be lost. Reading the Bible can be compared to reading a map of a city. First, you need to have a bird's-eye view. Then you need to consider the main streets. This will afford you a general sketch of the city, and the sketch will guide you into all the details.

I would now like to present a general sketch of the revelation of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created." At the end of the Bible there is a city lying foursquare. The length of this city is the same as the breadth, for "the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (Rev. 21:16). This city has twelve gates, three on each of the four sides. God on the throne is both on the top of the city and in the center of the city (22:1). We have seen that God is the origin, the beginning, and that the square city is the consummation, the ending. The city of New Jerusalem is a golden mountain, and God's throne rests at the peak of this mountain. Now we must ask how this city is related to the very God who is the center of the city, how this city as the consummation can be the issue of God as the origination. There is a flow within this city spiraling down around the golden mountain. Revelation 22:1 says, "He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The river of water of life proceeds out

of the throne and flows in the midst of the golden street. This flow connects God and the city.

THE ONE, COLLECTING FLOW

This flow did not start in Revelation 22; it began in the second chapter of Genesis. In Genesis 1 we see God as the Originator and the origination. After man was created, he was placed in front of the tree of life, whence flowed a river (2:9-10). Genesis 2:10 says that this river "divided and became four branches," flowing toward the four directions of the earth, indicating that the flow is for the entire earth. The picture in Genesis 2 is a miniature of the portrait in Revelation 22. In Genesis 2 we have God, out from whom flows a river. Man was put by this flowing river. Although in Genesis 2 there was a garden, there was no building. The difference between the garden and the city is that the garden is something of God's creation in its natural state, whereas the city is something built up with certain materials. At the beginning of the Bible, we have a garden with all the natural things created by God. At the end of the Bible, as the result of God's dispensing Himself into man, we have a city, which has replaced the garden. Both at the top and in the center of this city is the throne of God, and out from this throne proceeds the living flow that spirals down the mountain. The more this river flows, the more of the city it reaches. Eventually, this one flow reaches all twelve gates on the four sides of the city.

No matter from what direction we approach the city, whether north, south, east, or west, we may immediately be in the flow. Those who come in from South America come in the south gates, and those who come in from Europe come in the west gates. Years ago, in China, I came in through one of the east gates. After we enter into the city through one of these gates, we find ourselves in the flow. Praise the Lord, we are in the flow! Eventually, this flow gathers us together as one. In this flow we are truly one. Before we came into the flow, we were scattered. The Brazilians were Brazilians, the Danes were Danes, the Americans were Americans, and the Chinese were Chinese. Hallelujah, there is a collecting flow on earth today! Wherever this collecting flow comes, people have the opportunity to be gathered in by it. More than fifty years ago, this flow came to China. It came to me, picked me up, and carried me away. Sometimes I have tried to jump out of the flow, but I have been unable to do it. I am still in the flow. This collecting flow has brought me to this country to be one with all of you.

THE CHURCH BEING IN THE FLOW

The church is in the flow. Those in the local churches have come from all directions to be in the flow. Praise the Lord that we all have been gathered in! The only way to be one is to be in the flow. Although it is wonderful to be in the flow, sometimes we feel like leaping out of the flow, perhaps to get away from certain brothers. Nevertheless, the flow is too deep and too wide, and we simply do not have the strength to jump out of it. If you are able to jump out of the flow, it is a proof that you have never truly been in the flow. I do not believe that anyone who is in the flow could easily get out of it. Certain ones seemed to be in the flow, but later it became apparent that they were never in the flow. This flow is in the church.

BUILDING THE CHURCH BY BAPTIZING PEOPLE INTO THE TRIUNE GOD

In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus said that He would build His church with Peter and others as the stones and with Himself as the rock foundation. In Matthew 18 the Lord indicated that there would be a local church to which we could go to have our problems solved. If we have a problem that we cannot solve ourselves or with the help of a few others, we can go to the church. Undoubtedly, this church is the local church, the church in the locality where we live.

At the end of the Gospel of Matthew the Lord revealed the way to build the church. It is to baptize people into the Triune God. Probably few of us have seen that baptism is the way to build the church. Recently, my wife asked me how I could prove that baptizing people into the Triune God is the way to build up the church. When I pointed her to Matthew 28:19, she said that this verse does not mention the church. Immediately, I referred her to 1 Corinthians 12:13, which says, “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.” To be baptized in one Spirit is to be baptized into one Body. This surely is the way to build the church. My wife was convinced. The way to build the church is to put people into the Triune God, positioning them into the Triune God that they may be able to drink of the Triune God. We all have been baptized in one Spirit into one Body, and now we all are drinking of the one Spirit. First Corinthians 12:13, which covers both aspects, is a strong

proof that baptizing people into the Triune God is the way to build up the church.

THE CHURCH LIFE ACCORDING TO ACTS 2

According to Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost three thousand were saved. If you read the last verses in this chapter, you will see that what is recorded there exactly fulfills the Lord's command in Matthew 28:19 and 20. In these verses the Lord charged the disciples to baptize people into the Triune God and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded. Acts 2:42 says that the three thousand who were saved on the day of Pentecost "continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles." Acts 2 is a record of the practical church life. When on the day of Pentecost the three thousand were baptized into the Triune God, the flow from the throne of God reached them and collected them. From that day onward, they were all in the flow, practicing the church life.

DISTRACTIONS FROM THE FLOW

However, this pleasant scene did not last very long. Although the flow was there, various Judaistic teachings began to creep in. In the following chapters of Acts, we see the entering in of these teachings, all of which were like little serpents. One teaching said that in addition to believing in Christ, the believers had to practice circumcision. This teaching regarding circumcision became a divisive element, a wind of teaching that carried some away (Eph. 4:14). On the day of Pentecost all the three thousand one hundred twenty believers were one in the one flow. In the flow they enjoyed the Lord and found favor with men. They were happy with one another and experienced a marvelous church life. But the subtle enemy used a teaching from the Old Testament to cause damage. Circumcision was scriptural; it was ordained of God and recorded in the black and white letters of the Bible. Suppose you were in the church flow, and a brother said to you, "I do not oppose your being in the church flow, but what about circumcision? According to Genesis 17, God ordained circumcision through our father Abraham. In the books of Moses, God commanded repeatedly that His people had to be circumcised, and He rebuked those who were uncircumcised. Certainly circumcision should not be abandoned. Don't you think that we should keep practicing it?" Undoubtedly, you would be influenced by this subtle teaching. Although this teaching is healthy, scriptural, and sound, it has nothing to do with God's

up-to-date flow. Today is not the day of Abraham or Moses; it is the day of the church, the day of the Spirit. Circumcision may be scriptural, but it is out of date.

Some may say that it is heretical and contrary to the holy Word of God to teach that we should give up circumcision. But this is exactly what the apostle Paul taught regarding circumcision. In the early years the wind of teaching concerning circumcision blew many dear ones away from the enjoyment of the church flow. They were distracted from the flow and formed the division of circumcision. Those who were carried away by this teaching and who formed the circumcision party definitely were Christian brothers, but they were not the church. Rather, they became a division. Although they were members of the church, what they practiced was a division, not the church life. The Bible says that the church includes every real Christian. Those in the circumcision party were Christians, but they had been carried away from the church flow.

Other Judaizers in the early days felt unhappy about the fact that those in the church flow came together on the eighth day and no longer cared for the Sabbath. These Judaizers studied the scriptural teachings about keeping the Sabbath. The more they studied the Scripture, the stronger their convictions became. They knew that Moses had charged God's people to keep the Sabbath and that Isaiah had rebuked them for not keeping it, telling them that they had lost God's blessing because of their violation of the Sabbath. This was another wind of teaching. By it a number were blown away from the church flow. Although this teaching about the Sabbath was scriptural, it resulted in another division.

Still other Judaizers were concerned about dietary regulations. They pointed out that in Leviticus God gave regulations about eating. These Judaizers might have said, "The church people eat things that are unclean according to Leviticus 11. Certainly this is contrary to the Scriptures." This Judaistic teaching became yet another wind of teaching carrying believers out of the flow.

Eventually, the church flow reached Greece, where many who were philosophically minded were gathered in. At first, they were happy about having been brought into the divine flow. Gradually, however, they became rather disappointed because some things about the church were not as

pleasing to them as certain aspects of their Greek philosophy were. As a result, they began to teach their philosophy, known in church history as Gnosticism, to the believers. The Gnostics seemed to say, "The teaching of Christ is good, but because it is lacking in certain respects, there is the need for our philosophy." This philosophy became another wind of teaching carrying the believers away from the proper church flow. Therefore, besides the church flow, there were at least four divisions.

THE DIVIDED CONDITION OF TODAY'S CHRISTIANITY

We may apply this principle to today's Christianity. There is nearly no church flow on earth today because most Christians have been carried away by different teachings. Some, for example, have been blown away by the teaching regarding immersion. Every denomination is founded upon a certain teaching, and that teaching always becomes a strong wind. The Southern Baptist Church has twelve or thirteen million members. What a big wind this is. The charismatic movement is another wind. Some in that movement teach that we must all speak in tongues, without caring whether the tongue is genuine. Some tell you not to speak your native language but to make some peculiar sounds, and they claim that this is tongues! I am familiar with this because I was once a leader in that movement. The situation of today's Christianity is one of division. Now you can see why we say that those in the divisions are not the church. They are in divisions, not in the church flow. Many of us were in that situation, but the mercy of God reached us, and we saw that what we were in was not the church in the flow.

THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT AND THE ONENESS OF THE FAITH

At the beginning of Ephesians 4 Paul speaks of the oneness of the Spirit (v. 3). Every regenerated person has the oneness of the Spirit. However, the winds of teaching spoken of in Ephesians 4:14 have carried most Christians away from the oneness of the Spirit, producing division after division. In Ephesians 4:11-12 Paul says that the apostles, prophets, and other gifted persons should perfect the saints. To perfect the saints means to help them grow until they arrive at the oneness of the faith (v. 13). The faith in Ephesians 4:13 is the object of our belief; it is what we must believe in order to be saved. This faith mainly includes the person of Christ and His redemptive work. Of course, it does not include circumcision, Sabbath

keeping, and dietary regulations. It does not even include such things as head covering, foot-washing, immersion, and speaking in tongues. Those who have been carried away by these things need to turn to the flow, where they can receive the help to grow in life. With some growth they will drop the "toys." Their "toys" are their teachings. By God's mercy, some will be convinced and turn to the church flow.

This is what Ephesians 4:13 means by arriving at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. To arrive at a full-grown man is to be no longer little children. According to Ephesians 1:23, the fullness of Christ is the Body. Ephesians 4:13 does not merely say "the fullness of Christ" but "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," that is, the measure of the stature of the Body.

TWO CAUSES OF DIVISION—BLINDNESS AND IMMATURITY

These examples of the divisions in the history of the early church will help us see the difference between the church and the denominations. Once we have seen the vision of these things, we shall be kept in the flow. Those in the divisions even denominate themselves as certain kinds of divisions. The Lutheran "Church" and the Baptist "Church" are both denominations. They even put the words *Lutheran* and *Baptist* before the word *church*. This is serious.

Christians are divided because they are childish, immature; they are lacking in growth. Moreover, they see nothing of God's eternal purpose and do not know what God's economy is. Although many of them love the Lord, they love Him in an ignorant way. Consider the example of Saul of Tarsus. When he was opposing the Lord Jesus and persecuting the church, he surely must have thought that he was serving God. He was zealous and on fire for God, but his zeal was blind. For this reason, when the Lord knocked him down on the way to Damascus, He caused him to be blind, making him realize that he was blind, in darkness, and needed someone to instruct him so that the scales might fall from his eyes. Brother Ananias came to fulfill this task, saying, "Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming—so that you may receive your sight" (Acts 9:17). After Ananias said this, "immediately there fell from his eyes something like

scales, and he received his sight" (v. 18). Saul made a radical turn. Many Christians today have a heart for the Lord, but they are blind and in darkness; they do not have the heavenly vision. Later, Paul could say, "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (26:19). From the day Paul saw this vision on the way to Damascus, he never disobeyed it. In principle, it is the same with us. We have seen something. If you have not seen this vision, perhaps now is the time for you to see it. It is not adequate simply to be religiously zealous for God. Many of the persecutors of Jesus and of the apostles were zealous for God. They even sentenced the Lord Jesus to death in their zeal for God. But their zeal was utterly blind and in darkness.

Praise the Lord that we have an open heaven with a clear view! We have seen that the proper church is the flow. Thus, we must not care for divisive teachings but turn to the oneness of the faith. In the past many of us were carried away by various divisive teachings, but by God's mercy we have turned from them. We have forsaken the winds of teaching, and now we are for the flow. We are in the flow, and the flow is in us.

THE PRACTICALITY OF THE CHURCH

Up until this point, we have been dealing with the reality of the church. Now we must go on to consider the practicality of the church. I have known some dear ones who have truly seen the reality of the church but were not clear about the practicality of the church. Eventually, due to this, they missed the mark. We need both the reality and the practicality.

In various verses of the Bible, certain aspects of the church are set forth. As we fit these verses together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, we get a full view of the church. The same is true regarding the practicality of the church.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

BEING THE PRACTICALITY OF THE CHURCH

The first verse dealing with the practicality of the church is Matthew 18:17, where the Lord Jesus spoke of telling something "to the church." In this portion of the Word, we see a clear view of the practicality of the church. In Matthew 16 we see the material for the building of the church—stones built upon the rock. In Matthew 28 we see that the way the Lord builds the church is by baptizing people into the Triune God. Now we must discover the place

where the Lord builds the church. It is not logical to say that He builds the church in the heavens. The building of the church must take place on earth. Since the earth is very large, we still need to know in what place on earth the Lord builds the church.

This brings us from Matthew 16 to Matthew 18. In relating the case of how to deal with a brother who has sinned, the Lord Jesus indicated that the church can only be built in the localities where the believers live. The Lord first said to go to the brother alone and then, if necessary, with one or two others. If he will not listen to the two or three, then the brother should take the matter to the church. On the one hand, the matter may be taken to the church (v. 17). On the other hand, two or three must meet together in the Lord's name to pray (vv. 19-20). As they are gathered together in His name, He will be in their midst. This is the proper understanding of Matthew 18:15-20.

However, most Christian teachers misuse this verse, saying, "As long as two or three meet together and have the Lord's presence, they are the church." I have heard this teaching since the time of my youth. For years I was blindly misled by it. One day in my study of the Bible I realized how foolish it is to say that two or three are the church. If two or three are the church, then why must they still bring the problem to the church? That the two or three must go to the church proves that they are not the church. If they were the church, there would be no need for them to "tell it to the church." Rather, the "two or three" here are some saints who are part of the church and who meet together not to have a church meeting but simply to pray for the troublesome brother. This is the correct interpretation of this portion of the Word.

The church mentioned in Matthew 16 becomes practical in Matthew 18, for in Matthew 18 there is a church to which we can go. Here the church is solid, practical, and real in our living. The church is not merely a matter of meeting but of administration with authority. The church has the authority in the flow to deal with the saints. This is what we call the practicality of the church life.

The practicality of the church is the local church. We have seen that in Matthew 28:19 the Lord charged His disciples to disciple the nations and to baptize them into the Triune God. This discipling of the nations began on the day of Pentecost when at least three thousand were discipled and baptized into the church. Immediately, the first local church, the church in Jerusalem,

came into being. Beginning on that day, the church was not only real but also practical. Prior to that time there was no practicality of the church. If we are not in a local church, we are simply in the air and do not have the practicality of the church.

The Bible is wonderfully arranged. The first church established was the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). As the flow proceeded out from Jerusalem, it reached the city of Antioch, where there also was a church (13:1). The church in Antioch was a station of the church flow. From Antioch, God turned His divine flow westward from Asia to Europe. After the flow had turned toward Europe, it reached Greece and Macedonia. Hence, there came to be a church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2). Wherever the church flow went, there was always a local church. Only in the local church can the church be practical. Only in the local church and by the local church can we have the practice of the church. If we do not have the local church, we do not have anything practical as far as the church is concerned. Eventually, the Bible ends with seven local churches (Rev. 1:10-13).

THE LOCAL CHURCHES BEING THE DESTINATION OF GOD'S REVELATION AND MANIFESTATION

As we have pointed out elsewhere, the local churches are the destination of God's revelation and manifestation. Beginning with Genesis 1, God is progressively revealed. Eventually, in the local churches God's progressive revelation reaches its destination. Thus, without the local church there is no destination for God's revelation.

The local churches are also the destination of God's manifestation. In Genesis 1 God was manifested in the man who was made in His image. In the Gospels God was manifested in Jesus Christ. After the Gospels, in the Acts and the Epistles, God was manifested in the church.

Consummately, in the book of Revelation, God is manifested first in the local churches and ultimately in the New Jerusalem. Hence, if you reject the local church, you lose both the practicality of the church and the destination of God's revelation and manifestation.

Because many Christians have missed this destination, they have become very poor. But praise the Lord that we are enjoying the practicality of the

church life and the destination of God's progressive revelation and manifestation. To us, the Bible is transparent. We were not this clear before we came into the church. This is not man's wisdom; it comes from the flow. Oh, the flow is a great matter! Because we are in the flow, we have the practicality of the church life.

THE LOCAL CHURCH—

THE CHURCH MANIFESTED IN A LOCALITY

The church is the church. If we are not the church, then what are we? We do not call ourselves "the local church." The words *local church* are not a title, and we should never consider them to be a title. To consider the words *local church* to be our title makes us a local-church denomination. The words *local church* denote the nature of the church. They are a description of the church. The church today is local because the practicality of the church is local. To say that we are the church in Anaheim is like speaking of the moon in Anaheim. When we are in Hong Kong, we may speak of the moon in Hong Kong, and when we are in London, we may speak of the moon in London. This is both logical and practical. We are not the church in the air; we are the local church. The church manifested in Anaheim is the church at Anaheim, and the church manifested in Oklahoma City is the church in that city. This is not a title of the church. Just as the moon is simply the moon, so the church is simply the church. To say that we are the church is not to give ourselves a title; it is simply to state a fact.

DENOMINATIONS BEING DIVISIONS

The denominations and free groups are divisions. They call themselves by various denominational names. In the past, some Christian leaders came to me with a good intention, saying, "How can you say that you are the church and that we are not the church? Are we not saved?" I replied, "You are definitely saved, but why do you call yourselves Presbyterians? If you are the church, why do you denominate yourselves in this way? In coming to speak to me about this, you certainly want me to admit that you are the church. I admit that you are a part of the church, but you call yourselves Presbyterians. Since you do this, how can I call you the church? If you are Mr. Smith but wear a name tag saying that you are Mr. Jones, am I not correct in calling you Mr. Jones? You may say, 'No, I am Mr. Smith. Don't pay attention to this label.' But if you want me to forget it, you need to take the label off. Why won't you

drop this label?" Then they said, "Brother, this is not a simple matter. We are missionaries from another country, and we have our mission board. It is not easy to abandon that." To this I said, "Then you are what you are. You are Presbyterians." Why do the saints in the denominations need to designate themselves in divisive ways? If they would give up their denominational names, we would immediately be one with them. But as long as they bear denominational titles, such as Presbyterian or Baptist, it is difficult for us to be one with them in a practical way.

CHAPTER TWELVE

RETURNING TO THE PROPER GROUND FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH

In teaching children, we often first show them a picture and then give them a clear word. Without a picture it is difficult to explain things to them, but a clear picture makes things easy to understand. In His wisdom, before presenting the items of the New Testament, which are spiritual and abstract, God gave us a series of pictures in the Old Testament to show the real things that were to come. Sadly, however, throughout the centuries not many Christians, even Christian teachers, have paid adequate attention to all these pictures.

VARIOUS TYPES OF CHRIST

All Bible students agree that the experiences of the children of Israel are types. For example, the passover was a type. In that feast the children of Israel offered a lamb to God. When God saw the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorpost, He passed over them (Exo. 12:13). In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says, "Our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed," indicating that the passover was a prefigure of Christ. After celebrating the first passover, the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea and entered into the wilderness. According to 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, the crossing of the Red Sea was a prefigure of New Testament baptism. During their years in the wilderness, the children of Israel were nourished by manna. All students of the Scriptures agree that manna was a type of Christ as food for God's people (John 6:31-35). Furthermore, God commanded the children of Israel to erect the tabernacle and to offer certain offerings, including the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. All Bible students admit that these offerings were types of various aspects of Christ. Actually, the whole tabernacle, including all its fixtures, was a type of Christ. The altar, the laver, the table of the bread of the Presence, the lampstand, the incense altar, and the Ark were all types of Christ. After the children of Israel entered into the good land, they built the temple, which was not only a type of Christ but also a type of the church.

THE DISPERSION AND RETURN OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BEING A TYPE

The history of the children of Israel includes their dispersion. After the building of the temple, they were divided; and after they were divided, they were dispersed, being held in captivity seventy years. At the end of that period of captivity, God told them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Although nearly all Christian teachers have applied the types of the passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the manna, and the tabernacle and its furniture to the New Testament reality, to my knowledge, hardly any have proceeded to apply the latter part of their history.

THE PLACE GOD HAS CHOSEN

In Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 16 a number of critical points are covered. The first of these points is that God commanded the Israelites to worship Him in the place He had chosen (12:5, 11). When I studied the book of Deuteronomy as a young man, I wondered why God forbade the children of Israel to worship in the place of their choice. They were not permitted to worship God or to enjoy the offerings they presented to God in any place they liked. No, they had to go to one unique place. The choice was God's, not theirs. This requirement did not make sense to me. Surely God is omnipresent. He is everywhere, whether it be north, south, east, or west. Since God is omnipresent, why did He require His people to travel to just one place? As far as I was concerned, God was unreasonable in making this demand. If I had been God, I would not have required this. I would have said, "My people, as the great God, I am omnipresent. I am with you wherever you may be. No matter where you are on the face of the earth, you can worship Me." But God's way is not our way. He has His own wise way. In chapter 12 of Deuteronomy God seemed to be saying, "After you enter into the good land, take heed that you do not present your burnt offerings at any place you see. You have no right to do this. You must go to the place I have chosen. It is not a matter of your sight but of My sight." I wondered why He did not give His people liberty in this matter.

As we all know, God eventually chose Jerusalem. Those who lived near Jerusalem undoubtedly were happy to learn of this, and they might have said, "Hallelujah, we don't need to travel very far." However, those in the north, who had to travel a long way to Jerusalem, might have thought that God was

unfair and demanding too much of them. Nevertheless, God seemed to say, "Children of Israel, you have no right to choose the place. The choice is mine. You must go to the place I have chosen." This matter must have some significance in typology.

The passover lamb typifies Christ, the crossing of the Red Sea typifies baptism, and the manna typifies Christ as our food. But what does God's choice of Jerusalem typify? During the years I was in Christianity, I read many books, but not one book told me the significance of this point in typology. In Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 16, "The place which Jehovah your God will choose" occurs fifteen times. Hence, it must be vitally significant. Yet it has been neglected or overlooked throughout the centuries.

GOD'S COMMAND REGARDING THE PRODUCE OF THE GOOD LAND

God also commanded that the top portion of the produce of the good land be eaten in the place He had chosen. Regarding the enjoyment of the produce of the good land, God seemed to say, "When you enter into the land, you must keep aside the top portion of your crops and your herds. You have no right to eat this portion within your gates. You must bring it to the place I have chosen for My name and for My habitation. Three times a year you must bring the choice portion to this place." As I read this as a young man, I was troubled and thought that it was not at all economical. Everything other than the top portion could be eaten either in the homes of the Israelites or in any other place of their choice, but the top portion could be enjoyed only in the place God had chosen for His name and for His habitation. To me, this requirement was very strange. Probably you have never heard a message telling you the significance of this in typology.

THE CHOICE PORTION OF CHRIST ENJOYED ONLY IN THE CHURCH

The good land is a type of the all-inclusive Christ, and all the rich produce of the land is a type of the riches of Christ. Moreover, as we have seen, all the offerings of the produce of the good land are also types of Christ. Based upon this principle, we may ask the following question: Is there a portion of Christ that we cannot enjoy in our private place but only in the place chosen by God?

If you have seen that there is such a portion, I would ask if in your Christian life you have ever experienced Christ in the place He has chosen. If you have had this experience, I would like to hear you testify about it. You should be able to testify that wherever you are, you enjoy Christ by calling on His name. But you should also be able to testify that the top portion of the riches of Christ can be enjoyed only in the place of His choice. I can testify that I have not been able to enjoy the choicest aspect of the riches of Christ in my private fellowship with Him. In private I enjoy only the common portion of Christ, not the special portion. I can enjoy this choice portion of the riches of Christ only in the church, in the place chosen and appointed by the Lord.

Therefore, we have seen two important points: the chosen place and the special portion of the produce of the riches of the good land. I doubt that in Christianity you ever heard a message giving you the significance of these matters.

GOD'S WISDOM IN MAINTAINING THE ONENESS OF HIS PEOPLE

Based upon the principle that everything related to the history of the children of Israel has a significance in typology, we must now consider the significance of the Lord's choosing the unique place of worship. Although I first thought that the Lord was unreasonable in this matter, later my eyes were opened to see how wise He was. He chose the unique place for His people to worship Him and to offer sacrifices to Him for the purpose of preserving the oneness of His people. Without this regulation, restriction, and limitation, dozens of worship centers would have been established throughout the land of Israel, and consequently the people would have been divided. The subtle people of Dan (who are likened to a serpent in Genesis 49:17) probably would have said, "We are not happy with those in Judah. We prefer to be by ourselves. Let us have a worship center here in Dan." Other tribes might have said, "We are a long way from Jerusalem. Let us set up a center where we are." If all the tribes had done this, they would have been divided and could never have sung Psalm 133, which was always sung in the three yearly feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). As the children of Israel ascended Mount Zion, they sang these words: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is / For brothers to dwell in unity!" (Psa. 133:1). Suppose some Israelites from the different tribes had

problems with one another. Three times a year, they still had to go to the chosen place to worship. One Israelite could not say, "I'm not happy with you. Because you are going to Zion to worship God, I refuse to go there." If he had done that, he would have lost all the blessings. Although these Israelites might not forgive one another prior to the day of the feast, at least at the time of the feast they had to be reconciled to one another in order to sing Psalm 133. Here God's wisdom is displayed.

The unique worship center chosen by God was a powerful uniting factor. Throughout the centuries the children of Israel have not presumed to build a temple for the Lord on any other site. They realize that on the whole earth there is only one site for God's temple—Mount Zion. They may have different concepts, opinions, desires, and ambitions, but the site for the building of God's temple is uniquely one. This unique site kills all their concepts, opinions, desires, and ambitions. God does not give them the opportunity to fulfill their ambitions. Certainly a good number of intelligent Jews throughout the centuries have been very ambitious. However, none of them has dared to construct a temple on any other site. Choosing a specific place as a worship center was God's wisdom to maintain the oneness of His people.

THE SIN OF JEROBOAM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN TYPOLOGY

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom of David was divided. Due to the degradation of Solomon, ten of the twelve tribes were lost to Jeroboam, who established another kingdom (1 Kings 11:29-37). From that time onward, the children of Israel were two separate kingdoms—the kingdom of Judah to the south and the kingdom of Israel to the north. The worship center chosen by God, however, was not divided; it was still one. The kingdom may have been divided, but the center of God's testimony could not be divided. Jeroboam was very concerned about this matter. Probably deep in his heart, he said, "If these ten tribes continue going to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, they may be influenced to kill me and to return to the house of David." Therefore, Jeroboam set up two other worship centers, one in Bethel and one in Dan, for the convenience of his people (12:26-33). Jeroboam seemed to be saying to the people in a subtle way, "It is too far for you to travel to Jerusalem. It is not at all convenient. I have set up two other worship centers for you. Now you

don't need to go to Jerusalem. You may go either to Dan or to Bethel to worship your God." This also is very significant in typology.

The significance of Jeroboam's sin can be seen in practice in today's Christianity. Certain pastors and so-called Christian workers desire to have an empire under their control. In order to have their own kingdom, they, like Jeroboam, establish their own worship centers. Jeroboam did not have the real God. Having made two calves of gold, Jeroboam said, "Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" (v. 28). Perhaps you think that no one would have been so foolish as to follow such a blind guide, but many Christians are this foolish today. Just as Jeroboam had God only in name, some of the things that are called "God" in the worship centers today are simply God in name. Actually, it is not God—it is a calf.

Jeroboam surely had no heart for God; his heart was for himself and for his empire. He not only set up those two idols, but he also had the boldness to build a "house of high places" (v. 31). The Hebrew word for *house* in this verse is the same word for *the house of Jehovah,* referring to the temple (6:37). Thus, Jeroboam built a temple on the high places. Today there are many "high places" in Christianity upon which people build temples in the name of God. Actually, these temples are not built purely for God but are also for the ambition of those who build them. Many so-called Christian workers also treasure the particular names they keep. Because they want to maintain control over their empire, they do not call themselves by a common term but by a particular name. If they took a common name, their empire would be lost. Their names are unscriptural. You cannot find in the Bible the names they use. In principle, some of their deeds are the same as those of Jeroboam.

THE RETURN FROM BABYLON TO JERUSALEM

After the Babylonian captivity God told His people to return from Babylon to Jerusalem. He seemed to be saying, "Get out of your captivity and get into My recovery." Although not all the children of Israel returned, a number did go back to Jerusalem. Ezra was a leader among those who had returned, and the book of Ezra is the book of return from Babylon to Jerusalem, from captivity to the Lord's recovery. Those who returned to Jerusalem rebuilt the temple and later the wall of the city.

Do you know the significance of this point? Surely this matter is important. If we believe that Genesis 1:26 is God's word, then we must also believe that this point is His word. The question is how to apply it. We apply the passover to Christ, the crossing of the Red Sea to baptism, the manna to Christ as our food, the tabernacle to Christ, the altar to the cross of Christ, and the furniture in the tabernacle and the temple to Christ. If we would apply all the points we have considered thus far in this chapter, we must be very sober and not listen to the superficial talk of today's Christianity. Many critics say that it is not fair for us to claim that we are the church and that they are not the church. They say, "Is it fair for you to say that you are the church and that we are not? Are we not Christians? Have we not been saved? Don't we love the Lord? Are we not here serving the Lord? Is not our work for the Lord? Then why do you call yourselves the church and say that we are not the church?" Do not presume that you cannot be misled by such superficial talk. Apparently, such talk is quite logical; actually, it is altogether unscriptural. I admit that there are many genuine Christians who truly love the Lord and have a heart to serve the Lord, but they are still in captivity and have not returned to the proper ground.

TWO CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

As you contact other Christians, you must be calm and sober and ask them two important questions. First, ask them why they have different names that cannot be found in the Bible. Ask them why they have chosen these names for themselves. Tell them that in reading the New Testament you find no trace of these names. Ask them what name they have. Since they consider themselves to be scriptural, why do they not forsake these unscriptural names? Instead of giving you a straight answer, they may twist things in an attempt to excuse themselves.

Second, since they claim to be the church, ask them how many churches there should be. No one would say that there should be more than one church. Rather, everyone would say that there should be just one church. But in saying this, they are caught. Then you should reply, "Since there is only one church, why are you here as a 'church' and someone else is over there as another 'church'? You have so many so-called churches in one city. Since you are all in Anaheim and even in the same neighborhood, why don't you all come together? You claim that you are the church and that there is only one church. Why then will you not be one? We all hold the same Bible, believe in

the same Lord Jesus, and live in the same city. You all claim to be the church, yet you refuse to be one. What is this?" If any would say that it is not convenient to come together, you should reply, "In the early days in Jerusalem there were tens of thousands of believers who met in houses. But Acts 8:1 speaks of the church, not the churches, in Jerusalem. In the Bible there is only the city church, not the street church." If any would attempt to justify the existence of denominations, we should point to the four divisions named in 1 Corinthians 1 and ask whether they are positive or negative, whether they are approved by the apostle Paul or condemned.

Thus, we must ask about two matters: unscriptural names and divisions. These questions need to be answered. We have no particular names, names that are not in the Bible. We are not divisive; we are prepared to be one with all believers in Christ. Thus, we are on the proper ground as the church. If we are not the church, then what are we?

NO RIGHT TO OUR OWN CHOICE

If you bring all these matters to the Lord in prayer, you will clearly see that God has chosen only one ground, the ground of oneness. The principle is found in Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 16, where God charged His people again and again to care for the unique place chosen by Him. As far as the public worship of God's people is concerned, none of us has the right to select the place of our choice. Deuteronomy 12:8 says, "You shall not do according to all that we do here today, each man doing all that is right in his own eyes." In these chapters Moses charged the people to do what was right in the eyes of God, not to go any longer to the place of their choice and not to offer their burnt offerings in the place of their preference. Rather, they had to take heed to the place that God should choose. They had to learn how to worship God. They had no right to choose a place. The unique place is the ground chosen by God. This was true in typology, and it also must be true in reality.

ENJOYING GOD'S PRESENCE AND GOD'S GLORY IN HIS TEMPLE

We have seen that the people of God were degraded, and that furthermore they were scattered due to their degradation. During the captivity, they did not have the ground for the building of God's temple. After the years of their captivity were ended, God called them to go back to Jerusalem, back to the

old ground, back to the original site, the unique place God had chosen for the rebuilding of His temple. A number did return, and they rebuilt the temple. Due to this, God's glory returned. Many of the children of Israel remained in the place of their captivity, unwilling to pay the price to return to Jerusalem. They had become settled in Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt. Those who went back could claim that they had God's temple. In a very positive sense, they themselves were the temple of God.

Let us suppose that those who remained in Babylon, Egypt, and Assyria said, "You say that you are the temple of God and that we are not. But are we not the people of God?" Those who had returned to Jerusalem would reply, "Yes, you are the people of God just as much as we are, but there is a difference between us. We have returned to the land of our forefathers, but you still remain in captivity in the Gentile world. We have God's presence in His temple, but you do not have it." Yes, we admit that all real Christians throughout the world are truly the people of God. But so many of them are still in captivity and do not have the church life. Hence, they are not the temple with God's presence and God's glory. If we see this matter clearly, then we shall know where we are and what the Lord's recovery is today. Hallelujah, we are in the Lord's recovery! The Lord's recovery is to bring us back to the original ground so that His temple may be built and we may have His presence in His glory for our enjoyment. Today we are enjoying this glory. We have the boldness to say that the church is here. You cannot find the church life in denominations and free groups because the Christians there have lost the ground and are still in captivity.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE UNIQUE PLACE FOR GOD'S NAME AND FOR GOD'S HABITATION

As we pointed out in the last chapter, the Bible gives us a wonderful picture in the Old Testament. Before we go on to consider the unique place for God's name and for His habitation, we need to review this picture. The whole revelation of the Bible indicates that God has an eternal purpose, an eternal intention. This purpose is to gain a people to be His expression. In the Old Testament God called the children of Israel, and they became His people to express Him on earth. The children of Israel, however, were a type; they were not the reality. The reality came in the New Testament. In the New Testament we see a people who are the church, the real expression of God. Although we have the reality in the New Testament, we do not have a full picture there. If we had only the New Testament reality, it would be difficult to understand every aspect of this reality. Every reality is present, in type, in the Old Testament. Therefore, we need to consider further the picture in the Old Testament.

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

God chose the children of Israel. According to the picture in the Old Testament, this people fell into Egypt. At the end of the book of Genesis, we are told that Joseph, the representative of the chosen people of God, was put in a coffin in Egypt (50:26). Thus, the first book of the Bible ends with God's chosen people being put into a coffin in Egypt. If the Bible had only this one book, we would have to weep for this pitiful situation. But praise the Lord that Exodus follows Genesis. The word *exodus* means "a going out." The children of Israel went out of their coffin and out of Egypt. Before we made our exodus, we were in a coffin in "Egypt," in the world. That was my condition fifty years ago. Hallelujah, we have made our exodus out of our coffin in Egypt!

The exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt included two things: the passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. In the passover there were two main items—the blood of the lamb and the meat of the lamb. The blood covered the children of Israel so that God's righteous judgment might pass over them. The

word *passover* indicates that God passed over His people who were under the redeeming blood of the passover lamb (Exo. 12:13). Hallelujah for the blood! Although God's people were covered by the blood, they still had to eat the meat of the lamb in order to be strengthened to escape from Egypt. They had to be strengthened to walk out of the coffin and ultimately out of Egypt. On God's side, the children of Israel had been redeemed and strengthened. But, on Satan's side, the side of the evil power signified by Pharaoh and the Egyptian forces, the children of Israel were not allowed to flee. Hence, there was the need for the crossing of the Red Sea.

In contrast to the river of water of life, the water of the Red Sea does not appear to be very pleasant or positive. No one would care to drink water from the Red Sea. In God's economy there are two kinds of water: the water of the Red Sea and the water of life in the flowing river proceeding from the throne (Rev. 22:1). Although the water of the Red Sea does not quench our thirst, it surely buries the Egyptian army, the evil forces of Satan. By the crossing of the Red Sea, God's chosen people were delivered from Pharaoh's tyranny. The blood of the passover lamb did not deliver them from this; the blood that covered them delivered them from God's judgment. It was the water of the Red Sea that delivered God's chosen people from Pharaoh's tyranny. Hallelujah for the passover and for the exodus! Now, having made our exodus out of Egypt, we are on the seashore dancing and praising (Exo. 15:20-21). Praise the Lord, we are real Hebrews, true river crossers. We all have passed through the waters of the Red Sea. Our baptism was our crossing of the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1-2).

MEMORIES OF EGYPT

After the children of Israel had passed through the Red Sea, they found themselves in the wilderness. The wilderness is not as pleasant as Egypt. Like the children of Israel, many of us still remembered the taste of "garlic," "onions," and "leeks" when we were in the wilderness after we had made our exodus out of Egypt (Num. 11:5). We enjoyed recalling our experiences in the world. Many times you may have remembered the taste of going to the movies. This is a taste of "garlic." Perhaps you still have memories of the times you went dancing. This is an "onion." Before they were saved, some might have gone to the casinos in Las Vegas. After they were saved, however, in times of solitude they might have remembered those experiences. These are "leeks." If we are honest, we must admit that we all have had such memories.

THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

Although the wilderness does not seem to be a pleasant place, in it there is a certain enjoyment of Christ. In Egypt at the time of the passover, the children of Israel enjoyed the lamb as a type of Christ. In the wilderness they enjoyed manna day by day. They enjoyed something not from the earth but from heaven. When the children of Israel tasted manna the first time, everyone must have been excited. They might have said, "What a wonderful, heavenly food! It is nourishing, rich, and delicious." But after a while, they became weary of manna. Morning, noon, and night they had nothing except manna to eat. Hence, they complained to Moses, saying, "We remember the fish which we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic; but now our appetite has gone; there is nothing at all but this manna to look at" (vv. 5-6). They seemed to be telling Moses, "When we were in Egypt, we had a variety of good things to eat. Eating manna here in the wilderness is a punishment. Why did you bring us here?" This is not only the history of the children of Israel; it is also our biography. Often in the meetings we praise the Lord, saying, "Hallelujah for the enjoyment of Christ!" But has there not been at least one time when you were tired of enjoying Christ? I doubt that there is anyone who has never been weary of the enjoyment of Christ.

Although the children of Israel did not like to be in the wilderness, there was nothing they could do about it. It was too late to repent and return to Egypt. They had no choice except to go forward. If they wanted something richer than what they had in the wilderness, they had to go forward, not backward. They had to continue through the wilderness and cross another river, the Jordan.

ENJOYING THE RICHES OF THE GOOD LAND

After the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, they entered into the good land, and the manna ceased. Joshua 5:12 says, "The manna ceased on that day, when they ate of the produce of the land; and there was no longer manna for the children of Israel, but they ate of the yield of the land of Canaan that year." Even if they had wanted to enjoy manna again, there was no more manna. Perhaps after dwelling in the good land for a few years, many of the children of Israel remembered the pleasant taste of manna. Nevertheless, instead of manna there were the riches of the good land. Their

first enjoyment of the riches of the good land was not of fresh produce but of old produce. From that time onward, however, they enjoyed the new, fresh produce of the good land every year.

THE TITHES, THE FIRSTFRUIT, AND THE PLACE GOD HAS CHOSEN

God charged the children of Israel to keep the tithe, the first tenth, of all the produce of the good land, including the firstfruit and the firstborn, and to offer it to Him in the place of His choice for His worship. Deuteronomy 14:22 and 23 say, "You must give a tenth of all the produce of your seed, which the field brings forth, year by year. And you shall eat before Jehovah your God, in the place where He will choose to cause His name to dwell, the tithe of your grain, of your new wine, and of your fresh oil and the firstborn of your herd and flock." The firstborn were offered to the Lord. The Israelites were not allowed to use them in their work; instead, they were required to keep them aside to offer to the Lord in the three yearly feasts. Deuteronomy 15:19 and 20 say, "All firstborn males that are brought forth in your herd and in your flock you shall sanctify to Jehovah your God; you shall not do work with your firstborn ox, nor shall you shear your firstborn sheep. You and your household shall eat it before Jehovah your God year by year in the place which Jehovah will choose." If the children of Israel wanted to enjoy their cattle, they had to begin with the second one. Furthermore, they could not enjoy the firstborn of their flocks and herds in the place of their choice. They had to bring them to the place God had chosen for His name and for His habitation (12:5, 17-18). The same was true for the firstfruit of all the crops—the wheat, the corn, the wine, and the oil. The firstfruit had to be set aside to be offered to God in the place He had chosen. If we read the Old Testament carefully, we shall see that God charged the children of Israel to set aside three kinds of tenths for God's purpose. None of these portions could be enjoyed in the place of their preference. Although they had full freedom to enjoy the remainder at any time, at any place, and with anyone, the top portions had to be offered to God in the place of His choosing.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

Now we must consider the meaning of this requirement. In the previous chapter we pointed out that the passover lamb was a type of Christ and that manna was a type of Christ as our food. In Egypt the children of Israel

enjoyed Christ as signified by the passover lamb. This means that in "Egypt" we enjoy Christ as our Passover lamb. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" In the "wilderness" we enjoy Him as our manna. Furthermore, we may enjoy Christ as our good land, living in Him and walking in Him. Christ is our land, our realm, our sphere, in which we may live and walk day by day. Christ is the sphere, the realm, of our living. We may live in Him and by Him. Christ is also our food, as typified by the produce of the good land. Christ as our food is not of one category but of many categories, like the numerous courses of a bountiful feast. How bountiful are the riches of Christ in the good land! Christ is our good land today. All the riches of the good land are types of the riches of Christ.

Perhaps you have never heard that to enjoy Christ there is the need to set aside the top portion of Christ. We do not have the right to enjoy this portion of Christ at the time and place of our choosing. Only the common portion of Christ, not the firstfruit, can be enjoyed at any time and in any place we desire (Deut. 12:15). This is not a doctrinal matter; it is true to our experience.

There are two aspects of the enjoyment of Christ. The one is the common aspect. Wherever we are, no matter the time or the place, we may enjoy Christ. This is the common enjoyment of Christ. The other aspect of the enjoyment of Christ is the enjoyment of the top portion, the choice portion, the firstfruit or firstborn, of Christ. We can only have this aspect of the enjoyment of Christ in the proper church life. Have you experienced both aspects? Although Christ always remains the same, He nevertheless has a choice portion and a common portion. You may enjoy the common portion anywhere and at any time. You may enjoy Him in this way while you are driving your car. However, you will never enjoy the top portion of Christ alone. Even if you were to fast, pray, and call on Him night and day for three days alone in your home, you would still not be able to enjoy the choice portion of Christ. If you want to enjoy this portion, you must come to the church, the place God has chosen.

THE TWO OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF GOD'S CHOSEN PLACE

In the Old Testament the place chosen by God was Jerusalem, but we need to know the striking features of God's chosen place. Deuteronomy 12:5 says, "To the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go." In this

verse we see the two outstanding features of God's chosen place—His name and His habitation. Because the Lord's name was there, that place was unique. His name was not there automatically; it had to be put there. As this verse indicates, God's habitation was also there.

Deuteronomy 12:11 says, "Then to the place where the Jehovah your God will choose to cause His name to dwell, there..." In verse 5 God said that He would put His name there, but in verse 11 He said that He would cause His name to dwell there. Verse 11 proves that God's name is living. The name is not merely a name but a living person who can live and dwell in a certain place. These two matters, the name and the habitation, are the outstanding marks of the unique place chosen by God for our enjoyment of the top portion of Christ.

ENJOYING THE TOP PORTION OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH LIFE

This matter is so significant that it merits repetition. The children of Israel could enjoy the rich produce of the good land in two ways. The common way was to enjoy the common portion of the rich produce of the good land at any time, in any place, and with anybody. The special way was to enjoy the top portion, the firstfruit and the firstborn, in the unique place chosen by God. The distinguishing features of this place were the name of God and the habitation of God. All this is a clear picture of our enjoyment of Christ. Our enjoyment of Christ is also of two aspects—the common aspect of enjoying Christ at any time and at any place, and the specific aspect of enjoying Christ in the place God has chosen. This unique place has the name of God and the habitation of God.

If we consider our experience, we shall see that we have two kinds of enjoyment of Christ's riches. Using the terms of this chapter, we may say that we have the common enjoyment of Christ and the special enjoyment of Christ. We have experienced the special enjoyment of Christ in the proper church life. Whenever we come to a meeting of the church, the enjoyment of Christ is high and rich. We all need to enjoy Christ both in our private life and in the church life. Although the enjoyment of Christ in the church life is wonderful, it cannot replace our enjoyment of Him in our private life. Likewise, the enjoyment in our private life cannot replace the enjoyment in our public life, in our church life. Many Christians today do not see these two aspects of the

enjoyment of Christ. Some may even think that it is a waste of time to attend the church meetings. When they are in the meetings, they feel restricted. Some have said, "Instead of attending the meetings of the church, I like to stay home and enjoy my freedom. Whenever I attend the meeting, I feel imprisoned. I cannot keep from looking at my watch." But even those who consider the church meetings a form of imprisonment must confess that many times they have had some enjoyment of Christ in the meetings. Although their enjoyment of Christ in the meetings might not have been very rich, at least they had an enjoyment of Him that they could not have had in their private lives or even with their wives and a few close friends. Only in the meetings of the church can we enjoy the top portion of Christ.

In the early days I spent more time to enjoy Christ in my private life and less time to enjoy Him in the church life. Gradually, however, I have come to enjoy Him more in the church life than in my private life. There is no comparison between the enjoyment in the church life and the enjoyment in my private life. This does not mean that I no longer enjoy Christ in my personal life, but the taste is not as sweet as the taste in the church life. I am always eager to attend a meeting to enjoy the top portion of Christ. How about you? Often in my private life I am tired and need to rest. When I work, I work with every fiber of my being. This tires me out. Thus, my private life is a time for me to rest my whole being—my spirit, my heart, my conscience, my soul, my mind, my emotion, my will, and every part of my physical body. After a time of rest, I am ready once again to attend the meeting for the choice enjoyment of Christ. This is the reason I am so rich in the enjoyment of Christ. Many are rather poor in the enjoyment of Christ because they spend too much time trying to enjoy Him privately and little time to enjoy Him corporately. I encourage you all to spend more time in the church life.

THE CHURCH BEING GOD'S CHOSEN PLACE

Although there are thousands of places on earth, there is just one place—the church—where God's name and God's habitation are. Some of you were formerly in the Catholic Church. Did you enjoy the top portion of Christ while you were there? You probably did not even enjoy the bottom portion. One day, by the mercy of God, you were born again in Babylon. Recently, someone said to me, "After coming into the church life, I have heard a lot about being in captivity. I don't understand this. I was never captured and taken into captivity." I replied, "You didn't need to be captured because you

were born in captivity. You were born in Babylon, in captured Christianity." Those who were reborn while they were in Catholicism were reborn in captivity. After they were saved, some began to realize that not even the smallest portion of the enjoyment of Christ is available in the Catholic Church. Hence, they left Catholicism and became a church traveler, journeying from one place to another. Although in some places they may have heard a little regarding the enjoyment of Christ, what they heard was not very satisfying. Eventually, they came to the unique place, the church. After taking a sample of the enjoyment in the church, they may have said, "What is this? The way these people carry on the meeting surely offends my religious concepts, but I can't deny that there is something sweet and satisfying here." Then they may have gone back to some other places, but by comparison they came to know which place had the top enjoyment of Christ. The enjoyment they tasted in the unique place spoiled them for any other place. Thus, they had to return to God's chosen place. This proves the reality of the special enjoyment of Christ.

When, by the Lord's grace, we say that we are the church, some criticize us and condemn us as heretical. They ask, "Why do you say that you are the church and that others are not?" I would dismiss their accusation of heresy and ask them if they have the top enjoyment of Christ in their experience. If they are honest, they would have to admit that they do not have this enjoyment. Whenever they criticize the church, they lose whatever enjoyment of Christ they have. Even the common enjoyment of Christ will be lost. As some tried to argue with me, many times I simply smiled and said, "Friend, you are speaking one thing with your mouth, but your conscience tells you something else. While you are arguing with me, your conscience is saying that you have lost everything. The more you try to fight with me, the more you will lose. Please take care of your conscience, of your real feelings and inner sense, and of your enjoyment of Christ." To tell you the truth, the more I fight for the Lord's recovery, the greater is my enjoyment of the top portion of Christ. Whenever I minister in the meetings, my enjoyment of Christ is supreme. This is not a matter of doctrine; it is a matter of fact. If this were not the fact, I would not dare to say these things. It is a fact that there are different aspects to the enjoyment of Christ.

THE NAME, THE PERSON, AND THE SPIRIT

Now we must concentrate on the two crucial matters of the name and the habitation. These are deep matters. In Deuteronomy 12:5 the Lord said that

He would choose a place out of the tribes of the children of Israel to put His name there. Surely there was not a sign in front of the temple, "Jehovah Elohim." But have you ever considered how God actually put His name there? It certainly was not His way to put up a sign with His name on it. In order to understand how God put His name in His chosen place, we need to know what the name signifies.

John 14:26 connects the name to the Spirit: "The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name." This verse says that the Father will send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Son. Here we see that the Spirit is related to the name, and the name to the Spirit. By our experience we have come to realize that the name is the title and that the Spirit is the person. The Spirit is sent in the name of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, whoever calls, "O Lord Jesus," immediately receives the Spirit. When we call on the name of the Lord, we get the person, the Spirit. No one can say, "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). This means that whenever we say, "Lord Jesus," we immediately are in the Spirit. This is also proved by Joel 2:32 and Acts 2:21. Acts 2:17 says, "It shall be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh," and Acts 2:21 says, "It shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The Spirit has already been poured out, and the way to gain the Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord. When we call, "Jesus," we receive the Spirit. When I call a certain brother by name, that brother comes in person. Likewise, when we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, the Spirit comes. The name is the title, and the Spirit is the person. Hence, the name is the title of the person, and the person is the Spirit.

Because the name in Deuteronomy 12:5 is not merely a title but a person and because the person is the Spirit, for God to put His name there means that His Spirit was there. Whenever God's people call on the name of the Lord, the Spirit is there. This is our experience today. There must be a reason that some Christians oppose our calling on the name of the Lord. The reason is that the subtle enemy knows that when we call, "O Lord Jesus," the Spirit comes. Do not argue with me about this—try it. Also, I would ask you to try to receive the Spirit by sitting silently for fifteen minutes. Do this and see how much of the Spirit you receive. I can testify that the quickest and most prevailing way to gain the Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. When we call on His name, the person, the Spirit, comes.

GOD'S HABITATION BEING OUR SPIRIT

According to Ephesians 2:22, the habitation of God is our human spirit. Remember that what is found in the Old Testament is a type and that what is found in the New Testament is the reality. The reality of the name is the Spirit, and the reality of the habitation is our human spirit. This is proved by the Lord's word to the Samaritan woman in John 4. When she asked Him about the worship of God, saying, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, yet you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men must worship" (v. 20), He said, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness" (vv. 21, 23). Today's Jerusalem is our spirit. The Father is seeking those who will worship Him in their human spirit.

TRUE ONENESS—

THE ONENESS IN THE TWO SPIRITS

Much has been said about unity. True unity is the oneness in the two spirits—the Holy Spirit, who is the person of the divine name, and our spirit, which is the habitation of God. In order for believers to be one, they must be in these two spirits. The real oneness of the believers in the Body is this mingled spirit. This is today's Jerusalem, the place God has chosen. It is possible to be on the local ground and yet not be truly one. We are on the local ground, in the local churches, not in the denominations and free groups. But if we are not in the mingled spirit, we are still lacking genuine oneness. To repeat, real oneness is in the mingling of the Holy Spirit with our human spirit. Because the Holy Spirit indwells our human spirit, these two spirits have been mingled together as one spirit. "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). This one spirit is today's unique place chosen by God.

I have passed through many forms of Christianity. I was born into formal, organized Christianity; later, I was saved and brought into fundamental Christianity. Then I was with the Brethren assembly and, after that, in the Pentecostal movement. I also was involved with the matter of the inner life. Praise the Lord that eventually I came to the church. When those in fundamental Christianity come together, they come together with forms,

rituals, doctrines, and many other things. During the years I was in fundamental Christianity, I never realized that I needed to come together with others in the spirit. Many of you spent years in Christianity. Did you ever realize that you had to be in your human spirit? Your pastor was in his doctrine, others were in their ritual, and you, with your two critical, observing eyes, were in your mind. In situation after situation some were unhappy with their pastor and tried to oust him. But the pastor played politics like an able politician and was able to retain his position. Since those who wanted to depose him were unsuccessful, they were forced to leave that congregation. This all is a sharp contrast to genuine oneness.

True oneness is not in a practice, a doctrine, a ritual, or a form. True oneness is in our spirit, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is the person of the divine name. Only in this place can we have the proper church life. The church has been divided because so many Christians have not been in the spirit. If in the church life we are not able by His mercy and grace to be kept in our spirit, we shall be divisive. Anyone who is not in the spirit will eventually be a dividing factor. During the past fourteen years in the United States, there have been few of these divisive ones among us. But I must admit that there has been a small number who refused to turn to the spirit. We knew them well, and we knew their way of living. It is a fact that they would never turn to the spirit but always remained in the mind. Even in prayer they continued to exercise their mind, not their spirit. It was almost as if they did not have a spirit but had only an analytical mind. Hence, I became clear that sooner or later these brothers would be divisive. Eventually, the situation turned out to be just like this. Although we tried our best to avoid it, this was the eventual result because they never turned to the spirit. Today's Christianity has been divided because of one thing—people are not in the spirit.

The human spirit today is Jerusalem, God's chosen place. The material Jerusalem in the Old Testament was a type of our human spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit and mingled with the Holy Spirit. This is the place where God puts His name and where His being dwells. It is also the place where He builds His habitation.

THE AGE OF REALITY

When the Samaritan woman asked about the place of worship, the Lord clearly indicated that the hour has come to worship the Father in spirit. That the hour has come means that the age has changed. The former age was the age of typology; now is the age of reality. When Christ came, the age was changed from type to reality. In the age of reality it is no longer a matter of a material place but of the human spirit in which all true worshippers of God may contact Him. Jerusalem today is not a place—it is our regenerated spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit and mingled together with the Holy Spirit as one spirit. This is the place that God desires. Nothing is more desirable to our God than our mingled spirit. Here we have oneness, the church life, and here we enjoy the top portion of Christ.

THE CORPORATE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

Since today's Jerusalem is not a material site but our human spirit mingled with the Holy Spirit, some may wonder why there is still a difference between our enjoyment of Christ in our private life and our enjoyment of Him in the church life. In our private life we enjoy Christ by our spirit, and in the church life we also enjoy Him by our spirit. The difference is that in our private life we enjoy Christ by our own spirit, but in the church life we enjoy Him by our spirit mingled with the Holy Spirit in a corporate way. Your individual spirit can only bear a limited amount of the enjoyment of Christ. To use an example from electricity, our spirit is like a transformer that can only bear a limited amperage. Your spirit cannot bear the unlimited amperage of the divine electrical current. In order to bear a higher amperage, that is, a greater enjoyment of Christ, you need the church. But if the church is very small, composed only of thirty-five people, the capacity of the church to bear the divine current will still be quite limited. Certainly the enjoyment of Christ is higher and richer in a church of five hundred than in a church of thirty-five. If all these five hundred saints are in the spirit, what great amperage of divine electricity there will be! Praise the Lord for the riches of Christ in the church life.

If you have seen the vision of the church, you will never be turned aside or cheated. This is not a matter of doctrine; it is absolutely a matter of the spirit and of enjoyment.

Where the church is, what the church is, and who the church is all depend upon the spirit and the real experience and enjoyment of Christ. We did not

come to the church because we were drawn by doctrine, dead letters, or dogma, and we are not held in the church by such things. We are kept in the church by the spirit and by the enjoyment of our Christ in the mingled spirit.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SIX TESTS OF A GENUINE LOCAL CHURCH

In the past several chapters we have covered the reality and practicality of the church. We have seen that the church is one in substance, one in existence, and one in manifestation. The church is one substantially both universally and locally. Apart from God, nothing in the universe is more one than the church. The church is an entity of oneness.

THE UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL ONENESS OF THE CHURCH

The church is one universally and locally. There is just one church. Universally, the church is one in existence, and locally the church is one in manifestation. The church in the universe is one, and the church manifested in a locality is also one. The Lord's word, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18), is related to the universal church. Following this, in Matthew 18 the Lord spoke about the manifestation of the church in a locality. If two or three cannot solve a problem themselves, they should tell it to the church. This certainly is not the universal church but the church in the locality where those believers live. In the four Gospels the Lord mentioned the church twice, once for the universal aspect and once for the local aspect.

THE CLEAR PICTURE IN THE BIBLE

In the book of Acts the church is not mentioned in a universal way but in a local way. Acts 8:1 speaks of the church in Jerusalem, not the church in the universe. Acts 13:1 speaks of the church in another locality, the church in Antioch. We know from Revelation 1:11 that there were seven churches in seven cities in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Churches were also raised up in Europe. For example, there was a church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2). It is clearly portrayed in the Bible that the church is universally one in its existence and locally one in its manifestation. Wherever the church is, it is always one. Although there is just one universal church, in the many cities there are the many local churches, with one church in each city.

A PICTURE OF DIVISIONS

Although the picture regarding the church in the Bible is clear, the history and present situation of Christianity give us another picture—a picture of divisions. Instead of one church in a locality, there are numerous divisions. But according to the Bible it is wrong to say that there are many "churches" in a locality. This is against God's economy. What are called the many "churches" in a locality are actually divisions. Using other terms, we may say that they are denominations, sects, groups, or organizations. This is what we see everywhere in Christianity today.

As we stand here as the church in Anaheim, some say that we are merely another division. They claim that our coming here simply added another to the list of divisions. Someone might say to you, "I am a pastor of a certain group in this city. I have heard that you people say that you are the church and that we are not the church but rather are Babylon or organized Christianity. I don't agree with this. Am I not a real Christian? I was reborn before you were born. Since we all are Christian brothers, why do you say that you are the church and that we are not the church? It seems to me that you are simply another Christian group. You have added yourselves to the number of churches already in this city. Why did you come here? Why don't you go to a place where there is no church at all and be the unique group there? Why do you come here to trouble us?" In order to answer questions like these, we must know what constitutes a sect, a division, or a denomination.

NO PARTICULAR NAME

A division is called a denomination because it has been denominated by a particular name. Hence, the first factor of a denomination is a special name. Neither the sun nor the moon has a particular name. The sun is the sun, and the moon is the moon. I have never heard of anyone giving a name to the sun or the moon. Neither the sun nor the moon needs a name. Wherever I am, in the United States, Europe, or the Far East, the moon is the moon, and the sun is the sun. At most I can speak of the moon in Sydney, the moon in Paris, or the moon in Anaheim. To give a special name to a certain group of Christians is to constitute them a sect, a denomination. It makes them a denominated sect, a divisive sect with a particular name.

Any Christian group that has a particular name is a division, a sect. We should have no name other than the name of the Lord Jesus. We have believed in His name, and we have been baptized into His name, and now we are meeting in His name. Never think that the matter of the name is insignificant. I must use my name in all that I do. To use another name is deceitful. Never think that it makes no difference what you call yourself, whether you say that you are Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith. It is terrible to do this. My name is Witness Lee. You cannot call me Mr. Jones. The name means everything. If an inheritance were granted to me in my name, Witness Lee, but I call myself Mr. Jones, I would lose the right to claim and enjoy this inheritance.

Never neglect this matter of the name. To take any name other than the name of the Lord Jesus is a form of spiritual fornication. How wrong it would be for my wife, Mrs. Witness Lee, to go by the name of another man! For a married woman to take another name is fornication. Never think that this matter is insignificant. The Lord Jesus praised the church in Philadelphia because they did not deny His name (Rev. 3:8). All the denominations have denied the Lord's name, because in addition to His name, they have taken names such as Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. In taking these other names, the denominations have committed spiritual fornication. If we honor the Lord and sincerely mean business with Him, we would certainly forsake every name other than that of the Lord Jesus. We have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. In addressing the contentious ones in the church at Corinth, Paul said, "Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:12-13). Here Paul seemed to be saying, "Why do you say that you are of Paul? You must never say this. You were not baptized into my name—you were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must not be under any other name."

NO PARTICULAR FELLOWSHIP

We have been baptized into the unique name, the name above every name, and we have also been called into the fellowship of the Son of God (v. 9). This fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ has become the fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42). First John 1:3 says, "That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our

fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The *we* and the *us* mentioned in this verse refer to the apostles. The apostle John seemed to be saying, "We, the apostles, have reported to you the divine life. In this life you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and the Son." This fellowship is also called communion or participation. The meaning is the same. Whatever term we use, there is something called fellowship, the common participation in Christ, which is common to all believers in Him. Whoever has believed into Him is now in the fellowship of our wonderful Lord. This fellowship is common to you, to me, and to every regenerated one. However, many Christians do not have this unique fellowship. Rather, they have a different so-called fellowship, a special fellowship. Every special fellowship constitutes a division. Some Christians may not be denominated; that is, they may not have a name for their group, but they do have a particular fellowship. Their fellowship is not as large as the common fellowship of the Son of God. Instead, it is small and particular.

Let me give some illustrations from my own experience. When I was young, my mother was a Southern Baptist. The Southern Baptist denomination that she attended had communion only a few times a year. Whenever they had communion, they made a strong, serious, and solemn announcement to the effect that anyone who did not belong to the Southern Baptist denomination could not participate in their communion service. When some who were not members wanted to take communion, the pastor told them that they had to wait, pass an examination, and be immersed by them. One man said that he had already been immersed, but the pastor said, "We don't care how many times you have been immersed. If you want to take the holy communion with us, then you must be baptized by us. If you are unwilling to do this, then you are not welcome to share holy communion with us." This illustrates the fact that those Baptists had a particular fellowship. Although the Southern Baptists in the United States make up nearly one fourth of the total number of regenerated ones, they still do not have the common fellowship. Their fellowship is particular, and it constitutes them a division.

NO PARTICULAR TEACHING

Some groups do not have a name, but they have a particular teaching that produces a particular fellowship. For example, some groups believe that all the saints will be raptured before the great tribulation. Anyone who does not hold this concept must repent of his doctrine before he can fellowship with

this group. By this we see that the group insisting on the belief in the pretribulation rapture does not have just the common faith (Titus 1:4). In addition to the common faith, they hold to the belief in the pretribulation rapture. This particular teaching produces a particular fellowship, and this particular fellowship constitutes a division.

Other Christian groups insist upon foot-washing and head covering. When some Christians come to the Lord's table, they always wash one another's feet. If you are not willing to participate in this foot-washing, you have no right to join them in their holy communion. Hence, they also are a division. Some Brethren groups insist that all women wear a head covering. For a woman to have her head uncovered indicates that she does not agree with their belief. These Brethren have the common faith plus the belief in head covering. This results in a particular fellowship, a factor that makes them a division. Therefore, a name, a particular fellowship, and a particular teaching are causes of division.

Nearly every Christian group has a particular teaching or doctrine. The Baptists have a strong teaching on immersion; the Seventh-day Adventists, on the Sabbath; and the charismatic groups emphasize the manifestation of gifts, especially speaking in tongues. All these special teachings constitute these groups sects, divisions.

Thus far, we have seen three causes of division—a particular name, a particular fellowship, and a particular teaching. Just one of these items is sufficient to constitute a group a division. As long as you have either a particular name, a particular fellowship, or a particular teaching, you are a division.

A DESCRIPTION, NOT A NAME

We who are standing here as the church do not have a particular name. Do not think that the term *local church* is our name. This is not our name. It is right to say that we are the local church, but it is wrong to say that the *local church* is our name. This term describes the nature of the church. Do not give people the impression that our name is the local church. The local church in a city should consist of all the believers in that city. But we say with sadness that many dear saints are far away from their home in the church. We do not have any name. For the sake of communication and for registration with the

government, we may say that we are the church in Anaheim. But not even this should be construed as a name. Do your best to avoid using terms that may be misunderstood as being our name. We do not need a name, and we do not want to have one.

NO PARTICULAR TEACHING IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

In the Lord's recovery we do not have any particular teaching. Some may say, "Brother Lee, have you not emphasized the matter of the church over the years? Isn't your teaching about the church particular?" Certainly not. Although I have repeatedly ministered regarding the church, my teaching concerning it is not particular. My speaking about the church is like telling people that they must breathe—it is common and not particular. We only emphasize things that are common, not things that are particular. I could say over and over again that you must believe in the Lord Jesus and that you must live by Him. Although I may tell you a thousand times that you need to live by Christ, this is not a particular teaching. However, if I insist upon immersion and that only our immersion avails, that would be a particular teaching. Also, if I required you to speak in tongues and taught that unless you did so, you did not have the baptism of the Spirit, that would be a particular teaching. To say that we need the church is not to teach a particular doctrine. It is like saying that we all need a home. You cannot wander in the street—you must have a proper life in your home. To tell people that they all should have a home is not a particular teaching. However, to say that you must cut your hair in a certain way is to give a particular teaching. I hope that we all can make this differentiation.

No teaching in the Lord's recovery is particular. Rather, we say that the Bible is the holy Word verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit. Is this a particular teaching? Of course not. We also say that our God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—that the Son of God became flesh to be our Savior, and that He died on the cross for our redemption. I have been preaching these things for more than forty-five years. They absolutely are not particular teachings. Furthermore, we tell people that today the Lord Jesus Christ is our life in our spirit and that we must love Him, live by Him, and walk according to Him. We also say that everyone who has been reborn has the life of the Lord Jesus and is a member of His Body. We teach that God's intention is to have a proper church life on earth to express His Son for His glory. These are

not particular teachings. However, teachings such as foot-washing, head covering, immersion, and pretribulation rapture are particular teachings.

RECEIVING ALL GENUINE CHRISTIANS

In the church we receive all genuine Christians. We receive those who speak in tongues and those who do not speak in tongues, those who have been immersed and those who have been sprinkled, those who wear a head covering and those who do not wear a head covering, those who practice foot-washing and those who do not practice foot-washing. In fact, we would receive even Catholic nuns and priests who are true believers in the Lord Jesus. We receive all Christians, no matter what kind of Christians they are.

It seems that no two Christians are the same in opinion. They all have different opinions about various matters. Praise the Lord that in the church we do not touch these differing opinions. We all have locked our opinions away, knowing that if we bring them into the church, they will cause division. We only care that people believe in the Lord Jesus, are saved, and love Him. We would encourage them all to go on by loving the Lord, by growing in His life, and by realizing the proper church life to satisfy the desire of God's heart.

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP, NOT ISOLATED FELLOWSHIP

There may be some Christian groups who claim to have no particular name, fellowship, or teaching. They declare that they hate any name other than the name of the Lord Jesus and that they do not hold any particular fellowship or teaching. Rather, they receive all kinds of genuine Christians. If this is the case, then we must check three other matters, none of which is simple. First, we must see what kind of fellowship they have. Although they may not have a particular fellowship, their fellowship may be isolated, not universal. Although they receive all true Christians, they do not fellowship with any other churches. Their fellowship is very limited and isolated in their own realm. It is not universal or even fully local. This makes them a sect. Such a group is not a local church—it is a local sect. This matter is very delicate, and few are able to perceive it. It is easy to see that those with a particular name, a particular fellowship, and a particular teaching are sects. But it is difficult to see that a group without these things may still be a sect if its fellowship is

isolated. Although such a group claims to be the church in its locality, it is actually a local sect.

NO SEPARATE ADMINISTRATION

There may be a group that has no particular name, teaching, or fellowship, and whose fellowship is not isolated. Nevertheless, they may insist on having a separate administration, a separate eldership. This separate eldership constitutes them a division. No matter how many believers there may be in a particular church, the church in that locality must be under one eldership with one administration. The city of Anaheim has one mayor and one city hall. The city of New York, which is vastly greater than Anaheim, still has just one mayor and one city hall. If the city of New York had more than one mayor, it would be a sign that the city had been divided. Although there were tens of thousands of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20) and although they met in various homes, they had only one set of elders. There was still just one eldership, one administration.

Suppose there is in Anaheim a group of Christians whose practice closely resembles ours. They have no particular name, fellowship, or teaching, and their fellowship is open to all, to the whole church throughout the world. Nevertheless, they insist on keeping a separate eldership with a separate administration. Because that separate administration is a cause of division, this group is also a sect. If there are two administrations in a city, then there are two “churches” in the city. It is like having two mayors and two administrations in one city. If this is the case, then that city must be divided. From all these points we can see that it is not a simple matter to know the church.

NO HIDDEN CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

One other factor is a test of a genuine local church. There may be a Christian group that has no particular name, no particular fellowship, and no particular teaching. Their fellowship is universal, not isolated, and they do not have a separate administration. Although they pass all these tests, do not be quick to say that they are a true local church. It is still possible that this group has a hidden connection with another organization. They are like a kite in the air: someone on the ground is holding the string. How high the kite flies does

not depend upon the kite; it depends upon the one holding the string. In the past we were cheated by people like this, and we suffered as a result. One group said, “We are exactly the same as you. We have no particular name, particular teaching, or particular fellowship. Our fellowship is universal, and we do not insist upon having a separate administration.” When we heard this, we thought it was wonderful. However, we eventually learned that this group was connected to an organization in England. The kite was flying in China, but the one who held the string was in England.

The church is a pure golden lampstand, but any group that has a hidden connection with another organization is not pure. Rather, it is cloudy, opaque. The church, on the contrary, must be transparent and crystal clear. The New Jerusalem is a transparent city. Even the gold in the New Jerusalem is clear as glass (Rev. 21:18). In this city there is nothing opaque.

Whenever you meet a Christian group, you must check whether it has a particular name, a particular fellowship, a particular teaching, a fellowship that is not universal, a separate administration, or a hidden connection with another organization. If any group can pass all six tests, then the group must be all right. But if you apply these tests to today’s Christian groups, every one of them would be exposed and fall short.

THOSE WITH THE PROPER STANDING

BEING THE CHURCH

The church in Jerusalem had no particular name, no particular teaching, and no particular fellowship. The flow of the church eventually spread to Antioch. The church in Antioch also had no particular name, fellowship, or teaching. Their fellowship was open to all the churches universally, they had one set of elders, and they had no hidden connections. The church in Ephesus was the same in these matters as the church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch. Eventually, the flow of the church went to Corinth. We have seen that in 1 Corinthians Paul dealt with the contentions in this church. Paul caught this matter in time, the Corinthians were helped, and the divisions did not actually take place. Let us suppose, however, that four divisions actually occurred. Thus, in addition to those standing as the church in Corinth, there would be the church of Paul, the church of Apollos, the church of Cephas, and the church of Christ. If you were a brother visiting the city of Corinth, to which of these “churches” would you go? Suppose the total number of

Christians in Corinth was a thousand, with two hundred fifty in the church of Paul, three hundred fifty in the church of Apollos, one hundred twenty-five in the church of Cephas, one hundred in the church of Christ, and the remainder, seventy-five, in the church in Corinth. Of these five groups, four are divisions and one, composed of the seventy-five standing as the church in Corinth, is the church. Suppose one of the seventy-five in the church at Corinth would say that they are the church and that the others are not the church, and that the pastor of the "Pauline" church would say, "Don't you think that we believe in the Bible? We believe in the church just as much as you do. Why do you say that you are the church and that we are not the church?" A good answer would be this: "Brother, if you want to be the church, simply drop your title, and you will immediately become the church. If you find it impossible to drop the title, then leave your divisive circle and return to the proper standing. As soon as you do this, you will be in the church."

NOT ALL CHRISTIANS BEING THE CHURCH

Due to the division and scattering among today's Christians, not all Christians are the church. All Christians are the members of the church, but not all of them are the church. The nation of Israel is an excellent illustration. Although there are thirteen or fourteen million Jews on earth today, less than three million of them are the nation of Israel. Although the number of Jews in the city of New York is greater than the number in the nation of Israel, the Jews in New York are not the nation of Israel.

Recently, a brother told us about a newspaper article written by a group of orthodox Jews. In this article they declared that they would not recognize the nation of Israel. Claiming to be bona fide Jews, those in this group say that if any were to be considered the nation of Israel, they should be considered as that nation. The United Nations, however, does not recognize this group as the nation of Israel. The United Nations will recognize as the nation of Israel only those who are a proper people, who are on proper ground, and who have a proper government to be a proper nation. Those orthodox Jews who are still in New York City cannot say that they are the nation of Israel. Perhaps they are members of the nation of Israel, but they are not the nation of Israel because they are not on the right ground or under the proper government.

Likewise, not all bona fide Christians can say that they are the church. They must consider where they are. Are they on the proper ground? They need to

consider the example of the Jewish people. There are millions of genuine Jews who are not the nation of Israel. Only those Jews who have returned to the land of their forefathers and who stand on the proper ground and under the proper government are the nation of Israel. Yes, you may be a genuine Christian, and as a true Christian you are a member of the Body of Christ. Nevertheless, you are not on the proper ground. You may be in the Catholic Church, in a denomination, or in a free group. Do not argue with us—check where you are. If you are a member of the family, then why are you not at home with the family?

A MATTER OF STANDING, NOT OF NUMBERS

Some may argue with us, saying, "The church in Anaheim includes all the believers in Anaheim. Since you are such a small number, obviously not including all the believers in this city, why do you still say that you are the church in Anaheim and that the other believers are not?" Consider again the example of the divisions in Corinth. Although less than a tenth of the total number of believers in the city of Corinth had the standing of the church in Corinth, they were still the church, and the majority of the other believers, those in the four divisions, were not. The majority were in the "Pauline church," the "Petrine church," the "Apollonian church," or "the church of Christ." But the small minority of seventy-five still remained on the ground of the church in Corinth. If they were not the church, then what were they? To be the church is not a matter of numbers—it is a matter of the standing, the ground. It is just like the nation of Israel, which has fewer Jews than New York. But the smaller number of Jews standing on the proper ground are the nation of Israel, and the greater number of Jews, having lost the ground of their nation, are not the nation of Israel. As long as you are in a division, you lose the standing of the local church. Thank the Lord that by remaining on the proper standing and by not being in a division, we may be part of the church in our locality.

A MATTER OF THE GROUND, NOT OF CONDITION

Let us consider another aspect of the church as revealed in this example of the divisions at Corinth. Suppose the believers in the "Pauline church" were very good, spiritual, heavenly, and lovely, but the seventy-five remaining in the church in Corinth were rather sloppy. If you were a believer visiting that city, to which group would you go? Perhaps you would say, "I love the holy,

heavenly, spiritual saints in the ‘Pauline church.’ I don’t care about their ground or standing—I only care about their spiritual condition. Their standing is not right, but they, like Daniel, are very spiritual.” We need to make a clear distinction between the condition of the church and the ground of the church. The church may be correct in its ground, but poor in its condition. Of course, we look to the Lord that we may be right in both ground and condition. However, the decision concerning recognizing a church must not be made according to condition but according to the ground. This is the way to discern what the proper church is.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE GROUND OF GENUINE ONENESS

In these chapters we have covered various crucial matters pertaining to the church. The church is not shallow; it is very profound. If you are simply religious, ethical, and moral, you may say, "As long as we love Jesus, behave ourselves, and love others, it does not matter if we are in the Catholic Church, in the denominations, in the free groups, or in the charismatic movement. As long as we all believe in the Lord Jesus and know that we are going to heaven, everything is all right." Although you may say that everything is all right, God would not agree with you. What about God's purpose? More than nineteen hundred years ago, the Lord Jesus said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). However, it is very difficult to see where the church has actually been built. Undoubtedly, Christianity has exerted some influence upon human society. But where has the church been built to fulfill God's purpose? Apparently, the Lord's word has not been fulfilled.

THE SUBTLETY OF SATAN SEEN IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

Throughout the centuries, Satan, the enemy of God, has been doing everything possible to frustrate the building up of the church. The subtlety of Satan is demonstrated in the history of Christianity. Immediately after the departure of the apostles, the church began to degrade into an organized religion. Long before Constantine the Great brought Christianity into imperial favor (A.D. 313), the church had already been organized into a hierarchy. During the time of Constantine, the world was brought into the church and the church into the world. In the sixth century the papal system was fully established, and the Catholic Church was completely formed. The Catholic Church is subtly satanic and permeated with fornication. In the words of Scripture, the Roman Catholic Church is the great harlot (Rev. 17:1). The great Babylon of Revelation 17 is the apostate Roman Catholic Church. Many, however, have been drugged in Catholicism, never realizing that in the eyes of God the Catholic Church is the great harlot. The Roman Church has been a great frustration to the Lord's building of His church. Nevertheless, to the Lord one thousand years are as one day (2 Pet. 3:8). For Him to wait for

twenty centuries is like waiting for two days. God is wise. Through His wisdom all the follies of the enemy will be exposed, and He will come in to do His work. If He wanted, He could wait for another period of time for the building of His church. But I believe now is the time the Lord is intervening to accomplish His work. Perhaps the Lord will say to the enemy, "Little Satan, have you done your best? Is there anything more you can do?" Satan will have to confess that he can do nothing more.

After Catholicism had been in existence for centuries, the Lord began His recovery. According to the human concept, the beginning of the Lord's recovery was the Reformation, which started with Martin Luther. The Reformation actually did little to accomplish the building of the church. Rather, it mainly recovered justification by faith. This is useful for salvation, but it has not been used very much for the building up of the church. None of the denominations that issued out of the Reformation care for the building up of the church. Instead, they have divided the Body and cut it into pieces. In reformed Christianity today there are hundreds of divisions.

The so-called Pentecostal movement began in the middle of the last century. Nothing has been more divisive than the Pentecostal movement in the past and the charismatic movement at present. It has cut the Lord's Body into pieces even more. Everyone in this movement is utterly individualistic, and many feel free to set up a Christian meeting in any way they choose. Some may attend a small home meeting for a while. When they are no longer happy with the people there, they may form a meeting of their own. Here we see the subtlety of the enemy. He has brought in distractions, frustrations, and divisions. Today so-called Christendom is filled with divisions and confusion.

The Lord's recovery came to the United States in 1962. During the past fourteen years, we have been presenting, by the Lord's mercy, what He has shown us regarding the genuine oneness of the church. Some dear friends advised me to say nothing about the local church. In 1962 hardly anyone in Christianity was talking about the local church. But in the Lord's recovery we have delivered message after message on this matter, and today the term *the local church* is a popular item. Now a number of radio preachers are using this term, and a number of groups are calling themselves a local church.

THE MISUSE OF *THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH LIFE*

Let me now share a word concerning the book *The Normal Christian Church Life*. This book is composed of a series of messages given by Brother Nee in 1937. I was present when those messages were given. In fact, Brother Nee even asked me to give one of the messages for him. One morning Brother Nee called me to his home, told me that he was ill, and asked me to take his place in giving the message. When I told him that I had no idea what he would be speaking about, he gave me all the points of that message, which was on the line of Antioch. I wrote down the points, rushed back to the meeting, and informed the attendants that Brother Nee was ill and that he had charged me to deliver the message. I then related to them all the points regarding the line of Antioch that Brother Nee had given to me. At another time Brother Nee gave that same message himself. Later, in 1937, the co-workers gathered in Hankow, a city in central China, to escape the Japanese invasion. At that time Brother Nee delivered those messages a second time. Then he polished them and printed them as a book in 1938. After this, he spent more than a year visiting various countries in Europe. During his stay in London, he translated his book into English with the help of a British sister. It was published in 1939 under the title *Concerning Our Missions*. In 1962 a brother in the United States was burdened to publish an American edition of the book, entitled *The Normal Christian Church Life*. He was granted permission to do so, and the book was published by International Students. The American edition was widely distributed, and many people have read it. After reading this book, some have attempted to practice the local church life. They used this book to cause more divisions. We should not blame this book for these divisions; those who use this book to build their own work should be held responsible for this.

Certain so-called Christian workers have been hoping to establish a new work. However, they did not have any new concepts. By reading Brother Nee's book, they discovered some new concepts to feed their desire, and they began to establish local churches. But what they established was neither genuine nor pure. If they were genuine and pure, they surely would have learned that the Lord's recovery had already come to this country, and they would have contacted us. This would have been real oneness and a genuine beginning for the church life. Nevertheless, many who have read *The Normal Christian Church Life* have begun their own work without contacting us. Some of these were in the charismatic movement and had learned that speaking in tongues was not the way to build up the church. They also realized that old

Christianity was over, and they wanted nothing to do with it. But they did not have the proper way to go on. After reading Brother Nee's book, they felt that they had found the way.

Some who were influenced by Brother Nee's book have said that the practice of the Lord's recovery is too frank and too bold. Therefore, they invented another way. This way is to pretend to be something you are not. Those who follow this way claim that they are practicing the church life, but they do not want to call it the church.

Those who sincerely desire to have the church life will contact us. But instead of contacting us, some have used *The Normal Christian Church Life* to cause new divisions. Those who have done this have been those outside the Lord's recovery.

DIVISIONS CAUSED BY INSIDERS

In a few cases divisions have been caused by those who were once within the Lord's recovery. One brother who has been helped by the Lord's recovery attended the conference in Los Angeles in 1964. In one of the meetings he testified that as he saw me coming off the plane in a particular city, the Holy Spirit told him that he had to submit himself to me. He gave strong testimony of this publicly, and he did submit to me. The following year he gave this testimony a second time in our conference. However, not long afterward, he was distracted by a famous preacher from England, and together they spoke at a yearly conference on the east coast of the United States. When I was earnestly invited to be one of the main speakers at this conference, I rejected the invitation. The next year I was invited again. I also rejected this invitation, telling them that I did not have the anointing to participate in that kind of conference. Then the one who started this conference turned his back on me and began to fight against me. Eventually, that yearly conference became a failure and has been discontinued. Now this dear one, who has a group of his own in a certain city, has been fully distracted.

In 1963 a particular traveling preacher who knew nothing about the Lord's recovery visited my training in Los Angeles. Apparently, he was caught for the Lord's recovery. He discontinued his work and came to stay with us. He stayed for some time and learned many things, including the truths of God's eternal purpose and the tree of life. After about three years, he suddenly

claimed to see another line in addition to the line of Jerusalem and the line of Antioch. As a result, he left in 1969, taking with him all that he had learned in the Lord's recovery. After that, he kept returning to our meeting hall after the meetings to pick up printed materials. Not too far from Los Angeles, he has founded a work that he calls a local church.

Another division was caused by a brother who wanted to have his own ministry. He thought that the recovery was the best opportunity for him to build up his ministry. Because the intention of brothers like this is to establish their own work, sooner or later they will cause divisions. This particular brother eventually began his own work in another locality. Some of the saints there, being innocent, received help from our conferences and trainings. Gradually, they began to realize that what they had seen elsewhere was not being practiced in their locality. These saints had a genuine motive for the Lord's recovery. However, the intention of this brother was not purely for the recovery. Eventually, the real situation was exposed, and some of those in the lead rejected the Lord's recovery.

Thus, some outside the Lord's recovery have used this book, *The Normal Christian Church Life,* to begin so-called local churches. Actually, they have created more divisions. In addition, some insiders, who were with us for a while, but who would not give up their intention, were exposed and were no longer able to hide under the cloak of the recovery. Eventually, they went out to do their own independent work.

THE NEED FOR DISCERNMENT REGARDING THE CHURCH

We have seen that the church is a genuine oneness. The church is absolutely one in substance, both universally and locally. In every aspect, the church is one. Because the church is one, nothing that is of a divisive nature can be the church. Every division loses the position, the standing, the ground, of the church. Today we live in a dark age of division and confusion, and it is difficult to discern the church from a division. This is the reason I gave you the six tests of the genuine local church in the foregoing message.

In this matter of the church we must be discerning. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church claim to be the church. However, we would never admit that they are the church. In a sense, the

Roman Catholic Church believes in the Bible. Of course, the Roman Church believes the Bible in its own twisted way, claiming that the Bible can only be understood by the clerical hierarchy of the church. Through this subtle means, the people are deprived of the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church even includes the books of the Apocrypha as part of the Scriptures. These apocryphal books were not even recognized by the Catholic Church until A.D. 1645, when the pope decreed that they must be recognized as sacred Scripture. Some of the books of the Apocrypha, however, are like legends. Would you recognize legends as being inspired Scripture? Certainly not. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Church practices this. The Catholic Church does believe in God and somewhat in Jesus Christ.

When we say that the Catholic Church is not truly the church, some would reply, “It is not fair to say this. The Catholics have the Bible, they believe in God, and they have Jesus Christ.” Although this is true, the Catholic Church is still the great harlot. According to the Bible, she bears the name “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5). God is a divine mystery. Besides this divine mystery, there is a satanic mystery. This second mystery is a mixture. In this mystery earthly things are mixed with heavenly things, and paganism with the truths of the Bible. Furthermore, this mystery is filled with idols. Once, I visited a Catholic cathedral to study the situation there. Along the walls of the cathedral were idols. Underneath these idols were cards saying that anyone who prayed to the image for a certain period of time would be able to reduce the suffering of a relative in purgatory. This, like Buddhism, is superstitious and blasphemous to God. I cannot understand how educated people in a modern nation can believe such foolishness. How can scientifically trained people pray to an idol? What nonsense to say that the Catholic Church is truly the church!

Besides the Catholic Church, there are all the Protestant denominations, including the state churches, such as the Church of England and the Church of Denmark. Even today West Germany still has a state church, and all the citizens of that country must pay the church tax. The pastors of the state church are paid by the government. As we all know, the queen of England today is still the head of the Church of England, and all those born British citizens are members of the Church of England by birth. Would you recognize this as a church? Surely it is not the church.

After the rise of the state churches, the independent churches, such as the Presbyterians, the Baptists, and the Methodists, came into being. In the early part of this century, the Pentecostal movement reached the United States, landing in Massachusetts and spreading across the country to California. In 1915 the Assembly of God was formed. At the beginning, A. B. Simpson was there. However, when the decision was made to say that speaking in tongues was the unique manifestation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Simpson and others opposed this, withdrew from the Pentecostal movement, and formed the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Can the Catholic Church, the state churches, and all the independent churches be truly recognized as churches? No, they are divisions.

After World War II, a great many free groups were raised up in the United States. In 1963 I was told that in Southern California there were hundreds of small free groups. If all these free groups can be recognized as the church, then there must be a countless number of churches in the universe. The Catholic Church, the denominations, the Pentecostal churches, and the free groups all claim to be the church. Which group is the church? What should the Lord do in this situation? In order to answer this question, we must come back to the holy Word. In addition to the plain words of the New Testament, we should also consider the pictures, the types, in the Old Testament.

THE PICTURE OF THE RECOVERY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Let us now consider the picture of the recovery of the proper ground in Jerusalem after the dispersion. As we have pointed out already, many Christian teachers neglect the significance in typology of the history of Israel after their captivity in Babylon. Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah are books of recovery. Even Daniel is a recovery book. Of course, we do not see the actual recovery in Daniel. But we do see a man according to God's heart. Although he did not return to Jerusalem, he prayed for God's economy, opening his windows toward Jerusalem three times a day (Dan. 6:10). He prayed for the Lord's recovery of Jerusalem, and he expected to see it. Eventually, the Lord answered his prayer. The latter part of the Old Testament concerns the recovery. In this age of confusion, the only way for the Lord to carry out His economy is by recovery. *Recovery* means that in the midst of today's confusion and division the Lord is calling out a remnant of

His people to return to the original ground, to come back to the original standing. After their seventy-year captivity, a small number of Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. Although this temple was inferior to the original temple built by Solomon, the site, the ground, of the temple was the same. That is the Lord's recovery.

According to the book of Deuteronomy, the Jewish people realized that God wanted His people to build His temple only in the place He had chosen. This place was Mount Moriah, which later became Mount Zion. No Jew has ever had the boldness to build the temple in any other place. Today the Jews are anxious to rebuild the temple, but they do not have the site. When the ancient Jews were scattered, they were taken to Egypt, to Assyria, and mainly to Babylon. One day God called them back to their own land, and a small minority returned. That was the recovery. Suppose, while Daniel was praying, one of the scribes would say, "God is omnipresent. If God could be there in Jerusalem, can He not also be here with us in Babylon? Let us build a temple here." But even if they had built a temple exactly the same in design, size, and material as the temple constructed by Solomon, it would not have been recognized as the temple because it would have been on the wrong ground, the wrong site.

Those who actually returned to Jerusalem were not as good as Daniel was. When I was young, I could not understand why, according to Ezra and Nehemiah, so many poor Jews returned to the good land. It seemed that they were in a pitiful situation. However, although they built a temple that was smaller in size, inferior in material, and different in design from Solomon's temple, because it was built on the proper site, God confirmed by His glory that it was the temple. Today the Jews are awaiting the return of this site, which is presently occupied by a Muslim mosque. Under this mosque is supposed to be the place where Abraham offered Isaac. Throughout the centuries many have recognized that the site on which this mosque now stands is the site of the temple. The fact that the so-called Wailing Wall is not far from the mosque confirms this. Although the Jews may have everything needed for the rebuilding of the temple, they do not yet have the site. By this we see that the site, the ground, means a great deal.

THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH

Now we must consider what the ground of the church is. The ground of the church is the genuine oneness. The church is one. No division has the ground of the church, for division is the opposite of oneness. The way to discern whether or not a Christian group is a division is to apply the six tests given in the foregoing chapter. We need to ask whether a group has a particular name, a particular fellowship, a particular doctrine, a fellowship that is not universal, a separate administration, or a hidden connection with some organization.

OUR NEED TO BE PURIFIED

Now we need to consider further the question of motive. When it comes to the church, we must have a pure motive, seeking nothing for ourselves. Our motive must be singly for the Lord's recovery. Although we may be ignorant to some degree, if our motive is pure, we shall be always ready to receive light. But if we are unwilling to receive light, this indicates that our motive is not genuine. We must consider whether our motive is absolutely for the Lord's recovery. If not, our motive is wrong. We may be right in every respect outwardly, but we are still wrong inwardly.

I first came to Shanghai in 1933. At that time I met a brother who had come into the church at the very beginning of the practice of the church life in Shanghai. He earnestly desired to be an elder. Although apparently he zealously loved the Lord, he was not the proper person to be an elder. He simply did not have that kind of capacity. He came into the church life in 1928. When twenty years later, in 1948, he was still not an elder, he set up another meeting in his hometown and supported a preacher, doing the same thing as Micah in Judges 17.

During the past fourteen years, there have been a few among us in the United States who expected to become elders. When they were not appointed an elder in one locality, they moved by way of migration to another locality. The more they expected to become elders, the more obvious it became that they should not be elders. After going from city to city without being put into the eldership, they eventually turned their back on the church and left. Nothing tests our motive like the church. The church is a pure golden lampstand, and it cannot tolerate any mixture. We all must be purified. We need to pray, saying, "Lord, make me pure. Now that I am in Your recovery, I ask You to purify me."

None of us in the Lord's recovery should be ambitious. In the recovery, ambition is over. Moreover, none of us should be conscious of position. It is much better not to have any positions. Furthermore, never expect to be a leader. Likewise, you should not say that you would never be a leader or that you do not like to be a leader. Whether or not in the Lord's life you have the capacity to be a leading one is up to the Lord. But you must be the same whether you are a leader or not. If you are not a leader, then you must still be a living, functioning member. Otherwise, the Lord will have no way among us. You should not be humble and say, "I will never be a leader." Neither should you be ambitious and desire to be a leader. If you feel unhappy when a brother or sister is made a leader, it reveals that your motive has not been purified.

My heart is constantly aching because of the situation among Christians. Look at the situation in Catholicism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, and the free groups. Where is the way for the Lord to build up His church? We need to be clear about the Lord's recovery and His economy, and we must be pure in our motive.

EXERCISING WISDOM

None of us should have a condemning attitude toward others. You must exercise wisdom in applying what you hear in these messages. The messages in the Lord's ministry must be faithful to His burden and tell people the real situation. However, this does not mean that you should go out and criticize those in Catholicism, the denominations, or the free groups, telling them that they are divisive and that only the local church is right. This is not wise. On the other extreme, you should not be political, pretending to be something that you are not. We all must be what we are, yet with the exercise of wisdom. When we contact people, we must help them according to their condition and situation. Do not tell the unsaved about the church. Rather, minister to them something concerning the forgiveness of sins and the imparting of life. You may meet some who are saved but who have never consecrated themselves to the Lord. Thus, you should help them become consecrated people. At some point you may meet a person who truly loves the Lord and who is seeking after the Lord's heart. Then, with discernment, you may share something with him concerning the Lord's economy and His recovery today.

In this day of division and confusion you must be on the alert not to be cheated, deceived, or influenced by anyone. At the same time you must have much contact with the Lord, praying individually and corporately and fellowshipping to seek the Lord's leading in contacting people according to their situation and condition. I hope that the young people will come together in groups to pray and fellowship about all these matters. This will make you more clear about them and help you to contact others.

STRONG IN SPIRIT AND RICH IN THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

The most crucial need among the young people is to learn how to be strong in spirit and rich in the experience of Christ. Whenever you come to the meetings of the church, you must have a strong spirit, and you must be rich in the experience of Christ. These are the two items covered by the Lord Jesus in John 4:24. In this verse the Lord said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness." *Truthfulness* here refers to Christ experienced by us. As we have pointed out, in ancient times God's people were commanded to do two things in their public worship of God. First, they had to go to the place chosen by God, which was Jerusalem. Second, they had to bring the rich produce of the good land to offer to God. Today we are no longer in the type; we are in the reality. The place to which we must go is not the physical Jerusalem; it is our human spirit. We must come together to meet in our spirit, the New Testament Jerusalem. Not only should we come in our spirit; we must come with our hands full of Christ, full of the rich produce of the good land. We should be in the spirit, and we should have the riches of Christ to offer to God for His satisfaction. Then, with others, we shall enjoy this satisfaction before God and with God.

Young people, you must be clear about four matters: the church, the way to contact people, the spirit, and the experience of Christ. Do not come to the meetings in your mind—come in your strong spirit. To meet with others in the mind is to be in Babylon, but to meet with them in spirit is to be in Jerusalem. We must meet together in our human spirit, the place designated by God. But do not come empty-handed—come with your hands full of Christ. Come to the meetings in a strong, fresh, bold spirit, and come full of the experiences of Christ. Please pray about these matters and then practice them.