The Practical and Organic Building Up of the Church

Witness Lee

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE PRACTICAL AND ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

by Witness Lee

ISBN: 978-0-87083-462-2

CONTENTS

1. Living a Life according to God's Heart and Will
2. The Organic Oneness of the Body of Christ
3. Begetting, Nourishing, and Perfecting
4. Prophesying
5. The Spirit and the Word in the Organic Building Up of the Church
6. To Save Sinners and to Cherish and Nourish the Newly Baptized Ones
7. To Perfect the Saints
8. To Prophesy
9. The Life and Prayer Needed for the Organic Building Up of the Body of Christ

PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento, Pleasant Hill, and Berkeley, California, on February 9 through 19, 1989.

CHAPTER ONE

LIVING A LIFE ACCORDING TO GOD'S HEART AND WILL

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:22, 36; Eph. 1:9-11; 3:9-11; Heb. 10:5-10; Rom. 12:1-21

In this chapter we would like to fellowship concerning the living of a life according to God's heart and will. The Old Testament contains a portrait of David, a man according to God's heart, who did the will of God and served his own generation by the counsel of God (Acts 13:22, 36). In the New Testament, God's heart and will in His economy are revealed in the books of Ephesians, Hebrews, and Romans. Ephesians speaks of God's will (1:5, 9), the counsel of God's will (v. 11), God's good pleasure, the desire of God's heart (v. 9), the mystery of God's will (v. 9), and the economy of the mystery (3:9). Paul nearly exhausted his vocabulary in speaking of God's will. God's will is something according to God's good pleasure, and this good pleasure was what He purposed. The good pleasure of God was purposed by God in Himself.

Ephesians 3:11 speaks of the purpose of the ages. The purpose of the ages is the eternal purpose. Before the ages was the purpose in eternity past, and after the ages will be the purpose in eternity future. The purpose of the ages is the purpose of all time, including eternity past and eternity future. The purpose of God made by Him in Christ is such an eternal purpose, and this is according to the counsel of God's will. Moreover, God's will is according to the good pleasure of His heart. This is revealed in Ephesians 1:9-11 and 3:9-11.

Christians often want to know God's will. We may want to know what God's will is concerning our job, our place of living, or our marriage. What we seek is just God's will in a small sense. We may think that marriage is a great matter, but compared to God's will in the divine revelation, it is a small thing. Some may seek to know whether it is the Lord's will to buy a certain pair of shoes in the morning or in the afternoon. Such a person may appear to be a godly person, seeking God's will in every detail of his daily life. However, whether one buys a pair of shoes in the morning or in the afternoon is only God's will in a small sense. Ephesians 1 and 3 reveal God's great will, the

counsel of His will, something according to God's heart's desire and His good pleasure, which was purposed and planned in God Himself. This is the purpose of eternity, which was purposed in eternity past and will be completed for eternity future.

TO HAVE A BODY FOR THE ENLARGEMENT AND EXPRESSION OF CHRIST, THE EMBODIMENT OF THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD

God's heart and will in His New Testament economy, God's good pleasure, the counsel of His will, and His purpose are to have a Body for the enlargement and expression of Christ, the embodiment of the processed Triune God (1:9-11, 22-23; 3:9-11). A person's body is his enlargement. The church as the Body of Christ is the enlargement of Christ, and this enlargement of Christ is Christ's expression. As a man, I am fully expressed through my body; you may know me through my body. By seeing only my head without my body, you cannot know what kind of man I am. When I speak, my body is acting and moving, and I am fully expressed. Sometimes I can recognize a brother simply by looking at him from the back. By looking at the way he walks and moves, I can know who he is. One's body is his enlargement, and this enlargement is his expression.

God's great will is first to have a Body for Christ's enlargement and expression. God created the heavens and the earth with many items, and eventually He created mankind in order to have a Body composed of human beings who are saved, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, and transformed into the image of the processed Triune God. God wants to have such a Body for Christ, who is the very embodiment of the processed Triune God. The processed Triune God is embodied in Christ, and this Christ today needs a Body for His enlargement and His expression. We all are here as a part of this enlargement. Therefore, we are a part of Christ's expression. This is God's great will. Through this Body, God makes known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, according to the purpose of the ages made in Christ, according to the counsel of His will (1:9, 11; 3:11). There is no mystery in whether one should buy a pair of shoes in the morning or in the afternoon. The divine will is something that has a mystery.

God's heart and will is also to have a church to be the organic Body of Christ for the manifestation of His multifarious wisdom (vv. 9-10). Today the church as the Body of Christ is an organism to make God's multifarious wisdom known to all men. This is what God wants to have according to His eternal will. God created the heavens for the earth, and He created the earth for man's existence. The heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, man is for the producing of the church, and the church is the enlargement and expression of the processed Triune God. This is God's will. Whether we live in one place or another does not matter much. We do not need to pray much for that. Instead, we should focus our entire being on God's will to have the church, which is the Body of the embodiment of the processed Triune God. Through this church the processed Triune God is enlarged and expressed. This is the first aspect of God's will.

TO HAVE CHRIST AS THE REPLACEMENT FOR ALL THE SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS SO THAT WE MAY ENJOY HIM AS OUR ALL IN ALL

God's will is first to have a Body for Christ. However, how could this Body of Christ, the church, which is the enlargement and expression of God's embodiment, come into being? The answer is very much related to Christ. The second aspect of God's will is to have Christ as the replacement for all the sacrifices and offerings so that we may enjoy Him as our all in all (Heb. 10:5-10). The Old Testament saints were centered around the sacrifices and the offerings. The sacrifices and the offerings meant everything to them. However, Christ came to do God's will by replacing all the sacrifices and offerings in order that He could be everything to us.

In the Old Testament there are five main categories of offerings: the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. Hebrews 10:5 says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me." God prepared a body for Christ so that He could offer Himself to God to replace all the offerings. This was God's will, which Christ came to do. Now the sacrifices and offerings are no longer needed because they have been replaced by Christ. Christ today is all the offerings, and He is all the sacrifices.

Hebrews 10:9 says, "He then has said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second." Christ took away and replaced all the Old Testament types, and He established Himself to be "the second." As "the second," Christ is everything. Christ's replacing of all the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings, taking away the Old Testament types and establishing Himself as everything to us, was God's great will. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of Christ's body once for all, to enjoy and partake of Him as our everything (v. 10).

The book of Hebrews reveals five major aspects of Christ for our enjoyment and participation. First, we partake of Christ as our God in His humanity (chs. 1—2). Christ today is our God in His humanity as our portion for us to enjoy. He is not only God but also a God-man. Second, we partake of Christ as our Apostle, typified by Moses and Joshua, leading us into the good land, the all-inclusive Christ (3:1—4:13). Third, we partake of Christ as our High Priest, typified by Aaron, bringing us into the presence of God (4:14—7:28). Fourth, we also partake of Christ as the bequests of the new testament (covenant) (chs. 8—10). The New Testament has many contents. Every item of the contents is a bequest. If we would know all the items of the New Testament, we must study the book of Hebrews. Fifth, this Christ is also our Forerunner to run the course of the race (chs. 11—13). He has finished the course. He has cut and paved the way. Today in America there are highways from the west coast to the east coast. Christ has cut the highway that we might run the course, following Him. He has paved the way. We now may follow His footsteps to run the same course.

Christ is our God in His humanity, and He is our Apostle bringing God to us and our High Priest bringing us to God. He is all the riches, the contents, the bequests, of the New Testament, and He is our Forerunner, the Accomplisher, who has run the course. This means that He is everything to us according to God's will. Now we have nothing but Christ. We do not have the Old Testament sin offering, trespass offering, meal offering, burnt offering, or peace offering; we have Christ. Christ replaces everything, even ourselves and our good behavior. He is all in all to us. We simply enjoy Him. What is the will of God today? It is simply for us to enjoy Christ. To live a life according to God's heart and will is to have Christ as everything to us and to live by Christ. God's great will is for us to be a part of the Body, enjoying Christ as everything.

TO HAVE THE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST PRACTICE THE BODY LIFE

The third aspect of God's great will is to have the believers in Christ practice the Body life (Rom. 12). For this we must first present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice to do the will of God, that is, to practice the Body life (v. 1), not being conformed to this age but being transformed by the renewing of the mind that we may prove the will of God, which is that we practice the Body life (vv. 2-3). First, we must offer our body, and then we must have our mind, which is part of our soul, renewed, dealt with, thoroughly. Then we must exercise our gifts in the Body life (vv. 4-8). We have to preach the gospel, have home meetings to nourish the new believers, have small group meetings to perfect the saints, and learn to prophesy. By doing this we exercise many gifts, and each one of us will become fully occupied in the exercise of our gifts.

The saints who are practicing the Body life should live a life of the highest virtues, not of their human life or love but of the divine life and love by being burning in their spirit (vv. 9-21). Our body should be presented, our soul should be renewed, and our spirit should be burning. If we are such persons, we will have the practice of the Body life and a life of the highest virtues by God's divine life and love. One item of such a life is to feed our enemy and give him a drink (v. 20). This is the highest life.

We must understand what God's will is. God's will is to have a Body, and it is that we take Christ as everything and enjoy Him. The place to enjoy Christ is in His Body, the church. Then we must also practice the Body life. We cannot be separate from the believers, and we must never be individualistic. Some may say that they can enjoy Christ at home. This may be so, but if you are not practicing the Body life with all the saints together as the corporate Body, you will surely miss something of Christ. You may enjoy Christ a little by yourself, but you cannot enjoy Christ in His fullness. Try to enjoy Christ, not individualistically but corporately, and try to live a corporate life, a Body life, a church life. Always do things in the Body of Christ, in the practical church life. To merely live an individual Christian life is the way of poverty. If you live a corporate life, however, you will enjoy Christ in His fullness, which eventually is the church, the very expression of Christ.

We all have to see that God wants a Body, and to be a part of the Body we have to take Christ as our everything. We do not need anything else. We do

not need logic, philosophy, or ethics; we only need to take Christ as our everything. This Christ is our God, our Apostle, our High Priest, and all the riches of the New Testament economy. This Christ is the Accomplisher, the Finisher, of the way we are taking. Therefore, He is everything to us, and we take Him as our everything, not to live an individualistic life but to live a corporate life to have the practical church life. In this church life we will have a strong testimony, and many people will be influenced and attracted by us. They will come to join us in practicing the church life. Then the enlargement of Christ will be continually enlarged, from a hundred believers up to a thousand. This is the practice of the church life, and this is the increase and continuation of the enlarged Christ.

God's will is to have a Body as the enlargement and expression of the processed Triune God and to have Christ as the replacement for all the sacrifices and offerings so that we may enjoy Him as our all in all. The Body of Christ comes out of our enjoyment of Christ, and our enjoyment of Christ issues in the church life, which is a strong testimony, testifying that God has been processed to be everything to us for our enjoyment. If we enjoy Him, we will become His enlargement. This is the divine will.

We do not need to waste our time by concentrating on minor matters related to our personal life. We should simply live in the church life. In the church life we should go to disciple the nations, to visit people to get them saved. We should not concentrate on the minor things in our daily life. Instead, we should go to get people saved. Following this, we need to go to have home meetings to nourish the young babes. Then we must continue to go to bring all these nourished young Christians together to form a group so that they may do the same thing as we do. Then we can learn to prophesy. From the verses that we pray-read in the morning, we can compose a prophecy for the Lord's Day morning meeting. We all need to enter into the practical church life, living a life according to God's heart and will.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORGANIC ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: John 17:20-23; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:2-6, 12-15; 1:22-23

In the last chapter we saw that we need to be those living a life according to God's heart and will. In this chapter we want to see the organic oneness of the Body of Christ. In order to see this oneness, which is organic, we must study John 17:20-23.

THE ORGANIC ONENESS IN THE TRIUNE GOD

The Prayer of the Lord

The prayer of the Lord in John 17 shows that the organic oneness of the Body of Christ is the organic oneness in the Triune God. Verse 20 says, "I do not ask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word." This verse tells us that the Lord's prayer here includes us, all the ones who believe in Him. Verse 21 says, "That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You." This shows that the oneness of all the believers should be like the oneness in the Triune God. The Triune God is three yet one. The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father. The oneness in the Godhead is not a mere unification. That is the oneness of men. The oneness of the three of the Godhead is that They mutually indwell one another. What is the oneness among the believers? No word can adequately explain it, but there is the example of the divine oneness among the three in the Godhead.

Our God is the three-one God. There is not such a number "three-one" in man's mathematics. Our God is three-one because the three indwell each other. The Father is in the Son and in the Spirit, the Son is in the Father and in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the Father and in the Son. They are three, yet They are mingled together as one. This is coinherence. The three of the Godhead not only coexist but also coinhere. Coinherence is a mutual indwelling, or a mingling.

Verse 21 goes on to say, “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.” As the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, we also are in the Father and the Son. Before we believed in the Lord Jesus, we were separate from the coinhering Triune God, but now we are in the Triune God. God the Father’s being in the Son, God the Son’s being in the Father, the Father and the Son’s being in the Spirit, and the Spirit’s being in the Father and the Son has an issue, an outcome. This issue, this outcome, is that all the believers may also be in the three of the Godhead. In the entire universe there is such a oneness, and this oneness is that the believers are mingled and wrapped up with the Triune God.

Now we have to ask how we could be in the three of the Godhead. We have seen that the Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Father, the Father and Son are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the Father and the Son. Because all three are mingled together, the believers may be in all of Them. If we are in one of the three, we are in all of Them because They are mingled together as one. We are in the Father, in the Son, and in the Spirit at the same time because the three of the Godhead mutually indwell one another. We are in the divine “Us,” in the Triune God. We are in the three who are one. This is the oneness of the believers.

We need to see what the real Christian oneness is. The real Christian oneness is a coinherence. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit coinhere, which means that They are mutually within one another. By coinhering, the three are one. Because the three are one, we believers can be in the three. When we are in one of the three, we are in all three. By being in the three, we join the divine oneness. The divine oneness was once only among the three of the Godhead, but now we the believers have joined this oneness.

In verse 21 the Lord prayed that we would be one so that the world may believe that the Father has sent the Son. Suppose that we are meeting together in the wonderful way of being not only one with one another but also one with the Triune God. Then there will be a manifestation that God the Father has sent the Son. The people in the world will be able to see this. In other words, if we are really one in the Triune God, this is a strong testimony to prove to the world that God the Father has sent God the Son. Now that we believe in God the Son, we have become not only one with one another but

also one with the Triune God. There is a oneness on the earth today, not only among human beings but also between human beings and the Triune God.

Verse 22 says, "And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one." What is the glory in this verse? The Father has given His divine life to the Son that the Son may express the Father. This expression is the glory. Now the Son has given us His life by which we can express Him. This expression is also glory. This indicates that the oneness we have with the Triune God is the divine life, and by this divine life we can express the Triune God. The divine life has been given to us and is within us. When we express the Triune God by this divine life, that is the oneness. The oneness is the very expression of the Triune God in and by His divine life.

We all have received this divine life. When we live the divine life, there will be an expression, and this expression is the oneness. The oneness is the expression of the divine life of the Triune God. If we all live by our natural life, there will be no oneness. Instead, there will be division and separation. How can we have the practical oneness? We can have the practical oneness by living the divine life. When we live the divine life, our expression is the divine life. When the Son was on the earth, He lived the Father's life and this living was the Father's life expressed. We may also say that His living was the oneness of the Triune God expressed. Now that we have the divine life within us, what is needed is for us to live by this life, not by our natural life. If we live by our natural life, what is expressed will be division. If we live by the divine life, what is expressed will be the oneness of the Triune God.

Verse 23 says, "I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me." The Son is in the believers, the Father is in the Son, and by this the believers may be perfected into one. On the one hand, we are in the divine oneness. On the other hand, we still need to be perfected. This means that we may be in the oneness only to a small degree. This is why we need to be perfected into one. To be perfected is for us to have the growth in the divine life every day. The divine life has been given to us, and we need to live by this divine life. Then our expression will be the divine oneness. At the start of our Christian life we have just a little of the divine life, so we need to be perfected. This means that the divine life within us is continually increasing, and that we are growing in this increasing of the divine life. The

more we grow in the increasing of the divine life, the more we are perfected and the more oneness we live out. I hope that we all can realize that the very Christian oneness is the mingling of the Triune God with the believers in an increasing way. Last year the divine oneness expressed among us might have been only fifty percent. This year our expression of the divine oneness may increase to sixty percent. Later, we may go up to seventy percent. This increasing of the divine life and its expression are our being perfected into one.

The prayer of the Lord in John 17 is a unique prayer made by the Son to the Father. We may be accustomed to calling the prayer in Matthew 6 the Lord's prayer, but the prayer in John 17 is also the Lord's prayer. Actually, the prayer in John 17 is much higher than the one in Matthew 6. As we have seen, the Lord's prayer in John 17 is that we, all the believers in the Son, may be one, even as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, that we also may be in the Triune God (v. 21). The oneness among us is a oneness of coinherence. The three of the Godhead mutually indwell each other as one, we are one with the Triune God, mutually indwelling each other as one, and we believers all are one in the coinhering Triune God. We believers and the Triune God are all one. Although the believers in Christ come from many different countries and cultures, they all have the same unique divine life. The same life that is in you is also in me. Through this life we are one with each other and with the Triune God.

As an illustration of this oneness, let us consider the lights in the ceiling of a room. These lights in the ceiling are separate from one another until the switch is turned on and the electricity begins to flow in them. In all the lights there is one current of electricity. By the current of electricity all the lights are one. According to themselves, the lights are separate, but according to the electricity within them, they are one. They are not only one with one another but also one with the power plant. We all need to remain in the "current" of the divine life. When we live in this divine life, we are one with each other and with God. When we do not live in this divine life but in our own life, we are separate. The Son is in us, and the Father is in the Son, that we may be perfected into one in the Triune God. The Father is in the Son, and the Son came into us, so the Son with the Father is in us. By Their being in us, we can be perfected into one, not in ourselves but in the Triune God.

The Believers' Being Baptized into the Triune God

Matthew 28:19 refers to a marvelous fact in the universe: we believers have been baptized into the Triune God. This verse says that we have been baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. The name of the Triune God denotes the person of the Triune God. To be baptized into the Triune God is to be baptized into the divine person of the Divine Trinity. Our baptism brought us into a mystical and organic union with the processed Triune God so that all of us, the believers in the Son, may be one in this organic union. The proper oneness among us Christians is a oneness in the organic union among one another and a oneness between us and the Triune God. The Lord prayed in John 17 based upon the fact that we all have to be one in the Triune God.

The Oneness in the Divine Trinity

The oneness in the Divine Trinity can be seen in Ephesians 4:4-6: "One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." The Body is the expression (the fullness) of the Lord (1:23), and the Spirit is the essence of the Body. The one Lord is the Head (v. 22) to be the authority over the Body (Acts 2:36). The one God and Father of all is over all and through all and in all. God is the Originator of all things, and the Father is the source of life for the Body. On the one hand, we were created by God, the Originator of all things. On the other hand, we are also believers in Christ, so in this sense God is our Father. As the Father, He is the source of life for the Body. *Over all* refers to the Father as the source, *through all* refers to the Son as the means, and *in all* refers to the Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God, who reaches us by entering into us. God is the Father, the Father is in the Son, the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God, the consummated Spirit. As the consummated Spirit, He is the consummation of the Triune God reaching us by entering into us, so the Triune God is in us. In this reaching Spirit of the Divine Trinity, we all, the believers in the Lord, are one. The oneness is in the Triune God. As long as we are in the Triune God, we are in the oneness. The Christian oneness is God in His trinity mingled with us as one.

THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT

According to Ephesians 4:3, the organic oneness of the Body of Christ is also the oneness of the Spirit. The Spirit is the essence of the organic Body of Christ. Hence, the Spirit is the reality of the oneness of the Body of Christ. In other words, the oneness of Christians is the Spirit Himself. If you have the Spirit, you have the oneness. If you are in the Spirit, you are in the oneness. The oneness is just the Spirit.

THE ONENESS IN PRACTICALITY

We need to go on to see the oneness in practicality, which is the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God (v. 13). The oneness of the unique (objective) faith is our belief concerning the redemptive work of Christ. Although we are believers, there may be different concepts, ideas, and opinions among us. These different concepts, ideas, and opinions cause division. On the one hand, we are one in the divine life in reality, but are we one in our living in practicality?

Recently among us there has been a different opinion concerning the apostles' relationship with the churches that they have established. Some have said that once the apostles establish churches and appoint elders, they should keep their hands off the churches. To their feeling, the churches should be absolutely independent from the apostles. But according to the Bible, after the apostles established churches and appointed elders in them, they still took care of the churches.

The apostle Paul's relationship with the church in Ephesus is strong evidence of this. According to Acts 20, Paul established the church in Ephesus and appointed elders in that church, but after this he did not leave the church and the elders alone. Instead, he once stayed with the church in Ephesus for three years (v. 31). While Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he sent some from Miletus to call the elders in Ephesus to come to him (v. 17). When they came to him, Paul reminded them of how he behaved, worked, and labored among them for three years, admonishing the saints with tears (v. 31) and teaching them publicly and from house to house (v. 20). He charged them to take heed to themselves and to the flock committed to them (v. 28). He warned them that after his departure, wolves would come in among them, not sparing the flock (v. 29). He told them that some would rise up from among

them, speaking perverted things to draw away disciples after themselves (v. 30). This portion of the Word in Acts 20 shows that Paul did not leave the church in Ephesus alone. On the contrary, he was always caring for them.

Besides his visits to the church in Ephesus, he also wrote her the Epistle, teaching, admonishing, and giving her a lot of instructions for her edification and for the building up of the Body of Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, Paul told the saints that he was a nursing mother and a teaching, exhorting father to them. How could a nursing mother leave her children alone? How could a father leave his children, who are under his care, his teaching, and his raising up, to themselves? To say that the apostles stayed away from the churches after they established them and appointed the elders is not scriptural. This concept has caused trouble in some places. What shall we do about this? We have to exercise our patience. We have to love one another and keep the oneness of the Spirit. By keeping the oneness of the Spirit, we will grow. We hope that some of the brothers who have picked up this wrong concept will grow and advance. They will see more light and eventually see that the thought they hold today concerning the churches being absolutely independent is wrong. We all need to arrive at the oneness of the faith. This indicates that a process is required for us to attain to, or arrive at, the practical oneness.

We also need to arrive at the oneness of the full knowledge of the Son of God concerning the all-inclusive person of Christ. The oneness of the faith refers to Christ's work, and the oneness of the full knowledge of the Son of God refers to Christ's person. We may agree with the truth concerning Christ's person and work, but because we may still be young and childish, we hold on to different kinds of concepts. These different kinds of concepts cause divisions. Children enjoy playing with toys. All the different teachings are toys. The more that we advance and grow in life, the more we drop these toys. When we become a full-grown man, we will not have any toys.

We all need to be perfected to arrive at the practical oneness (Eph. 4:12-13). We need a practical oneness, not just a oneness in doctrine or a oneness as a fact in the Spirit. The oneness needs to become our practical experience. We are perfected to arrive at the practical oneness by growing in life to be a full-grown man (vv. 13b, 15) that we may be no longer little children, tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching (v. 14).

As we have pointed out, a wind of teaching has come in among us. In the past when I was in mainland China with Brother Nee, I saw this. In 1949 we came to Taiwan from mainland China, and we began the work there with a strong understanding of the unique ground of the church. This truth had been established among us. The work on the island of Taiwan was prevailing at the beginning. Within five years we increased a hundredfold, from about four hundred to forty thousand. Because some of the brothers felt that we needed some spiritual help, we invited T. Austin-Sparks from England to visit us. He came to visit us twice, but he brought in the thought that the unique ground of oneness is wrong. He even taught this to some of the young co-workers. That became a wind of teaching among us, causing division and frustrating the increase of the work in Taiwan. To say that the apostles should not touch the churches or the elders once they have been established is also a wind of teaching. We should be encouraged, however, that no wind can last for a long time. The winds come and they go. We should be at peace because any storm that comes into the Lord's recovery will not last long.

KEEPING THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT TO ARRIVE AT THE ONENESS IN PRACTICALITY

We need to keep the oneness of the Spirit to arrive at the oneness in practicality (vv. 3, 13a). Ephesians 4:2-3 says, "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love, being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." As long as there is a storm with winds and waves, we have to be long-suffering. We also need to be diligent. We should not be discouraged. To be diligent is to be aggressive. On the one hand, we need to be lowly, meek, and long-suffering, bearing with one another in love. On the other hand, while the winds and the waves are here, we have to be aggressive and diligent. We should not be disappointed to the extent that we would forget about the church life. During the storm, we can go out to visit people for the preaching of the gospel. While the waves are making trouble, we can make some profit for the Lord's interest. We can set up home meetings to nourish the newly born babes. We should not be disappointed or frustrated. Although we might experience the winds and the waves, the Lord is in our "boat," which means that He is in the church life. We have to go on aggressively to do a positive work to save sinners, to take care of the young ones in their homes, to have small group meetings, and to perfect the seeking ones. Eventually, all the winds and the waves will be rebuked by

the Lord. Regardless of how strong the storm is, eventually the church comes out with a profit and is built up in resurrection.

We need to keep the oneness of the Spirit with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love by being diligent. Eventually, we will arrive at the oneness in practicality—at a full-grown man and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (v. 13b).

CHAPTER THREE

BEGETTING, NOURISHING, AND PERFECTING

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 4:15; John 15:16; Eph. 3:8-11; John 21:15-17; Acts 5:42; 1 Thes. 2:7; Eph. 4:12; 1 Thes. 2:11

THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

In this chapter and the next chapter, we want to see four crucial matters for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. The church is not a congregation or an organization. The New Testament tells us emphatically that the church is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12). A person's body is not an organization but an organism. A wooden stand is a lifeless organization of pieces of wood that have been put together. Christ's Body, however, is an organism. A newborn child is not brought into being by organization but is begotten, conceived, and formed organically in his mother's womb. His birth is altogether a matter of life. The church also was born of God, in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ to be the Body of Christ. Thus, the church is altogether organic.

In the Old Testament there is a type concerning the church as the Body of Christ. This is the type of Eve. God created a man, but He did not create a woman. God took a rib out of Adam, and with that rib He built a woman (Gen. 2:22). This woman became Adam's counterpart. Adam's counterpart came out of him and was given back to him to be attached to him. Eve was the second part of this complete human being. A man is a unit but not a complete unit. The wife is the counterpart of the man. The husband and wife make a complete "melon." The husband is one half, and the wife is the other half. When they come together, they match each other to make a complete unit. This is why the Bible says that it was not good for Adam to be alone (Gen. 2:18). For a man to remain alone is for him to be just half. He needs another half. To get married is to gain a complement, a counterpart.

The relationship of Eve with Adam is a picture showing the relationship that the church has with Christ. The church is not something organized but something that comes out of Christ and grows into His counterpart with His

likeness. Paul received the revelation of the church as the Body of Christ. The Body is organic, not lifeless. Christianity in its degradation has made the church a lifeless organization instead of an organism. In human society there are different kinds of organizations or clubs, but the church is not like that. Apparently, the church is merely a kind of gathering, but actually the church is something born of God, with Christ, and through Christ to become Christ's Body, His organism to express His very being.

A man's body is his fullness for his expression. Christ is the Head of His Body, and the Body is the Head's fullness for His expression. Because our physical body is organic, we have to care for it in an organic way. If a wooden stand has been damaged, I may fix it with glue or with nails and a hammer. But when my finger is cut, I cannot care for it in this way. If I keep the cut on my finger clean and protected, it will be healed by the life in my body causing the growth. The cut on my finger is healed by the growth of my body. This is organic. Only something with life can grow.

Because we are organic, whatever we eat must also be organic. When we eat organic food, it is digested and assimilated organically to become the very element in our blood. Eventually, it becomes the very cells and tissues of our body. This is an illustration of what it means to be organic. To be organic means to have life, and life moves, grows, begets, and develops. The church, composed of God's chosen and redeemed people, is not something organized by God but something begotten by God with His life to make this entity full of life.

Our organic, physical body will not assimilate inorganic things. We human beings have been built up by eating. What we eat must be organic. Whenever we take in organic food, it works together with our organic body to build up our body. This is a good illustration of how the church can be built up. The church cannot be built up by adding something inorganic to it or by organizing it. The organic building up of the Body of Christ is altogether by the growth in life. Because the Body of Christ is an organism, its building up should be organic. In Paul's Epistles there are four particular books dealing with the building up of the Body of Christ—Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. These four books show that the building up of the Body of Christ must be organic because the Body is altogether a matter of life.

We can make an addition to a physical building or house because it is inorganic, but we cannot make an addition to a tree. The tree increases by growing because it is organic. The church should not have inorganic things added to it. The church needs to grow in life. Anything inorganic that is added to the church is false, like a false denture that has been added to our own body. A person's teeth were not added to his body but born into his body to be a part of his body organically. Today we must realize that the church can be built up only in the way of life, the organic way.

The inorganic, organizational way does not work, but whatever is organically begotten of the church or for the church really works. Today in the Lord's recovery there is the need of the increase, but we should not consider that the increase of the church comes by the way of addition. The increase of the church is for the increase of the Body of Christ in the organic way. In order to have the increase of the Body of Christ accomplished, there are four crucial organic matters that we greatly need: begetting, nourishing, perfecting, and prophesying. In this chapter we will fellowship concerning begetting, nourishing, and perfecting, and in the next chapter we will go on to talk about prophesying.

BEGETTING—TO BEAR FRUIT

For the organic building up of the Body of Christ, we first need to beget others, to bear fruit (1 Cor. 4:15; John 15:16a). In John 15 the Lord likened Himself with all the members of His Body to a vine tree with its branches. We the believers are the branches of Christ, the vine tree. This tree is for reproducing and for increasing by its branches bearing fruit. The branches of the tree bearing fruit is not by the way of addition but by the way of growth. When the vine tree bears fruit, it bears clusters of grapes. That is the issue of the rich flow of life from within. The fruit is not something just attached or added but something begotten by the outflow of the life from within. The Lord said in John 15:16 that He chose us and appointed us to go forth and bear fruit. He has chosen us and He has appointed us to go forth. What does *go forth* mean? This simply means you have to go to reach people. We go forth to beget people so that they become our fruit. In 1 Corinthians 4:15 Paul said to the Corinthians, "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." Because Paul begot them through the gospel of Christ, he was their father, and they were the fruit of the vine tree brought forth by him.

We need to realize that the preaching of the gospel to save sinners is the dispensing of the very elements of Christ into them. To minister, to dispense, the riches of Christ into people is the real and actual preaching of the gospel. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul says that he preached the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel. The gospel Paul preached was the riches of Christ. He did not preach mere doctrine or theology. He preached Christ Himself as the Spirit of life. To minister Christ as life into others, we must be very living. A withering, dying branch cannot bring forth any fruit, because there is not much life within. To be the fruit-bearing branches of Christ, we must be living by the riches of Christ, which we will minister, impart, and dispense to others. Our preaching is to minister a living One, the life-giving Spirit, into others so that others may have the same life that we do. This is what it means to bear fruit. All the fruit that we bring forth will be attached to Christ, or grafted into Christ, organically.

To bear fruit is the initial step for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. Therefore, we all have to bear such a burden. We are branches of Christ, and as branches, we all have the duty to bear fruit. The Lord told us clearly that if we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off from the vine tree (John 15:2a, 6a). This does not mean that we will perish but that we will lose the rich enjoyment of Christ. Branches that have been cut off from the tree lose the riches of the tree as their enjoyment. This is quite serious.

In order to bear fruit, we must be living. It is difficult for branches to bear fruit if they are very old. It is easy for the new branches to bear fruit. In our recent past in the Lord's recovery, we did not have much increase. This indicates that we had become old and that we were not so fresh or new. Regardless of how many years we have been Christians, we have to be renewed. We have to be new and fresh. The way to be new is to contact the Lord. If a brother who is only sixteen years old does not contact the Lord for a period of time, he will become old. Once we contact the Lord, we will become fresh and new. After we contact the Lord, it will be easy for us to reach people in our freshness and newness to bring forth fruit. I hope that this fellowship will help us to realize our need to bear fruit. We should not excuse ourselves by saying that we are too old because we have been Christians for many years. Regardless of how many years we have been in Christ, we still need to be rich, new, and fresh to bear fruit.

Now I would like to give some practical suggestions concerning how to preach the gospel. Throughout church history, many good saints preached the gospel by knocking on people's doors. Knocking on doors is not the goal. Knocking on doors is for the preaching of the gospel. Before going out to preach the gospel, it is profitable to consider whom you should go to visit. You have to consider first your in-laws and relatives. You may have been in the Lord for many years, yet still there are people in your family who remain unbelieving. A principle is set up in Acts 1:8 where the Lord charged the disciples to evangelize first Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and then the uttermost part of the earth. We have to start our preaching of the gospel from the center to those who are closest to us, that is, to our in-laws and relatives. We owe the gospel to them. First, we have to knock on their doors. Then we can consider our friends, our colleagues, our classmates, and our neighbors. Our friends who get saved also have their in-laws, relatives, friends, colleagues, classmates, and neighbors. In this way the gospel will be spread through personal contacts.

NOURISHING—FOR THE FRUIT TO REMAIN

When we preach the gospel, we also need to consider how many people we will be able to care for. We may be able to save many people, but can we take care of them all? We do not need to save more than we are able to care for. We can get three or four saved and then begin to take care of them. We will be like mothers with these newborn babes. If we have too many children, who will cherish and nourish all these little ones? If we save many people and are not able to care for them, they will die. If we have twenty cousins, we should get only three or four of them saved and baptized. Then twice a week we can go to feed them. We should not expect, however, that all four under our care will remain. It may be that only one will be remaining fruit, but we should not be disappointed. We can go further to visit our classmates or colleagues to get two or three more saved. If we practice in this way, we will always have three or four new ones under our care. If we do this faithfully, we can gain two remaining fruit every year. The Lord Jesus chose us and appointed us that we should go forth and bear fruit and that our fruit should remain. When four people get saved through our gospel preaching, we do not need to knock on more doors. We should take care of these four new ones. We should expect to bear two remaining fruit in a year.

Perhaps one-third of the saints will be able to go out to preach the gospel. When they get many baptized, they can share these new ones with others who cannot go to knock on doors. They can let the other saints "adopt" some of the new ones they have begotten. Perhaps we begot five children, but we can take care of only three. Then we can ask some other brothers and sisters to care for the remaining two. If the church does well in bearing fruit, it will be doubled yearly. Although we may have baptized many in the past, not many of them remained, because we did not spend adequate time to nourish them, to take care of them, and to raise them up. After mothers give birth to children, they have to spend time to cherish them, nourish them, and take care of them for a long time. If we devote two days a week, three hours each day, to the Lord for the gospel and the care of new ones and do this regularly all year, each of us will gain two remaining fruit yearly.

We may think that bearing two fruit yearly is easy, but it depends upon our labor. This is why we need a revival every day. We need to go to the Lord every morning. A morning is a new start. According to the natural law, the sun rises every twenty-four hours. We also need to rise with the sun every morning to be revived by the Lord. There is a big boulevard in San Francisco named Sunset Boulevard. I do not particularly care for the name of this boulevard because I do not want to live in the "sunset" but in the "sunrise." Every morning we need to go to the Lord to enjoy Him as a new sunrise (Luke 1:78). Every morning we can have a new start with the Lord. It is possible for us to have three hundred sixty-five new starts each year. Proverbs 4:18 says, "The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, / Which shines brighter and brighter until the full day." We must have a new start every day. We should not start our day without first going to the Lord in the morning. If we contact the Lord, we will be fresh, new, and rich. Then we can separate two evenings a week, three hours each evening, to visit people for the preaching of the gospel, to have home meetings to nourish the new ones, or to have small group meetings to teach and perfect them.

We must look to the Lord for the salvation of our in-laws, relatives, friends, neighbors, classmates, and colleagues. We do not necessarily need to knock on "new doors" when so many of those related to us and around us need the Lord's salvation. The point is that we need to beget others, to bear fruit, by preaching the gospel to save sinners for the organic building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 3:8-11). If we preach the gospel in this way, the ones saved through us will be organic. Once they have been begotten, we need to be like

nursing mothers to nourish them so that our fruit will remain. If we bear fruit yearly, we will live a joyful life. To see people saved is a real joy. Furthermore, when we see the new ones under our care growing in small things and in great things, we will be very happy.

We need to do our best to go to visit people to save them and to go to the homes of the saved ones to meet with them. Our meeting with them should not be in a legal, dead way but in a living and flexible way, which is the organic way. When we go to a home meeting, we must be full of life, singing, praising, and praying. Perhaps you will be singing a hymn while you are knocking on the new ones' door. When they open the door, they can join your singing. Then the home meeting will start in a living way. We do not need to be set on what we would share in the home meeting. We need to be flexible and allow them to ask questions. The new one whom we have recently baptized may say, "It is so strange. It seems to me that since I was baptized, someone or something is within me telling me to do this and not to do that. What is this?" Then we can tell him, "That is the Lord Jesus within you. Before you were baptized, you did not have this experience, but now you do." We can take this opportunity to fellowship with him for about fifteen minutes, teaching him that as a saved person, the Lord Jesus is living within him and is telling him what to do and what not to do. We can fellowship with him, cherishing him and encouraging him to go on. After six months of meeting with this new one on a regular basis, he can be established.

We need to exercise to nourish the new believers for our fruit to remain (John 21:15-17; 15:16b) by having home meetings with them. In these home meetings we can cherish the newly baptized ones as a nursing mother (1 Thes. 2:7) for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. All the steps of the way to practice the Lord's present recovery are for this organic building. We may bring people to Christ for their salvation, but they may not have anything to do with the church organically. However, when we preach the gospel organically and nourish the new ones organically, the result will also be organic for the building up of the Body in the organic way. Our practice is not only to help the church to increase but also to build up the organic Body of Christ.

PERFECTING—TO EQUIP THE SAINTS

We need to go on from nourishing the new ones in the home meetings to perfecting the saints, to equipping them (Eph. 4:12). In these small group meetings we need to teach the believers as a father (1 Thes. 2:11) so that they can carry out the practical church life for the work of the New Testament ministry—the organic building up of the Body of Christ. We can bring three or four new families together to form a group. The perfecting of the saints can take place in the small groups. Ephesians 4:11-12 says that Christ, the Head, has given some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers for the perfecting of the saints. We may have thought that the evangelists were just for the preaching of the gospel, but Ephesians 4 tells us that they are for the perfecting of the saints. The perfecting carried out in the small groups is by the way of fellowship, prayer, and mutual care. We can fellowship with the newly baptized ones to know their condition so that we can take care of their spiritual, physical, or financial situation and pray for them. We can also take about fifteen minutes to teach them the truth. If we teach the truth to them for fifteen minutes a week, they will accumulate the proper knowledge of the truth. We also have to help them to seek after the growth in life. In these meetings are fellowship, prayer, mutual care, the teaching of the truth, and the encouragement to seek after the growth in life.

After six months of these kinds of meetings, the new ones will be equipped to carry out the practical church life. Actually, the practical church life is carried out in the small groups, not in a big congregation. The practical church life cannot be carried out with a big congregation. With the traditional church meetings in which one person speaks and the rest listen, general teaching can be released but no particular perfecting can be carried out. For people to be productive in human society, they must receive some particular training, or perfecting. In colleges, students study a particular major. Others may go to trade schools to learn a particular trade. In the past we mainly had general teaching without particular perfecting. Nearly every Lord's Day a message was given, but the teaching was too general. By having the small groups, however, everything will be particular. Everyone in the small group meetings will be perfected to do what the gifted persons do. They will be perfected to go to preach the gospel to gain new ones, to take care of home meetings, and to take care of small group meetings. The twenty in one group may eventually become ten groups. In this way the saints will be perfected and the church will be increasing all the time.

We need the begetting through preaching the gospel, the nourishing of the new ones for remaining fruit, and the perfecting for the teaching, instructing, and educating of the saints. This will afford us a very practical church life that is full of life, altogether organic. Such a church will grow fast not only in numbers but also in life. If a church of one hundred saints doubles every year, this church can grow to one million within thirteen years. This is a thousand-percent increase. We had little increase in the past because we did not have the proper, scriptural practice. Now we need to rise up to take this organic way. In order to take this organic way, we need more prayer and even fasting. We need to have a thorough dealing with the Lord concerning our daily walk. We must be living persons, right persons, and dealt with persons. Then the power and the life will be with us, and all the riches of Christ will be our portion. Surely we will be living, strong, and full of the uplifted Christian virtues. This will make us prevailing in our service to the Lord.

To visit people with the gospel, to have home meetings with the new ones, and to have small group meetings with them should be considered as a part of the meetings of the church. The unbelievers spend their leisure time on worldly entertainment and amusement, but the best entertainment and amusement is the church life. We have to reconsider our situation. These crucial matters for the organic building up of the Body of Christ—begetting, nourishing, and perfecting—are not just the responsibility of the elders. They are the duty of all the saints. If we would devote two three-hour sessions a week to the Lord for the purpose of begetting, nourishing the new ones, and perfecting, equipping, the saints, we will see the positive results. All of us will be able to bear two remaining fruit yearly.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROPHESYING

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 14:12, 4-5, 31, 24, 1, 39a; Acts 5:20

According to the New Testament revelation, four crucial matters are needed to build up the church as the organic Body of Christ. As we have pointed out, these four crucial matters are begetting, nourishing, perfecting, and prophesying.

GOD'S INTENTION

God's intention, His heart's desire, is to have a Body to be the enlargement and expression of Christ. This is God's good pleasure based upon His plan. In eternity past before the foundation of the world, God had a plan, and this plan is His economy. God's economy is His arrangement to gain a Body for Christ, built up with human beings mingled with the divinity of the Triune God. God desires to have such a Body. For this purpose He created the heavens and the earth. The heavens are for the earth, and the earth is for man. The plant life and the animal life on the earth are for the human life. We partake of these forms of life to maintain our existence. We need to consider, however, what the purpose of our existence is on the earth. Many philosophers and scholars have not found the purpose of man's existence.

Three great matters in our human life on this earth are birth, marriage, and death. Without the church, without God, and without Christ, human life is a continuous cycle of birth, marriage, and death from generation to generation. Is man's purpose merely to be born, to get married, and to die? Many young people study hard and diligently so that they can make a living. After such hard labor they must face the responsibilities of a job and a family life that are full of troubles and problems. In the course of our human life, we eat, drink, and sleep. Is all of this the purpose of human life? Without the purpose of God to have the church, human life is vanity. The purpose of human life is the Body of Christ. This is the purpose for which God created the universe. Today we are in the center of God's purpose to build up the church as the organic, living Body of Christ.

BEGETTING

I am encouraged and happy to see that the churches are grounded in truth, in life, and in the experiences of Christ, but we need the increase. To build up this organic Body, we surely need people—the more the better. The Body of Christ is the fullness of the One who fills all in all. Surely such a Body must be universally vast and great. Consider the size of the universe. We cannot tell how long, how broad, how high, and how deep the universe is, but Christ fills all, and He is in all. This One needs a Body. Now we can see how big, how vast, the Body of Christ should be. To build such a great Body of Christ, there is the need of millions upon millions of persons. In Genesis 1 God blessed man and told him to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth (v. 28). This has been fulfilled today. The earth is full of men. God likes to see the earth full of people. God needs people. He needs you and He needs me. God needs millions and millions of people for His corporate expression. God has chosen these people, but how can God's chosen ones come to Him? They can come to Him through our going to them to contact them with God and bring God, Christ, the Bible, the gospel, and justification to them. The angels are not blessed to preach the gospel of grace. Only we human beings who have been chosen and regenerated by God have this privilege.

We need to eat Jesus and speak Jesus to people. Whatever we eat is what we will become. If we eat fish every day, we will even smell like fish. We are what we eat. This is why we need to eat Jesus. When we eat Jesus, we live by Jesus. When we eat Jesus, we have the inward feeling that we need to go to reach people. The happiest times of our Christian life are when we go to visit people. When we impart Christ into someone and baptize him into the Triune God, we are excited. Some who baptized three people in one evening were so excited that they had difficulty sleeping that night.

Recently in Orange County, IBM made the decision to send out two thousand of their sales personnel to knock on doors. They were not satisfied with the amount of their sales, so they sent out their sales personnel to visit people in their homes. We need to visit people with the gospel in the same way. It is best to go out in teams of three with at least one sister in each team. To build up the Body of Christ, we first need to have people. We need to "go fishing." The Lord Jesus used fishing as an illustration of gospel preaching. He told the disciples, "Come after Me, and I will make you fishers of men"

(Matt. 4:19). Fishermen do not invite the fish to come to them, but this is what we mostly did in the past. We need to go where the fish are.

If we endeavor to preach the gospel by visiting people where they are, the church can be doubled within a year. If a church of two hundred saints doubles every year, there will be over two hundred thousand saints in ten years. What an encouragement that would be! There is the strong possibility that this could happen if we all endeavor. We have to do business for the Lord (Luke 19:13). Big businesses are never satisfied or contented with what they have done. Their ambition for making profit is unlimited. It is easy, however, for us Christians to be contented with what we have done. If we endeavor, each of us can gain two remaining fruit in a year, and the church can double yearly. If we have a will to bear remaining fruit, God will give us the way. To preach the gospel by visiting people where they are is the real and practical preaching of the gospel. It is not practical to invite the fish to come to us.

One day we will all have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), and we will have to give an account to the Lord. The Lord desires that we would be fishers of men, so we must go fishing. We must go to gain people practically in an organic way for the building up of Christ's Body. We should not go in a light way but with much prayer, even fasting, to have a thorough dealing with the Lord. We have to go in a desperate way to beget people, to bear fruit. If we go in a desperate way, people will be begotten through us with the gospel, with God, with Christ, and with His divine, marvelous salvation.

NOURISHING AND PERFECTING

After baptizing people, we must bear the burden to care for them. If we baptize them, we will be like nursing mothers, loving them and considering them as little babes. We need to go back to them as soon as possible and then continue to go back to them again and again until they are established. These home meetings are for their nourishing and cherishing.

Then we can bring the new ones who live in the same neighborhood together for a small group gathering of perhaps twelve to twenty saints. In that small group we have to do everything to help them and fellowship with them. We can open up ourselves to them and allow them to open up themselves to us. Then we can have some prayer with them. We can ask them to care for us, and tell them that we will care for them. Then we will have the

mutual care as Christian brothers and sisters. The small group gathering will be a time for this mutual care. This kind of Christian care is the warm cherishing. When a mother puts her child into her bosom, she is cherishing him. In the small group gatherings we also need to teach the saints, giving them particular instructions concerning their daily life. This will help them to grow in life.

Therefore, in the small group meetings, we can fellowship with the new ones, pray for them, take care of them, teach them, and give them instructions for their growth in life. After half a year these new ones will grow up and can be raised up to bear some burden to do what we are doing. They can be perfected to preach the gospel, to take care of home meetings, and to have small group meetings. Through the begetting, the nourishing, and the perfecting, the church can be multiplied repeatedly.

To carry out these crucial matters, we need to love the Lord. Even if we feel that we do not love the Lord Jesus, His love is within us because we have been saved by Him. The divine love of Jesus is a hidden factor within us. We should sincerely pray, "Lord Jesus, I don't love You. Forgive me. Have mercy upon me. I want to love You. Make me love You. Constrain me with Your love for me to love You." Then the Lord will answer this prayer, and we will begin to love Him. When we touch the Lord directly, we get stirred up from within to love Him. Because we love Him, we have to cooperate with Him to accomplish His desire for the organic building up of His Body.

We need to come out of old, traditional Christianity. We need to be up-to-date with the Lord. The means of transportation on the earth has improved tremendously throughout history. Why would we travel by a mule wagon when we can take a 747? We need to pick up the best way to practice the church life, which is the scriptural way. We have to preach the gospel to sinners, have home meetings with them in their homes, and group them together to have small group gatherings where the mutual care and building can take place for them to grow in life and learn the truths. After six months to a year they will be able to repeat our work to do the work of the New Testament ministry, which is to build up the Body of Christ organically.

If we rise up to take care of these three crucial matters— begetting, nourishing, and perfecting—the atmosphere, the situation, the condition, and the environment of the entire church life will be changed and improved in

every way. All of us must rise up to do the work of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. According to the New Testament, all the believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). Paul tells us in Romans 15:16 that he ministered as a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit. To preach the gospel is to offer the Gentiles as a sacrifice to God for His satisfaction. This is altogether different from the practice of Christianity. We have no clergy or laity because we are all priests. We should all function as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers so that we can see the reality of the building up of the Body of Christ.

PROPHESYING

The Excelling Gift

Now we want to go on to see the fourth crucial matter for the organic building up of the Body of Christ—prophesying. First Corinthians 14 is an extraordinary chapter in the Bible because the entire chapter exalts prophesying. Verse 1 says, "Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." Verse 39 says, "So then, my brothers, desire earnestly the prophesying." Verse 12 says, "Since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church." The Greek word for *excel* may also be translated "abound." *Excel* is the best translation because it is used in the way of comparison. Paul's evaluation of speaking in tongues is low because it does not build up the Body of Christ. To prophesy, however, builds up the church as the Body of Christ. It excels all the other spiritual gifts, and it is the particular gift for the organic building up of the church (vv. 4-5). This is why Paul promotes and exalts the gift of prophesying.

The great lack among us is the building up of the Body of Christ. For us to be together is one thing, but to be built up is another thing. Togetherness is like the piling up of the building materials. The materials need to be fitted and built together for the building. The spiritual building up is accomplished by our prophesying. First Corinthians 14 is a unique chapter that talks about the building up of the church (vv. 4-5, 12, 26), and the unique excelling gift for this building is prophesying. Since we love the Lord and love the church, we must learn to prophesy.

The Universality of Prophesying

First Corinthians 14 reveals the universality of prophesying. The believers can all prophesy that all may learn and all may be encouraged (v. 31). The believers should all prophesy to convict people and to examine people (v. 24). When one person speaks and the rest listen, some general help can be given, but the riches of Christ can come only from a certain individual. If twenty speak in the meeting, the riches of Christ can be displayed in a much fuller way. Spontaneously, all the attendants in this meeting will be instructed and perfected. How rich such a meeting would be! Paul says that if we all prophesy in the church meeting, a new one will be convicted and examined by all, and the secrets of his heart will become manifest (vv. 24-25). He will see who he is and where he is. Then he will repent.

The Characteristic of Prophesying

The characteristic of prophesying is to speak for the Lord, to speak forth the Lord, and to speak the Lord into people, to minister Christ for the organic building up of the church, in larger meetings of the church. If our service in the church is only to preach the gospel, have home meetings, and have small group meetings, we have not arrived at the ultimate point for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ. We have to prophesy to build up the Body of Christ. We must seek to excel for the building up of the church. We must gain the skill, the ability, to speak the Lord forth into the listeners. We need to learn how to minister, how to dispense, Christ as everything into others that they may be nourished, strengthened, encouraged, and built up. If we come together every Lord's Day to prophesy, all the saints will be built up. This is not togetherness, the "piling up of materials," but it is the fitting, the knitting, and the joining—the building up of the organic Body of Christ.

To prophesy in 1 Corinthians 14 is not to predict. Even the majority of what Old Testament prophets spoke, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, was not prediction. Most of what Isaiah and Jeremiah wrote is a speaking forth of the Lord. The book of Isaiah is full of his rebuking of the children of Israel. This is speaking for the Lord and speaking forth the Lord. In the New Testament to prophesy is to speak for the Lord, to speak forth the Lord, and to speak the Lord into people. This is to minister Christ, to dispense Christ, into people. By our speaking, Christ can be ministered to the listeners, so we all have to learn to prophesy. We need to throw all our excuses into the "trash can." As long as we can speak, we are able to prophesy.

The Desire for Prophesying

We all need to have the desire for prophesying. This is why Paul tells us we need to pursue (v. 1a) and desire (vv. 1b, 39a) to prophesy. As we have pointed out, we also need to learn to prophesy. Because others learn something when we prophesy (v. 31), that means that we had to learn it first.

The Constituting Elements of Prophesying

According to our study of the New Testament, there are three constituting elements of prophesying: God's living word of life (Acts 5:20), the instant moving of the Spirit, and the view through the enlightening of the divine light. First, we need to be acquainted with the living word, so we need to read the Bible every day. Every morning we should spend ten minutes to pray-read two verses, dwell upon them, and enjoy the Lord in them. If we drive to work, we can pray-read these verses again on the way. If we pray-read two verses a day for six days a week, we can be saturated with six hundred twenty-four verses in a year. We will become saturated, soaked, and fully acquainted with these verses. This will give us the knowledge of the Word, and the proper expressions and utterance in our speaking.

The second element we need is the instant inspiration of the Spirit. Because we are persons dwelling in the Word, we will be in the fellowship of the Lord, and our spirit will be exercised and ready to receive the instant inspiration of the Holy Spirit at any time. We need the word of God, and we need the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Third, we need the view through the enlightening of the divine light. Our sky needs to be clear. Under the divine enlightenment we can see the real situation of ourselves, the church, and the saints. Because we have such a view, we can speak when the inspiration comes. We speak what we see with the divine word under the inspiration of the Spirit and with His enlightenment. This is prophesying.

According to our experience, it is good to have the larger church meetings divided into groups of about fifty saints to make it easier for more saints to prophesy. It is best to select a book such as Romans and cover about one chapter a week. This chapter can be divided into six sections for the six days of the week with two key verses in each section to pray-read, dwell on, and

dive into for our enjoyment of the Lord. By doing this, we will have some inspiration of the Spirit. Then we can write down a short reminder of the inspiration we receive each morning. On Saturday evening we can put these six inspirations together to compose a prophecy of no more than three minutes to speak in the church meeting on the Lord's Day. Some of the brothers may even function as coaches, instructors, or tutors to help the saints. After the saints compose a prophecy, they can present it to these brothers to help them improve it. We should practice our prophesying at home and either shorten it or lengthen it so that it is between two and a half to three minutes long. Then when we come to the church meeting, we will be prepared to speak for the Lord.

In the past the elders may have charged the saints to function, but the saints did not know what to speak or how to speak. With the fellowship that I have given in this chapter, we can have something to speak and can develop the skill to speak. This will fulfill 1 Corinthians 14:26—"Whenever you come together, each one has." When we come to the Lord's Day meeting, we already have something. We do not read what we have composed, but at the opportune time we speak what we have composed in a living way. Then our speaking will be full of riches. We can now say that we know how to prophesy, and we can have a prophecy for every church meeting. By our prophesying the church in our locality will be built up. We have the scriptural way of begetting people, nourishing the saints, perfecting the saints, and prophesying, speaking for the Lord. If we practice these four crucial matters, the church will be increased in number, and everyone will function to speak.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD IN THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:52; 6:5a; 11:24; 2:17; 1:8; 2:4; 4:8, 31; 13:9; 5:20; 6:7; 12:24; 19:20; 6:2; 8:4; 13:46, 44

In these days the Lord has been leading us into the vision and realization of the organic Body of Christ. The church as the Body of Christ is organic. The New Testament shows us that God's intention is to gain an organic Body for Christ. The church as the organic Body of Christ should be built up.

To build up our physical body is different from building up a house because a house is lifeless, inorganic, whereas our physical body is altogether organic. Anything that is organic is born of life and grows with life. We were born of our parents with life, and then we began to grow. The growth of our organic physical body is the real building up of our body. A newborn babe's growth into a husky man is his being built up. This husky man was not built up organizationally but organically. He grew by eating organic food. His growing up gradually was his being built up gradually. The procedure, or process, of such an organic building is hard to explain. For the growth, the building up, of our physical body, we need to eat and to drink. Without eating and drinking, our body cannot grow. This means that for our body to be built up, we need food and drink. We need the eating and the drinking to take in something organic into our being. Then we can grow.

Now we need to consider how the church as the organic Body of Christ is built up. We may not be clear about this because we may consider the church merely as a congregation, an assembly, or a gathering, but we need to see that the church is the Body of Christ. Since it is the Body, it is organic. The building up of the church is not a lifeless building but an organic building. This building is the growth of life, and for the growth of life there is the need of the supply of life. We need to be supplied with Christ as our food and drink. In the New Testament our spiritual food is the divine Word, and our spiritual drink is the Spirit. In the organic building up of the Body of Christ, we need

the Spirit as our spiritual drink and the Word as our spiritual food. God has ordained a way to give Himself to us according to His economy. He gives Himself to us in two forms—in the form of the Spirit and in the form of the Word. This is why the New Testament stresses the Spirit and the Word.

THE SPIRIT

God wants to have a Body for Christ, but how can He do it? The only way this Body can be produced is by God dispensing Himself into us, His chosen ones. God's intention is to have all of us built up together as the Body of Christ by the dispensing of Himself into our being. Not many Christians realize that God has been dispensed into them and that He wants to continue dispensing Himself into them. Now we need to consider how God can be dispensed into our being.

The Bible tells us that God was incarnated (John 1:14). He lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. Then He went to the cross and accomplished an all-inclusive death, a death that solves all our problems and takes care of all our needs. We have the problems of sin, sins, the world, the flesh, the old man, the natural man, and the old creation. In addition to these things, the enemy of God, Satan, is indwelling our flesh. But Christ died on the cross, and His unique, all-inclusive death dealt with all these negative things. After three days He rose up and entered into resurrection. In resurrection He changed into another form by becoming the life-giving Spirit.

First Corinthians 15:45b says that the last Adam, Christ in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit. The Savior, who died on the cross in His physical body, became a life-giving Spirit in His resurrection. He is the all-inclusive One. As the One who died on the cross, He took away all our problems, and as the One who is the life-giving Spirit, He is qualified and capable of imparting Himself into us as our life. Today this One is within us. The very God in whom we believe and whom we worship is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16). We all need to declare, "Jesus Christ is in me!" (2 Cor. 13:5). Jesus Christ is the very God embodied in man. This man died on the cross for the accomplishment of an all-inclusive redemption, and He has entered into resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit. Today He is the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit.

According to the divine revelation in the Bible, our God is triune. Our God is one, yet He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. God is one, yet He is three. He is three-one. The Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit, is the consummation of the Triune God. He is God reaching us. At one time God dwelt far away from us in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16), but then He came to us in incarnation. He went to the cross to die for us, and in resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit to enter into us. Now in us He is the consummation of God, the reaching of God to us. The Spirit is God reaching us. Because we have the Spirit within us (Rom. 8:9), we have the Son and the Father within us (John 14:20; Eph. 4:6). The Spirit of the Triune God is His consummation, His reaching us. This Spirit is infusing us and dispensing Himself into us. He is infusing His riches into our being.

Since we have believed in the Lord Jesus, we have been changed inwardly. The Lord is within us changing our disposition and our character. This change is called transformation. We are being transformed from our natural image to the glorious image of the Divine Trinity by God's dispensing of His essence and riches into our being to change us dispositionally (2 Cor. 3:18). We are being transformed inwardly, not corrected outwardly. We have been and are still being transformed by God with His essence, and His essence is the Spirit.

In the New Testament the consummated Spirit of God, who is in us, is likened to the air (John 20:22). When we have air in a room we may not sense it, but if the room is short of air, we will surely sense it. The Spirit is like the air that we cannot see but sense. We can sense that there is something within us that we did not have in the past. This is a person, the Spirit of God. Sometimes we may be happy, and at other times we may be low, but we have the sense that there is another One within us who is dear, near, and precious. Sometimes when we are weak, this One strengthens us. We need to experience the many aspects of the dear, precious presence of the one all-inclusive Spirit. When we offend Him or grieve Him, it is hard for us to be happy, because He is not happy within us.

We can enjoy this Spirit by praying, and we pray by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 10:12). We need to call "O Lord Jesus." We must learn to pray by inserting "O Lord Jesus." If we call on the Lord for five minutes, we will be happy. If we continue to call for another five minutes, we will be excited and out of ourselves. Whenever we turn our prayer into calling on the Lord, we will be enlivened. Calling on the Lord makes us alive. We all need to

find a time to call on the Lord. We can even call silently and inwardly when others are around. This is the way to exercise ourselves to enjoy God's essence, and God's essence is the Spirit in our spirit.

The way to exercise our spirit to touch the Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. When we call "O Lord Jesus," the very Spirit who indwells our spirit will be stirred up to anoint us with Himself as the ointment. By this inward anointing, the Spirit dispenses the riches of God's divine essence into our being. By this anointing, we are fed, nourished, satisfied, supplied, and supported, and we grow with the divine essence of God. In order to grow, a young child must eat and drink. We must take in the divine essence of God so that we can grow with the growth of God (Col. 2:19).

To grow with the divine essence of God, we need to be filled with the Spirit essentially and economically. The essential Spirit dwells in us as our life and person (Acts 13:52; 6:5a; 11:24), and the economical Spirit has been poured out upon us as our power and authority (2:17; 1:8; 2:4; 4:8, 31; 13:9). How can we be full of the Spirit inwardly and filled with the Spirit outwardly in our experience? We have to pray by always inserting "O Lord Jesus." Sometimes I am very busy, but even while I am putting on my shoes, I can call "O Lord Jesus." Whenever we call on the Lord Jesus, we are fed, nourished, and supplied. This is the way to gain the divine essence for our enjoyment. When we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, our spirit is exercised, and the divine Spirit within our spirit anoints us with all the riches of the divine essence. Then we will grow, and this growth is the building up of the Body of Christ. When we are built up in the Spirit, that means that a part of the Body of Christ is built up. As we all exercise to call on the Lord, the entire Body of Christ is built up by the growth in life through the enjoyment of the rich essence of God in our spirit.

THE WORD

Now we want to go on to see the position of the Word in the organic building up of the church. The Bible tells us that the Spirit is God and that the Word is God. In other words, God is the Spirit and the Word. We have seen that God as the Spirit is our supply. John 4:24 tells us that God is Spirit, and John 1:1 says that the Word was God. God, the Spirit, and the Word are one. We have one wonderful Savior, who is God, the Spirit, and the Word to us. Furthermore, the Word is the Spirit. In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "The

words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." Ephesians 6:17 speaks of the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God. The Word is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Word.

When I call on the name of the Lord and pray, I have the deep sensation that the Spirit is within me. Although I have this inward, divine sensation, I may not understand much. When I come to the Word, the Word speaks to me and explains something to me. The Word explains to me what I have sensed. The Word gives me the definition of the sensations of the Spirit within me. Then I speak the word to the saints according to my sensation of the Spirit within me. When we receive the Word, it becomes the Spirit within us. Then the Spirit within us becomes the word uttered by us. When some receive this word, it enters into them and becomes the Spirit. The Spirit and the Word are one.

We must pray by calling on the name of the Lord, and we must read the Bible so that we can have both the Spirit and the Word. If we merely read the Word without much prayer by calling on the Lord, we will have only the Word without the Spirit. Then the Word will be very dry and empty. Our reading of the Word will be empty, mental stimulus. While we are reading, we need to pray, and while we are praying, we should call on the name of the Lord. We should make praying, calling, and reading one thing. Calling on the Lord's name is for praying, and praying is for reading. Eventually, our reading of the Bible becomes pray-reading by calling.

In the Bible we are told that we have to feed on the divine Word, that we have to eat the Word (Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; John 6:57, 63). We should not just read, understand, and receive the Word in a doctrinal way, but we have to take the Word in by eating it. The best way to get into the Word in this way is to pray-read the Word. We should not merely exercise our eyes to read the Word and exercise our mind to understand and receive the Word in a doctrinal way. After reading, understanding, and receiving the Word, we have to exercise our spirit, because the Word is not just knowledge, but it is composed of the divine essence. In the word of the Bible is the divine essence. Surely we have to read, understand, and receive the Word by exercising our eyes, mind, and heart. Many of us, though, may stop here, thinking that we understand a certain verse or a part of the Word. We may understand it, but it has not been assimilated into our spiritual being. This is why we all have to learn to pray-read the Word by exercising our spirit.

Throughout the history of the church, many godly saints did not have the term *pray-read,* but they had the reality of pray-reading. They read the Word prayerfully, with prayer and by prayer. Whenever we pray, our spirit is exercised. To understand the Word is to exercise our mind, to receive the Word is to exercise our heart, and to pray is to exercise our spirit. Just as we walk by exercising our feet, we pray by exercising our spirit. We have to learn to exercise our spirit to eat the word of the Bible. After eating the word in our spirit, spontaneously something of God's essence will be assimilated into our spiritual being. This is similar to the physical food that we eat being digested and assimilated into our blood to become the cells and tissues of our physical being. Our physical being has been built up with food that we have eaten, digested, and assimilated. For the Body of Christ to be built up organically, we need the Word as our spiritual food.

If we only exercise our mind to read a verse like John 1:1 without exercising our spirit, it may be very dry and empty to us. We need to turn our reading into prayer. We need to read, pray, and call, "Lord, thank You that in the beginning was the Word. Thank You that You are the Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was You, Lord. Amen! Hallelujah! O Lord Jesus, You were in the beginning as the Word." By reading, praying, and calling with such a verse, we are watered, stirred up, enlightened, and made alive. We should combine reading, praying, and calling together. We need to read by praying and pray by calling on the name of the Lord. In this way we can receive God as the Spirit and the Word. When we receive God as the Spirit, we are drinking, and when we receive God as the Word, we are eating. Thus, we enjoy God as our drink and food, and we are nourished, satisfied, supplied, saturated, and enlivened.

Sometimes people ask me why I am so fresh, living, and active. The key is to contact the very God by the Spirit. He is the Spirit within us. He is so close to us. He is in our spirit, but we have to be positive and aggressive all the time to contact Him. It is good to call on the Lord ten times before we pray. This calling makes our prayer so living. We may have prayed ourselves to sleep in the past because we did not touch God in our prayer. God is not only near us but also in us as the Spirit, so we must exercise our spirit. When we call "O Lord Jesus," we are enlivened in our prayer. We need to exercise our spirit to touch the Spirit. Then we can open up the Word to read by praying and to pray by calling on the name of the Lord. We can blend and mix our reading,

praying, and calling into one. Then we will touch God, touch the Spirit, and touch the Word.

God is not only the Spirit and the Word but also the light. When we contact God in the way of pray-reading and calling, we will touch God's life, be brought into God's life, and in this life, we will see the light. We will be enlightened and exposed to realize our real condition and situation. Spontaneously, we will be like Isaiah who said to the Lord, "I am a man of unclean lips, / And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell" (Isa. 6:5).

God is the Spirit, the Word, the light, and also the divine love. When we touch God as the Spirit and the Word, we are nourished, saturated, and enlightened. Furthermore, He ministers Himself into us as love so that we can love even our enemies (Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:20). Sometimes we will be enlightened to see that we need to apologize to someone or make restitution. When we stay with God for a time, He will be love to us. God as love will be dispensed into our being, and this love enables us to apologize to people. We can enjoy God as the Spirit and the Word. Then we enjoy God as light and love. By this we are altogether enlightened, exposed, and supplied, being ministered to by God to enjoy Him as our bountiful supply. This is the way to be built up, to grow. If we all take this way, the entire Body of Christ will be built up with the Spirit and with the Word.

God's word is the constant word of God (Acts 4:31) and the instant word of life (5:20). Because the word is a matter of life, it can grow (6:7), multiply (12:24), and be strong (19:20). The word is strong, so it is prevailing. It can overcome all the enemies. Because the word prevailed to grow and multiply in Acts, the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied exceedingly (6:7). For the number of the church to increase, we all have to learn not only to enjoy the word but also to speak the word. The apostles did not forsake the word (v. 2), the believers announced the word of the gospel (8:4), the apostles spoke the word (13:46), and people listened to the word (v. 44).

We have to stick ourselves to the word and speak the word with the Spirit. When we speak, we need to call on the Lord inwardly. When we speak the word, we need the Spirit. The way to get the Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when we speak, the Spirit speaks, and we have the divine speaking in our speaking. Then the very Lord who is one spirit with us speaks in our speaking. This makes our speaking God's oracle because not only are

we speaking but also God is speaking in our speaking. Thank the Lord for the Spirit and the Word in the organic building up of the church.

CHAPTER SIX

TO SAVE SINNERS AND TO CHERISH AND NOURISH THE NEWLY BAPTIZED ONES

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:1-6; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:15; Rom. 12:5; John 15:16; 1 Thes. 2:7; John 21:15-17

In the previous chapter we saw the crucial need for the Spirit and the Word in the organic building up of the church. In this chapter we want to see that we need to cooperate with the Lord to save sinners and to cherish and nourish the newly baptized ones for the organic building up of the church.

SAVING SINNERS

I am burdened for this matter of saving sinners because, generally speaking, many of us do not know its real significance. According to the thought of many, to save sinners is merely to rescue them from hell so that they may go to heaven. Although it is correct to say that to save sinners is to rescue them from eternal perdition, this is not God's central thought, His eternal intention. The entire Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, unveils that God's heart's desire is to build up a Body for Christ. God desires to gain a Body for Christ. Christ is the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9), and He needs a Body for His expression that God may also be expressed in Christ. The thought of rescuing sinners from hell that they may go to heaven is natural and traditional. We are burdened to save sinners for the building up of the Body of Christ. To save sinners is to regenerate fallen people that they may become members of the organic Body of Christ.

In order to save sinners, we have to visit people where they are (Luke 10:1-6). We have to visit people to disciple them. The Lord told us in Matthew 28:19 to go and disciple the nations, baptizing them into the Triune God. There are many debates among Christians concerning the way to baptize people, but we need to see that when we baptize people, we are baptizing them into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The

name denotes the person, so we are immersing people into the very person of the Triune God.

We may preach the gospel and baptize people according to our natural thought and concept. *Hymns,* #921 in our hymnal says,

Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful,
Jesus will save.

The thought in this hymn is that the pitiful sinners need to repent. Although they are slighting Jesus, He is waiting for them. He is merciful and will save them. This hymn is very good in the thought that the sinners are perishing and that we need to rescue them, but the divine revelation conveyed in this hymn is too low and too shallow.

To save sinners is to minister Christ in His riches to people. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:8 that he was given grace to preach the unsearchable, or untraceable, riches of Christ as the gospel. Paul's gospel was not doctrinal teaching or theology. Paul's gospel was the untraceable riches of Christ. Paul preached a person, and this person's riches are untraceable. Our gospel to the nations must be the unsearchable riches of Christ.

To save sinners is also to beget them as children of God that they may become the members of the organic Body of Christ (1 Cor. 4:15; Rom. 12:5). They are enemies of God, and you have to beget them that they may become children of God. Your begetting them causes them to have a great change of life, change of nature, and change of character. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:15, "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 begot the Corinthians to make them children of God. When someone is begotten by us through the gospel, he is regenerated.

When we are preaching the gospel to people, is our intention to beget them? Do we preach the gospel with the understanding that we are going to make people members of the organic Body of Christ? We may have had only the intention to rescue the perishing, fallen sinners. The Lord's gospel is not to invite sinners to go to heaven, but the Bible does tell us that we are going to

make sinners God's children. When they become God's children, they become living members of the organic Body of Christ. We need a vision from the heavens to see what it is to save sinners. Then our understanding and our view concerning the preaching of the gospel will be revolutionized. We are not preaching the gospel to save sinners into heaven but to make them the living members of the Body of Christ. Our concept should be changed.

To save sinners is to bear fruit (John 15:16a). In John 15 the Lord told us that He is the vine tree and that we are His branches. He also said that as the branches of the vine tree, we have to bear fruit. To bear fruit is to have an overflow of the inner life. If the branches enjoy the rich supply of the inner life-juice, the inner life-juice will have an issue, and this issue is fruit. If the branches are very dry, they will not be able to bear fruit. The branches' bearing of fruit is the impartation of the life from within them. Do we have the thought that our preaching of the gospel is a dispensing of the life element within us to someone else? This truth is not according to our natural concept. To preach the gospel is to impart, to dispense, the very inner life from within us to others for their regeneration.

We all have to build up a habit of preaching the gospel in the prevailing way revealed in the Scriptures, not in our natural way. The prevailing way to preach the gospel is to disciple the nations and baptize them into the Triune God, to minister Christ in His riches to the nations, to beget sinners, making them children of God that they may become members of the organic Body of Christ, and to bear fruit for the glorification, the expression, of the Father.

The Lord has shown us that He desires to build up His organic Body in the organic way. For this organic building He needs an increase. We can gain this increase by begetting the sinners to make them living members of the organic Body of Christ. In the past our rate of increase was very low. Furthermore, because our concept was too low concerning the preaching of the gospel, the concept of the ones whom we brought to the Lord was also low. We did not have the concept that the preaching of the gospel is for the organic building up of the organic Body of Christ. Neither the preachers nor the saved ones have the proper concept of preaching the gospel for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. When people get saved through our preaching of the gospel, we should be full of joy that they have become living members of Christ's organic Body. The Lord desires to build up His organic Body, yet there is a shortage of material. The building is going on, but there is not much

material with which to build. We bring sinners into the building by regenerating them. They are grafted into Christ and made alive to be the living members of the Body of Christ. The organic preaching of the gospel is a practical part of the building up of the Body of Christ.

LEARNING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE PREVAILING WAY

I hope that in the Lord's recovery, our concept concerning going out to preach the gospel will be altogether revolutionized. If I ask you what you are going to do when you are going to preach the gospel, you should say, "I am going to beget some that they may become the members of the organic Body of Christ." We should drop the thought of saving sinners from hell so that they can go to heaven. This is according to our natural thought. We have to pick up the thought that we are going to gain some living members for Christ. Then we will have the intention to gain materials for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. We need to have such a change in our concept. We need to tell people, "You have nothing to do with Christ, but I am here to beget you, to regenerate you, to make you a living member of Christ." If we speak in this way, the Spirit will cooperate with us. Then these new ones will be deeply impressed that they have become living members of the organic Body of Christ. From the first day of their Christian life, they will have received the proper understanding and realization of what it means to be saved.

To come to a sinner and tell him right away that you are here to disciple him and baptize him into the Triune God is not the wisest way to begin to preach the gospel. The wisest way is to say, "I have come here to share the riches of Christ with you, and I have the right and the position to minister some of these riches into you." Then they may ask, "What are the riches of Christ?" We can tell them that the riches of Christ are different blessings. They may ask, "What are the blessings?" We can tell them: "Peace is a blessing, life is a blessing, light is a blessing, and joy is a blessing. Many times we are miserable. We want to have peace and be joyful, yet we cannot. Christ is life, Christ is joy, Christ is peace, Christ is light, and Christ is everything that we need. I have come here to bring Christ as all these blessings to you." We need to preach the gospel in this way.

We are too natural in preaching the gospel. We may think that Ephesians 3:8 is too deep to share with unbelievers. Instead, we may want to tell them

that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). This word is very rich, but in our natural way of preaching, we make it poor. Jesus Christ's coming into the world implies a lot. Whether this word is rich or not depends upon how we explain and expound it. We must learn to get out of the natural way and into the proper, spiritual, divine way. To minister the riches of Christ is to bring all the blessings of Christ, with Christ, and through Christ to the pitiful sinners. By doing this, we are imparting Christ in His riches to people. If we preach Christ in this way, the Holy Spirit will be happy with us. He will strengthen us, anoint us, and use our word to penetrate into people's inward parts. We have to impart, to dispense, whatever Christ is and whatever Christ has into people's inner being. Then the Holy Spirit will confirm, strengthen, and impress people with our words, and they will be regenerated.

In your preaching of the gospel, you may also share with people what it means to be begotten of God. You may say, "We are human beings born of our parents, but God's intention is to regenerate us with His life. We have only the human life, not the super life. The super life is the divine life, God's life. Whether our human life is good or bad, it is still too low. We may want to be humble, but we cannot. We may want to love others, but our love is short and is soon exhausted. Our life is too limited. We need a super life, and this life is God's life. God's intention is to give His life to us that we may be reborn. I came here with God's life so that you can receive this life. While I am talking with you, if you open yourself, this life in the Spirit will enter into you and beget you. Our human life is invisible and mysterious, and the divine life is invisible and even more mysterious. But you can receive this marvelous divine life." Then you can direct him to pray with you to receive Christ as his life. Such preaching is divine preaching and corresponds with what is unveiled to us of the Lord in the four Gospels. The Lord preached the gospel in a divine way, but many times we preach in a natural way.

In order to bear fruit, we have to abide in the Lord. When the branches are abiding in the tree, the life-juice flows into them. This life-juice is so rich, fresh, and energizing. The issue of the branches being filled with this rich life-juice is their bearing of fruit. We may even tell the ones to whom we are preaching that our speaking to them is a flowing, an issue, of the divine life within us.

In recent years many of us have been helped to preach the gospel by using the booklet *The Mystery of Human Life*. That booklet is written according to

the divine thought that we are containers, and God wants to be our content. We were made to contain God. The use of this booklet has been prevailing because it has such a thought. This booklet shows the three parts of man, the crucial part being the spirit of man, and touches the very center of the gospel preached according to God's economy. In our preaching of the gospel, we do not need to be limited to using this booklet, but we need to keep the principle of preaching the gospel in a divine way according to the divine thought. My fellowship here may be considered as some training on how to preach the gospel. We must learn to preach the gospel in the biblical way.

If we speak with people about ministering Christ in His riches, begetting sinners that they may become God's children and the members of the living Body of Christ, and bearing fruit, we can go on to speak concerning discipling the nations. We cannot disciple dogs to be men because dogs do not have the human life. If we were able to regenerate dogs with the human life, we would be able to disciple them in such a way. To disciple others implies that they have been regenerated with the divine life. The nations do not know anything concerning God, so we have to disciple them first by putting God's life into them. Then we can train them in the way that we would raise up our own children. To raise them up, to perfect them, is to disciple them.

The Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—is today the consummated Spirit. After His resurrection the Lord came back to the disciples and told them to disciple the nations, baptizing them into the Triune God, the processed, consummated God who is the all-inclusive Spirit. As those who are speaking by God, with God, and in God, we are qualified and able to put people into the consummated Spirit. We have to change the way of our preaching, and we need to have our concept revolutionized. When we go to preach the gospel, we have to speak with the understanding that we are speaking in the Triune God and with the Triune God. Because we are in the Triune God, who is the consummated Spirit as the air, we can put people into the Triune God. What we have fellowshipped above is the proper way to preach the gospel to save sinners in the Lord's new way for the organic building up of the Body of Christ.

BEING THE NURSING MOTHERS TO CHERISH AND NOURISH THE NEWLY BAPTIZED ONES

After we beget new believers and baptize them, they become our little children. Now we must be like mothers to nourish and cherish them. To nourish is to feed, and to cherish is to nurture with tender love and foster with tender care. The most effective way for a mother to cherish her babe is for her to hold him in her bosom. When the mother does this, the little one is warmly cherished and comforted. Many times when a little one cries, he is "praying" to his mother, asking her to cherish him. When she picks him up and puts him in her bosom, he will soon stop crying because he has been fostered with tender care. When we go to the home meetings to take care of the newly baptized ones, we need to have the realization that we are going to nourish and cherish them. This way of taking care of the home meetings is very effective. The new ones will feel cherished, comforted, and warmed up. They will lose any feeling of loneliness.

Paul told the Thessalonians, "We were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children" (1 Thes. 2:7). Paul likened himself to a nursing mother in his care for the new believers. We need to preach the gospel and take care of the newly baptized ones in the organic way, not in the old way. The organic way is the prevailing way. I hope that we can study these matters in small groups. This will revolutionize our way of preaching the gospel. We must preach the gospel in the organic way to beget sinners as children of God, making them the regenerated members of the Body of Christ. Following this we must exercise to cherish the new ones in their homes week by week. Within the first month after they are baptized, it is good to visit them ten times. After one month of this cherishing, the new ones will become settled and established. In the past we were short in caring for the new ones after we baptized them. As a result, many of the new ones disappeared after a few months. This was not Paul's way. Paul cherished the people whom he had begotten through the gospel. In addition to being like a nursing mother, Paul was also like an exhorting father to the new believers (v. 11).

In the full-time training in Taipei, we baptized thirty-eight thousand people in about eighteen months. We then realized that we had baptized too many because we did not have the manpower to take care of them. We should not beget more children in the gospel than we are able to care for. We need to cherish, nourish, feed, and raise up the new ones. After six months of this care, we can go out to beget a few more. If each of us bears two remaining fruit yearly, this will be wonderful. With so many people around us and related to

us, we can surely bear two remaining fruit a year. If we have a will to do this, there will be a way.

We should not trust in our fluctuating feelings in our labor in the gospel. We should just do our duty. Regardless of how they feel, mothers nourish and cherish their children day by day. Whether a mother feels well or not, she still does her duty to bring up her children. We have to consider that it is our daily duty to preach the gospel to make sinners the members of Christ and to raise them up by cherishing and nourishing them. One day we all will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give Him an account (2 Cor. 5:10). Can we tell the Lord in that day that we did not feel like preaching the gospel or taking care of new ones? If we say this, the Lord will call us an evil and slothful slave, and we will be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:26, 30). As the branches of Christ, our duty is to bear remaining fruit.

To cherish and nourish the newly baptized ones is to feed the lambs (John 21:15-17). In the Gospel of John we are charged to do two things: to bear fruit and to feed the lambs. To bear fruit is our daily duty. Abiding in the Lord is the condition for us to bear fruit. If we do not abide in the Lord, we cannot bear fruit. To feed the lambs, we need to love the Lord. To bear fruit is a matter of abiding, and to feed the lambs is a matter of loving. In John 21:15-17 the Lord asked Peter three times if he loved Him. When Peter told the Lord that he did love Him, the Lord told Peter to feed His lambs, shepherd His sheep, and feed His sheep. We have to abide in the Lord that we may bear fruit, and we have to love the Lord that we may have a heart to take care of His flock. The shepherd of a flock does not labor according to whether or not he feels like it. He does his duty to shepherd the flock and to feed the lambs day by day.

The Lord has shown us His biblical way to serve Him for the organic building up of the church. We have to gain more members for the Body of Christ by preaching the gospel, and we have to cherish and nourish the newly baptized ones to raise them up. This is our duty. If we fulfill this duty, I believe that the church can be doubled every year. As we endeavor to cooperate with the Lord, we will increase in number and grow in life. We all have to endeavor to do our daily duty to produce the living members of Christ's organic Body and to feed the young ones in Christ, to raise them up. In the next chapter we will see that we need to go further to perfect them to do what we are doing to serve the Lord. Then they will do what we are doing,

and they will perfect others. This will be repeated again and again from generation to generation, and we will see the increase of the Body and the growth in life of each member of the Body.

In Acts 20 we can see that after Paul established the church in Ephesus and appointed the elders there, he did not leave that church alone. At one time he stayed with them for three years. During those three years he taught them publicly (in big meetings) and from house to house (in home meetings), admonishing each one of the saints with tears day and night (vv. 20, 31). This indicates that he made himself available to the saints according to the times that were convenient for them, whether it was day or night. Paul said that he did not shrink from declaring to the saints all the counsel of God (v. 27). In those three years he perfected the Ephesian saints with all the knowledge concerning the things of God. We have to do the same kind of perfecting work that Paul did. Through this perfecting, everyone is enabled to do the work of an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, and a shepherd-teacher.

The Lord charged us to go forth to bear fruit and that our fruit should remain (John 15:16). To preach the gospel so that sinners can be regenerated to be the members of Christ is to bear fruit. To nourish the newly baptized ones in the home meetings is so that this fruit will remain. We also need to take care of the spiritual need of the new ones and their need in practical affairs, sicknesses, and other afflictions. In other words, we need to take care of them in any way and in all ways. We also have to pray for them. If we do these things, each of us will bear two remaining fruit every year.

ENJOYING CHRIST FOR FRUIT-BEARING AND LAMB FEEDING

When some hear this fellowship, they may think that there is too much demand upon them and that all they want to do is to enjoy Christ. We need to enjoy Christ, but we have to be balanced. We have to enjoy physical food every day, but if we eat and do not exercise, we will not be healthy. We need the working, the acting, and the exercising to balance our enjoyment. The Lord's word in John 15 is clear. He says that if we abide in Him, we will bear much fruit. To bear fruit is to exercise. We need to be charged and burdened to exercise.

We have seen in chapter 1 that the good pleasure of God's will is to gain a Body for Christ so that God can be expressed in Christ (Eph. 1:9-11, 22-23; 3:9-11). Furthermore, God's will was for Christ to come and replace all the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings with Himself so that He could be everything to us for our enjoyment (Heb. 10:5-10). John 15 goes on to show that our enjoyment of Christ issues in fruit-bearing. The Lord said that every branch in Him that did not bear fruit would be taken away (vv. 2, 6). This is serious. The Lord will cut off branches that do not bear fruit. This cutting off is not eternal perdition but the loss of the enjoyment of Christ. We may think that we are enjoying Christ and be self-deceived. Our enjoyment of Christ may not be genuine or normal. If it is genuine and normal, we will have the issue of fruit-bearing. A healthy branch of a vine bears fruit.

Our enjoyment of Christ issues not only in fruit-bearing but also in lamb feeding. We have to bear fruit to produce life, and we have to take care of the lambs by feeding and nourishing them for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. Fruit-bearing and the feeding of the lambs must balance the enjoyment of Christ. Without such a balance, we are off in some aspects of our experience of Christ. We are not normal. Our physical exercise should balance our physical eating. Otherwise, we will not be healthy. If I exercise by walking every day, this helps my digestion and maintains my health. We should not be deceived into thinking that we can enjoy Christ and do nothing. Our enjoyment must have some result. The enjoyment of Christ issues in fruit-bearing and lamb feeding. We all have to do these two things for today's living and for tomorrow's judgment seat. At the judgment seat we will have to give the Lord an account concerning these two things. For the building up of the organic Body of Christ, we need to enjoy Christ to bear fruit and feed His lambs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TO PERFECT THE SAINTS

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 2:11; Acts 20:20, 27, 31; John 21:16; Eph. 4:12-13, 15-16

We have seen that we need to cooperate with the Lord to save sinners and to nourish and cherish the newly baptized ones. In this chapter we want to see the crucial matter of the perfecting of the saints. This crucial item has been lacking among us, but Paul stresses this matter to the uttermost in the book of Ephesians, a crucial book concerning the Body of Christ. Paul says that the ascended Head, Christ, in His ascension has given some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers for the perfecting of the saints (4:11-12). Our concept may be only that the Head gave all these persons as gifts to His Body so that they could do their work. The apostles set up churches and appoint elders, the prophets speak for the Lord, the evangelists go out to preach the gospel to bring sinners to the Lord, and the shepherds and teachers do their shepherding and teaching work. It is correct to say that these gifted persons do their particular work, but according to the New Testament they do something additional to this. They perfect the saints.

PAUL'S PATTERN OF PERFECTING THE SAINTS

To see this crucial matter of the perfecting of the saints, we have to look at the apostle Paul in the book of Acts. The apostle Paul went to Ephesus, preached the gospel there, and established the church in Ephesus. Then he appointed the elders in the church. Afterward, Paul came back to visit the church in Ephesus. At one time he stayed there for three years (20:31). According to human experience, three years is a complete course of time. Our concept may be that of inviting a gifted person to come to help us and then sending him away. We do not have the concept of a gifted person coming to us and staying with us for an extended period of time for our perfecting. Paul's pattern in Acts 20 was that he stayed with the church in Ephesus for three

years. This was after the church in Ephesus had been established and the elders there had been appointed. He stayed there to perfect the saints.

We must admit that we are short of the perfecting of the saints by the gifted persons. I practiced to perfect the saints in my hometown of Chefoo in mainland China from 1940 through 1942. I taught them publicly in big meetings on the Lord's Day and on Wednesday evening. The rest of the time, day and night, I visited the saints. I visited them in two ways. Quite often a helper and I rode our bicycles to their homes. Also, on the evenings when there was no meeting, I invited twenty to twenty-five saints to come to eat with me in the meeting hall. I hired a brother to cook for us. I did this every week until after a period of time, I had invited quite a few hundred saints in Chefoo to eat with me. I ate with them and talked to them face to face. That was wonderful! In the day I went to visit them, and in the evening I invited them to come to eat with me. After three years of this kind of labor, a big revival broke forth on December 31, 1942. There was a period of revival for one hundred days. Paul's example in Acts 20 and my experience in Chefoo showed me that we desperately need the perfecting of the saints.

In Acts 20 Paul says that he taught the saints publicly and from house to house, admonishing each one of them for three years night and day with tears (vv. 20, 31). The phrase *from house to house,* means "according to houses." Paul went to all the homes of the saints in Ephesus to teach them. If we merely hold big meetings, we can only pass on general messages and do a general work, but we cannot do a particular work. The particular perfecting work can be carried out in the homes of the saints. If we go to visit the saints in their homes, we can talk to them face to face, discover their particular needs, and meet these needs in a particular way. This is what it means to perfect the saints.

PERFECTING THE SAINTS TO DO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

To perfect the saints is to equip them and to furnish them. People who join the army are taught, equipped, and furnished with what they need to fight the battle. In other words, they are perfected to be fighting soldiers. An apostle's perfecting of the saints is his equipping of the saints so that they are qualified to do the same work that he does. A professor of mathematics at a teachers' college also has such an intention. He has a planned curriculum that he takes

his students through so that they can graduate. His students are then perfected, equipped, furnished, to teach as he does. In the past many saints have been to "classes" year after year without ever "graduating." In other words, many saints have attended meeting after meeting for years without being perfected to do what the gifted persons do. The reason why not many among us have graduated, that is, have been perfected, is that we have mostly had general meetings with general "lectures." We have not had the particular perfecting work. Some saints who have been in the Lord's recovery for thirty-three years could not give a word concerning the truth of justification by faith or the truth concerning our reconciliation with God. This indicates a lack of perfecting.

To perfect the saints is to equip them and furnish them so that they can do the same work as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers. Eventually, all the saints will have the ability of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. If the joints (the gifted persons) rise up to do their duty to perfect the saints, the church in our locality will spread to other localities, and there will be many churches in our area.

Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ." The "ministry" here is the unique ministry, the New Testament ministry. According to the grammatical construction, the building up of the Body of Christ is the work of the ministry. The gifted persons perfect the saints, and the perfected saints do the direct building work. After being perfected, the perfected saints do the work of the ministry to build up the Body of Christ directly. Many of us have not received that much perfecting by the gifts the Lord has given to His Body. In our speaking for the Lord to prophesy, the content may be good, but our presentation, tone, and style may not be suitable because we have not received that much perfecting.

As the Apostles Do

We need to perfect the saints as the apostles do. Paul is a wonderful pattern to us of what an apostle should do. In 1 Thessalonians 2:11 we see that Paul exhorted the believers, consoled them, and testified to them as a father. Acts 20:20 and 27 tell us that Paul taught the believers publicly and from house to

house, not shrinking from declaring to them all the counsel of God. Acts 20:31 says that Paul admonished each one of the believers with tears night and day. Paul spent much time to tell the Ephesians concerning God's eternal economy. He even wrote a marvelous Epistle to them of six chapters telling them about the counsel of God's will (Eph. 1:11). Paul did not just teach the saints publicly in big meetings, but he also went to all the homes of the believers, admonishing each one of them with tears night and day. *Night and day* means that the apostle was available to the saints according to their convenience. If the saints did not have the time during the day, Paul would go to them in the night. If they did not have the time in the night, he would go to them in the day. Paul was available to the saints, and he was flexible to visit the saints according to their convenience. Paul said that during the three years he was with the saints in Ephesus, he did not cease admonishing them. We all have to learn from Paul's example.

On the one hand, all of us need to be perfected to do the work of the ministry. On the other hand, we have to realize that many of us have received some perfecting in our years in the church life. Actually, the church meetings are meetings of perfecting. All of us have been equipped to a certain degree, and we have been furnished with some knowledge of the Bible and with some experiences of Christ. Now we have to begin to do the same thing as the gifted ones do.

After we baptize some, we need to go back and have home meetings with them. When we go to visit the newly baptized ones, we should not shepherd them and teach them in the traditional, natural, and old way. We should not go to them in the type of a preacher. When we come to their door, we may be singing the chorus of a hymn, and we can ask them to join us. Of course, in the real situation everything will be living, flexible, and spontaneous. In our fellowship with them, we need to help them to talk about their enjoyment and experience of Christ and the enlightenment they have received from the Word.

We should not meet with them in a formal way. We need to talk with them in a living way to meet their need. We can use what they say to bring up a subject in a spontaneous way. Sometimes we may have a lesson from *Truth Lessons* or *Life Lessons*, but we should not come to the home meeting merely to teach that lesson. In our talk with the new ones, they may bring up a subject that is so fitting with the lesson that we choose. We can talk with them

about the contents of that message and at a certain point let them read a certain paragraph. We do not need to speak too much, perhaps only fifteen minutes to give them one point. This is the teaching of the truth. In this way, gradually, the new ones can be fully established in two or three months. They will continually come to the meeting, and they will not be led astray by other groups. Spontaneously, we can group them with some other new ones in the neighborhood. Three or four families grouped together can become a small group.

In this small group meeting we can have fellowship together and prayer. Perhaps one person would say, "Brothers, one brother is not among us because he was in a car accident." Based upon this brother's report, we can pray. After this prayer we can have some fellowship. Then we will know the real situation of all the members of the group. After listening to the fellowship, we can realize that a certain brother may have difficulties in his financial situation. Then we can pray for him and take care of him. This brings in the mutual care.

Some of the new ones may ask some questions that will give an opportunity for the teaching of the truth. One brother may say that he used to smoke before he got saved, but now he does not have the peace to smoke. He may ask why this is the case. This opens up a door for us to teach the truth. We can tell him that he does not have the taste to smoke anymore because the Lord Jesus is in him. Many members in the group can share something on this point. We can help this new brother to follow the inner anointing. We can point out to him that his inner sensation and feeling of not having the peace to smoke is of the Lord and that this is the Lord's moving in him, the inner anointing.

We need to break all formalities and arrangements and avoid any kind of program. The small group meeting should be very living and flexible. We need to meet in these small groups week after week. After about one year of meeting in this way, everyone can be edified and perfected. Everyone will be growing in life and will be advancing in the knowledge of the biblical truths. After a year of these group meetings, we can encourage the new ones to bear the burden to carry out the church life. We may say, "Brothers, we have been meeting this way for about one year. Now we all have to go out to get new ones. Maybe ten of us can go out to gain people. After we gain these new ones, we can raise them up in the same way that we were raised up. We can have

home meetings with them and group them together for small group meetings." In this way the church will be increased from one generation of saints to another generation. One small group meeting can branch out into eleven small group meetings. Ten of the saints can go out to carry out the same work of saving sinners, having home meetings with them, and forming them into group meetings. In this way everyone will be occupied in the Lord's service, and spontaneously the entire church will be the universal priesthood.

In the past we did not see clearly the scriptural way to carry out the Lord's recovery. As a result, we did a lot of groping in our service. If I do not know where the light switch is in a room, all I can do is grope in the darkness. But if I know where the switch is and turn it on, I can do things in an efficient way. Because the Lord has shown us His scriptural way to practice the church life, we will be successful if we rise up to cooperate with the Lord. Within three or four years we will see the increase of the church and the evidence of the growth in life. After about a year the new ones can be perfected to repeat our work. This is the reality of the gifted ones perfecting the saints unto the work of the ministry, which is the unique ministry of the New Testament to build up the Body of Christ.

As the Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherds and Teachers Do

We also need to perfect the saints as the prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers do. We need to prophesy to others; that is, we need to speak for the Lord, ministering the Lord into others. We also need to teach and instruct the believers to prophesy. We need to perfect the saints as the evangelists do by stirring up the believers to have a burning spirit for the gospel and by teaching and instructing the believers to preach the gospel. Finally, we need to perfect the saints as the shepherds and teachers do. The shepherds and teachers shepherd the believers by feeding and taking care of them that the believers may grow up in life (John 21:16). They also teach the believers in the knowledge of spiritual things and the things concerning God and His New Testament economy. Week after week we have to teach the new believers as Paul did. Paul did not shrink from declaring to the saints all the things that were profitable to them. He declared to them all the counsel of God. We should do the same thing. I believe that within about one year, most of the attendants of these small groups will be edified, joined together, and

perfected. Then they can repeat the New Testament work to build up the Body of Christ as the gifted persons do.

Gathering the Believers into Small Groups for the Organic Building Up of the Body of Christ

We need to gather the believers into small groups and have group meetings with them regularly for fellowship, prayer, raising up, building up, and carrying out the practical church life so that they may arrive 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 (Eph. 4:12-13). This means that in the small group meetings, the believers are on the way to arriving at a destination. This destination is first the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God. *The faith* refers to Christ's redemptive work, and *the Son of God* refers to Christ's person. We should not care for different teachings. We should only care for what Christ did for us and for what Christ is to us today. All the other teachings should be let go. Then we will not be tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching (v. 14). Even though some teachings may be good and scriptural, they can carry us away from the central lane of God's New Testament economy concerning Christ and the church. We should only care for Christ's redemptive work and His unique person. We need to arrive at this oneness.

We also need to arrive at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, by holding to truth in love that we may grow up into Christ the Head in all things (v. 15). We should not care for vain talk concerning doctrines, but we should hold to truth. In the universe there are three items that are true things: God, Christ, and the church. Only these three items are real and true. All things other than God, Christ, and the church may be vain. We should care only for Christ's redemptive work and His unique person. Then we can grow by holding to the true and real things in love. We can grow up into Christ, the Head, in all things.

Out from the Head all the Body, joined closely together through every joint of the rich supply and knit together through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the organic growth of the Body unto the organic building up of the Body itself in love (v. 16). The joints are the gifted

persons—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. When the joints exercise, the whole Body is supplied. Our physical body is full of joints so that it can act and move in many ways. For the joints of the Body there is the need of joining. For the parts of the Body there is the need of knitting. In a physical building of stones there is the joining and the knitting. The frames of the building need to be joined closely together. The knitting is the interweaving of the stones. The stones of the building are put together by being interwoven. In the Body of Christ the joining together is through the joints, and the knitting together is through the operation in the measure of each one part. The parts can eventually become joints by being perfected. After being perfected, the parts will be enabled to do what the gifted persons do, and they can become the joints. Through the joints being joined closely together and the parts being knit together, the Body will be built up in love by the growth in life. This view should revolutionize our way of meeting, our way of serving, and our way of working. Let us abandon the old way and take the new way for the building up of the organic Body of Christ.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TO PROPHESY

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 14:12, 4-5, 31, 24, 1, 39a

In the previous chapters we have seen our need to help sinners to be saved and become the organic members of the Body of Christ. This is the first thing we must do for the building up of the Body of Christ. After the sinners have been saved, we should continue to take care of them by nourishing and cherishing them continually. If we do this, the newly saved ones will be fully established. If we do not nourish and cherish a newborn babe and take good care of him, it will be very difficult for him to remain alive. In order for a little one to survive, we must have an adequate care for him that he may be established.

To establish the new ones means to qualify them to learn something more. A mother knows that before a baby is three months old, she cannot tell him many things. She needs to feed, nourish, and cherish him and let him grow for three months. After growing for three months, the baby will have more capacity. The mother will have the opportunity to instruct the baby, and he will be able to receive her instruction.

PERFECTING THE NEWLY SAVED ONES IN THE SMALL GROUPS

After the new ones are established, we should bring them together with other saved ones in small groups of fifteen to twenty or twenty-five. For only one or two to be saved is not adequate to form a small group. Therefore, we need to help more new ones to be saved. Two or three brothers or sisters can join together to bring several newly saved ones to form a group. These brothers and sisters can then work together. Much work will be required to perfect the new believers. In Greek the word *perfect* mainly means to equip. Perfecting may be illustrated by the training young people receive in the military service. The new believers have to be equipped. This involves instructing them. We have to teach them, and we have to feed them, not just with milk but with solid food.

Some may wonder how the new ones could go on so quickly. Many teachers have found that little ones have a great ability to apprehend things. Every kind of life has its ability. In the human life there is an ability to grasp and understand many things. The newborn Christians have the divine life. With the divine life there is also the divine ability. We have to believe that the saved ones have received something divine within them. Therefore, they have the capacity, the ability, to understand what we say.

We should bring the new ones out of their homes to join with other Christians. This is to bring them into the habit of not simply existing by themselves in their own homes but coexisting with other Christians. Now that we have brought meetings to them, we have to bring them out of their homes to gather with other Christians. They can rotate their meetings in different homes. This will make them happy, build them up, and provide contact and togetherness with the saints. This togetherness brings much benefit to their Christian life. Children learn a lot by being together. When they come together, they teach each other. Quite often I have seen little ones "tutoring" each other, and sometimes those little tutors do a better job than their mothers can do. They have their way to talk about things. They have their own language and new vocabulary. They understand each other even when their mothers do not. This is why we have to bring the new ones together with some new saints.

CHERISHING, ENTREATING, AND CONSOLING IN THE SMALL GROUPS

As we have seen, we must first help sinners to be saved and become living members of Christ. Second, we have to go to them quite often to nourish, cherish, and encourage them. Then we must form groups of these believers. We have discovered that the small groups are crucial. The cherishing, exhorting, and consoling of the believers for their perfecting takes place in the small groups. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7 Paul first says, "We were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children." It is not easy to be so patient, gentle, and tender in caring for little babes. Without grace one cannot do it. Then in verse 11 Paul also likens himself to an exhorting and consoling father. Exhorting, or entreating, implies a lot. Sometimes it implies a warning, and sometimes it implies rebuking, but with it is also the consoling. Martin Luther said that in disciplining children we sometimes must first

spank them and then give them an apple. This is wise. Many parents have learned that if they only charge their children, the children will not receive the charge. After rebuking, parents must console and "warm up" their children. Then they will do what they were told. Paul said he was a nursing mother, feeding the believers with milk, and an exhorting father, disciplining, teaching, instructing, and charging.

In Acts 20 Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus that he had stayed with them for three years (vv. 17-18, 31). Acts 20:20 says, "How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house." Paul taught and admonished them publicly in big meetings and also from house to house. One by one he had many home meetings with them. This building work was done day and night, without ceasing, and with tears (vv. 31, 19).

TEACHING IN THE SMALL GROUPS

In the group meetings a continuous fellowship should be maintained among the attendants. Then they will know each other and will offer prayers to God for one another. They will have a mutual care for one another. Someone may ask a question, to which one brother will give an answer while another strengthens his answer. This is the way in which they will learn the truth. We should build up an atmosphere in which all the attendants of the small groups are anxious to know the truth. Perhaps the saints in a small group would sing the song "Oh, He's the wonderful Spirit in us" (*Hymns,*#1113). A new one may then ask a brother concerning the wonderful Spirit. This question will afford a good opportunity to give this one a teaching. After one brother speaks something about the wonderful Spirit, another brother can add a little. Then one sister adds a little more, and another sister gives a little testimony to confirm this teaching. This way of meeting is living, rich, and flexible. To hold a group meeting in a religious way full of legality is too dead. We must be living and very flexible, keeping the meetings so flexible. Everyone should be free to speak. However, no one should speak nonsensically. Everyone should say something meaningful. In the small group our teaching should be carried out in this way.

We should also promote the seeking after life. We have to stir up a hunger for this. In the small group meeting a newly saved and established one who is not yet strong in life may ask something concerning seeking after life. A

brother may answer, “The life we seek after is not the plant life, the animal life, or even the human life. We seek after God’s life, the divine life, the eternal life, which is Christ Himself. We need to have this life added into our being more and more. Brother, you have been saved for three months, and you have this divine life, but even we who have been in the Lord for over fifteen years still feel that we do not have enough of the divine life. Therefore, we need to seek life more and more. It is the same with you.”

If the newly saved one is a thoughtful person, he may ask how to seek after the divine life. A brother may explain, “We must seek after the divine life in everything, even in the way we comb our hair. We used to do everything by our own life. Now that we have another life, the divine life, God’s life, we must have a change. Do not live by your natural life. You have to live by the divine life. Even when you comb your hair, you must do it not by your own life but by the divine life. When you comb your hair by your natural life, you comb it in a natural way. You may comb it simply according to the modern style. It is not easy to avoid this because the modern style may be quite attractive and tempting. However, within the modern style there is the devil. Are you happy with that? If you comb your hair by the divine life, the devil will be chased away.” This kind of talk will help the entire audience. They will all realize why they need the divine life.

After meeting in small groups like this for one year, all the attendants will enjoy much help, edification, building up, teaching, and instruction. This kind of teaching is much richer than the common way of teaching. This kind of meeting may be considered as an improved Bible study. Pick up this principle and try to practice it. You will find many benefits in this way of meeting.

THE NEW ONES GOING OUT

After only one year everyone in the small group can be very useful. They will have experienced many things. Then they will need to go out to repeat for others what has been done for them. First, they should go to visit new ones in their homes by knocking on their doors. These new ones may be their relatives. Within one or two months they should get at least two or three baptized. All the young believers will be able to do this. After they baptize people, they should right away go back to their homes in the way we did for them the previous year. They should have home meetings with them to nourish, cherish, and take care of them. Then after three months they should

bring them together to have small group meetings. We should tell the young believers to do for others what we have done for them. They have learned and experienced many things. We are the first generation, and they are the second generation. Now they have to work on the third generation. After another one and a half years, the third generation will produce a fourth. Generation after generation the church will increase.

PROPHESYING IN THE LARGER MEETINGS

The Significance of Prophesying

The larger meetings of the church are not the same as the home meetings and the group meetings. The bigger meetings are for speaking for the Lord and speaking forth the Lord, speaking the Lord out. The Lord is in us. Now we need to pour out what is stored within us by speaking. We should speak forth the Lord into others, speaking the Lord out of ourselves and into others. This is to minister and dispense Christ, to serve people with Christ, like a waiter serving people with food. For this we need a larger meeting so that many saints can come together to do the same thing—to mutually speak for the Lord and speak the Lord to others. This is to exhibit Christ. Every week we have morning watch, home meetings, and small group meetings. Through all these activities we taste Christ, enjoy Christ, and experience Christ. We have an accumulation of Christ within us. Now we need to have a bigger meeting for the saints to come together to display the very Christ whom we have experienced. This display is an exhibition by speaking for the Lord and speaking the Lord forth, speaking the Lord from within us into others. In this way the riches of Christ are released. This is the scriptural way to meet, and it is altogether different from today's common practice.

First Corinthians 14 promotes prophesying in the meeting. Many have misunderstood prophesying. They think that to prophesy is to tell people of things beforehand. In China and in the United States I attended a number of Pentecostal meetings and heard some prophecies of this kind. In 1963 I heard a prophecy that said Los Angeles would have an earthquake, and the whole city would fall into the ocean. The next year the same kind of prophecy was made in San Francisco. This was published in the newspaper, but it was never fulfilled. To prophesy in 1 Corinthians 14 does not denote this kind of foretelling. To prophesy means to speak the Lord with the Lord's word under His inspiration. We should not speak our own word or our own matters. If we

speak our own word, that is not prophesying. We must speak the Lord with the Lord's word. If we are one spirit with the Lord, and the Lord is one spirit with us, we will speak the Lord with His word, being inspired by Him. We will have the inspiration to speak the Lord. Every day throughout the week we have some experiences of the Lord, so we have the riches stored up within us. When the church comes together, that is the time for each one of us to release the riches we have enjoyed of the Lord by speaking Him with His word under His inspiration. This is to prophesy.

The Excelling of Prophesying

Prophesying excels the other spiritual gifts (v. 12). It is the particular gift for the organic building up of the church as the Body of Christ (vv. 4-5). Prophesying is excelling because it builds up the church. No other way or gift directly builds up the church as much as prophesying. First Corinthians 14:1 says, "Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." In this verse prophesying is above all the spiritual gifts. Prophesying is the high point. We have to pursue love and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but we should especially speak the Lord out from within us into others.

Verse 12 says, "So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church." If we seek to speak in tongues, our seeking is too low. We should rather seek to excel by seeking the top gift. To prophesy excels all other gifts. No other gift is as excelling as prophesying. It is the top gift.

The Universality of Prophesying

First Corinthians 14:31 also promotes prophesying. This verse says that the believers can all prophesy that all may learn and that all may be encouraged. Prophesying here is not to foretell. It is to teach and to encourage. Therefore, all can do it. Verses 24 and 25 say, "If all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all; The secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you." By saying "if all prophesy," Paul indicates that we all can do it, and we all should do it. The believers should all prophesy to convict people and to examine people.

The Characteristic of Prophesying and the Desire for Prophesying

The characteristic of prophesying is that prophesying ministers Christ for the organic building up of the church. As we have pointed out, this is carried out mainly in the larger meetings of the church. We should pursue prophesying and desire to prophesy (vv. 1, 39a). Moreover, we need to learn to prophesy (v. 31).

As we have seen before, we should first preach the gospel so that sinners are made living members of Christ. Then we need to have home meetings to nourish, cherish, and establish the new ones. We further need to group them together, to have fellowship with them, to pray for them, to have the mutual care, to teach them the truth, and to promote the seeking after life. By this the new ones will be perfected to do for others what we are doing for them. Then once a week we should come together to practice speaking forth the Lord, to minister the Lord to all the saints. This should not be by just one or two speakers but by all the saints mutually. We should have mutual speaking, mutual listening, and mutual building up. This is the direct organic building up of the Body of Christ. Therefore, it is the excelling way.

THE WAY TO LEARN TO PROPHESY

In order to learn to prophesy, we need to enjoy the Lord in a portion of the Word every morning. The way to do this is by pray-reading. Do not try to pray-read a whole chapter. This may be compared to eating a breakfast that is too large. We should choose a portion of the Word consisting of ten or fewer verses. Among these few verses there may be two verses that we especially enjoy, and we can concentrate on these. By doing this every morning we will receive inspiration, and we can take notes on the spiritual inspiration we receive. They do not need to be long notes; short notes with certain points as reminders are adequate. Then we should put all the notes, the inspirations of the past six mornings, together on the last day of the week to compose a prophecy for a three-minute speaking by exercising our spirit. Our speaking should not be too long or too short. Limiting our speaking to three minutes will help everyone to preserve the time in the meetings.

It is best to have some tutors, tutoring us on how to compose a prophecy. Those who know how to do this adequately can go out to visit some new ones

to look at their composition to improve it or adjust it and to help them learn more. We should then practice speaking what we have composed, checking to see whether it is three minutes or more. If it is too long, we can shorten it. In this way we will have a proper prophecy prepared in writing. On the next day, the Lord's Day, we will go to the church meeting having something. This will fulfill 1 Corinthians 14:26, which says that when we come together, "each one has." Everyone has something. When our time comes, we will speak, not read, our prophecy, and when we speak, we may add something to make it richer and more living.

In the past many were afraid that they had nothing to speak. Some may even have thought of not coming to the meeting. To attend the meeting was a hard matter for them. They considered that they did not have anything to speak and did not know how to speak. They felt that while the elders had much to speak, they did not have anything. However, through what we have learned about how to prophesy, our situation has now changed. Now we can have something, and we can have the boldness to take the opportunity to speak. Formerly, we may have waited for the meeting to be over so we could be dismissed. Now, however, we will be waiting for the opportunity to speak. We will be anxious to have time to speak. For this reason it is better not to have one or two hundred meeting together. This is too many. According to our experience, it is better to have about fifty, at most seventy, in a meeting. When we reach eighty, we should divide into two meetings. If there are fifty, about one-third of the attendants can speak. Twenty speakers can each occupy three minutes, using exactly one hour.

We should also always be ready in our spirit to receive the instant inspiration of the Spirit. If we are living a revived and overcoming life and are one with the Lord, we will always be ready to receive instant inspiration.

We also need to have the spiritual insight into all matters through the enlightening of the divine light, that is, through the enjoyment of the Lord in the Word. If we have the Word, and in our spirit we are ready to receive inspiration, then we will also have the insight over all things, even in all matters, through the enlightening of the divine light. Prophecy is always composed of the Word, inspiration, and the divine light. We need to put all the foregoing principles concerning prophesying into practice for the organic building up of the church.

CHAPTER NINE

THE LIFE AND PRAYER NEEDED FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: John 14:6a; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2:2; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; John 11:25a; 14:19b; Acts 1:14; 2:1-4, 16-17a; 4:24-31; 6:4; 10:9-16; 12:4-14; 13:1-4; 16:23-26; 22:17-21

In the previous chapters we have seen that according to God's ordained way for the building up of the Body of Christ organically, we all have to do four main things. First, we have to gain the new ones so that the Lord can regenerate them and make them the living members of the Body of Christ. Second, we have to continue to have meetings with them in their homes to cherish them, to nourish them, and to take care of them in every way so that they may be established. Third, we have to do our best to perfect them in the small group meetings. If we take care of these three things properly, the new ones will be established and perfected, and they will be able to carry out the church life in many ways. They will be enabled to repeat all the work that they have seen. This will enable the church to have a rich, refreshing, living, uplifting, edifying, and building-up meeting. This brings us to the fourth point that we need to take care of. Through being perfected, every saint needs to prophesy, to speak the Lord forth into others in the larger meetings of the church.

This view of the scriptural way to build up the Body of Christ organically is wonderful. By taking this way, every saint in the church will be occupied. Everyone will serve God in order to participate in the universal priesthood. In Romans 15:16 Paul said that he was "a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit." According to this verse, the main thing that the priest offers to God is the sacrifice of persons who have been saved by God's salvation. We all need to be the priests of the gospel like Paul, who offered the Gentiles as sacrifices to God. This is our priestly service. All the believers in the church should be priests offering

saved sinners to God as acceptable sacrifices. Regardless of how much we claim that we have practiced the universal priesthood, we actually had the clergy-laity system among us to some extent. There may be only a small number of saints in the church life who serve the Lord as priests. Others may only exercise to clean the hall or arrange the chairs. Our priestly service is to contact people, to spend all our time with living persons. All of us must have a change.

THE LIFE NEEDED

Our Need of Another Life, the Divine Life

In this concluding chapter we want to see the life and prayer needed for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. To carry out anything, there is the need of life. Our life is not adequate to practice the scriptural way to build up the Body of Christ. Our life is not adequate to get sinners saved and make them living members of the Body of Christ. Our life is not adequate to go to the home meetings regularly week after week. Our life is not adequate to take care of the new ones, to have fellowship with them, to pray with them, to take care of them mutually, to build them up in teaching them the truth, and to stir them up to seek after the divine life so that they may grow in this life. Our life is not adequate to prophesy, to speak the Lord. We should not be self-confident that we can carry out these matters. If I told you that you are altogether unable to do anything in God's economy, you might not feel happy about this. In our natural man we like to be highly appraised by others, but we need to realize that we cannot do anything apart from the Lord. In Luke 17 the Lord Jesus told us that even though we may serve Him in many things, we still have to say that we are unprofitable slaves (vv. 7-10).

Whatever is revealed in the New Testament concerning our service to the Lord requires another life, the divine life, not our life. Our life needs to be buried. Whatever is revealed in the New Testament needs a super life, a higher life, the divine life, the eternal life, not our life. Even if our life could do something, this doing could never be acceptable to God. God does not want anything done by us, but He wants everything done by Him, by His life, not by our life. We need another life, and praise the Lord, we have another life. We received our natural life by our first birth, but what we are charged to do for God should not be carried out by that life. That life is not qualified. The qualified life is the life we received by our second birth. By our regeneration,

we received the divine life, the eternal life. This life is eternal in time and quality. Anything that is temporary is low in quality. Something that is eternal is the highest in quality. Our life is temporary, but there is another life in the universe that lasts for eternity. Anything temporary will be exhausted, but whatever is eternal can never be exhausted. We have a life that is unlimited in its qualifications and in its supply. This life can never be exhausted. To change from our old, traditional, and unscriptural way of serving to the New Testament way demands us to change our life. This is why we need to live by the Lord as our life.

The Divine Life Living in and through Our Human Life

If we are going to carry out the organic building up of the Body of Christ, we must have our life changed from our natural life to the divine life, from our temporal life to the eternal life. Our human life is good for our existence, but it is altogether not qualified and not able to do the things to accomplish God's New Testament economy. This divine New Testament economy is altogether accomplished, completed, and consummated by the divine life, but not by the divine life alone. God's New Testament economy is accomplished by the divine life living in the human life. Our human life is good for our existence, but it is also good as a container of the divine life. The divine life does everything, but the divine life does not do everything by itself and in itself. The divine life does everything through our human life and in our human life.

To say that we need the divine life does not mean that we take away our life and replace it with the divine life. This does not work. Our human life has been grafted together with the divine life. This is according to the truth of Romans 11:24, which says that the wild olive tree was grafted into the cultivated olive tree. Our human life has not been put away to be replaced by the divine life. Our human life has been grafted into the divine life so that this divine life can live through it. This is the mingling of two lives. Our human life is only good for the divine life to live through it. We cannot do anything for God by our human life. Whatever we do in our human life will not be accepted by God. Therefore, we need to let the divine life live through us and do everything through us. This is grafting. We are the branches who have been grafted into Christ.

Galatians 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith.” This verse says that it is no more I who live but that Christ lives in me, but the second part of the verse says, “And the life which I now live.” We are crucified, yet we still live. How can we explain this? We still live, but we live by someone else, not by ourselves. We live by this One’s faith. We may not fully understand this verse, but we just need to say Amen to it. We have been crucified with Christ, and we no longer live. Instead, Christ lives in us, and we live by Christ as our faith. Christ has to live within us and through us. He has to do everything, not by Himself alone but through us in a mingled way. We need to be mingled with Him.

The divine life of Christ is the life that can accomplish everything that we have fellowshipped in the previous chapters. All of us have to admit that we ourselves are not qualified to carry out God’s New Testament economy. We need to be mingled with Christ as life. Our life needs to be mingled with His life. Then His life can work and move in our life, through our life, and with our life. This is really wonderful. While we work, He works within us. While He works within us, we live so that He may live to do whatever He wants to do through us. If we preach the gospel by ourselves, this will not work. We have to carry out the gospel preaching work by a mingled life. The life of God is the life that works, and the life of man matches God’s work to do the work. By the life of God we can accomplish what God wants us to do in the New Testament.

The Divine Life of Christ

The life that we need for the organic building up of the Body of Christ is the divine life of Christ—Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit within us (John 14:6a; 1 Cor. 15:45b). God became a man. By becoming a man, God was mingled with man. Today the life of Christ is a mingled life. It is the human life mingled with the divine life. We have such a life, and this life is Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit. We do not need to try to analyze this life. We may not understand the food that we eat every day, but we enjoy it and are nourished by it. Christ as the embodiment of God is the mingling of the human life with the divine life, and this life today is the life-giving Spirit. This Spirit is within us for us to partake of and enjoy.

The Crucified Life

This life is also the crucified life (2:2; Gal. 2:20a). This is a life under the subjective death of Christ, a life conformed to His death (Phil. 3:10b). Every day we need to take up the cross (Matt. 16:24), and the life that we live should be a crucified life. To be crucified means to get rid of our natural life, our old man, and our flesh. We all need to be crossed out. We should not think that we are so useful. We are qualified only to be crossed out. When Jesus lived on the earth, He always lived under the killing of the cross. He did not speak His own word, do His own will, or seek His own glory. He spoke the Father's word (John 14:24), did the Father's will (6:38), and sought the Father's glory (7:18). This indicates that He was living a life under the killing of the cross to give the Father the opportunity to work through Him. Today we need to live such a life, a life that is under the killing of the cross. This is a life that is conformed to the death of Christ. When we stay under the killing of the cross, we will be conformed to Christ's death. The life of Christ has become a mold into which our life can be conformed. We are being conformed into the form of Christ's death.

The Resurrection Life

The life that we need is also the resurrection life, which is the pneumatic Christ in resurrection (11:25a) with the resurrection power (Phil. 3:10a). When we live on the cross, being conformed to the death of the cross, the resurrection life rises up from within us. The human life is crossed out, and the divine life rises up to live. Every time we go out to visit people with the gospel, we must go with our natural life on the cross and under the death of the cross so that the resurrection life of God can have a chance to rise up within us to talk to people. Then when we talk to people, it is God in His resurrection who talks through us. We all have to practice this, and we have to make such a practice our habit. Whenever we go out to knock on doors for the preaching of the gospel, we need to go on the cross in the mold of Christ's death. This gives the very God who is within us as the resurrection life the way to rise up to do His work. On the one hand, this is the crucified life, but on the other hand, this is the resurrection life. This resurrection life is the pneumatic Christ. Christ is the pneuma, the breath, the air, the Spirit. Such a Christ has the resurrection power.

The Life Which We Live

The divine life of Christ, the crucified life, the resurrection life, is the life which we live (Gal. 2:20b; John 14:19b). This is the life in which we walk, work, and have our being. This is the life in which and with which we carry out the work of the New Testament ministry.

THE PRAYER NEEDED

For the organic building up of the Body of Christ, we need the divine life, and we also need prayer. We realize that we need another life, that we have been made by God as vessels as the means through which God can work. Still we need prayer. To pray means that we realize that by ourselves, with ourselves, and in ourselves, we are nothing. Therefore, we do not want to do anything by ourselves. Instead, we want to do everything in God, with God, and through God. There are two significances of prayer. First, when we pray, we pray ourselves into God. Second, when we pray, we pray God into us. We are not that much in God, nor is God that much in us. Because we are distracted, we get outside of God. If we are going to do God's work, we need to get into God. Furthermore, God is not that much in us. Therefore, we need to pray God into us. Then we can do the work in a way in which we are mingled with God. In other words, we are in God, and God is in us. We can arrive at this situation and condition by prayer. When we pray, we do not need to pray too much for affairs or for the work. We need to pray ourselves into God, and we need to pray God into us. This is the principle of prayer.

When we want to preach the gospel, we have to stop a while to pray. To pray means to stop ourselves from doing anything. If we can do something on our own, we do not need to stop and pray. We can just go ahead and do it ourselves. Many times we carry out the service in this way. We do it by ourselves. This is wrong. We have to stop ourselves. If we look into the New Testament, we can see that the Lord Jesus always prayed first. His prayer was to stop Himself from doing anything apart from the Father. His prayer afforded Him the opportunity to be fully one with the Father. Then the work done by God the Father was through Jesus, the Man. It was the same with the early apostles. The book of Acts shows us that whenever there was some activity, the apostles first prayed. They never initiated work without prayer. Whenever they wanted to do something, they stopped themselves by their prayer. Their prayer gave God a way to come into them, to fill them up, and to saturate their very being. Then the apostles began to work. That work was not

something done by the apostles independent from God. Instead, the work done by the apostles was done only in full dependence on God.

The Prayer That Brought In the Outpouring of the Spirit

In the book of Acts we can see the prayer of the early saints for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. The prayer that we need is the prayer that brought in the outpouring of the Spirit (1:14; 2:1-4, 16-17a). One hundred twenty saints praying with one accord for ten days brought in the outpouring of the Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit is the outpouring of God Himself. God poured out His entire being, the Spirit, upon the disciples. Immediately, the disciples became one with God. Here is the principle of praying ourselves into God and of praying God into us. Their prayer brought God from the heavens to the earth and upon themselves. Prayer is like our breathing. When we breathe, the air gets into us, and we get into the air. The result is that air is poured upon us. When we experience the outpoured Spirit through our prayer, we are refreshed to the uttermost.

The Prayer That Shook the Earth and Empowered the Apostles with the Holy Spirit for the Speaking of the Word of God with Boldness

We also need the prayer that shook the earth and empowered the disciples with the Holy Spirit for the speaking of the word of God with boldness (4:24-31). The disciples prayed with one accord (v. 24) according to the word of God (vv. 25-28), claiming the divine power through the name of Jesus (vv. 29-30). We have to pray to shake the environment. Many times the environment is a lie. When we go out to visit people for the preaching of the gospel, there may be something within us saying that people will not open the door to us. This is a lie. Another lie is that people will not open their heart and their spirit to receive the Lord. If this is the case, our going is in vain. Therefore, we have to pray to shake the environment. We need to open the doors by our prayer. To pray is to shake the environment, to change the environment. When we pray in such a way, we will be filled with the

economical Spirit, and we will have the boldness to speak the word of God. We should not believe in the environment. Instead, we have to believe in our prayer to change the environment.

The Prayer of the Apostles to Match the Ministry of the Word

In Acts 6:4 we see the prayer of the apostles to match the ministry of the word. This prayer was continuous and steadfast. Preaching the gospel, having home meetings, having small group meetings, and prophesying in the big meetings are all for ministering the word. We must remember that the ministry of the word should be matched by our prayer. Our prayer will make the word living and powerful. Peter said that he and the other apostles would give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. We also need to continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.

The Prayer That Brought Peter into a Trance and Brought a Heavenly Vision to Him

Acts 10:9-16 shows us the prayer that brought Peter into a trance and brought a heavenly vision to him. This prayer at the appointed time (v. 9) brought Peter into a conversation with the Lord (vv. 13-16). This is another principle of prayer. To pray is to pray ourselves into a trance. A trance means that we have gotten out of our self. We may be imprisoned in our self, but we need to pray out of that imprisonment. In a trance, in a situation in which we are out of our self, we can receive visions of God. We all need a trance because we remain in our self too long. We are in our self too much. Our self is a strong prison that we need to get out of, so we need to pray ourselves into a trance. Many times in morning watch, while we are reading the Bible and pray-reading, we have the sensation that we are out of our self and that we are in a situation of being so close to God. We cannot tell where we are. We just know that we are out of our self. That is a trance, and in that trance we receive visions from God. Peter prayed this way at the appointed time, which was at noon. I believe that Peter used to pray at that time every day, and he prayed himself into a conversation with the Lord. When we get into a trance, we are in a conversation with the Lord in which we talk to the Lord and the Lord talks to us. Peter and the Lord conversed together. We all need the kind of prayer that brings us into such a trance.

The Prayer That Opened the Prison Gate for Peter

We also need the kind of prayer that opened the prison gate for Peter (12:4-14). This shows the fervent prayer of the church (v. 5) in small groups (v. 12). To preach the gospel by visiting people, we surely have to pray to open the doors. Actually, the doors are opened to us, not by our knocking on them but through our prayer. We need the fervent prayer of the church in small groups. Peter went to the home of Mary after he was released from prison, and there was a group of saints praying in that home. Acts 12 also indicates that there were many small groups praying for Peter at that time in the homes of the saints.

The Prayer That Brought the Five Prophets and Teachers into the Lord's Commission

For the organic building up of the Body of Christ, we need the prayer that brought the five prophets and teachers into the Lord's commission in Acts 13:1-4. These five prophets and teachers in Acts 13 served the Lord by praying and fasting, and that prayer brought them into the Lord's commission, the Lord's sending. They were commissioned and sent by the Lord through prayer, not through any kind of appointment. Their prayer was with ministering to the Lord and fasting (v. 2a). Ministering to the Lord means serving the Lord, waiting on the Lord in the service to the Lord. Eventually, they prayed themselves into the speaking of the Holy Spirit (v. 2b). The Holy Spirit will not speak to us unless we pray ourselves into that situation. Then the Holy Spirit will speak for sending the sent ones (v. 3).

The Prayer That Brought In a Great Earthquake and Shook the Foundation of the Prison

We also need the kind of prayer that brought in a great earthquake and shook the foundation of the prison (16:23-26). Whether the earth will "quake" or not is up to our prayer. While Paul and Silas were praying in Acts 16, they were singing hymns of praise to God (v. 25). They were in chains in the stocks in the inner prison, but instead of worrying, they sang hymns of praise to God. Their prayer shook the foundation of the prison. When we go out to preach

the gospel, we should pray that the "foundation" of the doors that we are knocking on will be shaken and will be opened to us.

The Prayer That Brought Paul into a Trance and into the Lord's Speaking to Him

In Acts 22:17-21 is the prayer that brought Paul into a trance and into the Lord's speaking to him. Both Peter and Paul prayed themselves into a trance. Again, we all need to pray ourselves into a trance, into the Lord's speaking to us. Paul did this in the temple, in a holy and quiet place (v. 17). In his prayer he received the Lord's commission (vv. 18-21).

The book of Acts is a record of the activities of the apostles, and the apostles' activities were always matched by their prayers. All the kinds of prayers that we have fellowshipped about in the book of Acts show the kind of prayer that we need to pray. We need to learn to pray the way the disciples in Acts prayed. This kind of prayer can shake the environment, shake the foundation of the prison, shake the earth, shake off all the chains, and open the doors. This prayer will also bring us into a trance, bring us into God, and bring God into us. Then we can converse with God, receive His commission, and receive His sending. We have to learn to pray in all these ways. We need the divine life, and we need prayer for us to accomplish all the crucial steps for the Body of Christ to be built up organically through our work.

A FURTHER WORD

I would like to add a further word to our fellowship in this book. In principle, a healthy local church should not always be depending on others to help them. If we always depend on gifted persons or on people from other churches to help us in our local church, this can spoil us. The daughter of a mother who is a very capable cook may be a very poor cook. This is because the mother can cook so well that she never allows her daughter to learn to cook. We need to learn to trust in the Lord, in His life, and in our prayer. The scriptural way is now clear to us, and all of us can participate. It may seem like a heavy burden to visit people in their homes for the preaching of the gospel, but when we do this work and get into it, it is not a burden but an enjoyment. We can go out once a week for a month, and within a month we will get at least one baptized. Then we can go back to visit this one and raise him up to get him established. If we cooperate with the Lord in His present

move, each of us can have two remaining fruit yearly. In ten years each of us can have twenty remaining fruit. How marvelous this would be for the increase of the church! If all of us rise up to practice the fellowship in this book, we will be in the universal priesthood. Each of us will have a part in the universal priesthood. As we all function organically in the priesthood, we will see the practical and organic building up of the church.