

## MIDWEST SISTERS' CONFERENCE

CHICAGO: NOVEMBER 13-15, 2015

# THE GOD-MAN LIVING IN THE PRACTICAL CHURCH LIFE AND THE PRAYER FOR GOD'S MOVE

## Message Two

### The Oneness of the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: John 17:21-22; Eph. 4:1-6; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 12:15-22; 2 Cor. 10:13-15

- I. Because it is difficult for us to understand the oneness unfolded in the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus prayed in John 17 about the oneness instead of speaking about it as the continuation of His discourse to His disciples:**
  - A. The Father and the Son are one (vv. 11, 21), and this oneness implies, or includes, the Spirit.
  - B. The Lord used the plural pronouns *We* (v. 11) and *Us* (v. 21) to signify the Triune God.
  - C. The Triune God is one, and that oneness is a model of the oneness of the Body of Christ.
  - D. The oneness of the Body of Christ is the enlarged oneness of the Divine Trinity—v. 21.
  - E. The base of our oneness is the oneness for which the Lord prayed:
    1. This oneness is in the Father's name by the eternal life—vv. 2, 6, 11.
    2. This oneness is in the Triune God through sanctification by the holy word—vv. 14-21.
    3. This oneness is in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God—vv. 22-24.
  - F. The Lord prayed to the Father for the oneness among all His believers that it may merge with the genuine oneness of the Divine Trinity—vv. 21-23.
- II. We need to see the uniqueness of the Body of Christ—there is one Body in the universe—Eph. 4:1-6; 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 5:23-25; 2:15; Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:12.**
- III. The practice of the oneness is the one accord; the one accord is the master key to every blessing in the New Testament—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; Rom. 15:6.**
- IV. Five phrases in Ephesians 4:1-3 give us a practical way to keep the oneness of the Spirit (the oneness of the Body of Christ), which is to practice the one accord: *lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, bearing one another in love, and the uniting bond of peace*; these five items are a test to us in the practice of the church life; by this test we can see whether or not we are practically in the church life:**
  - A. We should not set up a high standard for others, but in lowliness we should love the weaker ones:
    1. As long as we take something other than Christ Himself as our standard,

we do not have lowliness; if we put forth a high standard, we are not lowly in our mind and attitude.

2. Regardless of how good, heavenly, or spiritual something is, as long as it is something other than Christ Himself, it will cause division.
  3. The weaker ones, the younger ones, and the backsliders need more love in the Lord; to love them will solve most of their problems; otherwise, we will set up a high standard out of pride and not lowliness.
- B. We must sacrifice ourselves to be meek in our attitude—Num. 12:3; Matt. 5:5:
1. The Greek word for *meekness* implies mildness, gentleness, and unselfishness.
  2. Meekness is a matter of an unselfish attitude that is mild and gentle, never argues for oneself, and never makes an excuse for oneself—2 Chron. 1:10; Col. 2:2-3; Phil. 4:5.
  3. In order to be meek, we must sacrifice ourselves, regardless of how we are treated; in the church life we must not have a harsh, hard, or cruel attitude.
  4. In order to have the proper attitude, we must not be selfish; unselfishness produces meekness, mildness, and gentleness.
  5. In many local churches the problems come mostly from wrong, careless, cold, and harsh attitudes; Satan always uses careless attitudes to attack the church—Eph. 6:16.
  6. In order to have the church life, we need to learn that it is very fine, not rough; according to the type, the church is a corporate meal offering, a cake, made of fine flour—Lev. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 10:17.
- C. To be long-suffering is to endure mistreatment; to be long-suffering is mainly related to our spoken word:
1. A brother may wrong us, but for the Lord's glory and for the sake of the church life, we should not speak a word about it; to utter, express, and talk about everything that happens to us requires no long-suffering or patience.
  2. If we see the leading brothers quarreling, we may immediately go and relate this to another brother; but if we have learned the lesson, for the Lord's glory and for the sake of His church, we will not say a word.
  3. If we learn to keep our words in such a proper way, we will realize the true meaning of the word *suffering* in the church life.
  4. Immediately after a message is given, we may begin to criticize the speaker, but if we have learned the lesson, we will say nothing negative about the ministry, despite what we feel about it, for the sake of the practice of the church life; our mouths will be under the control of the Holy Spirit.
  5. Our speech and our conversation damage the church more than anything else; once a story is secondhand, it begins to change, and eventually it can become a great exaggeration; this is always the case with rumors.
  6. In order to learn the lesson of long-suffering, we need to experience the suffering of restricting our mouth and stopping our tongue; we may see and hear many things, but we should not speak a word without the anointing and leading of the Holy Spirit so that the church life will be kept from damage.
- D. In order to bear one another in love, we need to fight against suspicion and fear in the church life:

1. Instead of suspicion and fear, we should have only love; love should prevail in the church life; love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything in the church life—12:31b.
  2. To have suspicion toward a brother means that our love is gone; then after suspicion, fear will follow; 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”
  3. It is always a temptation to know others’ attitude toward us, how they consider us, and what is being said about us; in order to realize the church life, we must reject this temptation—cf. Eccl. 7:21-22.
- E. We need to be diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
1. If we have peace only with God and not with all the brothers, we have lost the church life; the church life is tested by the peace we have, not only vertically with God but also horizontally with all the brothers.
  2. We should not be over-related or under-related to anyone; the uniting bond of peace is the balanced relatedness in the church.
- V. If we hold Christ as the Head (acknowledging that only He is the Head and coming absolutely under His authority), we cannot have different interpretations of Scripture—1 Tim. 1:3-4; Col. 2:19:**
- A. Differences arise when someone is not holding the Head, because He cannot possibly say one thing to one member and something else to another.
  - B. Christ is the unique authority in the Body; the place of all the members is to hold the Head and to acknowledge Him as the unique and supreme authority in all things.
- VI. We should always consider the Body, care for the Body, honor the Body, and do what is best for the Body—1 Cor. 12:12-27.**
- VII. “When Brother Nee taught about the Body, he said that with whatever we do, we have to consider how the churches would feel about it” (*The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life*, pp. 28-29).**
- VIII. In the Body there can be no independence or individualism, for we are members, and members cannot live in detachment from the Body—v. 27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 5:30:**
- A. Wherever there is Body-revelation, there is Body-consciousness, and wherever there is Body-consciousness, individualistic thought and action are ruled out.
  - B. What I do not know, another member of the Body will know; what I cannot see, another member of the Body will see; what I cannot do, another member of the Body will do—1 Cor. 12:17-22.
  - C. If we refuse the help of our fellow members, we are refusing the help of Christ; sooner or later all individualistic Christians will dry up—v. 12.
- IX. As members of the Body, we must allow ourselves to be limited by the other members, not going beyond our measure:**
- A. God has placed all the members in the Body, even as He willed—v. 18:
    1. The Head sets us in our special place in the Body and points us to our special function—Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:15-17.

2. Each one of us members has our own place in the Body of Christ; it is assigned by God and should be accepted by us.
  3. Since such an assignment is according to God's will, every member is necessary; every member has a definite place, a definite assignment, and a particular portion with which he serves the Body of Christ—vv. 18-22.
  4. Each member has his own characteristics and his own capability; these characteristics constitute the place, position, or ministry of each member—Rom. 12:4-8.
- B. A basic requirement for the growth and development of the Body is that we recognize our measure and do not go beyond it—Eph. 4:7, 16:
1. When we go beyond our measure, we interfere with the order of the Body.
  2. To think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, without a sober mind, is to annul the proper order of the Body life—Rom. 12:3.
- C. Like Paul, we should move and act according to how much God has measured to us in the Body of Christ, staying within the limits of God's ruling, God's measuring—2 Cor. 10:13-15; Eph. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:5.