

Banners for 2017 Thanksgiving Conference

In the real church life the service to the Lord is rendered,
the testimony of the Lord is seen, and the love toward the Lord is poured out;
this is the real expression of the Body of the Lord,
which is a vessel to contain the Lord and to express Him.

Fellowship—the circulation of the divine life in the Body of Christ—
is the reality of the church life, and this circulation of the divine life
brings all the members of the Body of Christ into oneness.

In order to practice the scriptural way to meet and to serve
for the building up of the Body of Christ,
we need a revived living and a labor in shepherding
that flow out from our love of the Lord.

The goal of the Lord's recovery is to bring forth the one new man,
and this requires that we practice the church life in the consciousness of the one new man
by taking Christ as our person, being constituted with Christ,
and being renewed in the spirit of the mind.

**Outline of the Messages
for the Thanksgiving Conference
November 23-26, 2017**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE GENUINE CHURCH LIFE**

Message One

Basic Principles for the Practice of the Church Life

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:2, 10-13; 3:3-4; Eph. 4:3-6; 1 John 2:27; Rom. 14:1; Psa. 119:140

I. We must see and stand on the unique ground of the local churches of God—the practice of the church life in the early days was the practice of having one church for one city, one city with only one church—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:11:

- A. “To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours”—1 Cor. 1:2:
1. The church being “of God” refers to the content of the church in its essence.
 2. The church “in Corinth” shows the locality of Corinth for the existence, expression, and practice of the church; such a locality becomes the local ground of the local churches on which they are built respectively; thus, the locality spontaneously becomes the church ground.
 3. “Those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints” are the constituents as the framework of the church.
 4. “With all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place” indicates that this Epistle has been and will be read by people in thousands of places throughout the generations; even today we are the recipients of this book.
 5. Christ being “theirs and ours” means that Christ is the portion of the local saints in Corinth and of all the saints in whatever place, who participate in the fellowship (enjoyment) of Christ, into which all the believers have been called by the faithful God—v. 9.
- B. Divisions among the saints are condemned by the apostle as the deputy authority of Christ the Head—vv. 10-13.
- C. Christ is not divided—Christ is unique, not divisible nor divided—v. 13.
- D. Division is of the flesh, according to the manner of man—3:3-4.
- E. We need to see our practice under today’s divisive and confusing degradation of Christianity:
1. We do not and should not participate in the Catholic heresy, the Protestant denominations, and any kind of free groups of Christians.
 2. But we recognize and receive the individual believers in Christ who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are redeemed by His blood and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and who are not factious (Titus 3:10), not making divisions (Rom. 16:17), not worshipping idols (1 John 5:21), nor living in sin (1 Cor. 5:11), even if they are still related to any of the above-listed divisions.
 3. We are one with all the believers who are in the Lord’s recovery throughout the world, and in the principle of Philadelphia, we choose to love all the brothers—Rev. 3:7.
 4. We do not have any creed; we have only the unique Bible properly translated and interpreted by and according to the Bible itself.

II. We must see and keep the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ—Eph. 4:3-6:

- A. The unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ is of the Spirit, which oneness believers should not break but keep diligently in the uniting bond of peace—v. 3.
- B. In the whole universe there is only one unique Body of Christ, with the Triune God as its contents—vv. 4-6:
 - 1. The one Spirit is the essence of its contents.
 - 2. The one Lord is the element of its contents.
 - 3. God the Father is the source of its contents, as the One who is over all and through all and in all triunely.
- C. We must see and practice the blending of the universal Body of Christ:
 - 1. God has blended the Body together (1 Cor. 12:24); this is the blending of all the individual members of the Body of Christ, the blending of all the churches in certain districts, the blending of all the co-workers, and the blending of all the elders.
 - 2. Such a blending is not social but the blending of the very Christ whom the individual members, the district churches, the co-workers, and the elders enjoy, experience, and partake of.
 - 3. This blending is for the building up of the universal Body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) to consummate the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2) as the final goal of God's economy according to His good pleasure (Eph. 3:8-10; 1:9-10).

III. We must practice the church life by submitting to the headship of the Lord and by being balanced by the Body:

- A. We must learn from the book of Acts and from the experience of the apostles and elders in Acts 15 never to make decisions on our own; furthermore, we should not make suggestions to others or give instructions to them; none of us is qualified to do this:
 - 1. We are not the Lord or the Master, and we are not the Lord of the harvest (Luke 10:2; John 4:35); only the Lord Jesus is the Lord of the harvest, the Master, and the Head of the Body, and we must honor Him by not making decisions in ourselves.
 - 2. If we tell others where to go, there would be no need for them to pray; instead, they would simply act on our word; to do this is to usurp the position of the Lord and to make ourselves the Lord; this is the greatest insult to the Lord.
 - 3. Everyone must pray until he is clear about the Lord's leading; everyone must be brought into the presence of the Lord to contact Him.
- B. For the Lord's move we also need to be balanced by the Body:
 - 1. Suppose the leading ones, after much prayer, are truly burdened about a certain matter; what they should do then is through fellowship pass on their burden to the saints and ask the saints to pray.
 - 2. Eventually, the saints will receive a personal leading from the Lord, and they may move accordingly; in this way no one will be individualistic or rebellious.

IV. We must practice the spiritual charter (spiritual rules and regulations) of the church, which is the cross, Christ as life, the Holy Spirit, the headship of Christ, the Body, a general attitude toward our fellow believers, and the Word of God:

- A. The altar in the temple (Ezek. 40:47) signifies the cross of Christ, and it is the center not only of the inner court but also of the entire premises of the temple; this altar, typifying the cross, is actually the center of the universe:
 - 1. As the center of the universe, the cross points to the all-inclusive death of Christ, which involved God, man, and all the creatures; the death on the cross was the release of

- God (Luke 12:49-50; John 12:24) and the termination of man and all negative things (Rom. 6:6; Heb. 2:14; 9:26-28; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:14-15).
2. In Christ's death God passed through death in man to be released, and man died in God to be terminated; the death of the Lord was His release; the more we pass through the cross, the more Christ as life is released into others—2 Cor. 4:12.
 3. The cross spreads in every direction and to every corner of God's building; thus, if we wish to contact God and enjoy His riches in His house, we must pass through the cross.
- B. If we do not have Christ as life, we do not have the church life; the church life is simply Christ as life realized by us in a corporate way—John 10:10b; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:6.
- C. If we check ourselves with the cross, and we honor, magnify, exalt, and respect the Lord Jesus Christ, we are in the right position to experience the Holy Spirit in our spirit; the Spirit is our charter; if we do not have the inner anointing of the Spirit while we are speaking, we should stop—v. 16; 1 John 2:20, 27.
- D. In His ascension Christ was inaugurated into the full headship of the entire universe (Eph. 1:20-22; Acts 2:36); in the third heaven Christ was given to be Head over all things to the church, and He is also the head of every man (1 Cor. 11:3a):
1. The headship of Christ does not allow for there to be any other heads or subheads; any other head is an insult to Christ—Col. 2:19; Matt. 23:8-12.
 2. In order to know how to conduct ourselves in the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), we first must be careful not to insult the headship of Christ in anything that we do.
 3. Many brothers often unconsciously insult the headship of Christ by telling a saint what to do instead of encouraging him to learn how to contact the Lord.
- E. We must be regulated, restricted, and limited by the Body of Christ; on the one hand, we must stay within our measure as members of the Body (Eph. 4:16); on the other hand, we must “fully accomplish,” fill up the full measure, of our ministry in and to the Body (2 Tim. 4:5); all that we say and do must be in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body.
- F. Christians are divided because they lack a spirit of generality; they may talk about the Body in Romans 12, but without Romans 14 we can never have the Body life:
1. In order to practice the Body life revealed in Romans 12, we must learn the practical lessons of receiving the believers, as revealed in Romans 14, so that the church life may be all-inclusive, able to include all kinds of genuine Christians.
 2. Such receiving requires the transformation mentioned in Romans 12:2; if we remain natural, we will be unable to receive those whose views are different from ours in doctrine or in practice.
 3. As long as one is a genuine Christian and has the fundamental faith of the New Testament, we should not exclude him, even though he may differ from us with respect to doctrine; rather, we should receive him in the same one Lord—14:1.
- G. “Your word is very pure, / And Your servant loves it”—Psa. 119:140:
1. The Scripture, the word of God, is the very breathing out of God; God's speaking is God's breathing out; hence, His word is spirit, or breath; thus, the Scripture is the embodiment of God as the Spirit—2 Tim. 3:16; John 6:63.
 2. The Spirit is therefore the very essence, the substance, of the Scripture, just as phosphorus is the essential substance in matches; we must strike the Spirit of the Scripture with our spirit to catch the divine fire.