

**TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON
AND LIVING HIM IN AND FOR THE CHURCH LIFE**

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

**Becoming Pillars and Pillar Builders
in and for the Building of God**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; Gen. 28:10-22; Prov. 4:18; 1 Kings 7:17-20; Rev. 3:12

I. Jacob's dream unveils that God desires to have a house on earth, and His intention is to transform His called ones into stones, pillars, material for His building—Gen. 28:10-22; Matt. 16:18; 1 Pet. 2:4-5; Rev. 3:12:

- A. In the book of Genesis there are two kinds of pillars—the pillar of salt (19:26), which indicates shame, and the pillar of stone (28:18; 35:14), which indicates building in strength (1 Kings 7:21).
- B. In Genesis 28 Jacob was a supplanter, but by the time we come to chapter 48, this supplanter has been thoroughly transformed into a man of God; this man of God is the pillar—28:18, 22a; cf. Prov. 4:18.
- C. “He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name”—Rev. 3:12, cf. v. 8:
 - 1. The word *make* is very significant, meaning to constitute into something, to construct in a creative way; the Lord makes us pillars by transforming us, that is, by carrying away our natural element and by replacing it with His divine essence—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2.
 - 2. For the overcomers to be pillars in the temple means that they will be pillars in the Triune God, for the temple is “the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb”—Rev. 21:22; cf. Psa. 90:1; John 14:23.

II. The life and experience of Jacob reveal the way that we can be transformed into pillars for God's building:

- A. Since our selection was according to God's mercy, we need to continually depend on His mercy, enjoying His new mercies day by day to become vessels of mercy, honor, and glory—Rom. 9:11-13, 16, 21, 23; Lam. 3:21-24.
- B. We need to enjoy Him as the All-sufficient God—Gen. 48:3; 17:1; Phil. 1:19.
- C. We need to enjoy His continual shepherding until the end of our days—“the God who has shepherded me all my life to this day”—Gen. 48:15b; Rev. 3:8.
- D. We need to behold God's face (Gen. 32:30; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6-7), seek His face (Psa. 27:8, 4), enjoy His face as our serving supply (Exo. 25:30; 33:11a), doing everything in the face, the person, of Christ for our transformation from glory to glory (2 Cor. 2:10; cf. 13:14); when the Triune God is dispensed into us, we have the face of the Triune God as our grace and His countenance as our peace (Num. 6:25-26):

1. Seeing God equals gaining God to be constituted with God—Job 42:5-7.
 2. Seeing God transforms us because in seeing God, we receive His element into us, and our old element is discharged—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2.
- E. In the Scriptures the pillar is a sign, a testimony, of God’s building through transformation in practicing the Body life—Gen. 28:22a; 1 Kings 7:15-22; Gal. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 3:12; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:11-12:
1. According to Genesis 28:18, Jacob took the stone that he had made his pillow and set it up for a pillar:
 - a. The stone becoming a pillow signifies that the divine element of Christ constituted into our being through our subjective experience of Him becomes a pillow for our rest—cf. Matt. 11:28.
 - b. The pillow becoming a pillar signifies that the Christ whom we have experienced and on whom we rest becomes the material and the support for God’s building, God’s house—1 Kings 7:21; 1 Tim. 3:15.
 2. The pillars of the temple were built of bronze, signifying God’s judgment—1 Kings 7:14-15; cf. John 3:14:
 - a. Those who are useful to God are constantly under God’s judgment, realizing that they are men in the flesh, worthy of nothing but death and burial—Psa. 51:5; Exo. 4:1-9; Rom. 7:18; Matt. 3:16-17.
 - b. We must judge ourselves as nothing and being only qualified to be crucified; whatever we are, we are by the grace of God, and it is not we who labor but the grace of God—1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:20; 1 Pet. 5:5-7.
 - c. The reason for both division and fruitlessness among believers is that there is no bronze, nothing of God’s judgment; instead, there is pride, self-boasting, self-vindication, self-justification, self-approval, self-excuse, self-righteousness, condemning others, and regulating others instead of shepherding and seeking them—Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:54-55.
 3. On the capitals of the pillars in the temple were “nets of checker work [like a trellis] with wreaths of chain work”; these signify the complicated and intermixed situation in which those who are pillars in God’s building live and bear responsibility—1 Kings 7:17.
 4. On the top of the capitals were lilies and pomegranates—vv. 18-20:
 - a. Lilies signify a life of faith in God, a life of living by what God is to us, not by what we are; the bronze means “not I,” and the lily means “but Christ”—S. S. 2:1-2; Matt. 6:28, 30; cf. 2 Cor. 5:4; Gal. 2:20.
 - b. The pomegranates on the wreaths of the capitals signify the fullness, the abundance and beauty, and the expression of the riches of Christ as life—1 Kings 7:20; cf. Phil. 1:19-21a.
 - c. Through the crossing out of the network and the restriction of the chain work, we can live a pure, simple life of trusting in God to express the riches of the divine life of Christ for God’s building in life.
- F. In spiritual significance the bowls of the capitals are a testimony (two) indicating that those who place themselves under God’s judgment (bronze), counting themselves as nothing, are able to bear responsibility (five) in full (ten) and express the riches of the divine life (pomegranates) in the midst of a complicated and intermixed situation (the checker work and chain work) out of the

process of resurrection (the base of the capitals, three cubits in height) because they do not live by themselves but by God (lilies).

III. Solomon, the builder of the temple, is a type of Christ (Matt. 12:42), and Hiram, the builder of the pillars (1 Kings 7:13-15), is a type of the gifted persons in the New Testament, who perfect the saints for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:8, 11-12, 16):

- A. That the work of building was not done by Solomon directly but by Solomon through Hiram indicates that Christ builds up the church not directly but through the gifted persons.
- B. Second Chronicles 2:14 says that Hiram's mother was "a woman of the daughters of Dan"; the tribe of Dan is the tribe of idolatry that caused God's people to stumble and fall from God's way (Gen. 49:17); the fact that Hiram's mother was of Dan indicates that Hiram's origin, like that of all men, was of sin (Psa. 51:5; cf. John 8:44a).
- C. Hiram "was the son of a widow and of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a bronze worker; and he was full of wisdom and understanding and skill to do all kinds of work in bronze"—1 Kings 7:14:
 1. That Hiram became one who was "of the tribe of Naphtali" (v. 14), the tribe of resurrection, that is, of transformation (Gen. 49:21), signifies that in order to be a part of God's building and participate in its building work, we need to be transferred from the "tribe of Dan" into the "tribe of Naphtali" by being regenerated and transformed in Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 3:15-18).
 2. "Naphtali is a hind let loose; / He gives beautiful words"—Gen. 49:21:
 - a. A hind is a person who trusts and rejoices in God in a desperate situation—Hab. 3:17-18.
 - b. Habakkuk 3:19 says, "Jehovah the Lord is my strength; / And He makes my feet like hinds' feet / And will cause me to walk on my high places."
 - c. "The hind of the dawn" is also mentioned in the title of Psalm 22, which is on Christ in resurrection for the church (v. 22; Heb. 2:12; S. S. 2:8-9); Naphtali is a tribe of the hind, signifying a regenerated and transformed person who trusts in God, walks on the mountaintops, and lives in resurrection for the church life.
 - d. Naphtali was in the land of Galilee (Matt. 4:15), and the first group of apostles came from Galilee (Acts 1:11); the beautiful words that came out of these Galileans were the word of life (5:20), the word of grace (14:3), the word of salvation (13:26), the word of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8), the word of knowledge (v. 8), and the word of building (Acts 20:32).
 3. Tyre was a Gentile city noted for its commerce; hence, it was one with Satan—Ezek. 28:12, 16.
 4. Hiram's father was the source of Hiram's skill in working with bronze; however, his father died, leaving his mother, the source of his existence, a widow:
 - a. This signifies that in order to be useful to God for the building of the church, God's dwelling place, we need to acquire the secular learning and skills but must allow our "Tyrian" father, the source of these things, to die.

- b. Furthermore, our “Danite” mother must be “widowed” (separated from the worldly source), and we must be of the “tribe of Naphtali,” the tribe of transformation.
- c. Thus, we continue to possess the learning and the skills without the source, our existence (mother) is no longer linked to our worldly origin, and we are in resurrection; Moses and the apostle Paul are excellent examples of this principle.
- D. Hiram was brought from Tyre to King Solomon in Jerusalem (1 Kings 7:13-14), the place where the temple was to be built; Jerusalem typifies the church:
 - 1. Both today’s Solomon (Christ) and God’s present building are in the church.
 - 2. Thus, in order to be useful to God for His building, we must gain secular skills, live in resurrection, and come to the proper ground, the ground of the church—Rev. 1:10-11.

IV. The need in the church today is for the Lord to gain pillars and pillar builders; in order for this need to be met, we all must pray to the Lord, saying, “Lord, for the sake of Your building, make me a pillar and a pillar builder.”

Excerpts from the Ministry:

OUR NEED TO BE IN TODAY’S BETHEL

If we mean business with the Lord to become pillars, then we must discover where Bethel is today. Otherwise, we shall be seeking the right thing in the wrong place. If we remain in the Catholic Church, the denominations, the charismatic movement, or the free groups, it will be impossible for us to be perfected as pillars. Do not think that such a statement indicates we are being narrow-minded or shortsighted. We must be in today’s Bethel, the church. There is no other place for us to be made pillars in God’s building. The pillars perfected in other places are not pillars for Bethel, God’s building, but for other things. Through the past centuries, some spiritual giants have been perfected to be pillars for the denominations, for the mission fields, or for certain movements. However, through my years of observation, I have not seen any pillars perfected for the Lord’s building outside of the local churches. We must be clear that the pillars about which we are speaking are the genuine pillars for God’s building. If we want to be such a pillar, then we must ask where God’s building, today’s Bethel, is. We should not take this matter lightly.

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

In 1933 I was burdened by the Lord, even forced by Him, to give up my job and to serve Him full time. I had not studied in a Bible school or seminary. At the time I was working in a corporation. When the Lord was dealing with me about giving up my job, I could not eat or sleep well for three weeks. To serve the Lord full time required an extreme exercise of my faith, and nothing in my environment favored this decision. I simply did not know how I would care for my living. Eventually, however, I had no choice except to quit my job. After I made this decision, I received a brief note from Brother Nee. In this note Brother Nee said, “Brother Witness, as to your future, I feel that you have to serve the Lord with your full time. How do you feel about it? May the Lord lead you.” This note, dated August 17, 1933, the middle of my three-week struggle with the Lord, was a strong confirmation. I had resigned from the corporation, but I had little faith; I was still doubting that I had made the right decision. At that very juncture, that note arrived from Brother Nee. After I read it, I

said, "The Lord willing, I will visit this brother and find out why he wrote that note to me at that time."

With this purpose in mind, I went to Shanghai to visit Brother Nee, and he received me as his guest. I stayed with him for several months, and I received great help from him. Of course, my first question was why he had written that note on August 17. He told me that as his boat was sailing back to China on the Mediterranean Sea and he was sitting silently in his cabin alone, he was burdened to pray for the Lord's move in China. While he was praying, the Lord pointed out to him that he had to write me that note. Then I told him that the date on which he wrote this note was in the middle of my three-week struggle with the Lord. This report confirmed for Brother Nee that what he had written was absolutely right. Through this note he and I were builded together even more than before. We were deeply assured that the Lord had put us together. From this time, he treated me as a new learner, and I honored and respected him, my senior co-worker, as one who could perfect me.

Because there was not that much work for Brother Nee and me to do in the early days, I often went to him in his home for long periods of time. At these times he perfected me in many different ways. Before the Lord I can testify that we never spent any time in gossip. Brother Nee, an outstanding gift given by the Lord to perfect others, always used the time to perfect me. He certainly knew what I needed. He gave me the proper understanding of church history from the first century until the present; he shared with me the biographies of nearly all the founders of the different denominations; and he perfected me with respect to the inner life, the church life, and the Lord's move.

ONE FLOW

One day Brother Nee told me that he and the other co-workers were burdened that I move to Shanghai with my family to stay with them and work with them. He asked me to bring this matter to the Lord. As I took the matter to the Lord and prayed about it, the Lord showed me from the book of Acts that in His move on earth there is only one flow. This flow started from Jerusalem and spread to Antioch, and from Antioch it turned to Europe. The Lord told me that for His move in China there should not be two flows or two origins. I had been burdened for north China. Before I had gone to see Brother Nee, I had conducted a thorough study on the Song of Songs in the summer of 1933. But although I was definitely burdened for north China, Brother Nee and the co-workers felt that I should move to Shanghai, stay there, and work with them. At this time the Lord showed me that I had to get into the one flow that had started from Shanghai. I saw that from Shanghai the flow would proceed to the north and to other parts of the country. Therefore, I decided to move to Shanghai and to stay there. From that time onward, I have been in the flow. I have been absolutely clear that this is the Lord's flow and His move on earth in His recovery. Using today's word, I knew that I had found Bethel.

THE MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FLOW

Because I knew I was in the Lord's flow and that this flow had already started, I also realized that there was a ministry responsible for that flow. As the result of seeing this, I strongly decided to forget all my past learning and experience. The fact that I had been able to conduct a detailed study on Song of Songs indicates that I had some knowledge and that I could do something. I had learned a good deal about the Bible in my seven and a half years with the Brethren. I knew the types, the prophecies, and various other things. Moreover, a church had been established through me. Nevertheless, I realized that the Lord's flow on the earth must be one, that the flow had already begun, and that there was a ministry carrying

on this flow. I knew that I had to be in the flow and to be under the ministry responsible for the flow.

Those who were with us in the early years can testify that, apart from the messages I gave in the meetings, I never said anything. In view of the fact that Brother Nee was present, I dropped all my concepts, all my learnings, and all my experiences. He was the one used by the Lord to start the flow, and he had the ministry to carry on the flow. There was no need for my opinion. However, this does not mean that I did nothing. During the next eighteen or twenty years, I did a great deal. But everything was according to Brother Nee's leading, not according to my opinion. I never ministered anything according to myself; I only ministered the messages delivered by Brother Nee. In those years I never expressed my opinion or concept; instead, I wholly followed Brother Nee.

The Lord is flowing in His move on earth. This flow was not started by you, but by others. Furthermore, there is a ministry responsible for the flow. It is difficult for me to speak about this because now the matter is very much related to me. If I were still on the mainland and the flow were related to Brother Nee's ministry, I would have the ground to say much more.

THE SECRET TO BEING PERFECTED TO BE A PILLAR

Let me now tell you the secret to being solidly perfected to be a strong pillar for the Lord's move. Certain brothers have been perfected because they have had no concepts of their own. Recently, one brother declared strongly that he only knows to follow the ministry of Brother Lee and to absorb everything of this ministry. There have been others among us who were quite opinionated. They often said, "Brother Lee says such-and-such. Is this right? Is the church right? Just a week ago, I learned about a mistake made by the church." None of these opinionated ones has yet been perfected. But those who have been perfected to be pillars are not like this. Even when they see certain mistakes, they forget about them, having no time to waste discussing them. They only desire to soak in all the positive things.

FEASTING ON THE POSITIVE THINGS

According to God's principle in His creation, in order for anything to grow there is the need for a negative side. Take the example of a chicken. We all appreciate chicken eggs, breasts, and legs, but we certainly do not care for chicken dung, feathers, and bones. Nevertheless, without dung, feathers, and bones, a chicken cannot grow. In order for a chicken to be a chicken, it must have these things. But it is not our portion to eat them. We should enjoy the eggs, the breasts, and the legs, and forget the dung, the feathers, and the bones. If we concentrate on the positive aspects of the chicken, we shall receive much nourishment.

I admit that the church in Los Angeles has made certain mistakes, and I confess that I have made mistakes. The elders can testify of this. Everybody makes mistakes. No one can deny this. I have had to make mistakes in order to grow. These mistakes are my "dung." If you eat this, you are foolish. I also admit that I have "feathers." The church in Los Angeles also has had a certain amount of "feathers" and "bones." However, without these "feathers," "bones," and "dung," neither the church in Los Angeles nor my ministry would be able to exist. Do you intend to gather up the "feathers" and say, "Look! This is the church in Los Angeles. Look! This is what Brother Lee has done. See all these awful 'feathers.'" If you do this, you will not damage the church in Los Angeles or my ministry, but you will surely damage yourself. To do this is not wise. These who have been perfected to be pillars, who surely are not less intelligent than you, are wise. Their eyes are much clearer than yours. But they refuse to devote their attention to the negative things. They would say, "Although Brother Lee has some 'dung,' he has a great many eggs. I don't care for the 'dung' issuing out of his ministry—I want to eat all the 'eggs,' 'breasts,' and 'legs.' I have no time to hear about

‘feathers’ and ‘bones.’” Let us follow the example of such brothers to forget the negative things and to feast upon the “eggs,” “breasts,” and “legs.” This is my burden in this message.

Are you in Anaheim as a spy, investigating whether or not Witness Lee has any “dung”? I cannot live without “dung.” To be sure, both “feathers” and “bones” can be found here in Anaheim. The elders have made many “bones.” But I would stand, even dance, upon all the “bones” they have made; I would not be so foolish as to eat them.

Three or four of us knew Brother Nee very intimately. He fully opened himself to us, and we knew his imperfections. But we realized that these imperfections were the “dung” that enabled him to exist. Unlike others, we would not cling to his “feathers,” nor to the “bones” of the “chicken” in Shanghai. If we had done this, we would have sacrificed ourselves. I never suffered such self-inflicted damage. Rather, I enjoyed the fresh, nourishing “eggs,” “breasts,” and “legs” of Brother Nee’s ministry. When a great turmoil was aroused against his ministry, I was not ashamed to say that I was an absolute follower of Brother Nee. I did not care what others said about his mistakes. I only knew how grateful I was to him for the perfection he had rendered to me. I knew the nourishment I had received from him. Even when we are in the New Jerusalem, I shall be able to say that the Lord used Brother Nee to perfect me. Apart from his ministry, I would never be the person I am today.

How foolish it would be for anyone in the church to devote his time to finding “dung” or stuffing his pockets with “feathers,” saying, “This is a ‘feather’ from that ‘chicken’ Witness Lee, and these are the ‘bones’ of the church in Anaheim. Don’t you know that the church in Anaheim has made mistakes?” If this is your intention, you are wasting your time. You are in the wrong place. Neither Witness Lee nor the church in Anaheim would pay you for exposing them. But do not think that we are afraid of being exposed. Whatever Witness Lee is, he is what he is. Whether the church is genuine or not, the church is what the church is. Neither the church in Anaheim nor my ministry is afraid of exposure. On the contrary, we appreciate it. But what will you gain by exposing us?

FINDING THE FLOW AND GETTING INTO IT

The Lord is still working and moving to accomplish something on earth. In order for Him to fulfill His purpose, there must be a flow. Among the many activities taking place in Christian circles, there must be the flow of the Lord’s move. Surely you believe that the Lord is still living, moving, and working on earth. According to the principle, there must be one flow of the Lord on earth. The Bible reveals that there has always been just one flow. There was one flow with Abel, Noah, and Abraham, and at the end of the Old Testament there was still only one flow. It is the same in the New Testament. Because the Lord is still living, moving, and working on earth, there must also be just one flow on earth today.

Since there is only one flow on earth, we should do everything necessary to find out where the flow is. It is certainly worthwhile to travel and study in order to find it. I am not a stupid person who follows things blindly. Before I leaped into the flow, I searched and researched thoroughly. I had given up my job, my family, and everything I had. I did not want to waste my sacrifice. Hence, I took time to study the matter. Eventually, I was convinced that this is the flow, and for more than forty-five years I have not had a doubt about it.

After we have seen that there is one flow and we have discovered where the flow is, we must get into it, forgetting our past learnings, concepts, understandings, and viewpoints. As far as the flow is concerned, all this means nothing. For many, it is rather late to say that they know nothing. They should have said this at the very beginning. From the very day I told Brother Nee that I would move to Shanghai, work with them, and learn of the brothers, I abandoned everything and followed that unique ministry. I shall never regret that decision.

Hallelujah for that choice! No one can measure the nourishment and perfection I received as the result of turning this way. Certain brothers among us have been the same. They have no time to care for “dung,” “feathers,” or “bones.” They only have time to absorb all that is in this flow. This is the proper way to be perfected as useful pillars for the Lord’s move. (*Life-study of Genesis*, pp. 1133-1140)