

Message Five

Standing on the Unique Ground of the Church, Being under the Limitation of the Body of Christ, and Being Body-conscious in One Accord

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:12-27

I. We must stand on the unique ground of the church, the genuine ground of oneness:

- A. First Corinthians 1:2 speaks of the church at Corinth—this 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 church in Corinth was built on the ground of the city of Corinth.
- B. 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; in no city was there more than one church—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:11:
 1. This is the local church with the city, not the street or area, as the unit.
 2. The jurisdiction of a local church should cover the whole city in which the church is located; it should not be greater or lesser than the boundary of the city.
 3. All the believers within that boundary should constitute the one unique local church within that city.
 4. There are four characteristics of our meeting on the genuine ground of oneness, the place that God has chosen—cf. Deut. 12:5:
 - a. First, the people of God should always be one; there should be no divisions among them—Psa. 133; John 17:11, 21-23; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3-4a.
 - b. Second, the unique name into which God's people should gather is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the reality of which name is the Spirit; to be designated by any other name is to be denominated, divided; this is spiritual fornication—Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 1:12; 12:3b.
 - c. Third, in the New Testament God's habitation, His dwelling place, is particularly located in our spirit, that is, in our mingled spirit, our human spirit regenerated and indwelt by the divine Spirit; in our meeting for the worship of God, we must exercise our spirit and do everything in the spirit—John 3:6b; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; Eph. 2:22; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:15.
 - d. Fourth, in our worship of God we must have a genuine application of the cross of Christ, signified by the altar (Deut. 12:5-6, 27), by rejecting the flesh, the self, and the natural life and by worshipping God with Christ and Christ alone (Matt. 16:24; Gal. 2:20).

II. As members of the Body of Christ standing on the genuine ground of oneness, we must be limited by the other members, not going beyond our measure:

- A. God has placed all the members of the Body, even as He willed—1 Cor. 12:18:

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—vv. 19-22.
 4. Every member has a definite place, a definite assignment, and a particular portion with which he serves the Body of Christ.
 5. Each member has his own characteristics, and each has his own capability; these characteristics constitute the place, position, or ministry of each member—Rom. 12:4-8; 2 Tim. 4:5.
- 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. We must be willing to be limited by our measure—Rom. 12:3, 6.
 2. As soon as we go beyond our measure, we go beyond the authority of the Head and move out from under the anointing—cf. Psa. 133.
 3. When we go beyond our measure, we interfere with the order of the Body.
 4. 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, staying within the limits of God's ruling, God's measuring—2 Cor. 10:13:
1. When we give a testimony about our work, experience, or enjoyment of the Lord, we must testify within measure, that is, within a certain limit.
 2. Although we expect the work to spread, we must learn how to be under God's restriction; we should not expect a spread that is without measure—vv. 13-15:
 - a. If we spread the work according to the Spirit, there will always be a certain limit—cf. 2:12-14.
 - b. Inwardly, we will have the consciousness that the Lord intends to spread the work only to a certain extent; inwardly, we do not have the peace to spread the work beyond a certain point.
 - c. Outwardly, in the environment the Lord may cause certain matters to restrict the spread of the work; the environment does not allow us to go beyond a particular boundary line—cf. Rom. 15:24.
 3. In the church service, we need to realize that God has measured out only so much to us, and we should not overstretch ourselves—12:3-4, 6a.

III. For the Lord's move in His recovery both locally and universally, we must be Body-conscious in one accord—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 15:25; Rom. 15:6:

- A. 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.
- B. "When Brother Nee taught about the Body, he said that 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.

- C. In the Body there can be no independence or individualism, for we are members, and members cannot live in detachment from the Body—1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 5:30:
1. Those who see that they are members of the Body treasure the Body and honor the other members, each of whom is indispensable—1 Cor. 12:15, 21, 23-24; Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:29; 1 Cor. 16:18; Judg. 9:9:
 - a. Since we are members of the Body of Christ, we should have a feeling for the Body, taking the feeling of the Head as our own feeling—Phil. 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:25b-26.
 - b. We need to be like-souled in the Body life, genuinely caring for the things of Christ Jesus, the things concerning the church with all the saints—Phil. 2:2, 20-21; 1:8.
 2. Wherever there is Body-revelation, there is Body-consciousness, and wherever there is Body-consciousness, individualistic thought and action are ruled out:
 - a. If we want to know the Body, we need deliverance not only from our sinful life and our natural life but also from our individualistic life.
 - b. Just as the Father is versus the world (1 John 2:15), the Spirit is versus the flesh (Gal. 5:17), and the Lord is versus the devil (1 John 3:8), so also the Body is versus the individual.
 - c. Just as we cannot be independent from the Head, we cannot be independent from the Body.
 - d. Individualism is hateful in the sight of God:
 - (1) The enemy of the Body is the self, the independent “I,” the independent “me”; if we would be built up in the Body, the self must be condemned, denied, rejected, and renounced—Matt. 16:21-26.
 - (2) We should be dependent not only on God but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters—Exo. 17:11-13; Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33.
 - e. 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.
 - f. 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.