

Message Three

Caring for the Oneness of the Body of Christ by Seeing, Experiencing, and Applying Twelve Crucial Matters

Scripture Reading: John 17:11, 17, 21-23; Eph. 4:3-6

I. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the oneness of the Body of Christ— Eph. 4:3-4:

- A. The Lord's recovery is based upon the truth that Christ has only one Body—1 Cor. 12:12-13, 20; Eph. 1:23; 4:4, 16.
- B. The Lord desires to recover the Body of Christ and the oneness of the Body of Christ—v. 3; John 17:11, 21-22.
- C. The oneness of the Body of Christ is the oneness of the Spirit; therefore, we need to be diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit—Eph. 4:3:
 1. For us to keep the oneness of the Spirit, we need to be dealt with by the cross—Rom. 6:6; Matt. 16:24.
 2. If we would keep the oneness of the Spirit, our flesh, our self, and our "I" must be crossed out by the cross of Christ—Gal. 2:20; 5:24.

II. The one unique, universal Body of Christ is expressed as the local churches— Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11:

- A. A local church is the expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32b; 12:12-13, 20, 27.
- B. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many local churches—local expressions of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:16b.
- C. Every local church is part of the unique, universal Body of Christ and is a local expression of this Body—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.

III. The ground of the church is constituted of three crucial elements:

- A. The first element of the church ground is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ—"the oneness of the Spirit"—Eph. 4:3-4.
- B. The second element of the church ground is the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Rev. 1:11.
- C. The third element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit of oneness, expressing the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ on the unique ground of locality as a local church—1 John 5:6; John 16:13:
 1. By the Spirit of reality, who is the living reality of the Divine Trinity, the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living.
 2. Through this Spirit the ground of the church is applied in life and not in legality.

IV. The ground of oneness is the processed and consummated Triune God applied to our being—17:21-22; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:14-17a; 4:4-6:

- A. The oneness of the Body of Christ is actually the triune, organic, living God Himself—1:3-14, 22-23; 3:14-17a; 4:4-6:
 1. Ephesians 4:4-6 reveals four persons—one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father—mingled together as one entity to be the organic Body of Christ.

2. The church is the Triune God mingled with His redeemed people to become the golden lampstand to express God—Rev. 1:20.
- B. We have been brought into the oneness produced by the application of the processed and consummated Triune God to our being—John 17:21-22; 2 Cor. 13:14.
- C. The oneness in the churches in the Lord's recovery involves the application of the Triune God to our inner being—Eph. 3:14-17a.

V. The essence of oneness is life and light—John 8:12; 10:10; 11:25:

- A. The oneness is in life, with light, and on the proper ground—Psa. 36:8-9.
- B. The Father's name is a matter of life, and the Father's truth is a matter of light—John 17:11, 17:
 1. Without life, there can be no oneness (Ezek. 37:1-14); the only way oneness can be maintained is by life, in life, and with life—Gen. 2:9; Rev. 22:1-2.
 2. Divisiveness and divisions are the issue of taking into our being something other than life—Gen. 3:1-6; 11:1-9.
 3. Light preserves oneness and rules out disorder—Rev. 21:23.
- C. Light, life, and oneness go together and are a cycle: the more light, the more life; the more life, the more oneness; and the more oneness, the more light.
- D. All the churches in the Lord's recovery must be in life and under the shining of light (1 John 1:1-5); by the shining of light and by the watering and supplying of life, we are one—Rev. 21:23; 22:1-2.

VI. There are six tests of a genuine local church—1:4, 11:

- A. A genuine local church has no special name—3:8.
- B. A genuine local church has no special teaching or practice—Acts 2:42.
- C. A genuine local church has no special fellowship—1 Cor. 1:9.
- D. A genuine local church has no separate administration.
- E. A genuine local church has no hidden connection with other organizations.
- F. A genuine local church is willing to have fellowship with all the local churches—10:16-17; 16:19; 1 Thes. 2:14; Rev. 1:4; 2:7a.

VII. The damage to the oneness of God's people is portrayed in the Old Testament:

- A. Joshua 22:10-34 shows us that no matter what the situation of God's people might be today, we are not allowed to set up another altar for the worship of God and for fellowship with God.
- B. The significance of the high places is division and involves the exaltation of something—1 Kings 11:6-8; 13:33-34; 14:22-24; 15:14, 34; 22:43:
 1. In principle, every "high place," every division, involves the uplifting, the exaltation, of something other than Christ—1 Cor. 1:10-13.
 2. In the church life we should not have any "high places"; instead, we should all be on one level to exalt Christ—Col. 1:18; 3:10-11.
- C. Jeroboam's apostasy broke God's ordination of having one unique worship center in the holy land for the keeping of the oneness of the children of Israel—1 Kings 12:25-33.

VIII. The truth sanctifies us for oneness—John 17:17:

- A. The truth sanctifies, and sanctification issues in oneness—vv. 21-22.

- B. To be sanctified is to move out of ourselves and into the Triune God and to allow Christ to live in us—vv. 11, 14-17, 21-26.
- C. The four factors of division—worldliness, ambition, self-exaltation, and opinions and concepts—can be dealt with only by the sanctifying truth—v. 17.

IX. The genuine oneness is versus “the evil”—vv. 15-17, 21-23:

- A. The world is the satanic system with Satan as the evil within it; Satan and the world are one entity—vv. 14-16.
- B. The evil (v. 15) is the world with its ambition, self-exaltation, and opinions and concepts, all of which produce division.
- C. In the Triune God there is no ambition, in the glory of the Father there is no self-exaltation, and in the place where Christ lives and reigns there are no opinions and concepts—vv. 21-23.

X. In addition to keeping the oneness of the Body, we need to maintain a good order in the Body—1 Cor. 12:18; 2 Cor. 10:13:

- A. God has made definite arrangements and instituted order in the Body—1 Cor. 12:28:
 - 1. We have to know the order of the Body, which is God’s assigned pattern in the Body.
 - 2. Every member must be in order and walk in an orderly way—11:34b; 14:33, 40; Col. 2:5.
- B. Order in the Body is essential to growth and ministry; lawlessness makes the development of the Body impossible—Eph. 4:16; 1 John 3:4.
- C. We must be limited by our measure; when we go beyond our measure, we interfere with the order of the Body—2 Cor. 10:13.
- D. We need to maintain a good order in the Body by being subject to one another; then we will keep the one accord—Eph. 5:21; Acts 1:14; 2:46; Rom. 15:6.

XI. There should be only one work in the Lord’s recovery—the work of the one Body—Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10:

- A. We must all see the Body and do the work of the Body—Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12.
- B. All the co-workers should do the same one work universally for the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 24-27; Eph. 4:12.
- C. The regions of the work should not divide the churches—Gal. 2:7-8.
- D. “Whenever God’s children see the oneness of the Body, they will also see the oneness of the work, and they will be delivered out of individualistic work into the work of the Body”—*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 37, p. 244.

XII. In order to keep the oneness of the universal Body of Christ, we need to be blended together—1 Cor. 12:24:

- A. The word *blended* means to be adjusted, harmonized, tempered, and mingled, implying the losing of distinctions.
- B. Blending requires us to be crossed out and to be by the Spirit to dispense Christ for the sake of the Body—Matt. 16:24; Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 24-25; Eph. 3:8; 4:12, 16.

- C. We should have the blending of all the members of the Body, the blending of all the churches in certain districts, the blending of all the co-workers, and the blending of all the elders.
- D. This blending is for the building up of the universal Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem as the final goal of God's economy according to His good pleasure—1:9-10, 23; 3:8-10; Rev. 21:2.