

## SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD

Message Nine

(Saturday—Evening Session)

### Shepherding the Flock of God to Know the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:5; 16:1-5, 17; 1 Cor. 12:12, 24; Eph. 1:17, 22-23; 4:11-13, 16

**I. If we are for the Lord's recovery, we need to realize what the recovery is; the Lord desires to recover the missed Body of Christ and to recover the neglected oneness of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:3-4a; John 17:21, 23:**

- A. The Body of Christ is the top revelation of the Bible and the focus, the center, of the Christian life; the economy of God is for the Body of Christ, and the will of God is to have the organic Body of Christ—Eph. 1:5, 9-11, 17, 22-23; 2:10; 3:9-11; 4:1-6, 11-13, 15-16.
- B. The focal point of Romans is the Body of Christ—12:1-5; 16:1-5:
  - 1. The book of Romans reveals four stations—the station of justification (chs. 1—4), the station of sanctification (chs. 5—8), the station of the Body of Christ (chs. 9—12), and the station of the local churches to express the Body and bring us into the reality of the Body (chs. 13—16).
  - 2. We must follow the apostle's footsteps by serving God in our spirit in the gospel of His Son (1:1, 9) to bring all the saints and all the local churches into the final station of the gospel of God in Romans, that is, into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ (16:1-23).

**II. The elders must shepherd one another and love one another to be a model of the Body life; they must shepherd the flock of God to know the life of the Body, the position of the Body, the coordination of the Body, the feeling of the Body, and the living in the Body, because the Body is the intrinsic significance of the church—Eph. 1:22-23a:**

- A. Many saints “may consider that the recovery is for the recovery of the local churches. I say ‘yes’ with a ‘but.’ ‘Yes,’ Brother Nee did minister on the local churches, ‘but’ he went on from the local churches to the Body of Christ” (*The Practical Points concerning Blending*, p. 33).
- B. “Brother Nee's fellowship on the Body...was the most strategic work of his entire life” (*The History of the Church and the Local Churches*, p. 65).
- C. “At least I can testify for myself and for my senior brother, Brother Watchman Nee. We always behaved, acted, and took action in the recovery as one Body. This is why the Lord's recovery could exist on this earth over these past approximately seventy years. We do not have any organization to keep anything, but the recovery is still here. The recovery is still existing and has been kept by the principle of the Body. While I was ministering the word, I often considered Brother Nee. I considered what he spoke; I did not like to speak anything which was contradicting with his ministry. If I had spoken in a contradicting way, where would the recovery be today? We must know the Body” (*The Issue of the*

*Dispensing of the Processed Trinity and the Transmitting of the Transcending Christ, p. 91).*

**III. We must see the three crucial elements of the ground of the church, which keep the genuine oneness of the church both locally and universally (Eph. 4:3), without any division:**

- A. The first element of the church ground is the unique oneness of the universal Body of Christ, which is called “the oneness of the Spirit” (v. 3); this is the oneness that the Lord prayed for in John 17, a oneness of the mingling of the processed Triune God with all the believers in Christ.
- B. The second element of the church ground is the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists; all the local churches, as the expressions of the universal Body of Christ, are located in their respective cities; every city as the boundary in which a church exists is the local ground of that church—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:4, 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 of a local church:
  - 1. This element of the church ground is the reality of the Spirit, who is the living reality of the Divine Trinity—1 John 5:6; John 16:13.
  - 2. It is by this Spirit that the oneness of the Body of Christ becomes real and living; it is through this Spirit that the ground of locality is applied in life and not in legality, and it is by this Spirit that the genuine ground of the church is linked with the Triune God—Eph. 4:3-6.

**IV. To be in the Spirit and in the unique oneness of the Body is to be kept in the Lord’s recovery—Rom. 1:9; 8:4; 7:6; Gal. 5:25; Phil. 3:3; Eph. 4:3-4a:**

- A. In our spirit there is the all-inclusive Spirit, who is the oneness of the Body and the reality of the Body—Rom. 8:16; Eph. 4:3-4a; John 16:13; 1 John 5:6.
- B. Our spirit is today’s Jerusalem and is the only place where we can be one; our independent mind with its dissenting concepts and opinions of division and confusion is today’s Babylon; to obey the Lord’s call to come out of Babylon is to come out of our mind, and to obey His call to return to Jerusalem is to return to our spirit—John 4:20, 23-24; Rev. 18:4-5; cf. Ezra 1:1-4.
- C. “If we are not in the spirit but still in the mind, we are not in Jerusalem. This is pitiful. To be in the mind is to be captured, to be in captivity. Therefore, we all need to get out of our mind and turn to our spirit. This is to return from captivity.

“By reading some of the books we have published, some dear ones today have picked up the teaching of the ground of locality. To them, however, the ground of locality may be something in the mentality. In this way, even the ground of oneness becomes a divisive factor. The ground of oneness is for oneness, not for division, but if we take the ground of oneness in our mind and make it a mental matter, right away it becomes a divisive factor. Instead, we need to return to the spirit...The recovery is possible only in our spirit” (*Enjoying the Riches of Christ for the Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ, p. 188*).

- D. Whenever we turn to our spirit and exercise our spirit, we enter into the reality of the Body, because the Body is in our spirit—Eph. 1:17; 2:22; 3:5, 16; 4:23; 5:18; 6:18; 4:4; cf. Rom. 8:16.

**V. The divine fellowship is the reality of living in the Body of Christ:**

- A. The Body of Christ is uniquely one universally, and the fellowship of the Body of Christ is also uniquely one universally; this fellowship is the flow of the eternal life within all the believers who have received and possess the divine life—Eph. 4:4-6; 1 John 1:3; cf. Rev. 22:1.
- B. The circulation of blood in our physical body is a good picture of the fellowship, the flow of the divine life, in the Body of Christ—cf. Rom. 12:4-5:
  - 1. Just as the health of our physical body depends on the circulation of our blood, so the health of the Body of Christ depends on the fellowship of the Spirit; the fellowship of the Body of Christ is simply the circulation, the current, of the Spirit—2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1-2.
  - 2. The Spirit today is the “blood” in Christ’s Body; if Christ’s Body did not have the Spirit, it would be like a corpse—Eph. 4:4a.
  - 3. When this all-inclusive Spirit is circulating within the Body of Christ, divinity, humanity, Christ’s person, Christ’s death, and Christ’s resurrection all are circulating—Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 13:14.

**VI. The trouble in the churches today is due to the shortage of the fellowship, the circulation of the blood; this lack of fellowship gives the enemy the opportunity to come in:**

- A. If any part of the Body of Christ is separate, that part will eventually die; the best way to stay healthy is to “receive more blood and to give more blood,” that is, to stay in the fellowship, the circulation of life.
- B. The circulation of blood within our body carries nourishment to every part of our body and also causes our body to be cherished; in like manner, the fellowship in the Body nourishes us with the riches of Christ and cherishes us with the presence of Christ as the Spirit.
- C. The circulation of blood within our body is like a river that always carries away the waste in our being so that it can be discharged; in like manner, the fellowship in the Body carries away all the negative things—1 Cor. 1:9.

**VII. One of the tests of a genuine local church is that it has fellowship with all the genuine churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship and oneness of the Body of Christ; any local church that does not keep this fellowship is divisive and becomes a local sect:**

- A. If we cut off the meeting in our locality from the rest of the churches in the recovery, we are a division and whatever we do in our place is divisive; this is because all the churches are one Body—10:16-17.
- B. The divine fellowship blends us together; it tempers us, adjusts us, harmonizes us, and mingles us together into one Body—12:24-25.
- C. All the local churches need to be kept in the unique oneness of the Body of Christ by being restricted in the divine fellowship—Rev. 1:10-12; 2:7b.

- D. We accept all the believers in Christ, but because division dismembers the Body of Christ, we must obey the apostle's charge to turn away from the divisive and sectarian ones so that we may be preserved and kept in the oneness of the Body of Christ—Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10.
- E. Turmoil after turmoil has transpired because of our not knowing the Body; the only remedy that can cure us of this kind of illness is for us to see the Body, know the Body, care for the Body, honor the Body, do the work of the Body, and keep every principle of the Body—1 Cor. 12:12, 24; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:16.