

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND THE WORK

Message One

(Friday—First Morning Session)

The Body—the Governing Principle of the Church, the Ministry, and the Work

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; Col. 2:19; 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1; 1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10

- I. “I ask you to render to this work the highest cooperation. When I say ‘the highest cooperation,’ I mean that you must dive into these things, as I did, day and night. Second, you have to experience them. Third, you have to live a God-man life. Fourth, you have to be an overcomer to keep every principle of the Body” (Witness Lee, fellowship with co-workers, December 15, 1995).**
- II. In the universe God has laws on the physical side, and He has laws also on the spiritual side—Rom. 8:2; Heb. 8:10:**
 - A. The spiritual laws are stricter than the physical laws.
 - B. When we touch the spiritual work of God, we must be restricted by His laws; if we deviate from His laws, we are finished—cf. Num. 18:1.
- III. The Body is the governing law of the life and work of the children of God today—Eph. 1:22-23; 4:1, 4, 16; 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 12-13, 27:**
 - A. The church, the ministry, and the work are all on the ground of the Body:
 1. The basic principle of the churches is the Body; the basic principle of the ministry is the Body; and the basic principle of the work is the Body.
 2. The churches are the Body expressed locally; the ministry is the Body in function; and the work is the Body seeking increase—Acts 13:1-2; 21:19.
 3. The church is the life of the Body in miniature; the ministry is the functioning of the Body in service; and the work is the reaching out of the Body in growth—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27; 16:10; 2 Cor. 3:6.
 - B. The churches, the ministry, and the work are quite different in function and sphere, but they are coordinated and interrelated—Acts 13:1-4; 20:24; 21:19:
 1. All three are manifestations of the one Body, so they are all interdependent and interrelated.
 2. None can move, or even exist, by itself; their relationship is so intimate and vital that none can be right by itself without being rightly adjusted to the others.
 3. They must move and act as one, for they are all in one Body, regardless of their specific functions and spheres.
 - C. The church, the ministry, and the work derive their existence from, find their place in, and work for the good of the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 2:19; 3:15:
 1. The importance of this principle cannot be over-emphasized, for without it everything is man-made, not God-created.

2. If this principle of relatedness to the Body and interrelatedness among its members is not recognized, there can be no church, no ministry, and no work.

IV. Because God's eternal economy is to obtain the Body of Christ, we need to have a vision of the Body and do the work of the Lord's recovery under this governing and controlling vision—Eph. 3:3-11; Prov. 29:18a:

- A. The Body fulfills God's desire for His expression and the destruction of Satan—Gen. 1:26.
- B. The work of the Triune God in us is to produce the Body of Christ; any work outside of this is not on the central lane of God's eternal economy—Eph. 4:4-6.
- C. The Lord's recovery is for the building up of the Body of Christ—v. 16.
- D. All the problems in the church today are due to the lack of seeing the Body and to the ignorance concerning the Body.
- E. The way we behave ourselves in the church, the ministry, and the work depends upon the degree of our seeing the Body—Acts 26:18-19.

V. The ministry of the new covenant is for the producing of the Body of Christ—2 Cor. 3:6, 8-9; 4:1; 5:18:

- A. First Corinthians covers the Body of Christ, and 2 Corinthians tells us that if we desire to have the Body of Christ, we must have the new covenant ministry—1 Cor. 12:12-27; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8-9.
- B. Without the new covenant ministry, there is no possibility to bring forth the Body of Christ.
- C. The sphere of the ministry is the Body of Christ, which may be expressed locally as a church, or extra-locally as the work—Eph. 4:16.
- D. What we have in the Lord's recovery is not one man's individual ministry but a corporate ministry of the Body—vv. 11-13.

VI. Our work in the Lord's recovery is the work of God's economy, the work of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Col. 4:11:

- A. The Body of Christ is organic and does not allow anything of human work, and the Body is not built up by using man's natural methods or the organization of human work—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19.
- B. Most of the work in today's Christianity is human work, is natural, and has nothing to do with the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 3:12-16.
- C. We may be very gifted and have a large capacity to work out something, but what we work out may be the same as worldly people carrying out a certain enterprise.
- D. In the recovery we should not have the thought that we can do a particular work according to our way; rather, we need to realize that in the Lord's recovery there is only one work—the work of the Body—Col. 2:19:
 1. What we are doing today is not our personal work but the work of the economy of God—the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 3:9; 4:16.
 2. All the co-workers should do the same one work universally for the unique Body; the starting point of the work is the oneness of the Body—1 Cor. 16:10.

- E. “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).