

# THE EXPERIENCE, GROWTH, AND MINISTRY OF LIFE FOR THE BODY

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

## **Living a Sacrificing Life in the Body and Ministering Life to the Body for the Growth of the Body**

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:17; Rom. 12:1; 1 John 5:16a; 2 Cor. 4:12; Eph. 4:13-16; Col. 2:19

### **I. In the Body we need to live a sacrificing life—Rom. 12:1:**

- A. The vine typifies the sacrificing Christ, the Christ who sacrificed everything of Himself, and out of His sacrifice He produced new wine to cheer God and man—Deut. 8:8; Judg. 9:13; Psa. 104:15a:
  - 1. Christ is the wine-producer, sacrificing Himself to produce wine to cheer God and others; as the vine, Christ produces happiness for God and happiness for others—Judg. 9:13; Psa. 104:15a.
  - 2. Under the Lord's sovereignty, we may be put into situations where we need to sacrifice ourselves to make others happy—Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:2:
    - a. If in the midst of such a situation we contact the Lord, we will experience Him as the wine-producing vine, as the One who gives cheer to God and to others—Phil. 3:1a.
    - b. The issue of experiencing Christ as the vine is that in Him, with Him, and through Him we become a vine that produces something to cheer God and man—Judg. 9:13.
  - 3. If we contact the Christ typified by the vine and experience His sacrificing life, He will energize us to live a life of sacrifice, producing wine to make others and the Lord happy—Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:2; 2 Cor. 1:24:
    - a. In ourselves we are not able to live a life of sacrifice, for our life is a natural life, a selfish life; if we contact the Lord and experience His sacrificing life, He will energize and strengthen us to sacrifice for God and for others—Matt. 16:25; John 1:29; 20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17; Phil. 4:13; Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:2.
    - b. The more we experience Christ as the vine with His sacrificing life, the more we will be energized to sacrifice ourselves to make God and others happy; we will bring happiness to those who contact us, and we will bring cheer to God—2 Cor. 1:24; 5:13a.
- B. By experiencing Christ as the wine-producing vine and by being filled with Him as the new wine, we may become a drink offering in Him and with Him to cheer God and man—Gen. 35:14; Exo. 29:40-41; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6:
  - 1. The drink offering typifies not only Christ Himself but also the Christ who saturates us with Himself as new wine until He and we become one to be poured out for God's satisfaction and for God's building—Matt. 9:17; 2 Tim. 4:6; Gen. 35:14.
  - 2. The drink offering is our experience of being made one with Christ to such an extent that He becomes us and that we become the same as He is in His sacrificing life—Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6.

**II. As we live a sacrificing life in the Body, we minister life to the Body—  
1 John 5:16a; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; Eph. 4:16:**

- A. Everything we have is in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body; thus, our living should be in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—v. 16.
- B. The Body is built up by the mutual supply of the members; God conveys life to the Body through every member—v. 16.
- C. One can supply the Body only with what he has received of Christ; the measure of our ministry is determined by the measure of Christ in us—vv. 15-16:
  - 1. The only thing that is useful in the Body is the Christ who has been wrought into us, and only this can render the supply of life to others—3:16-17.
  - 2. What we minister to the Body is Christ, and what the Body receives is Christ, because Christ is all and in all in the Body—Col. 3:4, 10-11, 15-16.
  - 3. What we receive from Christ the Head, the Body spontaneously receives, for what is ours *is* the Body's, and there is no need to struggle to pass it on—John 1:16; Eph. 3:2; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10.
- D. Where there is the cross, there is the ministry of life; the way to be used to minister life to the Body is to let the cross operate in us in the normal course of our life with the Lord—2 Cor. 4:10-12:
  - 1. It is an abiding principle of the Body that “death operates in us, but life in you”—v. 12.
  - 2. Anything that God takes us through by way of the cross spontaneously brings an increase of life in the Body; what we go through in secret with the Lord is sufficient to minister life to the Body—Matt. 6:16-18; Col. 3:3-4.
  - 3. The Body is ministered to by a communication of life, and life is communicated to the Body as death operates in us—2 Cor. 4:12.
- E. It is by inward reality that we minister life to the Body of Christ; the Holy Spirit will witness only to what is true and real—John 16:13; 1 John 5:6.
- F. Through the ministry of life, we serve the Body and contribute to the growth of the Body; when the life we receive from the Lord flows into the Body, the measure of the stature of the Body increases—Eph. 4:13-14.

**III. We need to minister life to the Body for the growth of the Body—Col. 2:19;  
Eph. 4:15-16:**

- A. God's intention is to use the members of the Body of Christ as channels for Christ's life to flow into the Body and to increase the measure of the Body through them—2 Cor. 4:12; Eph. 4:16.
- B. The growth of the Body depends on what comes out of Christ as the Head—vv. 15-16:
  - 1. When the Body is supplied by holding the Head, the Body grows with the growth of God—Col. 2:19.
  - 2. The Body grows out from the Head, for all the supply comes from the Head—Eph. 4:15-16.
- C. The growth of the Body depends on the growth of God, the addition of God, the increase of God, within us—Col. 2:19:
  - 1. God gives the growth by giving Himself to us in a subjective way.

2. The more God is added into us, the more growth He gives to us; this is the way God gives the growth—1 Cor. 3:6-7.
  3. Only God can give growth; only God can give us Himself, and without Him we cannot have growth—vv. 6-7:
    - a. The addition of God into us is the growth He gives.
    - b. For God to give us growth actually means that He gives us Himself—Rom. 8:11.
- D. The growth of the Body is the building up of the Body—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19:
1. Ephesians 4:11-16 occupies a special place in the New Testament because it shows the mystery concerning the building up of the Body of Christ.
  2. The growth of the Body of Christ is the increase of Christ in the church, which results in the building up of the Body by the Body itself—v. 16; 3:17a:
    - a. When Christ enters into the saints and lives within them, the Christ within the saints becomes the church—Col. 3:10-11.
    - b. The Body of Christ grows by the growth of Christ within us and is built up this way—1:18; 2:19.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE DRINK OFFERING**

The seed of the drink offering is sown in Genesis 35. If we would understand it, we must read Numbers 15 and 28, Philippians 2:17, and 2 Timothy 4:6. Then we shall understand that we must not only offer Christ to God as the basic offerings, but also as the drink offering. We need to be filled with joy by experiencing Christ that we may become wine for God and be willing to be poured out as a drink offering upon Christ to God. This experience is deep and quite subjective. You may say, “O Father God, I offer myself as a drink offering upon Christ to You.” Although you may say this, if you have not experienced Christ to the extent that you are filled with joy and are drunken with heavenly wine, you will not have the joy and the willingness to be poured out as a drink offering to God. In the church life there are the possibility and the potential of experiencing Christ so much that we shall be saturated with the divine wine and even become wine. Oh, in the church life I am filled with joy and am willing to be poured out upon Christ as a drink offering for God’s satisfaction.

God enjoys drinking wine. He does not want the wine made from grapes, but the wine made from Christ’s saturating us. God is not interested in grapes—He is interested in you with Christ. We must become wine through the experience of Christ. The only place where we can become God’s wine is in the church. I assure you that in the church your experience of Christ will bring you to the point where you will be filled with heavenly joy and will become the divine wine and be willing to be poured out upon Christ for God’s satisfaction. This is the reaction of Israel in Bethel. I have the complete confidence that from now on there will be many reactions like this in the local churches. Many dear saints will say, “Lord, I’m so saturated with Your joy that I’m drunken. I have become wine to satisfy my God. Now I am willing to be poured out, even to be martyred.” Recall that Paul said that he was already

being poured out upon Christ for God's satisfaction. In the church life we all must be saturated with heavenly joy so that we might be ready and willing to sacrifice ourselves, to be poured out upon Christ for God's satisfaction. In the church life we all can experience Christ to the degree that we are willing to be poured out as a drink offering. (*Life-study of Genesis*, pp. 1022-1023)

In Philippians 2:17 Paul says, "But if even I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith, I rejoice and rejoice together with you all." In 2 Timothy 4:6 Paul also refers to himself as a drink offering: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (lit.). Since everything Paul covers in the book of Philippians is related to the experience of Christ, this must also be true of the drink offering referred to in 2:17. If our experience of Christ has not come to the point where we have been constituted as a drink offering, we have not yet experienced Christ to the uttermost. When we experience Christ to an exceedingly high degree, we shall become a drink offering.

#### CONSTITUTED A DRINK OFFERING

The drink offering was additional to the basic offerings revealed in Leviticus chapters one through seven (Num. 15:1-10; 28:7-10). The basic offerings were types of various aspects of Christ. The drink offering was a type of Christ as enjoyed by the offerer, an offering that fills him with Christ as the heavenly wine and even causes him to become wine to God. The apostle Paul became such a drink offering by so enjoying Christ that he could be poured out by the shedding of his blood upon the believers' faith as a sacrifice to God.

The burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering were the basic offerings, but the drink offering was not. The five basic offerings covered in chapters one through seven of Leviticus are types of various aspects of what Christ is to God on our behalf. If we read Numbers 15:1-10 and 28:7-10, we shall see that the drink offering was something additional. If one of the basic offerings was offered without the drink offering, this was an indication that there was something lacking with the presentation of the basic offering. The one who offered the basic offering must have been rather poor. Actually, the drink offering signifies that the offerer himself becomes the drink offering. However, this does not mean that the offerer can be such a drink offering according to his own natural constitution. Rather, he must enjoy Christ to such an extent that Christ fills him, saturates him, and permeates him. Christ is the heavenly wine for our enjoyment. When we enjoy Him by taking Him into us, we shall become filled with Him and thoroughly saturated with Him. In this way we shall become the wine to be poured out as a drink offering upon the offerings we present to God.

With the typology in the Old Testament as a basis, Paul came to regard himself as a drink offering poured out upon the sacrifice and priestly service of the believers' faith. For years Paul had been drinking of Christ and enjoying Him so that he came to the point that he was filled with Christ and saturated with Him. Eventually, Christ as the heavenly wine caused Paul to become a constitution of wine in

his very being. This was the reason Paul could consider himself wine poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice he offered to God as a priest. (*Life-study of Philipians*, pp. 115-116)

#### MINISTERING LIFE

The highest purpose of God for the Church today is that she should build herself up in love by a ministry of life, and so grow up in all things into Christ. This is the goal set before her in Ephesians 4.

We have seen already how, in 2 Corinthians 4, the death of Christ operating in one place (“in the body,” v. 10; “in us,” v. 12) allows Him to manifest His resurrection in two places (“in our body,” v. 10; and “in you,” v. 12). Here we have fruitfulness of life and fruitfulness of ministry, and of course they are ultimately one, the only difference being in the place of manifestation. In the first instance, the life is manifested in the place where death operates; in the second, somewhere else. When the manifestation is in me I call it life, when in others I call it ministry.

Where there is no Cross there is no life, and no ministry of life. The object of suffering is that there may be a full and abundant ministry. Theory is no substitute for this. Poverty of ministry results from the choice of an easy road. Those who have an easy time all too often have little to give. They do not understand men’s needs. Of course I don’t mean we are to invite trouble, or by austerity to ill-treat our bodies. The Spirit Himself takes responsibility for our experience, leading us in paths where we encounter, in body, heart, or spirit, that measure of “the dying of Jesus” that will mean enrichment to our ministry. It is our part only to follow.

You ask me how you can be used to minister life to the Body. Not by setting out deliberately to do a lot, nor indeed by running away into retirement and doing nothing, but simply by letting the Cross operate in the normal course of your walk with the Lord. Those who only serve by words and works find they have no ministry if at any time they are reduced to inactivity or silence. But the measure of your ministry is not determined by the measure of your activity. Only let “the slaying of Jesus” work in you, and life *must* manifest itself in others. It cannot be otherwise, for it is an abiding principle of the Body that “death worketh in us, but life in you.” So you need make no special effort to bring increase to the Body in this way, or anything God takes you through by way of the Cross will spontaneously bring increase there.

Nor need you talk a lot, for it is not necessary to testify to your death experience in order for it to become vital to others. Provided you are willing for death, others *will* know life. Reality communicates itself; it is not dependent upon human communications. We “despise not prophesyings,” but we affirm nevertheless that ministry in the Body is not only a question of preaching or testifying. What we go through in secret with the Lord is quite sufficient to minister life to His members. If we suffer for the Lord’s sake, that suffering will bring increase to others, without our making known the story of our suffering. Talking about it is not only superfluous; in some circumstances it is an abomination.

If you forgive a brother, the reality of your forgiveness will minister life to the

Body quite apart from any expression of it (though in this case the Lord may of course require of you that it be expressed). If you truly love a brother, that love will build up the Body though you may never tell that brother how you love him. I found myself once, at short notice, taking part on the platform in a large convention meeting in England where, unknown to me, a Japanese brother was to be one of the speakers. We had not met before—and our two countries were at war. I do not know what that brother felt, and we had opportunity for only a brief conversation. I only know that while he spoke I was aware of the love and fellowship of a brother in the Lord, a love that leaped over national barriers and that did not demand words for its expression.

The Body of Christ is ministered to, not first of all by preaching and working, but by inward reality. The Holy Spirit is concerned with what is real and true, and will never witness to what is not real. What you communicate by words is what you are already bringing of Christ to the Church, for as we have said, the Body is ministered to by a communication of life. And life is communicated to others, quite simply and spontaneously, as death operates in us. So the question is not, How much are you doing or saying? but, How much are you going through under the hand of God?

Ministry on any basis other than the oneness of the Body is unreal. Until you have seen that fact, you constantly wonder how you can function; but when you see it, you know that as soon as you yourself have received something, the Body *has* received it. What is yours *is* the Body's, and there is no need to struggle to pass it on. Do you want to build up the church? Then let it be built up in you. What you receive from the Head, the Church, His Body, spontaneously receives; and what you have not received, it can never receive through you. The question of ministry is settled when the question of receiving is settled; and the question of receiving is settled by "the dying of Jesus." (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 40, pp. 111, 124-127)