

## VITAL FACTORS FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH LIFE

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

### **The Factor of the Church Being in the Triune God, the Local Churches Being Expressions of the Body of Christ, and the Believers Practicing the Church Life in the Consciousness of the Body**

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1; Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-27

#### **I. The church is in the Triune God—“the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”—1 Thes. 1:1:**

- A. In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 we have the revelation of the tremendous fact that the church is in the unique God and that this God is our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
  - 1. The church is not only of God and of Christ; the church is also in God and in Christ.
  - 2. It is important for us to see that the church in our locality is of God and in God, of Christ and in Christ.
- B. The church is composed of human beings, but they, the believers, are in the Triune God—v. 1; 2 Thes. 1:1.
- C. The church is a group of human beings who have been born of God the Father with His life and nature and who have been brought into the organic union with Christ:
  - 1. For the church to be in God, God must become our Father, and we must have a life relationship with Him—1 John 3:1a:
    - a. In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 the word *Father* indicates a relationship in life; in God the Father, we have been born again, regenerated, and now, as His children, we have a life relationship with Him—John 1:12-13.
    - b. The church being in God the Father implies that the church is in God’s purpose, plan, selection, and predestination—Eph. 1:4-5.
    - c. The church in God the Father is the church in the One who is the unique Initiator and Originator—Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Matt. 15:13.
  - 2. To be in the Lord Jesus Christ is to be united with Christ organically in all that He is and has done—1 Thes. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:30:
    - a. In the Lord Jesus Christ we have the termination of everything of the old creation, for to be in Christ is to be in His death, the death that terminates all negative things—Rom. 6:4.
    - b. The title *Christ* in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 denotes all the riches of resurrection; thus, to be in Christ is to be in resurrection—Rom. 8:10-11.
- D. The church is in the processed Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the One who has become the life-giving Spirit with the Father and the Son—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 14:17, 23.

#### **II. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32b, 17; 12:12-13, 20, 27:**

- A. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many local churches in the divine oneness as it is with the Triune God and in the divine nature, element, essence, expression, function, and testimony; there are many churches, yet they have one divine nature, one divine element, one divine essence, one divine expression, one divine function, and one divine testimony because they are one Body—Rev. 1:11; John 17:11, 21, 23.
- B. The church revealed in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the unique Body of Christ, whereas the church revealed in 18:17 is the local church, the expression of the unique Body of Christ in a certain locality.
- C. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many local churches—local expressions of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:16.
- D. The unique Body of Christ is expressed in many localities as the local churches—Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11:
  - 1. The Body of Christ is the source of the local churches—Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22.
  - 2. The universal Body is like the father to all the churches, and all the churches are like the children to the father—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:4.
- E. Every local church is a part of the unique, universal Body of Christ, a local expression of this Body—Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27:
  - 1. Universally, all the local churches are one Body, and locally, every local church is a local expression of the universal Body; therefore, a local church is not the Body but only a part of the Body, an expression of the Body.
  - 2. The universal Christ has a part of Himself in every local church; every local church is a part of Christ, and all these parts constitute the Body—Eph. 1:23; 2:22.
- F. The local ground of the church is basically the unique oneness of the Body of Christ practiced in the local churches—4:4; 1 Thes. 1:1:
  - 1. Both the universal Body of Christ and the local churches are uniquely one.
  - 2. There is one unique Body in the whole universe, and there is one unique local church in each locality respectively.
  - 3. This unique oneness is the basic element in the church life—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 2:1-2.
- G. The churches in different localities are for the universal expression of Christ—Eph. 1:23; Rev. 1:4, 11; 22:16a:
  - 1. A local church that makes everything local and that expresses only its locality has become a local sect, a local division.
  - 2. All the basic things for the Body are not local—the Spirit, Christ, God, the Bible, the apostles' teaching, and the apostles' fellowship.
- H. In our consideration the Body should be first and the local churches should be second—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Eph. 4:4, 16; 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 12:12; 1:2:
  - 1. Local churches are the procedure God takes to reach the goal of His economy—the Body of Christ—Rom. 16:1, 4, 16; 12:4-5.
  - 2. We should consider our local church as a part of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:16-17; 12:12-13, 20, 27.

**III. In practicing the church life, we need to have the consciousness of the Body—vv. 12-27:**

- A. In order to have the Body life, we must be full of feeling for the Body, taking the feeling of the Head as our own feeling—Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26-27; Acts 9:4-5:
  - 1. If we as members have the feeling of the Head in everything and care for the Body, we will take the Body as the rule in our mind, thoughts, words, and actions—Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 2:19.
  - 2. We should deny ourselves and identify ourselves with the Body (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 12:4-5, 15; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-27); if we do this, the life we live will be the Body life, and the Lord will gain the expression of the Body—Eph. 4:15-16; 1:22-23.
  - 3. Our enjoyment of Christ causes us to become conscious of the Body of Christ—Col. 2:16-17, 19.
- B. Whatever we do involves the Body; therefore, whenever we do something, we must have a proper consideration of the Body—2 Cor. 8:21; Eph. 4:16:
  - 1. We should not do anything without taking care of the Body—1 Cor. 12:12-27.
  - 2. We need to consider how the Body would feel about what we are doing and how the Body, the recovery, will react.
  - 3. How we behave ourselves depends upon the degree of our seeing the Body.
  - 4. If we are in one accord only in our local church and do not care for the other churches, this kind of one accord is a sect, a division—Acts 1:14; 15:25.
  - 5. If we take care of the Body and are concerned for the Body, there will be no problems—Eph. 4:4, 16.
- C. Among all the churches that compose the one universal Body of Christ, there is no organization, but there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:16-17; 11:29:
  - 1. All the churches on earth are one Body, and within this one Body there is the circulation of the divine life—the fellowship of the Body—1 John 1:3.
  - 2. Fellowship is related to oneness; the circulation of the divine life in the Body brings all the members of the Body into oneness—Eph. 4:3-4; Rom. 16:1-23.
  - 3. The local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ.
  - 4. Although the administration of the church is local (Acts 14:23), the fellowship of the church is universal (2:42); there are churches in many cities, but there is one fellowship in the entire universe.