

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Thursday—First Morning Session)

Message One The Basic Factor of God's Administration among His People and the Principle of Keeping the Kingship and Headship Uniquely for God Himself

Scripture Reading: Exo. 3:16; 4:29; 12:21; Acts 14:23; 1 Sam. 8:5-19; Matt. 23:8-10

- Exo 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you and seen what is being done to you in Egypt.
- Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
- Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, Draw out and take lambs according to your families, and slaughter the passover.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^efastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- 1 Sam 8:5 And they said to him, You are now old, and your sons do not follow in your ways. Appoint now for us a king to judge us like all the nations.
- 1 Sam 8:6 But the matter displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. Then Samuel prayed to Jehovah.
- 1 Sam 8:7 And Jehovah said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people according to all that they have said to you; for it is not you whom they have rejected, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.
- 1 Sam 8:8 Like all the deeds that they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt to this very day by forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they do also to you.
- 1 Sam 8:9 Now therefore listen to their voice, but you shall solemnly warn them and declare to them the practice of the king who will reign over them.
- 1 Sam 8:10 So Samuel spoke all the words of Jehovah to the people, who had asked him for a king.
- 1 Sam 8:11 And he said, This will be the practice of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for himself to his chariots and as his horsemen, and they will run before his chariots;
- 1 Sam 8:12 And he will appoint them for himself as captains of thousands and as captains of fifties, and to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war and the equipment for his chariots.
- 1 Sam 8:13 And he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.
- 1 Sam 8:14 And he will take your best fields and vineyards and olive groves, and give them to his servants.
- 1 Sam 8:15 And he will exact a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards, and give it to his eunuchs and servants.
- 1 Sam 8:16 And he will take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work.
- 1 Sam 8:17 He will exact a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his servants.
- 1 Sam 8:18 And you will cry out in that day on account of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but Jehovah will not answer you in that day.
- 1 Sam 8:19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, No; but there will be a king over us,
- Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for ¹One is your ^aTeacher, and you are all ^bbrothers.
- Matt 23:9 And do not call *anyone* on earth your father, for ¹One is your ^aFather, ²He who is in the heavens.
- Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.

I. Our God is a God of purpose; in order for His purpose to be carried out, there is the need of His administration, His government—Isa. 9:6-7:

- Isa 9:6 For a child is born to us, A son is given to us; And the government Is upon His shoulder; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
- Isa 9:7 To the increase of His government And to His peace there is no end, Upon the throne of David And over His kingdom, To establish it And to uphold it In justice and righteousness From now to eternity. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts Will accomplish this.

- A. The divine concept concerning God’s administration is the same throughout the Bible, that is, the same in both the Old Testament and the New Testament—Exo. 4:29; Titus 1:5.
 Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
 Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:
- B. God’s administration in the Old Testament, as in the New Testament, involved apostles, prophets, and elders; on the human side, these three groups are the main constituents of God’s administration—Psa. 105:26; Exo. 4:29; 1 Sam. 3:20; Eph. 2:20; Acts 14:23.
 Psa 105:26 He sent Moses His servant, And Aaron, whom He had chosen.
 Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
 1 Sam 3:20 And all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of Jehovah.
 Eph 2:20 Being ^{1a}built upon the ^{2b}foundation of the ^capostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the ^{3d}cornerstone;
 Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- C. From Exodus onward, we see that God deals with His people through the elders; the elders are crucial because they are the leading ones among God’s people and represent God’s people—Exo. 3:16; 4:29; 12:21; Titus 1:5.
 Exo 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you and seen what is being done to you in Egypt.
 Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
 Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, Draw out and take lambs according to your families, and slaughter the passover.
 Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

II. According to the revelation of the entire Bible, the elders are the basic factor of God’s administration among His people—Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17:

- Acts 11:30 Which also they did, sending *it* to the ^{1a}elders through the hand of ^bBarnabas and ²Saul.
 Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
 Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the ^aelders of the ^bchurch.
- A. The basic category of persons in God’s administration is the elders; the elders existed before Moses was raised up as the first apostle—Exo. 3:16; 4:29; 12:21.
 Exo 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you and seen what is being done to you in Egypt.
 Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
 Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, Draw out and take lambs according to your families, and slaughter the passover.
- B. The basic factor in God’s administration today is the elders; the apostles and prophets do many things, but the basic constitution of God’s administration is the elders, for it is the elders who directly administrate—Acts 14:23; Eph. 2:20.
 Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
 Eph 2:20 Being ^{1a}built upon the ^{2b}foundation of the ^capostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the ^{3d}cornerstone;
- C. The direct administration in both the Old Testament and the New Testament was with the elders—Acts 11:30; 20:17.
 Acts 11:30 Which also they did, sending *it* to the ^{1a}elders through the hand of ^bBarnabas and ²Saul.
 Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the ^aelders of the ^bchurch.

D. The genuine administration of God in the local churches depends basically and directly on the elders—Titus 1:5, 9.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching *of the apostles*, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.

III. In the sight of God, it was a great wickedness, a great evil, for the people of Israel to insist on having a king—1 Sam. 8:5-19:

1 Sam 8:5 And they said to him, You are now old, and your sons do not follow in your ways. Appoint now for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

1 Sam 8:6 But the matter displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. Then Samuel prayed to Jehovah.

1 Sam 8:7 And Jehovah said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people according to all that they have said to you; for it is not you whom they have rejected, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.

1 Sam 8:8 Like all the deeds that they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt to this very day by forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they do also to you.

1 Sam 8:9 Now therefore listen to their voice, but you shall solemnly warn them and declare to them the practice of the king who will reign over them.

1 Sam 8:10 So Samuel spoke all the words of Jehovah to the people, who had asked him for a king.

1 Sam 8:11 And he said, This will be the practice of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for himself to his chariots and as his horsemen, and they will run before his chariots;

1 Sam 8:12 And he will appoint them for himself as captains of thousands and as captains of fifties, and to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war and the equipment for his chariots.

1 Sam 8:13 And he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.

1 Sam 8:14 And he will take your best fields and vineyards and olive groves, and give them to his servants.

1 Sam 8:15 And he will exact a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards, and give it to his eunuchs and servants.

1 Sam 8:16 And he will take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work.

1 Sam 8:17 He will exact a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his servants.

1 Sam 8:18 And you will cry out in that day on account of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but Jehovah will not answer you in that day.

1 Sam 8:19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, No; but there will be a king over us,

A. It was the degradation among the children of Israel in the Old Testament that caused a king to come in; the desire of the children of Israel for a king was according to the custom of the nations, which is abominable in the eyes of God—vv. 5, 19:

1 Sam 8:5 And they said to him, You are now old, and your sons do not follow in your ways. Appoint now for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

1 Sam 8:19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, No; but there will be a king over us,

1. Israel had been chosen by God to be a particular people on earth; therefore, they should have been absolutely different in every respect from the nations, but they took the way of the nations by rejecting God as their King—Exo. 19:6; 1 Sam. 8:5.

Exo 19:6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.

1 Sam 8:5 And they said to him, You are now old, and your sons do not follow in your ways. Appoint now for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

2. By insisting on having a king, the elect of God turned from God to a man; in so doing, they offended God by rejecting Him as their King and thus replacing Him—v. 7.

1 Sam 8:7 And Jehovah said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people according to all that they have said to you; for it is not you whom they have rejected, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.

- B. The thought of a human king is altogether offensive to God; God does not want to have a human king among His people, because once a king comes in, the headship of God is usurped—12:12.
- 1 Sam 12:12 And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said to me, No; but a king will reign over us, though Jehovah your God was your King.
- C. The principle of keeping the kingship and headship uniquely for God is consistent throughout the Bible—Matt. 23:8-10; 1 Pet. 5:2-3.
- Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for ¹One is your ^aTeacher, and you are all ^bbrothers.
- Matt 23:9 And do not call *anyone* on earth your father, for ¹One is your ^aFather, ²He who is in the heavens.
- Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.
- 1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- 1 Pet 5:3 Nor as ^{1a}lording it over your ²allotments but by ³becoming ^bpatterns of the ⁴flock.
- D. We must see that in God's economy for His administration, He desires to keep the kingship uniquely for Himself—1 Sam. 8:7:
- 1 Sam 8:7 And Jehovah said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people according to all that they have said to you; for it is not you whom they have rejected, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.
1. The Bible clearly reveals that God does not want to have a human king in His administration, because He does not want anyone to replace Him by usurping His headship and kingship.
 2. The headship and kingship must be left to God alone—1 Chron. 29:10-11.
- 1 Chron 29:10 And David blessed Jehovah in the sight of all the assembly. And David said, You are blessed, O Jehovah, God of Israel our Father, from eternity to eternity.
- 1 Chron 29:11 Yours is the greatness and the power and the splendor and the victory and the majesty, indeed all that is in heaven and on earth; Yours, O Jehovah, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as Head over all.
- E. God wants to have only the apostles, prophets, and elders as His sent ones, His spokesmen, and the leading ones among His people, for these do not usurp His headship—Acts 13:1-2; 14:23; Eph. 2:20.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in ^aAntioch, in the local ^{1b}church, ^{2c}prophets and ³teachers: ^{4d}Barnabas and Simeon, who was called ⁵Niger, and ⁶Lucius the Cyrenian, and ⁷Manaen, the foster brother of ^{8e}Herod the tetrarch, and ^{9f}Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ¹ministering to the Lord and fasting, the ²Holy ^aSpirit said, ^{3b}Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the ^cwork to which I have ^dcalled them.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- Eph 2:20 Being ^{1a}built upon the ^{2b}foundation of the ^capostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the ^{3d}cornerstone;
- F. Although the apostles, prophets, and elders are part of God's administration, the kingship should be kept for God Himself—Isa. 6:1, 5:
- Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne, and the train of His robe filled the temple.
- Isa 6:5 Then I said, Woe is me, for I am finished! For I am a man of unclean lips, And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell; Yet my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.
1. The apostles, prophets, and elders do not interfere with, offend, or usurp the kingship of God—Acts 2:42; 11:27; 14:23.
- Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the ¹teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the ^abreaking of bread and the ^bprayers.
- Acts 11:27 And in these days ^{1a}prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

2. When God's people bring in a king, this is a direct offense against God's kingship—1 Sam. 8:5, 19; 12:12.

1 Sam 8:5 And they said to him, You are now old, and your sons do not follow in your ways. Appoint now for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

1 Sam 8:19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, No; but there will be a king over us,

1 Sam 12:12 And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said to me, No; but a king will reign over us, though Jehovah your God was your King.

G. Whatever we may do, no matter how good, "spiritual," and even scriptural it may be, it is evil in the sight of God if we reject Him as our Head and our King; it is not a matter of right or wrong but a matter of whether we take God as our King or reject Him—1 Chron. 29:10-11; Psa. 72:1, 11; 145:1.

1 Chron 29:10 And David blessed Jehovah in the sight of all the assembly. And David said, You are blessed, O Jehovah, God of Israel our Father, from eternity to eternity.

1 Chron 29:11 Yours is the greatness and the power and the splendor and the victory and the majesty, indeed all that is in heaven and on earth; Yours, O Jehovah, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as Head over all.

Psa 72:1 O God, give Your judgments to the king, And Your righteousness to the son of the king.

Psa 72:11 And all the kings will bow down before Him; All the nations will serve Him.

Psa 145:1 I will extol You, O my God and King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever.

IV. Because God desires to keep the headship and kingship absolutely and uniquely for Himself, He needs a group of elders in each locality who participate in His administration without offending His headship—Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5:

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the ^aelders of the ^bchurch.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

A. The eldership does not offend God's headship, but if anyone becomes a king, this offends God's headship—Matt. 20:25-26.

Matt 20:25 ^aBut Jesus called them to *Him* and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.

Matt 20:26 It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become ^agreat among you shall be your ¹servant,

B. The elders in the local churches may be capable and strong, but they must be careful not to become kings—1 Pet. 5:1, 3.

1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:

1 Pet 5:3 Nor as ^{1a}lording it over your ²allotments but by ³becoming ^bpatterns of the ⁴flock.

C. The plurality in the eldership is crucial because it helps to prevent anyone from becoming a king—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5:

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

1. If there is one elder above the others, that one is a king, which is an insult to Christ's headship and kingship—Matt. 20:21, 25-26.

Matt 20:21 And He said to her, What do you want? She said to Him, Say that these two sons of mine will ^asit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your kingdom.

Matt 20:25 ^aBut Jesus called them to *Him* and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.

Matt 20:26 It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become ^agreat among you shall be your ¹servant,

2. Among His people today, God desires to have a plurality of elders; this will allow God's economy to be carried out yet avoid offending God's headship.
- D. The elders in every local church should be diligent in directly seeking the Lord for everything; for every need they should pray, fellowship, and wait on the Lord to receive direction, guidance, and leading directly from Him—1 Tim. 2:8.
- 1 Tim 2:8 I desire therefore that men ¹pray in every place, ^alifting up ²holy ^{3b}hands, without ⁴wrath and ^{5c}reasoning;
- E. The elders in a locality should not allow one elder to become a king—Matt. 23:8-10:
- Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for ¹One is your ^aTeacher, and you are all ^bbrothers.
- Matt 23:9 And do not call *anyone* on earth your father, for ¹One is your ^aFather, ²He who is in the heavens.
- Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.
1. Every elder must exercise discernment and pray to seek the Lord's leading while respecting the Lord's leading in the other elders—Eph. 5:21.
- Eph 5:21 Being ^{1a}subject to ²one another in the ³fear of Christ:
2. If all the elders are exercised in taking the lead, there will be no opening for anyone to become a king, which is contrary to God's administration— Heb. 13:7, 17.
- Heb 13:7 ¹Remember the ones ^aleading you, who have ^bspoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their ^cmanner of life, ^dimitate their faith.
- Heb 13:17 ¹Obey the ones ^aleading you and ^bsubmit to *them*, for they ^cwatch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.
- F. In order to receive God's blessing, we must not open the door for a king to come in, nor should we desire to be a king—Matt. 20:26; Rom. 15:29; Eph. 1:3.
- Matt 20:26 It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become ^agreat among you shall be your ¹servant,
- Rom 15:29 And I know that when I ^acome to you, I will come in the ¹fullness of the blessing of Christ.
- Eph 1:3 ^{1a}Blessed be the ^{2b}God and Father of ³our Lord Jesus Christ, who has ⁴blessed us ⁵with every ⁶spiritual ⁷blessing in the ^{8c}heavenlies ⁹in Christ,

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE ELDERS BEING THE BASIC FACTOR OF GOD'S ADMINISTRATION AMONG HIS PEOPLE

The basic category of persons in God's administration is the elders. We can see this concept in the Bible. The elders of the children of Israel already existed before Moses was raised up as the first apostle. We should not rely entirely on the apostles and prophets. The apostles are sent by God to accomplish something, and the prophets speak for God. However, those who administrate directly among God's people are the elders. Thus, the elders are the basic factor of God's administration among His people.

The elders of Israel became lazy and idle, preferring the convenience of the kingship according to the custom of the nations (1 Sam. 8:19-20). Christian denominations today follow this principle. For the sake of convenience, the members of a denomination donate money to hire a pastor as a king to do everything for them. This offends God's headship. The elders in the local churches may be capable and strong, but they must be careful not to become kings. The eldership does not offend God's headship, but if anyone becomes a king, this offends God's headship. The thought of a human king is altogether offensive to God. In 1 Samuel 8 the elders' request for a king greatly displeased God, who told Samuel, "It is not you whom they have rejected, but they have rejected Me from being King over them" (v. 7). This indicates that although the apostles, prophets, and elders are part of God's administration, the kingship should be kept for God Himself. The apostles, prophets, and elders do not interfere with, offend, or usurp the kingship of God. However, when God's people bring in a king, this is a direct

offense against God's kingship. The apostles, prophets, and elders must be careful to keep the kingship for God.

The principle of keeping the kingship and headship uniquely for God is consistent throughout the Bible. This is the reason the Lord told His disciples, "Do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers" (Matt. 23:8). Christ alone is our Teacher, Master, Leader, and King. Peter exhorts the elders, "Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God;...nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3). The elders should shepherd and oversee the flock, but they should not be lords. To be a lord interferes with God's kingship. We must see that in God's economy for His administration, He desires to keep the kingship uniquely for Himself.

If we prefer to be idle and have someone else do everything for us for the sake of convenience, this will open the door for a king to come in, just as Saul came in as a king among the children of Israel. The elders especially should not be idle or take the way of convenience. They need to be diligent and willing to bear the burdens. In order to receive God's blessing, we must not open the door for a king to come in, nor should we desire to be a king. The Bible clearly reveals that God does not want to have a human king in His administration, because He does not want anyone to replace Him by usurping His headship and kingship. The headship and kingship must be left to God alone. God sends His apostles and establishes His prophets and the elders among His people, but He has no desire for there to be a king.

THERE NEEDING TO BE A PLURALITY OF APOSTLES, PROPHETS, AND ELDERS

According to the Bible, there should always be a plurality of apostles, prophets, and elders. After calling His disciples, the Lord appointed twelve apostles (Matt. 10:2). Whenever the Lord sent out His disciples, He sent them two by two (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). The Lord never sent out an apostle alone. In Acts 13:2 Paul and Barnabas were sent out together as apostles. There is always a plurality in the apostleship. The same is true of the prophets and elders. There should always be several elders in a local church. The plurality in the apostleship, the prophethood, and the eldership is crucial because it helps prevent anyone from becoming a king among the churches.

There was no permanent leadership among the early apostles. Peter took the lead in Acts 2:14, but in 15:13 James rose up to take the lead. This record shows that Peter was not the permanent, unique, official, or organizational leader. Instead, he was only a momentary leader; later, James became another momentary leader. If there is one apostle, prophet, or elder above the others, that one is a king, which is an insult to Christ's headship and kingship.

The Lord has shown us that God does not want to have a human king in His administration. There was a king in the Old Testament, but that was against God's desire. Thus, there is no king among God's people in the New Testament age. It was the degradation among the children of Israel in the Old Testament that caused a king to come in. The desire of the children of Israel for a king was according to the custom of the nations, which is abominable in the eyes of God. We must be impressed that we should not have a king. We welcome the apostles, prophets, and elders, but we have only one king, who is our God, Savior, and Lord.

We must see this principle and stand against anyone becoming a king among the local churches. The basic factor in God's administration today is the elders. The apostles and prophets do many things, but the basic constitution of God's administration is the elders. It is the elders who directly administrate. Because God desires to keep the headship and kingship absolutely and uniquely for Himself, He needs a group of elders in each locality who participate in His administration without offending His headship.

In the Old Testament the first apostle was Moses. Following Moses, many were raised up to speak for God. These were prophets, God's spokesmen. Eventually, the Lord Jesus came as the Apostle and the Prophet (Heb. 3:1; Deut. 18:15, 18). Christ is the Apostle who is sent with God's

authority and the Prophet who speaks for God. Christ initially appointed and sent out twelve of His own apostles. After Pentecost He sent many more, including Paul. Among these apostles some were also prophets. These early apostles appointed elders in the local churches they established (Acts 14:23). Since that time God's administration among His people has been primarily with the elders.

THE PROPER BALANCE IN THE ELDERS' RECEIVING HELP FROM OTHERS YET BEARING THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN LOCALITIES

There should be no king among God's people in the churches today. The elders in every local church should be diligent in directly seeking the Lord for everything. For every need they should pray, fellowship, and wait on the Lord to receive direction, guidance, and leading directly from Him.

On the one hand, the elders should never think that because they are capable, they do not need help from the other churches or anyone outside their locality. Such pride is wrong. On the other hand, neither should they be open to everyone without discernment and ask for help from the other churches and servants of the Lord every time a need arises, in order to avoid bearing any burdens. This is also wrong. We need to be humble and open to others, yet we also must be diligent and not always rely on others' help. Therefore, whenever a need arises, we should first pray in order to seek the Lord directly. After we pray, the Lord may send someone to give us some extraordinary help or open the fellowship so that we receive help from other churches, but ordinarily we must take care of our own local affairs.

No matter how weak certain persons may be, when they are married and have a family, they find a way to take care of their family. Similarly, all the elders must learn to take care of their own localities. They should not always look to others for help but must be diligent and faithful and must open directly to the Lord in prayer. Nothing is better than our direct contact with the Lord. If the elders pray, seek the Lord, and wait on Him, the help will often come directly from the Lord.

We need to change our attitude, because our idleness, laziness, and habit of relying on others open the door for a king to come in, not only among a group of churches but also locally. The elders in a locality should not allow one elder to become a king. Every elder must exercise discernment and pray to seek the Lord's leading while respecting the Lord's leading in the other elders. The elders must be diligent, active, and faithful to the Lord, not expecting someone else to do everything for them for the sake of convenience. To dominate is wrong, and to be lazy is also wrong. If all the elders are exercised in taking the lead, there will be no opening for anyone to become a king. To have a king is contrary to God's administration. Among His people today, God desires to have a plurality of elders. This will allow God's economy to be carried out yet avoid offending God's headship. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 11-15)

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Thursday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

The Producing of the Elders in Life to Care for the Church in an Organic Way

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:23; 20:28; Titus 1:5; John 21:15-17; 1 Thes. 2:7, 11

- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.
- Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:
- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to ¹Simon Peter, Simon, *son of John*, do you ²love Me ^amore than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I ³love You. He said to him, ^{4b}Feed My ⁵lambs.
- John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, *son of John*, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, ^{1a}Shepherd My ²sheep.
- John 21:17 He said to him the ¹third time, Simon, *son of John*, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You ^{2a}know ^ball things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, ^cFeed My sheep.
- 1 Thes 2:7 But we were ^agentle in your midst, as a ^{1b}nursing mother would ^{2c}cherish her own ^dchildren.
- 1 Thes 2:11 Just as you know ¹how *we were* to each one of you, as a ^{2a}father to his own ^bchildren, ^{3c}exhorting you and consoling *you* and testifying,

I. The elders are produced not by appointment but by growth in life—1 Tim. 3:1-7:

- 1 Tim 3:1 ^aFaithful is the word: If anyone ¹aspires to the ²overseership, he desires a good work.
- 1 Tim 3:2 ^aThe ^{1b}overseer then must be ²without reproach, the ³husband of ^cone wife, ^{4d}temperate, ⁵of a ^esober mind, ⁶orderly, ^{7f}hospitable, ⁸apt to ^gteach;
- 1 Tim 3:3 ¹Not an ^aexcessive drinker; ²not a striker, but ^{3b}gentle; ^{4c}not contentious; ⁵not ^dfond of money;
- 1 Tim 3:4 One who ^{1a}manages well his own house, having *his* children in subjection with all ^{2b}gravity
- 1 Tim 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the ^achurch of God?);
- 1 Tim 3:6 Not a ¹new convert, lest being ^{2a}blinded with pride he fall into the ³judgment *suffered* by the devil.
- 1 Tim 3:7 And he also must have a ^{1a}good testimony from ²those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the ^{3b}snare of the ⁴devil.

A. The children of Israel had elders, but the Old Testament does not tell us how these elders were appointed; likewise, there were elders in the church in Jerusalem, but there is no record of when or how they became elders—Exo. 4:29; Acts 8:1; 15:2, 4, 6.

- Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
- Acts 8:1 And Saul ^aapproved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great ^bpersecution against the ^{1c}church which was in Jerusalem; and all were ^dscattered throughout the regions of ^eJudea and Samaria, except the apostles.
- Acts 15:2 And when no little ¹dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, *the brothers* directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and ^aelders in ^{2b}Jerusalem concerning this question.
- Acts 15:4 And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were ^areceived by the ^bchurch and the apostles and the elders, and they ^cdeclared the things that God had done with them.
- Acts 15:6 And the apostles and the elders were ¹gathered together to see about this matter.

B. The New Testament shows us the importance of the elders in God's administration—Acts 11:29-30; 15:2, 4, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18:

- Acts 11:29 And the ¹disciples, according to how one was ²prospered, determined, each one of them, to ^asend *things* ³for ^bdispensing to the ^cbrothers dwelling in Judea,
- Acts 11:30 Which also they did, sending *it* to the ^{1a}elders through the hand of ^bBarnabas and ²Saul.

- Acts 15:2 And when no little ¹dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, *the brothers* directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and ^aelders in ^{2b}Jerusalem concerning this question.
- Acts 15:4 And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were ^areceived by the ^bchurch and the apostles and the elders, and they ^cdeclared the things that God had done with them.
- Acts 15:23 Writing *to them and sending* by their hand *the following*: The apostles and the elder ^abrothers, to the brothers throughout Antioch and ^bSyria and Cilicia who are of the Gentiles, rejoice.
- Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the ^adecrees to keep which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
- Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the ^aelders of the ^bchurch.
- Acts 21:18 And on the following day Paul went in with us to ^{1a}James, and all the ^belders were present.
1. The elders are overseers in the local church—20:28:

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.

 - a. The title *elder* denotes a person of maturity, whereas the title *overseer* denotes the function of an elder—14:23; 20:28.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^efastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.
 - b. To oversee is to observe the situation, condition, and need for the purpose of taking care of the church with all the saints—1 Tim. 3:1.

1 Tim 3:1 ^aFaithful is the word: If anyone ¹aspires to the ²overseership, he desires a good work.
 - c. The elders should oversee the church altogether according to God's thought, feeling, will, and choice—1 Pet. 5:2.

1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;
 2. The elders take the lead in the local church, going ahead of the flock to set an example—1 Tim. 5:17.

1 Tim 5:17 Let the ^aelders who ^btake the lead well be counted worthy of double ¹honor, ²especially those who labor in ³word and teaching.
 3. All the elders should be apt to teach the members of the local church—3:2:

1 Tim 3:2 ^aThe ^{1b}overseer then must be ²without reproach, the ³husband of ^cone wife, ^{4d}temperate, ⁵of a ^esober mind, ⁶orderly, ^{7f}hospitable, ⁸apt to ^ateach;

 - a. The elders are the local shepherds, and to be a shepherd is to be a teacher; teaching is the main way to practically shepherd the saints— Acts 20:28.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.
 - b. The elders should be occupied in teaching the saints concerning the practical matters of the daily Christian life and church life.
 4. The elders bear the burden of shepherding the local church; the church is like a flock, and the elders are the shepherds to shepherd this flock, taking care of the situation of the flock and meeting the needs—v. 28.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.

5. The elders take care of the finances in a local church; an elder must be pure in money matters, especially since the church fund is under the elders' management—11:29-30; 1 Tim. 3:3.
- Acts 11:29 And the ¹disciples, according to how one was ²prospered, determined, each one of them, to ^asend *things* ³for ^bdispensing to the ^cbrothers dwelling in Judea,
- Acts 11:30 Which also they did, sending *it* to the ^{1a}elders through the hand of ^bBarnabas and ²Saul.
- 1 Tim 3:3 ¹Not an ^aexcessive drinker; ²not a striker, but ^{3b}gentle; ^{4c}not contentious; ⁵not ^dfond of money;
- C. The producing of the elders does not depend mainly on the appointment by the apostles; rather, the producing of the elders is mainly a matter of life—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5:
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:
- The elders are produced by what they are in life according to their growth and maturity in life—1 Tim. 3:1-7.

1 Tim 3:1 ^aFaithful is the word: If anyone ¹aspires to the ²oversership, he desires a good work.

1 Tim 3:2 ^aThe ^{1b}overseer then must be ²without reproach, the ³husband of ^cone wife, ^{4d}temperate, ⁵of a ^esober mind, ⁶orderly, ^{7f}hospitable, ⁸apt to ^gteach;

1 Tim 3:3 ¹Not an ^aexcessive drinker; ²not a striker, but ^{3b}gentle; ^{4c}not contentious; ⁵not ^dfond of money;

1 Tim 3:4 One who ^{1a}manages well his own house, having *his* children in subjection with all ^{2b}gravity

1 Tim 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the ^achurch of God?);

1 Tim 3:6 Not a ¹new convert, lest being ^{2a}blinded with pride he fall into the ³judgment *suffered* by the devil.

1 Tim 3:7 And he also must have a ^{1a}good testimony from ²those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the ^{3b}snare of the ⁴devil.
 - To appoint elders is simply to point out or indicate to the saints who the elders are in order to avoid confusion or complication; nevertheless, we need to be clear that the elders are produced not by appointment but by life.
 - The strength of the eldership depends on life and teaching; if the elders are rich in life and in teaching, the situation in the churches will be wonderful.
- D. Elders are not transferable—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5:
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:
- The elders should be raised up locally from among the saints meeting in a church, and there should be no transfer of elders, because this violates the principle of life—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:
 - Transferring elders is dangerous because it opens the door to hierarchy and causes the churches to lose the Lord's blessing—cf. Rom. 15:29; Eph. 1:3.

Rom 15:29 And I know that when I ^acome to you, I will come in the ¹fullness of the blessing of Christ.

Eph 1:3 ^{1a}Blessed be the ^{2b}God and Father of ³our Lord Jesus Christ, who has ⁴blessed us ⁵with every ⁶spiritual ⁷blessing in the ^{8c}heavenlies ⁹in Christ,

3. Transfers cause a local church to become a man-made organization without the nature of a family—Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15.

Gal 6:10 So then, as we have the opportunity, let us do what is ^{1a}good toward all, but especially toward those of the ^{2b}household of the ^{3c}faith.

Eph 2:19 So then ¹you are no longer ^{2a}strangers and sojourners, but you are ^{3b}fellow citizens with the saints and ⁴members of the ⁵household of God,

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know ¹how one ought to conduct himself in the ^{2a}house of God, which is the ^bchurch of the ^{3c}living God, the ^{4d}pillar and base of the ^{5e}truth.

4. Transferring elders is absolutely against the biblical principle and is useful only for those who want to build up their own kingdom by manipulating the situation in order to gain control over certain local churches.

II. The church is the organic Body of Christ, and the elders should care for the church in an organic way—John 21:15-17; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Pet. 5:2:

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to ¹Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you ²love Me ^amore than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I ³love You. He said to him, ^{4b}Feed My ⁵lambs.

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, ^{1a}Shepherd My ²sheep.

John 21:17 He said to him the ¹third time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You ^{2a}know ^ball things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, ^cFeed My sheep.

Rom 12:4 For just as in ^aone body we have ^bmany members, and all the members do not have the ^csame ¹function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body ¹in Christ, and individually ^{2a}members one of another.

Rom 12:6 And having ^{1a}gifts that differ according to the ^bgrace given to us, whether ^{2c}prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the ^dproportion of faith;

Rom 12:7 Or ¹service, *let us be faithful* in that service; or he who ^ateaches, in that teaching;

Rom 12:8 Or he who ^aexhorts, in that exhortation; he who ^{1b}gives, in simplicity; he who ^{2c}leads, in diligence; he who ³shows ^dmercy, in cheerfulness.

1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;

- A. The eldership is organic, and the elders' care for the church should be altogether organic, not organizational—John 21:15-17:

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to ¹Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you ²love Me ^amore than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I ³love You. He said to him, ^{4b}Feed My ⁵lambs.

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, ^{1a}Shepherd My ²sheep.

John 21:17 He said to him the ¹third time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You ^{2a}know ^ball things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, ^cFeed My sheep.

1. The term *elder* indicates something organic, something of life; an elder is a person who is mature in life—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

2. The elders should be one with the Lord Jesus to feed, shepherd, nourish, and cherish the church; this is the organic way to care for the church— John 21:15-17; Eph. 5:29:

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to ¹Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you ²love Me ^amore than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I ³love You. He said to him, ^{4b}Feed My ⁵lambs.

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, ^{1a}Shepherd My ²sheep.

- John 21:17 He said to him the ¹third time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You ^{2a}know ^ball things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, ^cFeed My sheep.
- Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but ^{1a}nourishes and ^bcherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- a. The word *shepherd* nearly equals the words *nourish* and *cherish*—1 Pet. 5:2; Eph. 5:29.

1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;

Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but ^{1a}nourishes and ^bcherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
 - b. All the elders should be nourishing mothers and teaching fathers— 1 Thes. 2:7, 11.

1 Thes 2:7 But we were ^agentle in your midst, as a ^{1b}nursing mother would ^{2c}cherish her own ^dchildren.

1 Thes 2:11 Just as you know ¹how *we were* to each one of you, as a ^{2a}father to his own ^bchildren, ^{3c}exhorting you and consoling *you* and testifying,
 - c. We all need to learn not to control the saints but to nourish and cherish them.
3. To take the lead, to administrate, to function as an elder in the church, is one of the gifts given according to grace; this indicates that the leading of the elders is organic and that it is by life and is not organizational—Rom. 12:4-8.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in ^aone body we have ^bmany members, and all the members do not have the ^csame ¹function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body ¹in Christ, and individually ^{2a}members one of another.
- Rom 12:6 And having ^{1a}gifts that differ according to the ^bgrace given to us, whether ^{2c}prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the ^dproportion of faith;
- Rom 12:7 Or ¹service, *let us be faithful* in that service; or he who ^ateaches, in that teaching;
- Rom 12:8 Or he who ^aexhorts, in that exhortation; he who ^{1b}gives, in simplicity; he who ^{2c}leads, in diligence; he who ³shows ^dmercy, in cheerfulness.
4. If the elders take the lead in an organizational way, this indicates that the church has degraded, for to be in the realm of organization is to be in degradation.
5. If the elders live in the spirit by life to nourish, cherish, and shepherd the church, they are organic; when a church is organic, all the serving ones serve organically—8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:29.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be ¹fulfilled in us, who do not ^{2a}walk according to the flesh but according to the ³spirit.
- Gal 5:16 But I say, ^{1a}Walk ^bby the ²Spirit and you shall by no means ^cfulfill the ^dlust of the flesh.
- Gal 5:25 If we ¹live by the Spirit, let us also ^{2a}walk by the Spirit.
- Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but ^{1a}nourishes and ^bcherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- B. Among the churches there should not be an improper coordination that brings in hierarchical organization and human headship—Rev. 2:6, 15; Col. 4:15-16:
- Rev 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the works of the ^{1a}Nicolaitans, which I also ^bhate.
- Rev 2:15 In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the ^{1a}teaching of the ^{2b}Nicolaitans.
- Col 4:15 Greet the brothers in ^aLaodicea, as well as Nymphas and the ¹church, which is in ²his ^bhouse.
- Col 4:16 And when this letter is ^aread among you, cause that it be read in the church of the ^bLaodiceans also, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.

1. Coordination often implies organization and activity; for the churches to have fellowship is normal, but to coordinate in the way of organizing nearby churches is an improper activity—2 Cor. 9:13; 1 Thes. 2:14.

2 Cor 9:13 They, through the ¹approving of this ministry, are ^aglorifying God *based* upon the subjection unto the gospel of Christ that *issues* from your ^bconfession, and upon the ^cliberality of the ^{2d}fellowship to them and to all;

1 Thes 2:14 For you, brothers, became ^{1a}imitators of the ^bchurches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, for you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they also from the Jews,
2. Fellowship among the churches and the saints is the healthy flow of life, and it is normal for the elders in nearby churches to come together to fellowship; however, for the elders to coordinate may be a snare that causes the church to fall into organization—1 John 1:7.

1 John 1:7 But if we ^awalk in the light as He ¹is in the light, we ²have fellowship with one another, and the ^{3b}blood of ⁴Jesus His Son ⁵cleanses us from every ⁶sin.
3. We may come together for fellowship, but we must avoid hierarchical organization and human headship not only among the churches but also within each local church—Col. 2:19; 4:15-16.

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

Col 4:15 Greet the brothers in ^aLaodicea, as well as Nymphas and the ¹church, which is in ²his ^bhouse.

Col 4:16 And when this letter is ^aread among you, cause that it be read in the church of the ^bLaodiceans also, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE ELDERS BEING PRODUCED BY GROWTH AND MATURITY IN LIFE

We need to consider how the elders are appointed, or the way in which the elders should be produced. The New Testament apparently reveals that the apostles appoint the elders. However, the producing of the elders actually does not depend mainly on the appointment by the apostles. Sometimes what the Bible does not say is as meaningful as what the Bible does say. The Bible does not say how the elders among the children of Israel were produced. Nor does the Bible say how the elders in the church in Jerusalem were produced. This indicates that the producing of the elders does not depend entirely on their appointment.

The producing of the elders depends mainly on the matter of life. In a family there is no need to appoint the father. He is produced not by appointment but by life. It is a spontaneous matter of life that among the persons in a family, one is the father. The term *elder*, which simply means an older person or a person of advanced age, implies one who is produced by the growth and maturity of life. We need to be impressed that the elders are produced not mainly by appointment but by what they are in life according to their growth and maturity.

Although the father in a family does not need to be appointed, the elders do need to be appointed because the situation in the church is not as simple as that of a family. In a family everyone knows who the father is, and there is no argument about it. In principle, the elders are produced by their maturity in life, but even in a small church it may not be immediately clear which ones have the most maturity. Therefore, in order to prevent confusion, a few need to be appointed as elders. To appoint elders is simply to point out or indicate to the saints who the elders are in order to avoid confusion or complication. Nevertheless, we need to be clear that the elders are produced not by appointment but by growth in life.

According to Acts 14, during the same journey on which Paul preached the gospel, he also raised up local churches and appointed elders in each church. Verse 23 says, “When they had appointed

elders for them in every church and had prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord into whom they had believed.” These churches in which Paul appointed elders had been established within less than one year. Thus, Paul’s practice in his early ministry and during his first trip was to first preach the gospel, second raise up churches, and third appoint elders. Twenty years later his practice in appointing elders seems to have changed. In Titus 1:5 he said, “For this cause I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things which I have begun that remain and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you.” Paul did not directly appoint the elders in Crete as he did on his first journey.

On his first journey he appointed the elders as soon as a church was established, but later he may have discovered that this practice was unreliable. Therefore, in his later ministry he did not immediately appoint the elders but instead left the task to his younger co-worker because he saw the need for some consideration concerning the qualifications of the elders. Paul did not mention the specific qualifications of the elders until his later ministry (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9). This may indicate that he found that some elders were appointed at the wrong time. In other words, in Paul’s early ministry the appointment of the elders was quick, but in his later ministry the appointment of elders was slow and deliberate. He became very careful about this matter.

We should not decide whether a brother is an elder at an early stage of his growth in life, when he is immature. We must be slow in this matter and wait until the time is right. Otherwise, it is unsafe and may cause trouble. The New Testament reveals that the elders in a local church should not be appointed in a quick way. There is the need of time for thorough consideration so that the qualifications may be manifested. Then the time will be right to make a decision. Farmers wait to reap grain until it is ripe. It would be foolish to reap before the harvest ripens. Similarly, whenever a new local church is raised up as the Lord’s testimony, it is proper and safe to delay appointing the elders until there is a full manifestation of the situation.

THE ELDERS BEING RAISED UP LOCALLY

The migrations in the past few years have allowed a subtle practice to creep in, which we may call the transfer of elders. An elder is like a father in a family, and fathers are not transferred. There is no transfer of elders in the Old Testament. The elders in a tribe of the children of Israel were raised up from within that tribe. If the elders in one tribe were weak, other elders were not transferred in from another tribe. The elders in Judah belonged to the tribe of Judah; they could not transfer to the tribe of Dan to be elders of that tribe.

Elders are not transferable. In a migration we do not transfer anyone. In the past when large groups of saints migrated to establish new local churches, each group was already like a tribe of the children of Israel with elders who went with them. These elders were not transferred to take the lead among a new group of saints. However, because some misunderstood what happened in these migrations, the practice of transferring elders subtly crept in. This is absolutely against the biblical principle and is useful only for those who want to build up their own kingdom by manipulating the situation in order to gain control over certain local churches. Transferring elders is dangerous because it opens the door to hierarchy. The elders should be raised up locally from among the saints meeting in a church. Keeping this principle in life will prevent false ones from maneuvering according to their ambition to build up a hierarchy or personal kingdom. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 18-21)

THE ORGANIC CARE FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

If we want to know how to take care of the church as the organic Body of Christ, we have to consider how we take care of our physical body. Surely we do not take care of our physical body in an organizational way. Let us come back to the New Testament to see what it says concerning the organic care for the Body of Christ. Ephesians 5:29 says, “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church.” Just as we nourish and cherish our physical body,

Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. A person loves his physical body by nourishing and cherishing it.

Some have asked me why I am so healthy at my age and why I have lived so long. The first thing I exercise to do is to eat the proper thing and to eat well. We should not eat roughly or quickly, nor should we eat when we are angry. We have to learn to eat the right thing by the right way. This is what it means to nourish and cherish our body. We have to nourish and cherish our body in order to live. Every day we nourish our body with at least three meals.

Eating nourishes us, but eating the wrong thing in the wrong way can also kill us. Alexander the Great died when he was thirty-three because of overeating and overdrinking. The proper eating nourishes, but improper eating can gradually kill us. To eat roughly and wrongly is a kind of gradual suicide. Long life, of course, is a gift from the Lord. The length of our life is up to Him, but we still must cooperate with Him. During my life, the Lord allowed me to have certain illnesses. These illnesses taught me a lot. By being ill, I learned how to keep myself healthy. We all have to learn how to nourish the church in a proper way to keep the church healthy. We should not try to govern the church. This is organization. To nourish the church is organic.

To cherish the church is also an organic matter. The word *cherish* is hard to explain. Note 1 of Ephesians 5:29 in the Recovery Version says, "To cherish is to nurture us with tender love and foster us with tender care, outwardly softening us through tender warmth that we may have soothing, comfortable rest inwardly. This is the way Christ cares for the church, His Body." We may illustrate what the word *cherish* means by the relationship between a mother and her little child. When a mother puts the little child in her bosom, she is cherishing the child. She is warming the child up, comforting the child, and making the child happy. Many times the mother will feed the child while the child is in her bosom. That little child in his mother's bosom receives everything. He is given a room, a bed, food, drink, and comfort. The mother also rocks him to make him happy. I believe that all this is included in the word *cherish*. To nourish is to feed, but the mother putting the child in her bosom is not merely feeding. It is the mother affording everything to the child. This is the way that Christ takes care of His Body.

We should take care of the Body in the same way. In our care for the church, there should be no condemnation, rebuking, or criticizing. Instead, there should be nourishing and cherishing. To nourish and to cherish are altogether matters in life. They are organic. To control, to rebuke, to condemn, and to criticize are altogether organizational. I still remember what I shared in 1976 when we were on the life-study of Matthew. When we were covering Matthew 20 and 23, I exhorted the elders not to control the churches. The Lord Jesus told us that we are all brothers on the same level (23:8). He is the unique Lord and Instructor among us (v. 10). Once a brother becomes an elder, he is a slave to the saints in a church, and his wife becomes the wife of a slave. The eldership is not a matter of a position in a hierarchical sense. That is altogether organizational.

In Peter's first Epistle, he spoke to his fellow elders. Peter was an elder in Jerusalem. He charged the elders to shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1-2). The word *shepherd* nearly equals the two words *nourish* and *cherish*. A good shepherd always loves the flock, and the flock eventually loves this shepherd. They know each other intimately. To shepherd is not to control. In John 21 the Lord asked Peter, "Do you love Me?" Then He indicated that if Peter loved Him, he would feed His sheep and shepherd His sheep (vv. 15-17). The Lord Jesus spoke this to show how we should take care of the church. We should be those who are one with Him to feed, shepherd, nourish, and cherish the church. This is the organic way to care for the church.

THE ELDERSHIP BEING ORGANIC

The leading ones' care for the church is not an organizational matter. The church is not an organization. The church is God's family, God's household (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10). All the elders should be the teaching fathers and the nourishing mothers (1 Thes. 2:7, 11). This is the way to take

care of the church. It is altogether an organic matter, not organizational. The term *elder* also indicates something organic, something of life. An elder is a person who is mature in life.

To see more concerning the organic service in the Body of Christ, let us read 1 Corinthians 12:28: “And God has placed some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then works of power, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” *Administrations* refers to the eldership in the church. *Helps* refers to the services of the deacons and deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Administrations and helps are listed with apostles, with prophets, with teachers, and with works of power, healing, and tongues. This proves that both the helps by the deacons and the administration by the elders are not organizational. They are from the Spirit.

Now we need to read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7: “But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are distinctions of ministries, yet the same Lord; and there are distinctions of operations, but the same God, who operates all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable.” The word *distinctions* in these verses can also be translated as *distributions*. These verses are a summary and a governing word of the whole chapter. Of course, they govern verse 28, which lists administrations and helps.

According to our natural thought, the government of the church has nothing to do with the distribution of gifts by the Spirit. But 1 Corinthians 12 tells us clearly that even the service of the deacons as helps and the function of the elders as administrations are distributions of gifts by the Spirit. This has to be something of the Spirit organically, not something of organization. Many years ago, I considered that the administration by the elders was not a gift from the Spirit, but later I received the light to see that it is a gift from the Spirit. Since this is the case, it has to be organic.

The spiritual gifts are of two categories—the miraculous gifts and the gifts of life given according to grace. Romans 12:6 speaks of the gifts of life given according to grace. These gifts are the issue of the development of our spiritual function in the spiritual life. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul puts the gifts of life and the miraculous gifts together. Helps and administrations are gifts of life. Since they are gifts, they are something of the Spirit, and they are organic.

In Romans 12:8 Paul refers to taking the lead as a gift according to grace. This refers to the elders in the church. To lead in the church is to administrate. We may consider that the administration of the church is not of any gift, not of life, or not of the Spirit. We may think that it is altogether a positional, organizational matter. But Romans 12 tells us that to lead, to administrate, to function as an elder in the church, is one of the gifts given according to grace. This indicates that the leading of the elders is organic. It is by life and not organizational. These three words—*eldership*, *administration*, and *lead*—are misunderstood by Christians as something organizational. After much study of the Word, we can see that they are not organizational. They are organic. (*Elders' Training, Book 9: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (1)*, pp. 71-73, 75-77)

**BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE
TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION**

(Thursday—Evening Session)

Message Three

Seeing the Principle

**of God's Government among His People
and Honoring the Headship of Christ**

in the Fellowship of the Apostles, Elders, and Churches

Scripture Reading: Exo. 3:16; 4:29; 28:30; Acts 14:23; 15:1-31

- Exo 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you and seen what is being done to you in Egypt.
- Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- Acts 15:1 And certain men ¹came down from ^aJudea and began to teach the ^bbrothers, ^{2c}Unless you are ^{3d}circumcised according to the ^{4e}custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.
- Acts 15:2 And when no little ¹dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, *the brothers* directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and ^aelders in ^{2b}Jerusalem concerning this question.
- Acts 15:3 They therefore, having been ^asent forward by the ^{1b}church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, telling in detail about the turning of the ^cGentiles; and they brought great joy to all the ^dbrothers.
- Acts 15:4 And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were ^areceived by the ^bchurch and the apostles and the elders, and they ^cdeclared the things that God had done with them.
- Acts 15:5 But certain men from the ^asect of the ¹Pharisees who had believed rose up from among *them*, saying, It is ^bnecessary to ²circumcise them and to charge *them* to ³keep the ^claw of Moses.
- Acts 15:6 And the apostles and the elders were ¹gathered together to see about this matter.
- Acts 15:7 And when much discussion had taken place, Peter rose up and said to them, ¹Men, brothers, you know that from the ²early days God ^achose *from* among you that through my mouth the ^bGentiles should hear the word of the ^cgospel and believe.
- Acts 15:8 And God, the Knower of ^ahearts, bore witness to them, giving *them* the Holy ^bSpirit even ^cas also to us;
- Acts 15:9 And He made ^ano distinction between us and them, ^bcleansing their ¹hearts by faith.
- Acts 15:10 Therefore why are you now ^atesting God by placing a ^{1b}yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?
- Acts 15:11 But we believe that through the ^{1a}grace of the Lord Jesus we are ^bsaved in the same way also as they are.
- Acts 15:12 And all the multitude became silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul ^arelating all the ^bsigns and wonders God had done among the ^cGentiles through them.
- Acts 15:13 And when they ¹finished speaking, ^aJames answered, saying, ²Men, brothers, listen to me.
- Acts 15:14 ¹Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles to take out from *them* a ^apeople for His name.
- Acts 15:15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, even as it is written,
- Acts 15:16 "^aAfter these things I will return, and I will rebuild the ¹tabernacle of David which has fallen; and I will rebuild its ruins and erect it again,
- Acts 15:17 So that the remainder of men may ^aseek out the Lord, even all the Gentiles ¹upon whom My ^bname has been called,
- Acts 15:18 Says the Lord, who is making these things known ^{1a}from of old."
- Acts 15:19 Therefore I judge that we do not harass those from the Gentiles who are ^aturning to God,
- Acts 15:20 But that we write to them to abstain from the ^acontaminations of ^bidols and ^cfornication and what is strangled and ^dblood.
- Acts 15:21 For ¹Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who proclaim him in the ²synagogues, he being ^aread every Sabbath.

- Acts 15:22 It then seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole ^achurch to choose men from among them to send to Antioch together with Paul and Barnabas: Judas, who is called ^bBarsabbas, and ^cSilas, leading men among the brothers,
- Acts 15:23 Writing *to them and sending* by their hand *the following*: The apostles and the elder ^abrothers, to the brothers throughout Antioch and ^bSyria and Cilicia who are of the Gentiles, rejoice.
- Acts 15:24 Since we have heard that certain ones who went out from among us have ^atroubled you with *their* words, unsettling your souls, to whom we gave no instruction,
- Acts 15:25 It seemed good to us, having become of ^aone accord, to choose men to send to you together with our ^bbeloved Barnabas and Paul,
- Acts 15:26 Men who have ¹risked their ^{2a}lives for the ^bname of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Acts 15:27 Therefore we have sent Judas and ^aSilas, who themselves will report the same things by word *of mouth*.
- Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy ^aSpirit and to us to lay upon you no greater ^bburden than these necessary things:
- Acts 15:29 To abstain from things that have been sacrificed to ^aidols and blood and things strangled and fornication, from which if you carefully keep yourselves, you will do well. May you be strong.
- Acts 15:30 So when they had been sent away, they went down to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they handed *them* the letter.
- Acts 15:31 And when they read *it*, they rejoiced at the encouragement.

I. We need to see the principle of God's government among His people—Exo. 3:16; 4:29; 12:21; 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8, 10:

- Exo 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you and seen what is being done to you in Egypt.
- Exo 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.
- Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, Draw out and take lambs according to your families, and slaughter the passover.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- Lev 8:8 And he placed the breastplate upon him, and in the breastplate he put the Urim and the Thummim.
- Num 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.
- Deut 33:8 And concerning Levi he said, May Your Thummim and Urim be with Your faithful man, Whom You tested at Massah, With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah—
- Deut 33:10 They shall show Jacob Your judgments, And Israel Your law; They shall put incense before Your nostrils And whole burnt offerings upon Your altar.

A. In the Old Testament we have a type of the New Testament government; in order to understand God's administration in the New Testament, we need to understand God's administration in the Old Testament—Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 2:9:

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a ^achosen ¹race, a ²royal ^bpriesthood, a ³holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may ⁴tell out the ^{5c}virtues of Him who has ^dcalled you out of ^{6e}darkness into His marvelous ^flight;

1. God's administration is a direct ruling and governing by God Himself; this direct ruling is a theocracy—1 Sam. 8:7.

1 Sam 8:7 And Jehovah said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people according to all that they have said to you; for it is not you whom they have rejected, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.

2. In the Old Testament God's administration among the children of Israel was neither an autocracy by a dictator nor a democracy of the people; on the contrary, God's administration was a theocracy, indicating that God Himself came to govern, to rule, to administrate, the people of God directly yet through some agents—Exo. 12:1-3, 21; 28:30; Deut. 33:8, 10:

Exo 12:1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

- Exo 12:2 This month will be the beginning of months for you; it shall be the first of the months of the year to you.
- Exo 12:3 Speak to all the assembly of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month each man shall take a lamb according to his fathers' house, a lamb for a household.
- Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, Draw out and take lambs according to your families, and slaughter the passover.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- Deut 33:8 And concerning Levi he said, May Your Thummim and Urim be with Your faithful man, Whom You tested at Massah, With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah—
- Deut 33:10 They shall show Jacob Your judgments, And Israel Your law; They shall put incense before Your nostrils And whole burnt offerings upon Your altar.
- a. Among the children of Israel, these agents were the priests and the elders working together for God's theocracy—Num. 27:15-21.
- Num 27:15 And Moses spoke to Jehovah, saying,
- Num 27:16 Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly,
- Num 27:17 Who will go out before them and who will come in before them, and who will lead them out and who will bring them in; so that the assembly of Jehovah will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.
- Num 27:18 And Jehovah said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him;
- Num 27:19 And set him before Eleazar the priest and before the whole assembly, and give him a charge in their sight.
- Num 27:20 And you shall put some of your honor upon him, so that the whole assembly of the children of Israel may obey him.
- Num 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.
- b. The theocracy among the nation of Israel was a government according to God's constant speaking, as written in the law, or God's instant speaking, as revealed through the breastplate of the high priest by means of the Urim and the Thummim—Exo. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- Lev 8:8 And he placed the breastplate upon him, and in the breastplate he put the Urim and the Thummim.
- Num 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.
- Deut 33:8 And concerning Levi he said, May Your Thummim and Urim be with Your faithful man, Whom You tested at Massah, With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah—
- 1 Sam 28:6 And Saul inquired of Jehovah; but Jehovah did not answer him, not by dreams or by the Urim or by the prophets.
- Ezra 2:63 And the governor told them that they should not eat of the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.
- Neh 7:65 And the governor told them that they should not eat of the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.

3. In principle, the administration of God was always carried out by the elders according to the divine speaking received through the Urim and the Thum-mim—Exo. 12:1-3, 21; Num. 27:15-21:

Exo 12:1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,
Exo 12:2 This month will be the beginning of months for you; it shall be the first of the months of the year to you.
Exo 12:3 Speak to all the assembly of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month each man shall take a lamb according to his fathers' house, a lamb for a household.
Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, Draw out and take lambs according to your families, and slaughter the passover.
Num 27:15 And Moses spoke to Jehovah, saying,
Num 27:16 Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly,
Num 27:17 Who will go out before them and who will come in before them, and who will lead them out and who will bring them in; so that the assembly of Jehovah will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.
Num 27:18 And Jehovah said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him;
Num 27:19 And set him before Eleazar the priest and before the whole assembly, and give him a charge in their sight.
Num 27:20 And you shall put some of your honor upon him, so that the whole assembly of the children of Israel may obey him.
Num 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.

- a. After the high priest received the instant speaking from God, he did not directly execute or carry out what God spoke; the high priest passed on the word that he had received to the elders, and the elders became the direct administrators among God's people—Exo. 28:30; Num. 27:15-21.

Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
Num 27:15 And Moses spoke to Jehovah, saying,
Num 27:16 Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly,
Num 27:17 Who will go out before them and who will come in before them, and who will lead them out and who will bring them in; so that the assembly of Jehovah will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.
Num 27:18 And Jehovah said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him;
Num 27:19 And set him before Eleazar the priest and before the whole assembly, and give him a charge in their sight.
Num 27:20 And you shall put some of your honor upon him, so that the whole assembly of the children of Israel may obey him.
Num 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.

- b. Joshua may be considered the leading elder among God's people at his time, and the high priest accompanying him was Eleazar; Eleazar bore the responsibility to go into God's presence to receive His instant speaking, and from him Joshua received the divine speaking to administrate among God's people—v. 21.

Num 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.

4. God's government is by His instant speaking plus the constant written Word; the instant speaking was either through the priests or the prophets, and this speaking was carried out by the direct administrators.
- B. The principle regarding God's administration in the New Testament is the same as that in the Old Testament; the elders are both the priests receiving the instant word from God and the administrators to administrate what they have received from the Lord—Exo. 19:6; Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10:
- Exo 19:6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the ^aelders of the ^bchurch.
- Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.
- Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:
- 1 Pet 2:9 But you are a ^achosen ¹race, a ²royal ^bpriesthood, a ³holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may ⁴tell out the ^{5c}virtues of Him who has ^dcalled you out of ^{6e}darkness into His marvelous ^flight;
- Rev 1:6 And made us a ^{1a}kingdom, ^{2b}priests ^cto His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.
- Rev 5:10 And have made ¹them a ^{2a}kingdom and priests to our God; and they will ^breign ³on the earth.
- In the Old Testament kingdom of God, the constitution was the law, and in the New Testament kingdom of God, the constitution is the teaching of the apostles; the teaching of the apostles replaces the law in the sense of replacing the law in God's administration—Acts 2:42; Titus 1:9.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the ¹teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the ^abreaking of bread and the ^bprayers.

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the *apostles*, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.
 - The written constitution of the New Testament kingdom of God is the teaching of the apostles, and the direct administrators in this kingdom are the elders—vv. 5, 9.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the *apostles*, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.
 - In the Old Testament the priests are one group, and the elders are another group, but in the New Testament the two groups are one; all the elders are both priests and administrators, who honor the teaching of the apostles as the highest power in the church and who spend much time in the Lord's presence to receive His instant speaking—1 Pet. 2:9; Titus 1:5, 9.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a ^achosen ¹race, a ²royal ^bpriesthood, a ³holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may ⁴tell out the ^{5c}virtues of Him who has ^dcalled you out of ^{6e}darkness into His marvelous ^flight;

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the *apostles*, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.

II. We need to honor the headship of Christ in the fellowship of the apostles, elders, and churches—Acts 15:1-31:

- Acts 15:1 And certain men ¹came down from ^aJudea and began to teach the ^bbrothers, ^{2c}Unless you are ^{3d}circumcised according to the ^{4e}custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.
- Acts 15:2 And when no little ¹dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, *the brothers* directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and ^aelders in ^{2b}Jerusalem concerning this question.
- Acts 15:3 They therefore, having been ^asent forward by the ^{1b}church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, telling in detail about the turning of the ^cGentiles; and they brought great joy to all the ^dbrothers.
- Acts 15:4 And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were ^areceived by the ^bchurch and the apostles and the elders, and they ^cdeclared the things that God had done with them.
- Acts 15:5 But certain men from the ^asect of the ¹Pharisees who had believed rose up from among *them*, saying, It is ^bnecessary to ²circumcise them and to charge *them* to ³keep the ^claw of Moses.
- Acts 15:6 And the apostles and the elders were ¹gathered together to see about this matter.
- Acts 15:7 And when much discussion had taken place, Peter rose up and said to them, ¹Men, brothers, you know that from the ²early days God ^achose *from* among you that through my mouth the ^bGentiles should hear the word of the ^cgospel and believe.
- Acts 15:8 And God, the Knower of ^ahearts, bore witness to them, giving *them* the Holy ^bSpirit even ^cas also to us;
- Acts 15:9 And He made ^ano distinction between us and them, ^bcleansing their ¹hearts by faith.
- Acts 15:10 Therefore why are you now ^atesting God by placing a ^{1b}yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?
- Acts 15:11 But we believe that through the ^{1a}grace of the Lord Jesus we are ^bsaved in the same way also as they are.
- Acts 15:12 And all the multitude became silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul ^arelating all the ^bsigns and wonders God had done among the ^cGentiles through them.
- Acts 15:13 And when they ¹finished speaking, ^aJames answered, saying, ²Men, brothers, listen to me.
- Acts 15:14 ¹Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles to take out from *them* a ^apeople for His name.
- Acts 15:15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, even as it is written,
- Acts 15:16 "^aAfter these things I will return, and I will rebuild the ¹tabernacle of David which has fallen; and I will rebuild its ruins and erect it again,
- Acts 15:17 So that the remainder of men may ^aseek out the Lord, even all the Gentiles ¹upon whom My ^bname has been called,
- Acts 15:18 Says the Lord, who is making these things known ^{1a}from of old."
- Acts 15:19 Therefore I judge that we do not harass those from the Gentiles who are ^aturning to God,
- Acts 15:20 But that we write to them to abstain from the ^acontaminations of ^bidols and ^cfornication and what is strangled and ^dblood.
- Acts 15:21 For ¹Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who proclaim him in the ²synagogues, he being ^aread every Sabbath.
- Acts 15:22 It then seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole ^achurch to choose men from among them to send to Antioch together with Paul and Barnabas: Judas, who is called ^bBarsabbas, and ^cSilas, leading men among the brothers,
- Acts 15:23 Writing *to them and sending* by their hand *the following*: The apostles and the elder ^abrothers, to the brothers throughout Antioch and ^bSyria and Cilicia who are of the Gentiles, rejoice.
- Acts 15:24 Since we have heard that certain ones who went out from among us have ^atroubled you with *their* words, unsettling your souls, to whom we gave no instruction,
- Acts 15:25 It seemed good to us, having become of ^aone accord, to choose men to send to you together with our ^bbeloved Barnabas and Paul,
- Acts 15:26 Men who have ¹risked their ^{2a}lives for the ^bname of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Acts 15:27 Therefore we have sent Judas and ^aSilas, who themselves will report the same things by word of *mouth*.
- Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy ^aSpirit and to us to lay upon you no greater ^bburden than these necessary things:
- Acts 15:29 To abstain from things that have been sacrificed to ^aidols and blood and things strangled and fornication, from which if you carefully keep yourselves, you will do well. May you be strong.
- Acts 15:30 So when they had been sent away, they went down to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they handed *them* the letter.
- Acts 15:31 And when they read *it*, they rejoiced at the encouragement.

A. The record in Acts 15 shows us the proper headship and leadership—v. 28:

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy ^aSpirit and to us to lay upon you no greater ^bburden than these necessary things:

1. All the apostles and elders honored the headship of Christ, with each one conducting himself not as a leader or head but as a brother; there was no human headship, leadership, or presumption—vv. 7-13.

Acts 15:7 And when much discussion had taken place, Peter rose up and said to them, ¹Men, brothers, you know that from the ²early days God ^achose *from* among you that through my mouth the ^bGentiles should hear the word of the ^cgospel and believe.

Acts 15:8 And God, the Knower of ^ahearts, bore witness to them, giving *them* the Holy ^bSpirit even ^cas also to us;

Acts 15:9 And He made ^ano distinction between us and them, ^bcleansing their ¹hearts by faith.

Acts 15:10 Therefore why are you now ^atesting God by placing a ^{1b}yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Acts 15:11 But we believe that through the ^{1a}grace of the Lord Jesus we are ^bsaved in the same way also as they are.

Acts 15:12 And all the multitude became silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul ^arelating all the ^bsigns and wonders God had done among the ^cGentiles through them.

Acts 15:13 And when they ¹finished speaking, ^aJames answered, saying, ²Men, brothers, listen to me.

2. Among the saints and the churches, there was only one Head; if we keep this principle and honor the Lord's headship, we can have the assurance that blessing will be transmitted from the Head to the Body—Col. 2:19.

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

B. Acts 15 reveals some basic principles in God's administration:

1. In the early days among the churches there was no head church; all the churches were equal in the one Body—vv. 2-3, 30-31.

Acts 15:2 And when no little ¹dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, *the brothers* directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and ^aelders in ^{2b}Jerusalem concerning this question.

Acts 15:3 They therefore, having been ^asent forward by the ^{1b}church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, telling in detail about the turning of the ^cGentiles; and they brought great joy to all the ^dbrothers.

Acts 15:30 So when they had been sent away, they went down to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they handed *them* the letter.

Acts 15:31 And when they read *it*, they rejoiced at the encouragement.

2. No church made a decision by itself; in God's administration no single church should presume to make a decision regarding the truth or in other matters affecting the other churches without fellowship—vv. 1-2.

Acts 15:1 And certain men ¹came down from ^aJudea and began to teach the ^bbrothers, ^{2c}Unless you are ^{3d}circumcised according to the ^{4e}custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

Acts 15:2 And when no little ¹dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, *the brothers* directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and ^aelders in ^{2b}Jerusalem concerning this question.

3. Not only the apostles but also the elders represented the churches; both were included because in God's administration the apostles represent the universal church, and the elders represent the local churches—vv. 2, 6.

Acts 15:2 And when no little ¹dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, *the brothers* directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and ^aelders in ^{2b}Jerusalem concerning this question.

Acts 15:6 And the apostles and the elders were ¹gathered together to see about this matter.

4. There was much discussion among the apostles and elders; it is wrong to think that we need to avoid discussion in order to be spiritual—v. 7.

Acts 15:7 And when much discussion had taken place, Peter rose up and said to them, ¹Men, brothers, you know that from the ²early days God ^achose *from* among you that through my mouth the ^bGentiles should hear the word of the ^cgospel and believe.

5. The Holy Spirit was presiding over the conference, and the decision was made by this presiding One as the presence of the King—v. 28:

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy ^aSpirit and to us to lay upon you no greater ^bburden than these necessary things:

- a. The decision was apparently made by the apostles and elders, but it was actually made by the Holy Spirit with them; this is the principle of incarnation; we must have the assurance that every decision in the church is made by the Holy Spirit with us—vv. 13-22, 25, 28.

Acts 15:13 And when they ¹finished speaking, ^aJames answered, saying, ²Men, brothers, listen to me.

Acts 15:14 ¹Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles to take out from *them* a ^apeople for His name.

Acts 15:15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, even as it is written,

Acts 15:16 ^{"a}After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the ¹tabernacle of David which has fallen; and I will rebuild its ruins and erect it again,

Acts 15:17 So that the remainder of men may ^aseek out the Lord, even all the Gentiles ¹upon whom My ^bname has been called,

Acts 15:18 Says the Lord, who is making these things known ^{1a}from of old."

Acts 15:19 Therefore I judge that we do not harass those from the Gentiles who are ^aturning to God,

Acts 15:20 But that we write to them to abstain from the ^acontaminations of ^bidols and ^cfornication and what is strangled and ^dblood.

Acts 15:21 For ¹Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who proclaim him in the ²synagogues, he being ^aread every Sabbath.

Acts 15:22 It then seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole ^achurch to choose men from among them to send to Antioch together with Paul and Barnabas: Judas, who is called ^bBarsabbas, and ^cSilas, leading men among the brothers,

Acts 15:25 It seemed good to us, having become of ^aone accord, to choose men to send to you together with our ^bbeloved Barnabas and Paul,

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy ^aSpirit and to us to lay upon you no greater ^bburden than these necessary things:

- b. We need to discuss, testify concerning the facts, and find the confirmation in the Word, and then the Holy Spirit will guide us to the correct decision; this is the proper way to maintain God's administration while honoring and respecting the unique headship of Christ in the fellowship of the apostles, elders, and churches—v. 28.

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy ^aSpirit and to us to lay upon you no greater ^bburden than these necessary things:

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE ELDERS AS PRIESTS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, made this matter of God's administration in the New Testament very clear. He charged the brothers in Corinth to remove a certain sinful man from the fellowship of the church (5:13), which is also the fellowship of the apostles and of the saints. His desire was that this evil person would be removed from the church, but he would not do it by himself because he was not the direct administrator. Therefore, he charged the ones who were the direct administrators in the church. By the New Testament teaching and example, we can realize that some

elders had been established in the church in Corinth. Paul gave such a charge to the brothers, but he did not carry out the administration. The elders were the direct administrators of the church there. The written constitution of the New Testament kingdom of God is the teaching of the apostles, the complete New Testament, and the direct administrators in this kingdom are the elders.

Furthermore, in the New Testament age, there is still some instant speaking. In the New Testament, we have the reality of the high priest and the priests. In the Old Testament, the priests are one group, and the elders are another group. But in the New Testament, these two groups are one. All the believers in Christ are priests to God (1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6), including the elders. All of the elders are priests, and Christ is the High Priest (Heb. 3:1). Where is Christ? We know that He is seated at the right hand of God in the heavens (Rom. 8:34), but we must see that for God's movement among us on this earth, our High Priest, Christ, is in us (8:10). All of the elders need to declare that Christ, the High Priest, is in them. We have such a High Priest (Heb. 8:1). The elders, who are also the priests, should be the ones who administrate the church in God's government. If there is a problem in the church under the administration of the elders, how shall they solve it? In the Old Testament, it was necessary to study the law to find out what to do to solve the problem. If there is a problem in the church, we have to study our New Testament constitution.

The United States is a good example of a country ruled by its Constitution. The highest power in the United States is neither the President nor the Congress. It is the Constitution. Because of the power of the United States Constitution, President Nixon was forced to resign from office. Eventually, the Constitution is more powerful than the President. We must admit that today the highest power in the church is the teaching of the apostles. If there is a problem in the church, we have to come to the New Testament to see what it says about this particular problem. We should not say we are for or against something until we go to the New Testament constitution to see what it has to say. When any problem arises, we must learn to be silent and go to the written Word of God, the New Testament constitution, without any opinion. We have a complete constitution with many more details than the United States Constitution.

If we cannot find anything in our written constitution directly concerning a certain problem or if we can find something and are not clear how to apply it, we need an instant speaking. The time and the way to carry out the written constitution still needs the Lord's instant speaking. How can we have the Lord's instant speaking? We have to get into the presence of the Lord, stay in His presence, and wait on Him, asking Him to show us what to do. Then we have to read the breastplate with all its letters. The stones on the breastplate with the letters refer to the saints, God's people. We have to read the people of the church. By reading the people of the church in the presence of the Lord, with the Lord, and with His loving capacity typified by the breast, we will receive some instruction as to when and how to carry out what is in the written constitution. This is to receive the instant speaking according to the written teaching of the apostles. Of course, we should not do anything that is against the teaching of the apostles. In the Old Testament, no one was to do anything against the law, but to carry out the law, there was also the need of the instant speaking of God Himself. When we have His instant speaking, we are not speaking our own word. What we speak is not something of democracy or of autocracy, but it is of theocracy since God Himself is speaking instantly according to His written constitution to govern and rule His people.

All of the elders of the church need to realize that they are the real priests. They are the elders and the priests. As an elder, you have the High Priest within you, and you can share in His loving capacity as symbolized by His breast. You love the saints with Christ's love and go into His presence with such a loving capacity, waiting on Him and reading the letters on the stones of the breastplate, that is, reading all the members of the church. By reading the members of the church, taking the members as the letters of a divine typewriter, a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, and even a chapter will come to you, telling you what to do and how to do it.

We must also remember the principle of the eldership. The elders are always in plurality. Because the elders are in plurality, there is the need of much fellowship. The genuine fellowship must be in the presence of the Lord. If any fellowship among the elders is not in the presence of the Lord, that is not genuine fellowship. Thus, all the elders should exercise the practice of being in the presence of the Lord in the fellowship. In this kind of fellowship, surely the “Urim” and the “Thummim” in Christ’s loving capacity would speak. Then the elders would know what is on the heart of the Lord concerning His people and what He desires to administrate in their locality for the church there. The elders are both the priests receiving the instant word from God, and the administrators to administrate what they have received from the Lord. The principle in the Old Testament regarding God’s administration is the same in the New Testament. (*Elders’ Training, Book 9: The Eldership and the God ordained Way (1)*, pp. 46-49)

FURTHER FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING PROPER DISCUSSION

We must learn not to hide anything or do anything independently but to open everything for discussion. However, we also must learn to discuss without losing our temper. This is not easy. In the early years of my service in the church, I learned much concerning this point. For the first few years that I served, I did not say much in the way of discussion because I did not have the assurance that I could control my temper. I knew that I should participate in the discussions, but I also realized that I was not qualified, because my temper was not dealt with. I repented to the Lord for not being purified from my temper so that I could be used by Him. I also confessed to the brothers the reason for my silence. Eventually, I learned to discuss without losing my temper.

We should not insist when we are in a discussion with the brothers. To insist is a sign that we are ruled by our temper. Acts 15 records that there was much discussion, but we also know that there was no insisting, because verse 25 says that they became of one accord. To avoid insisting is not easy. As long as we are natural, have a temper, and are in our self, we will insist on our opinion. To discuss in a proper way is quite difficult; it requires many lessons of the cross. If we do not learn these lessons, our discussions will become battles. Nevertheless, we need to have much discussion. We should not excuse our silence by saying that we want to keep the oneness when actually we dare not speak because we are weak in the spirit and not yet free from our temper.

The apostles and elders in Acts 15 had all learned much through many spiritual experiences. Therefore, they were qualified to participate in the discussion, and they did so without losing their temper. Because they discussed without insisting, they were able to accept the final decision even if the decision went against their initial opinion. It is not easy to not be offended when what we say in a discussion is set aside. Nevertheless, we must learn to discuss without losing our temper, insisting, or being offended. In the affairs of government, people often play politics in order to avoid offending others or to save face. However, in Acts 15 there was no offending, no saving of face, and no playing of politics. The brothers were open and genuine.

It is quite difficult to put the normal and proper principles in Acts 15 into practice. In order to perform an operation, a surgeon must be qualified, and he and his instruments must be sterilized, purified; otherwise, he will introduce germs into his patient and make the patient sicker. Similarly, in order to participate in the fellowship of the co-workers and elders, we must be qualified and purified. When we try to put the principles in Acts 15 into practice, we will find that we are not qualified or prepared if we have not learned the lessons of the cross and have not been purified or thoroughly dealt with. Our participation in a discussion will become a problem. If we are offended in a discussion, this indicates that we are in the flesh. If we are not in the flesh, we will not care to save our face or be concerned about whether others respect us. To be overly concerned about politeness is actually to play politics for the sake of the flesh, but the flesh has no place in the meetings of the co-workers and elders. The example of Acts 15 can be practiced only by those who have learned the lessons of the cross. Because the early apostles and elders had adequately learned the lessons of the cross, they were

qualified to have such a discussion. They participated in the discussion because they felt that they had something to say, but they did so without insisting or losing their temper. As a result, their discussion ended not in offense but in one accord (v. 25). Therefore, especially among the co-workers and elders there is the need to learn many lessons of the cross. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 34-36)

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message Four The Qualifications of the Elders

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:1-7

- 1 Tim 3:1 ^aFaithful is the word: If anyone ¹aspires to the ²overship, he desires a good work.
1 Tim 3:2 ^aThe ^{1b}overseer then must be ²without reproach, the ³husband of ^cone wife, ^{4d}temperate, ⁵of a ^esober mind, ⁶orderly, ^{7f}hospitable, ⁸apt to ^eteach;
1 Tim 3:3 ¹Not an ^aexcessive drinker; ²not a striker, but ^{3b}gentle; ^{4c}not contentious; ⁵not ^dfond of money;
1 Tim 3:4 One who ^{1a}manages well his own house, having *his* children in subjection with all ^{2b}gravity
1 Tim 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the ^achurch of God?);
1 Tim 3:6 Not a ¹new convert, lest being ^{2a}blinded with pride he fall into the ³judgment *suffered* by the devil.
1 Tim 3:7 And he also must have a ^{1a}good testimony from ²those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the ^{3b}snare of the ⁴devil.

I. The qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are actually a revelation of what the indwelling Christ as the resurrection life can do in us—cf. 1:4, 16; 3:16; 6:12, 19:

- 1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to ^{1a}myths and unending ^{2b}genealogies, which produce ^cquestionings rather than God's ^{3d}economy, which is in ^{4e}faith.
1 Tim 1:16 But because of this I was shown ^amercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a ¹pattern to those who are to ^bbelieve on Him unto ^{2c}eternal life.
1 Tim 3:16 And ¹confessedly, great is the ^{2a}mystery of ^bgodliness: ³He who was ^{4c}manifested in the ^dflesh, ⁵Justified in the Spirit, ⁶Seen by angels, ⁷Preached among the nations, ⁸Believed on in the world, ⁹Taken up in glory.
1 Tim 6:12 ^{1a}Fight the good fight of the ^bfaith; lay ^chold on the ²eternal life, ³to which you were ^dcalled and have ^{4e}confessed the good confession before many ^fwitnesses.
1 Tim 6:19 ^aLaying away for themselves a good ^bfoundation as a ^ctreasure for the ¹future, ²that they may lay ^dhold on that which is really life.

A. This is like the constitution of the kingdom in Matthew 5—7, which not only indicates what the kingdom requires but also proves and testifies how much the resurrection life can do in us.

- Matt 5:1 And when He saw the ^acrowds, He ¹went up to the ^bmountain. And after He sat down, His ²disciples came to Him.
Matt 5:2 And ^aopening His mouth, He taught them, saying,
Matt 5:3 ¹Blessed are the ^{2a}poor in ³spirit, for theirs is the ^{4b}kingdom of the heavens.
Matt 5:4 Blessed are those who ^{1a}mourn, for they shall be ^{2b}comforted.
Matt 5:5 Blessed are the ^{1a}meeek, for they shall ^{2b}inherit the earth.
Matt 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and ^athirst for ^{1b}righteousness, for they shall be ^{2c}satisfied.
Matt 5:7 Blessed are the ^{1a}merciful, for they shall be ²shown mercy.
Matt 5:8 Blessed are the ^{1a}pure in heart, for they shall ^{2b}see God.
Matt 5:9 Blessed are the ^{1a}peacemakers, for they shall be called the ^{2b}sons of God.
Matt 5:10 Blessed are those who are ^{1a}persecuted for the sake of ^brighteousness, for ²theirs is the ^ckingdom of the heavens.
Matt 5:11 Blessed are you when they ^{1a}reproach and ^bpersecute you, and while speaking lies, say every ^cevil thing against you ²because of Me.
Matt 5:12 ^aRejoice and exult, for your ^{1b}reward is great in the heavens; for so they ^cpersecuted the ²prophets who were before you.
Matt 5:13 ¹You are the ^{2a}salt of the earth. But if the salt has become ^{3b}tasteless, with what shall it be salted? It is ^cno longer good for anything except to be ^{4d}cast out and ⁵trampled underfoot by men.
Matt 5:14 You are the ^{1a}light of the world. It is impossible for a ^{2b}city situated upon a mountain to be hidden.
Matt 5:15 Nor do *men* light a ^alamp and place it under the ¹bushel, but on the ^{2b}lampstand; and it shines to all who are in the house.

- Matt 5:16 In the same way, let your light ^ashine before men, so that they may see your ^{1b}good works and ^{2c}glorify your ³Father who is in the heavens.
- Matt 5:17 ¹Do not think that I have come to abolish the ^alaw or the prophets; I have not come to abolish, but to ^{2b}fulfill.
- Matt 5:18 For truly I say to you, Until ^{1a}heaven and earth pass away, one ²iota or one ³serif shall by no means pass away from the law until all come to pass.
- Matt 5:19 Therefore whoever annuls one of the ^aleast of these ¹commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called the ^bleast in the ^ckingdom of the heavens; but whoever practices and teaches *them*, he shall be called ^dgreat in the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your ^{1a}righteousness surpasses that of the ²scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means ^{3b}enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt 5:21 ^aYou have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not murder, and whoever murders shall be liable to the ^bjudgment."
- Matt 5:22 But ¹I say to you that every one who is ^{2a}angry with his ³brother shall be liable to the ^{4b}judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ⁵Raca, shall be liable to *the judgment of the* ^{6c}Sanhedrin; and whoever says, ⁷Moreh, shall be liable to the ^{8d}Gehenna of fire.
- Matt 5:23 Therefore if you are offering your ^{1a}gift at the ^{2b}altar and there you remember that your ^cbrother has ³something against you,
- Matt 5:24 Leave your gift there before the altar, and ¹first go and ²be ^areconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
- Matt 5:25 Be well disposed ¹quickly toward your ^{2a}opponent at law, while you are with him ³on the way, lest the opponent ⁴deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.
- Matt 5:26 Truly I say to you, You shall by no means ¹come out from there until you ^apay the last ²quadrans.
- Matt 5:27 ^aYou have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery."
- Matt 5:28 But I say to you that every one who ^alooks at a woman in order to lust after her has already committed ^badultery with her in his ^{1c}heart.
- Matt 5:29 So if your right ^aeye stumbles you, ¹pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into ^{2b}Gehenna.
- Matt 5:30 And if your right ^ahand stumbles you, ¹cut it off and cast *it* from you, for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to pass away into ^bGehenna.
- Matt 5:31 And it was said, ^aWhoever ¹divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.
- Matt 5:32 But I say to you that ¹every one who ^adivorces his wife, except for the cause of ²fornication, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her who has been divorced commits adultery.
- Matt 5:33 Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, "^{1a}You shall not break an oath, but you shall ^{2b}render to the Lord your oaths."
- Matt 5:34 But I tell you ^anot to swear at all; neither by ^{1b}heaven, because it is the throne of God;
- Matt 5:35 Nor by the ^aearth, because it is the footstool of His feet; nor unto Jerusalem, because it is the ^bcity of the great King;
- Matt 5:36 Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.
- Matt 5:37 But let your word be, ^{1a}Yes, yes; No, no; for anything more than these is ²of ³the ^bevil one.
- Matt 5:38 You have heard that it was said, "^aAn eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."
- Matt 5:39 But I tell you ^anot to resist him who is evil; rather whoever ^bslaps you on your right cheek, ¹turn to him the other also.
- Matt 5:40 And to him who wishes to ^asue you and take your ¹tunic, yield to him your cloak also;
- Matt 5:41 And whoever compels you to go one ¹mile, go with him two.
- Matt 5:42 To him who asks of you, ^{1a}give; and from him who wants to ^bborrow from you, do not turn away.
- Matt 5:43 ^aYou have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your ^benemy."
- Matt 5:44 But I say to you, ^aLove your enemies, and ^bpray for those who ^cpersecute you,
- Matt 5:45 So that you may become ^{1a}sons of your Father who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to ^brise on the evil and the good and ²sends ^crain on the just and the unjust.
- Matt 5:46 For if you ^alove those who love you, what ¹reward do you have? Do not even the ²tax collectors do the same?
- Matt 5:47 And if you greet only your brothers, what better thing are you doing? Do not even the ^aGentiles do the same?
- Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be ^{1a}perfect ^bas your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matt 6:1 ¹But take care not to do your ²righteousness ³before men in order to be ^agazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your ⁴Father who is in the heavens.

Matt 6:2 Therefore when you ^agive alms, do not ¹sound a trumpet before you as the ^{2b}hypocrites do in the ³synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be ^cglorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.

Matt 6:3 But you, when you give alms, do not let your ¹left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matt 6:4 So that your alms may be in ^{1a}secret; and your Father who ²sees in secret will ^{3b}repay you.

Matt 6:5 And when you pray, you shall not be like the ^ahypocrites, because they love to ^bpray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, They have ¹their reward in full.

Matt 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your ¹private room, and ^ashut your door and pray to your Father who is in ^bsecret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Matt 6:7 And in praying do ¹not babble empty words as the Gentiles do; for they suppose that in their ^amultiplicity of words they will be heard.

Matt 6:8 Therefore do not be like them, for your Father ^aknows the things that you have need of before you ¹ask Him.

Matt 6:9 ^aYou then pray ¹in this way: Our ^bFather who is in the heavens, ²Your name be ^csanctified;

Matt 6:10 Your ^akingdom come; Your ^bwill be done, as in heaven, *so* also on ¹earth.

Matt 6:11 ¹Give us ²today our ³daily bread.

Matt 6:12 And ^{1a}forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matt 6:13 And do ¹not bring us into ^atemptation, but ^bdeliver us from ²the ^cevil one. ³For Yours is the ^{4d}kingdom and the ^epower and the ^fglory forever. ^{5g}Amen.

Matt 6:14 ¹For if you ^aforgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also;

Matt 6:15 But if you do ^anot forgive men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses.

Matt 6:16 And when you ^{1a}fast, do not be like the sullen-faced hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so that they may ^bappear to men to be fasting. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.

Matt 6:17 But you, when you fast, ^aanoint your head and wash your face,

Matt 6:18 So that you may not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in ^asecret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Matt 6:19 ¹Do ^anot store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where ^bmoth and rust consume and where thieves dig through and steal.

Matt 6:20 But ¹store up for yourselves ^atreasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not ^bdig through nor steal.

Matt 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your ^{1a}heart be also.

Matt 6:22 The ^alamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is ¹single, your whole body will be full of light;

Matt 6:23 But if your eye is ¹evil, your whole body will be dark. If then the ²light that is in you is ^adarkness, how great is the darkness!

Matt 6:24 No one can ¹serve ^atwo masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will ²hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and ^{3b}mammon.

Matt 6:25 Because of this, I say to you, ^aDo not be ^banxious for your ¹life, what you should eat or what you should drink; nor for your body, what you should put on. Is not the life ²more than food, and the body than clothing?

Matt 6:26 Look at the ^abirds of heaven. They do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father nourishes them. Are you not of more value than they?

Matt 6:27 Who among you by being anxious can add one cubit to ¹his stature?

Matt 6:28 And why are you ^aanxious concerning ^bclothing? Consider well the ^{1c}lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, neither do they spin *thread*.

Matt 6:29 But I tell you that not even ^aSolomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these.

Matt 6:30 And if God so arrays the ^agrass of the field, which is *here* today and tomorrow is cast into the furnace, *will He* not much more ^bclothe you, you of ^clittle faith?

Matt 6:31 Therefore do not be ^aanxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed?

Matt 6:32 For all these things the Gentiles are anxiously seeking. For your ¹heavenly Father knows that you ^aneed all these things.

Matt 6:33 But seek first His ^{1a}kingdom and His ^brighteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matt 6:34 Therefore do not be ^aanxious for ^{1b}tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient for the day is its *own* ²evil.

Matt 7:1 ^{1a}Do ²not judge, that you be not judged.

Matt 7:2 For ¹with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what ^ameasure you measure, it shall be measured to you.

Matt 7:3 And why do you look at the ^asplinter which is in your brother's eye, but the beam in your eye you do not ¹consider?

Matt 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the splinter from your eye, and behold, the beam is in your eye?

Matt 7:5 ^{1a}Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will ²see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.

Matt 7:6 Do not give ¹that which is ^aholy to the ^{2b}dogs, neither cast your ^cpearls before the ^dhogs, lest they trample them with their feet, and turn and tear you.

Matt 7:7 ^{1a}Ask and it shall be given to you; ^bseek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.

Matt 7:8 For every one who ¹asks receives, and he who ²seeks finds, and to him who ³knocks it shall be opened.

Matt 7:9 Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks him for a ^aloaf, will give him a stone?

Matt 7:10 Or also when he asks for a ^afish, will give him a serpent?

MattMatt 7:11 If you then being ^aevil know ¹how to give ^{2b}good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him!

Matt 7:12 Therefore all that you wish men would ^ado to you, so also you do to them; for this is the ^{1b}law and the prophets.

Matt 7:13 ¹Enter in through the ^anarrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that ²leads to ^{3b}destruction, and many are those who enter through it.

Matt 7:14 Because ^{1a}narrow is the ^bgate and constricted is the ^cway that leads to ²life, and ^dfew are those who find it.

Matt 7:15 Beware of ^afalse prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ¹ravenous ^bwolves.

Matt 7:16 By their ^afruits you will recognize them. Do *men* gather grapes from thorns, or ^bfigs from thistles?

Matt 7:17 Even so every ^agood tree produces ^bgood fruit, but the corrupt tree produces ^cbad fruit.

Matt7:18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit.

Matt 7:19 Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and ^acast into the fire.

Matt 7:20 So then, by their ^afruits you will recognize them.

Matt 7:21 Not every one who says to Me, ^aLord, Lord, will ^{1b}enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who ^cdoes the ^dwill of My Father who is in the heavens.

Matt 7:22 Many will say to Me in ¹that day, Lord, Lord, *was it* not in Your name *that* we prophesied, and in Your name ^acast out demons, and in Your name did many ^bworks of power?

Matt 7:23 And then I will declare to them: I never ^{1a}knew you. ^bDepart from Me, you workers of ^clawlessness.

Matt 7:24 ^aEvery one therefore who hears these words of Mine and ^bdoes them shall be likened to a ^cprudent man who built his house upon the ^{1d}rock.

Matt 7:25 And the ¹rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and they beat against that house; and it did ²not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

Matt 7:26 And every one who hears these words of Mine and does ^anot do them shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the ¹sand.

Matt 7:27 And the ^arain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and they dashed against that house; and it ¹fell, and its fall was great.

Matt 7:28 And when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were ^aastounded at His teaching,

Matt 7:29 For He taught them ^aas One having ^{1b}authority and not like their scribes.

B. Like the qualifications of an elder, the requirements of the kingdom of the heavens are the highest demand, and the divine life of the Father, the resurrection life, is the highest supply to meet that demand; this demand opens up our inner being, showing us that we are able to attain to such a high level and to have such a high living—Matt. 5:48.

Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be ^{1a}perfect ^bas your heavenly Father is perfect.

C. Our flesh, old man, and natural life have been crucified on the cross, and it is now Christ who lives in us; we need to cooperate with Him by having a desire and a willingness and by praying much—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:13.

Gal 2:20 I am ^{1a}crucified with Christ; and *it is* ²no longer I *who* live, but *it is* ^{3b}Christ *who* lives in me; and the ⁴life which I now live in the flesh I ^clive in ⁵faith, the ^dfaith ⁶of the ⁷Son of God, who ^{8e}loved me and ^fgave Himself up for me.

Phil 2:13 ¹For it is ²God who ^{3a}operates in you both the ⁴willing and the ⁵working for His ^{6b}good pleasure.

II. “Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work”—1 Tim. 3:1:

A. An overseer in a local church is an elder; *elder* denotes a person of maturity, and *overseer* denotes the function of an elder—Acts 20:17, 28:

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the ^aelders of the ^bchurch.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.

1. To be an elder is not a matter of ability or gift but a matter of life, a matter of what we are—Heb. 13:7.

Heb 13:7 ¹Remember the ones ^aleading you, who have ^bspoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their ^emanner of life, ^dimitate their faith.

2. Being an elder is a matter of our character, disposition, conduct, and being.

3. Aspiration to be an overseer, an elder, with a pure motive differs from ambition with an impure motive.

B. The elders must exercise their spirit to be one with the Lord in watching over the saints’ souls (v. 17); our Lord, as the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our real person (1 Pet. 2:25).

Heb 13:17 ¹Obey the ones ^aleading you and ^bsubmit to *them*, for they ^cwatch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.

1 Pet 2:25 For you were like ^asheep being led astray, but you have now ¹returned to the ^{2b}Shepherd and ^cOverseer of your ^{3d}souls.

III. “The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach”—1 Tim. 3:2:

A. To be without reproach does not mean to be perfect or blameless in the eyes of God; rather, it means to be irreproachable in the eyes of man.

B. To be the husband of one wife implies the restraining of the flesh, which is highly required of an elder; it keeps an elder in a simple and pure married life, free from the tangle of a complicated and confused marriage.

C. The word *temperate* denotes “moderate, not going to extremes, balanced, and self-controlled.”

D. To have a sober mind means to be not only keen but also discreet in the understanding of matters; to be of a sober mind means to think clearly and to have a pure and clear discernment—cf. Eph. 4:23:

Eph 4:23 And *that* you be ^{1a}renewed in the ^{2b}spirit of your mind

1. In order to receive light from the Word of God, our mind must be pure, clean, and straight, without any peculiar thinking.

2. In order to be an overseer in a local church, a brother needs such a mind so that he can accurately understand the situation of the church and of the individual saints.

3. The overseers’ thinking must be practical, based in reality, pure, clean, and straight, because they are responsible for keeping strange, polluted, and damaging things out of the church—Acts 20:28.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.

- E. To be orderly is to be decorous, to have behavior that always fits the situation:
1. This means that the leading ones work together with God by a life (not by any gift) that is all-sufficient and all-mature.
 2. Such a life is able to fit all situations, that is, able to endure any kind of treatment, to accept any kind of environment, to work in any kind of condition, and to take any kind of opportunity, for the carrying out of the leading ones' ministry, the ministry of reconciliation—2 Cor. 5:18—6:1.

2 Cor 5:18 But ¹all things are out from God, who has ^areconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ^bministry of reconciliation;

2 Cor 5:19 Namely, that God ^ain Christ was reconciling the ^bworld to Himself, ^cnot accounting their offenses to them, and has put in us the ¹word of reconciliation.

2 Cor 5:20 On behalf of Christ then we are ^{1a}ambassadors, as God ^bentreats *you* through us; we beseech *you* on behalf of Christ, Be ²reconciled to God.

2 Cor 5:21 Him who did ¹not know ^{2a}sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the ^{3b}righteousness of God ⁴in Him.

2 Cor 6:1 ¹And working ²together with *Him*, we also ^{3a}entreat you not to receive the ^{4b}grace of God in vain;
- F. To be hospitable requires love, care for people, and endurance:
1. The elders must realize that most Christians are weak—weak in their soul and even weaker in their spirit; therefore, the elders need to help the saints find rest by listening to their stories.
 2. Just as an on-call physician must be available to provide medical care at any time, an elder must always be available to help the saints.
 3. Being hospitable is not a matter of ability but of willingness to give and even be troubled, bothered, and exhausted in order to take care of others—cf. Psa. 51:12.

Psa 51:12 Restore to me the gladness of Your salvation, And sustain me with a willing spirit.
 4. In a local church, besides those who are disorderly and need admonishing, those who are little-souled and need consoling, and those who are weak and need sustaining, all the members may be a problem in some way and need us to be long-suffering toward them—1 Thes. 5:14.

1 Thes 5:14 And we ^aexhort you, brothers, Admonish the ^{1b}disorderly, console the ^{2c}fainthearted, sustain the ^{3d}weak, be ^{4e}long-suffering toward all.
- G. An elder must be apt to teach; the word *apt* means “tending, inclined, likely”:
1. Teaching here is similar to parents' teaching of their children.
 2. An elder must be apt to render this kind of home teaching to the members of a local church.
 3. An elder's gift or ability to teach is of secondary importance; primarily, he must be concerned for the saints' learning the truth and must build up a willingness and a habit to teach the saints.

IV. “Not an excessive drinker; not a striker, but gentle; not contentious; not fond of money”—1 Tim. 3:3:

- A. It is quite difficult for people to control themselves once they have been drinking; therefore, in order to control ourselves, it is best not to drink at all.
- B. Not being a striker means that an elder has a strong restraining of his temper.
- C. Being gentle means that an elder is yielding, approachable, mild, reasonable, and considerate in dealing with others, without strictness—cf. Phil. 4:5.

Phil 4:5 ¹Let your ²forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is ^{3a}near.
- D. Not being contentious means that an elder must not be quarrelsome but peaceable.

- E. An elder must not be fond of money; money is a test to all men, and an elder must be pure in matters related to money, especially since the church fund is under the elders' management—Acts 11:30; cf. John 12:4-6; 2 Kings 5:14-27.

Acts 11:30 Which also they did, sending *it* to the ^{1a}elders through the hand of ^bBarnabas and ²Saul.

John 12:4 But ^aJudas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was about to betray Him, said,

John 12:5 Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred ¹denarii and given to the poor?

John 12:6 But he said this not because it mattered to him concerning the poor, but because he was a thief, and ^aholding the purse, carried off what was put into *it*.

2 Kings 5:14 So he went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times according to the word of the man of God. And his flesh was restored to be like the flesh of a little boy, and he was clean.

2 Kings 5:15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him and said, Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except with Israel. And now, please accept a present from your servant.

2 Kings 5:16 But he said, As Jehovah lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing. And Naaman urged him to take it, but he refused.

2 Kings 5:17 And Naaman said, Then if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth, for your servant will no more offer burnt offerings and sacrifices to other gods, but to Jehovah only.

2 Kings 5:18 In this matter may Jehovah pardon your servant: When my master goes into the house of Rimmon to bow down there and leans on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down in the house of Rimmon, may Jehovah pardon your servant in this matter.

2 Kings 5:19 And he said to him, Go in peace. And when he had gone from him a little way,

2 Kings 5:20 Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha the man of God said, Now my master has spared Naaman this Syrian by not receiving from his hand that which he brought. As Jehovah lives, I will run after him and take something from him.

2 Kings 5:21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he alighted from the chariot to meet him and said, Is all well?

2 Kings 5:22 And he said, All is well. My master has sent me, saying, Now at this moment two young men from among the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.

2 Kings 5:23 And Naaman said, Please take two talents. And he urged him and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothes, and gave them to two of his attendants; and they carried them before him.

2 Kings 5:24 And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house. And he sent the men away, and they departed.

2 Kings 5:25 And he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, Where have you come from, Gehazi? And he said, Your servant has not gone anywhere.

2 Kings 5:26 And he said to him, Did not my heart go with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive silver and to receive clothing and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male servants and female servants?

2 Kings 5:27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your seed forever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

V. **“One who manages well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (but if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the church of God?)”—1 Tim. 3:4-5:**

- A. A father's leadership in his family should not be based on his ruling with authority but should instead be based on the pattern of his daily living.
- B. God's ordained principle is that a father must live a life that is a pattern, an example, to his children; nevertheless, we must realize that the way our children turn out ultimately depends on the Lord's mercy.
- C. Therefore, we must do our duty to live a proper life as an example to our children, but we should not be discouraged or proud because of how our children turn out; Jacob and Esau were twins, but Romans 9:10-13 shows that their destiny depended on God's selection.

Rom 9:10 And not only *so*, but ^aRebecca also, having conceived by one, Isaac our father,

Rom 9:11 Though *the children* had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the ¹purpose of God according to ^aselection might remain, not of works but of Him who ^bcalls),

Rom 9:12 It was said to her, "^aThe greater shall ¹serve the less";

Rom 9:13 As it is written, "^aJacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

- D. The best and most proper way to be a parent is to live as an example to our children and pray for the Lord's mercy.
- E. If our living establishes a proper standard, we are not liable if our children behave badly; however, if we do not live as a pattern, our children's bad behavior is our responsibility.
- F. In order to be a good example, we must love the Lord and His Word, deal with sins, hate the self, and learn the lessons of the cross; this will be an example not only to our children but also to all the saints.
- G. We must reject the concept that the elders "run" the church; even the Lord Jesus took the way of setting up an example for us to follow—John 13:15; Matt. 11:29; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21.

John 13:15 For I have given you an ^aexample so that you also may do even as I have done to you.

Matt 11:29 ¹Take My ²yoke upon you and ^alearn from Me, for I am ^{3b}meek and lowly in heart, and you will find ^crest for your ⁴souls.

1 Cor 11:1 ¹Be ^aimitators ^bof ²me, as I also am of Christ.

1 Pet 2:21 For to ¹this you were ^acalled, because Christ also ^bsuffered on your behalf, leaving you a ^{2c}model so that you may follow in His steps;

VI. "Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment suffered by the devil"—1 Tim. 3:6:

- A. The Greek word rendered "blinded" literally means "beclouded with smoke"; pride here is likened to smoke that beclouds the mind, making it blind, besotted with the self-conceit of pride.
- B. Pride makes us blind, and if an elder becomes proud, he will suffer the same judgment as the devil, who was proud of his high position—Ezek. 28:13-19; Isa. 14:12-15; Jude 9.
 - Ezek 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald, with gold. The workmanship of your tambourines and your pipes was prepared with you on the day that you were created.
 - Ezek 28:14 You were the anointed cherub who covered the Ark; indeed I set you, so that you were upon the holy mountain of God; you walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.
 - Ezek 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.
 - Ezek 28:16 By the abundance of your trading they filled your midst with violence, and you sinned. So I cast you out as profane from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.
 - Ezek 28:17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness. I cast you to the ground; I presented you before kings that they may look at you.
 - Ezek 28:18 By the multitude of your iniquities in the unrighteousness of your trading you have profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I sent forth fire from your midst; it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all those who look at you.
 - Ezek 28:19 All who know you among the peoples are astonished at you. You have become a source of terror, and you will be no more forever.
 - Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, O Daystar, son of the dawn! How you have been hewn down to earth, You who made nations fall prostrate!
 - Isa 14:13 But you, you said in your heart: I will ascend to heaven; Above the stars of God I will exalt my throne. And I will sit upon the mount of assembly In the uttermost parts of the north.
 - Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.
 - Isa 14:15 But you will be brought down to Sheol, To the uttermost parts of the pit.
 - Jude 9 But ^{1a}Michael the ^barchangel, when he contended with the ^cdevil and disputed concerning the ²body of Moses, ³did not dare to bring a ^dreviling judgment against *him* but said, The Lord ^erebuke you.

- C. Those who are taking the lead in the churches must be in fear and trembling, praying that the Lord will preserve them from any kind of pride.

VII. “And he also must have a good testimony from those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”—1 Tim. 3:7:

- A. To have a good testimony is to have a walk and living that issue from living out Christ and expressing Christ and are appreciated and praised by others.
- B. An elder must be right with himself, with his family, with the church, and with those outside—the society; and, according to the context, an elder must be right in intention, in motive, in character, in attitude, in word, and in deed.
- C. Falling into the judgment suffered by the devil is due to the pride of the elder himself; falling into the snare of the devil is occasioned by the reproach of the outsiders; an elder should be alert not to be proud, on the one hand, and not to be reproachable, on the other, that he may avoid the devil’s entanglement.
- D. The elders must pray, “Lord, deliver me from any temptation, and keep me from the evil one and evil things”; Paul’s word reveals that there is a battle regarding the eldership because the devil seeks to ruin every elder.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE QUALIFICATIONS IN 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7 ACTUALLY BEING A REVELATION OF WHAT THE RESURRECTION LIFE OF THE INDWELLING CHRIST CAN DO IN US

The self-control that is required of an overseer is altogether a matter of life. As elders we must live a life that has been dealt with by the cross of Christ so that the resurrection power will enable us to exercise such self-control. We should not say that no one can meet these requirements. If no one could make it, the apostle Paul would not have written it, nor would it be included in the Bible. These qualifications are not a kind of law or commandment; instead, they show us what the Lord can do within us. This is like the constitution of the kingdom in Matthew 5—7, which not only indicates what the kingdom requires but also proves and testifies how much the resurrection life can do within us. We believe God’s living Word. Whatever the Lord says will come to pass. Hence, we need to trust in His Word, receive it, and pray. We should not be disappointed by our apparent shortcomings. Instead, we should be encouraged that because the Word includes these qualifications, the resurrection life will produce them in us.

We should not isolate 1 Timothy 3:1-7 from the rest of the Epistle, which reveals the eternal life, God’s economy, which is His dispensing, and the manifestation of God in the flesh (6:12, 19; 1:4; 3:16). Thus, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is actually a revelation of how much the resurrection life of the indwelling Christ can do in us. By ourselves we cannot meet these requirements, but the indwelling Christ can certainly meet them. However, we must be willing to cooperate with Him. Our flesh, old man, and natural life have been crucified on the cross, and it is now Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20). We need to cooperate with Him by having a desire and a willingness and by praying much. If we wait on the Lord, He will work out all these things from within us. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 47-48)

THE ELDERSHIP DEPENDING NOT MAINLY ON ABILITY OR GIFT BUT ON LIFE

We must note that in the writings of both Paul and Peter very little is said concerning the abilities of the elders. First Timothy 3:2 says that an elder must be “apt to teach,” yet the word *apt* does not indicate ability but habit. Parents may not have much ability in teaching, but they should nevertheless be apt to teach their children at home. The elders similarly must be apt to care for the saints’ learning. According to Paul’s word in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, eldership is not a matter of gift or ability but a matter of life. This does not mean that the elders can be without ability. However, throughout church history and

even in our recent past, the problems in the eldership have been not mainly matters of ability or gift but matters of life.

Within a few minutes of the start of a basketball game, it is possible to assess the players' abilities. Similarly, it is possible to know a person's spiritual abilities or gifts in a short time. To know a brother's eloquence, we only have to listen to him speak for a few minutes. However, to know a person in life takes time. In Paul's later ministry he did not appoint elders immediately after establishing a church but left this matter to his co-workers (Titus 1:5). Perhaps this was because he found that it was unsafe to appoint a brother to be an elder before the necessary time had passed to know him in life.

It takes more than a few months to truly know a person because it takes time for a person's real condition in life to be exposed. Someone may pretend to be patient, humble, and not ambitious for a few months, but it is difficult to pretend for more than a year. Within a year a person's condition in life will be exposed through his manner and conduct. It is not safe or proper to decide quickly whether a brother is an elder. We must allow a longer time to see the brother's real situation in life. According to our experience, to know someone in life requires at least a year of regular contact.

To know a person, we need not only time but also different circumstances and situations. If within a year there has not been a situation that tempts a brother's ambition, it may remain hidden until such a situation arises. Time alone does not expose people adequately. Time plus environments expose a person. For this reason, we should wait at least a year before we decide whether a brother is an elder. It is better if we can wait even longer.

Companies, schools, hospitals, and other organizations care much for the abilities of their workers, but Paul does not mention anything concerning gifts or ability among the many qualifications of the elders he lists. The problems in the eldership are not related to ability, skill, or gift but are matters of life. What we can do does not mean much; instead, we should consider what we are. Only what we are in life counts for the eldership. To be an elder is not a matter of ability or gift but a matter of life, a matter of what we are.

AN ELDER BEING AN OVERSEER

Paul does not use the word *elder* in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Instead, he uses the word *overseer*, which in Greek is *episkopos*. This word is sometimes translated "bishop." However, the word *bishop* has been misused to describe a hierarchical position. An elder is an overseer (Acts 20:17, 28). Humanly speaking, to be such an overseer requires some ability, but Paul instead emphasizes character, disposition, conduct, and being. In order to be an overseer in the church, a brother must be the right kind of person, not in what he can do but in what he is. This means that a brother must be right in life before he can be a proper overseer in the church.

According to human history and our own experiences, we know that in most situations what we can or cannot do does not mean as much as what we are or are not. The condition of people's family life is not determined by their ability as much as by their character, disposition, conduct, and being. We should not be concerned about how much we can or cannot do. We should not be proud of our ability, nor should we be disappointed in our inability. We need only to be the right person in disposition, character, conduct, and being.

THE HOLY ASPIRATION TO THE OVERSEERSHIP

In 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul writes, "Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work." To aspire does not mean to be ambitious. A man can aspire to be a good father, but this does not mean that he is ambitious. The church needs many brothers to aspire to the overseership. Not every brother with this aspiration will become an elder, but the church will have a wonderful future.

The elders need to speak to the brothers in their localities to stir up their aspiration to be elders. If an elder is afraid of others' aspiration, this may indicate that he is trying to hold on to his personal kingdom. If we do not want our own kingdom, we will stir up the aspiration in others to be elders. We will like to see many in the younger generation aspiring to be elders. Such aspiration is very good, but we condemn ambition. To have the ambition to be a great leader is devilish (cf. Isa. 14:12-15).

Paul begins 1 Timothy 3:1 by writing, "Faithful is the word." This probably indicates that the second part of the verse was a well-known saying among the churches at that time, and Paul was confirming the saying. Ambition and competition should be condemned, but we need to stir up in the saints a holy aspiration for the Lord's interests and the spreading of the church. Because we desire that the churches would spread, and every church needs elders, many young brothers should pray, "Lord, if it is Your will, I would like to be one of the elders to take care of Your testimony in a locality." This is not ambition. If circumstances never allow a brother to be an elder, he should not be dissatisfied. There should be no ambition or competition but a proper, holy aspiration. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 38-40)

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

Aspects of the Eldership Revealed in Titus and First Peter

Scripture Reading: Titus 1:2, 6-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-7

- Titus 1:2 In the ^{1a}hope of ^{2b}eternal life, which God, who ^ccannot lie, ^{3d}promised ⁴before the ^etimes of the ages
- Titus 1:6 ^aIf anyone is ^bunreprovable, the ¹husband of one wife, having believing children not accused of ^cdissoluteness or ^dunruly.
- Titus 1:7 For the ^{1a}overseer must be unreprovable as a ^bsteward of God, not ^cself-willed, ²not quick tempered, ³not an excessive drinker, ⁴not a striker, ⁵not greedy for base gain;
- Titus 1:8 But ¹hospitable, a ^alover ²of good, of a sober mind, righteous, ³holy, self-controlled;
- Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.
- 1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:
- 1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- 1 Pet 5:3 Nor as ^{1a}lording it over your ²allotments but by ³becoming ^bpatterns of the ⁴flock.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief ^aShepherd is manifested, you will receive the ^{1b}unfading ^ccrown of glory.
- 1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, ^ayounger men, be ^bsubject to ¹elders; and all of you ²gird yourselves with ^{3c}humility toward one another, because God ^{4d}resists the ^{5c}proud but ^fgives ^{6e}grace to the ^{7h}humble.
- 1 Pet 5:6 Therefore ^abe ^{1b}humbled under the mighty ^chand of God that He may ^{2d}exalt you in due time,
- 1 Pet 5:7 ^{1a} Casting ²all your ^{3b}anxiety on Him because ⁴it matters to Him concerning you.

I. Paul's Epistle to Titus, which concerns the maintaining of order in the church, says that Paul was an apostle "in the hope of eternal life"—1:2, 5:

- Titus 1:2 In the ^{1a}hope of ^{2b}eternal life, which God, who ^ccannot lie, ^{3d}promised ⁴before the ^etimes of the ages
- Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things which I have begun that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:
- A. The hope of eternal life, which is the divine life, is altogether a matter of the expression of this life not only for the coming age and eternity future but also for this age:
1. We have much to hope for in the eternal life, the life of God, because it is able to do many things that we are unable to do in ourselves.
 2. The hope of God's promise is Christ as the seed of life, the eternal life, that is sown into the believers (Mark 4:26-29); we have hope because the seed of life as our hope has been sown into us to be our daily salvation.

Mark 4:26 And He said, So is the ^{1a}kingdom of God: as if a ²man cast ^{3b}seed on the earth,
Mark 4:27 And ¹sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and ²lengthens—how, he does not know.
Mark 4:28 The ¹earth bears fruit ²by itself: first a blade, then an ear, then full grain in the ear.
Mark 4:29 But when the fruit is ripe, ^aimmediately he sends forth the ^{1b}sickle, because the harvest has come.
 3. We can meet the requirements of the elders described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 only because we have God as the eternal life within us; since the eternal life is within us, we can fulfill the highest requirements.

1 Tim 3:1 ^aFaithful is the word: If anyone ¹aspires to the ²overship, he desires a good work.
1 Tim 3:2 ^aThe ^{1b}overseer then must be ²without reproach, the ³husband of ^cone wife, ^{4d}temperate, ⁵of a ^esober mind, ⁶orderly, ^{7f}hospitable, ⁸apt to ^ateach;
1 Tim 3:3 ¹Not an ^aexcessive drinker; ²not a striker, but ^{3b}gentle; ^{4c}not contentious; ⁵not ^dfond of money;
1 Tim 3:4 One who ^{1a}manages well his own house, having *his* children in subjection with all ^{2b}gravity

1 Tim 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the ^achurch of God?);

1 Tim 3:6 Not a ¹new convert, lest being ^{2a}blinded with pride he fall into the ³judgment *suffered* by the devil.

1 Tim 3:7 And he also must have a ^{1a}good testimony from ²those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the ^{3b}snare of the ⁴devil.

Titus 1:6 ^aIf anyone is ^bunreprovable, the ¹husband of one wife, having believing children not accused of ^cdissoluteness or ^dunruly.

Titus 1:7 For the ^{1a}overseer must be unreprovable as a ^bsteward of God, not ^cself-willed, ²not quick tempered, ³not an excessive drinker, ⁴not a striker, ⁵not greedy for base gain;

Titus 1:8 But ¹hospitable, a ^alover ²of good, of a sober mind, righteous, ³holy, self-controlled;

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the *apostles*, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.

4. The high standard of the requirements in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 should not discourage us; instead, we should be hopeful in the realization that these requirements prove the capacity of the divine life in us.

1 Tim 3:1 ^aFaithful is the word: If anyone ¹aspires to the ²oversership, he desires a good work.

1 Tim 3:2 ^aThe ^{1b}overseer then must be ²without reproach, the ³husband of ^cone wife, ^{4d}temperate, ⁵of a ^esober mind, ⁶orderly, ^{7f}hospitable, ⁸apt to ^ateach;

1 Tim 3:3 ¹Not an ^aexcessive drinker; ²not a striker, but ^{3b}gentle; ^{4c}not contentious; ⁵not ^dfond of money;

1 Tim 3:4 One who ^{1a}manages well his own house, having *his* children in subjection with all ^{2b}gravity

1 Tim 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the ^achurch of God?);

1 Tim 3:6 Not a ¹new convert, lest being ^{2a}blinded with pride he fall into the ³judgment *suffered* by the devil.

1 Tim 3:7 And he also must have a ^{1a}good testimony from ²those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the ^{3b}snare of the ⁴devil.

1 Tim 3:8 ^{1a}Deacons *must* similarly *be* grave, ²not double-tongued, ³not ^baddicted to much wine, ⁴not ^cgreedy for base gain;

1 Tim 3:9 ^aHolding the ^{1b}mystery of the ^cfaith in a ^{2d}pure conscience.

1 Tim 3:10 And these also must first ^{1b}be ^aproved; then let them ²minister if they are ^{3b}unreprovable.

1 Tim 3:11 ¹Women similarly *must be* grave, ²not ^aslanderers, ^{3b}temperate, ⁴faithful in all things.

1 Tim 3:12 Deacons must be ¹husbands of ^aone wife, ^{2b}managing *their* children and their own houses well.

1 Tim 3:13 For those who have ¹ministered well obtain for themselves a ²good standing and ³much boldness in ^afaith, which is in Christ Jesus.

1 Tim 3:14 These things I write to you, hoping to come to you shortly.

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know ¹how one ought to conduct himself in the ^{2a}house of God, which is the ^bchurch of the ^{3c}living God, the ^{4d}pillar and base of the ^{5e}truth.

1 Tim 3:16 And ¹confessedly, great is the ^{2a}mystery of ^bgodliness: ³He who was ^{4c}manifested in the ^dflesh, ⁵Justified in the Spirit, ⁶Seen by angels, ⁷Preached among the nations, ⁸Believed on in the world, ⁹Taken up in glory.

Titus 1:1 Paul, a ^aslave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ ^baccording to the ^{1c}faith of God's ^{2d}chosen ones and the ^{3e}full knowledge of the truth, which is ^{4f}according to godliness,

Titus 1:2 In the ^{1a}hope of ^{2b}eternal life, which God, who ^ccannot lie, ^{3d}promised ⁴before the ^etimes of the ages

Titus 1:3 But in ^{1a}its own times ^bmanifested ²His ^cword in the ^dproclamation with which I was ^eentrusted ^faccording to the ³command of our Savior God;

Titus 1:4 To ^aTitus, genuine ^bchild ^caccording to the ¹common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

Titus 1:6 ^aIf anyone is ^bunreprovable, the ¹husband of one wife, having believing children not accused of ^cdissoluteness or ^dunruly.

Titus 1:7 For the ^{1a}overseer must be unreprovable as a ^bsteward of God, not ^cself-willed, ²not quick tempered, ³not an excessive drinker, ⁴not a striker, ⁵not greedy for base gain;

Titus 1:8 But ¹hospitable, a ^alover ²of good, of a sober mind, righteous, ³holy, self-controlled;

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.

Titus 1:10 For there are many ^aunruly men, ^bvain talkers and ^cdeceivers, especially ^{1d}those of the circumcision,

Titus 1:11 Whose mouths must be ¹stopped, who overthrow whole ^ahouseholds, teaching ^bthings ^{2c}for the sake of base gain, which they ought not to do.

Titus 1:12 One from among ¹themselves, a ^{2a}prophet of their own, said, ^bCretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle ³gluttons.

Titus 1:13 This testimony is true; for which cause ^{1a}reprove them ^{2b}severely that they may be ^{3c}healthy in the ⁴faith,

Titus 1:14 Not paying attention to Jewish ^{1a}myths and the ^{2b}commandments of men who ^{3c}turn away from the ^{4d}truth.

Titus 1:15 ¹All things are ^apure to the pure; yet to those who are ²defiled and unbelieving ^bnothing is pure, but both their ^{3c}mind and their conscience are defiled.

Titus 1:16 They ¹profess to know God, but by their works they ^adeny Him, being ^babominable and ^cdisobedient and, as to every good work, ^{2d}disapproved.

B. An “overseer must be unreprovable as a steward of God”—Titus 1:7a:

Titus 1:7 For the ^{1a}overseer must be unreprovable as a ^bsteward of God, ...

1. A steward is not only a servant but also one who dispenses—1 Pet. 4:10.

1 Pet 4:10 ^aEach one, as he has received a gift, ¹ministering it among yourselves as good ^bstewards of the ²varied ^cgrace of God.

2. Therefore, an elder should be one who dispenses, or ministers, God to others.

C. An overseer must be “righteous” and “holy”—Titus 1:8:

Titus 1:8 But ¹hospitable, a ^alover ²of good, of a sober mind, righteous, ³holy, self-controlled;

1. These words show that the requirements of an overseer are based not on his ability but on his manner of life.

2. To be righteous is mainly toward man, and to be holy is mainly toward God.

D. An overseer must be one who is “holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose”—v. 9:

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.

1. The faithful word is the full revelation of the New Testament, and the elders must hold to this revelation, which is the teaching of the apostles; the elders in a local church should hold to this faithful word so that they may fulfill their duty in teaching—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:2; 5:17.

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the ¹teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the ^abreaking of bread and the ^bprayers.

1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was ¹going into ^aMacedonia, to remain in ^bEphesus in order that you might charge ²certain ones not to teach ^{3c}different things

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to ^{1a}myths and unending ^{2b}genealogies, which produce ^cquestionings rather than God's ^{3d}economy, which is in ^{4c}faith.

1 Tim 3:2 ^aThe ^{1b}overseer then must be ²without reproach, the ³husband of ^cone wife, ^{4d}temperate, ⁵of a ^esober mind, ⁶orderly, ^{7f}hospitable, ⁸apt to ^eteach;

1 Tim 5:17 Let the ^aelders who ^btake the lead well be counted worthy of double ¹honor, ²especially those who labor in ³word and teaching.

2. The elders’ holding to the faithful word is both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to deal with the opposers; this indicates that the overseers need to have two kinds of teaching—one kind to edify, nourish, and heal the saints and the other to fight the

battle so that the mouths of the vain talkers and deceivers may be stopped—Titus 1:9-11.

Titus 1:9 ^{1a}Holding to the ^{2b}faithful word, which is according to the ³teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the ^{4c}healthy teaching and to ⁵convict ⁶those who ^doppose.

Titus 1:10 For there are many ^aunruly men, ^bvain talkers and ^cdeceivers, especially ^{1d}those of the circumcision,

Titus 1:11 Whose mouths must be ¹stopped, who overthrow whole ^ahouseholds, teaching ^bthings ^{2c}for the sake of base gain, which they ought not to do.

3. Thus, all the elders have to dedicate themselves to study the Bible and the ministry books in order to be fully educated in the crucial aspects of the truth; when we are educated in the teaching of the apostles, we will be able to safeguard and protect the local church—1 Tim. 4:6.

1 Tim 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good ^{1a}minister of Christ Jesus, ²being nourished with the words of the ^{3b}faith and of the ⁴good teaching which you ⁵have ^cclosely followed.

4. The more we study the Bible and the ministry books, the more enjoyment we receive; it is also a great enjoyment to help others in the church, especially to minister Christ to the young ones and the weak ones.
5. In God's economy to be an elder is a great blessing; thus, we should treasure the eldership.
6. The testimony of God today rests on the shoulders of the elders; they bear the Ark of the Testimony, Christ (Exo. 25:22; 26:33-34), for the Tabernacle of the Testimony, the church (38:21).

Exo 25:22 And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

Exo 26:33 And you shall hang up the veil under the clasps and bring in the Ark of the Testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall make a separation for you between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

Exo 26:34 And you shall put the expiation cover upon the Ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies.

Exo 38:21 This is the sum of the things for the tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, as they were counted according to the commandment of Moses for the service of the Levites by the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

II. First Peter speaks of the elders' shepherding and its reward—5:1-7:

1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:

1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;

1 Pet 5:3 Nor as ^{1a}lording it over your ²allotments but by ³becoming ^bpatterns of the ⁴flock.

1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief ^aShepherd is manifested, you will receive the ^{1b}unfading ^ccrown of glory.

1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, ^ayounger men, be ^bsubject to ¹elders; and all of you ²gird yourselves with ^{3c}humility toward one another, because God ^{4d}resists the ^{5e}proud but ^fgives ^{6g}grace to the ^{7h}humble.

1 Pet 5:6 Therefore ^abe ^{1b}humbled under the mighty ^chand of God that He may ^{2d}exalt you in due time,

1 Pet 5:7 ^{1a}Casting ²all your ^{3b}anxiety on Him because ⁴it matters to Him concerning you.

- A. "The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed"—v. 1:

1. To shepherd the flock of God requires suffering for the Body of Christ as Christ suffered (Col. 1:24); this will be rewarded with the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Col 1:24 I now ^arejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and ¹fill up on my part that which is lacking of the ^bafflictions of Christ in my flesh for His ^cBody, which is the church;

- 1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:
- 1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- 1 Pet 5:3 Nor as ^{1a}lording it over your ²allotments but by ³becoming ^bpatterns of the ⁴flock.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief ^aShepherd is manifested, you will receive the ^{1b}unfading ^ccrown of glory.
2. Every elder needs to be an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ; this means that the elders should be ready to sacrifice their lives as a part of their testimony—v. 1; cf. John 21:19; 2 Pet. 1:14.
- 1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:
- John 21:19 Now this He said, ^asignifying by what ^{1b}kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He said to him, ^eFollow Me.
- 2 Pet 1:14 Knowing that the ^{1a}putting off of my tabernacle is imminent, even as ²also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.
3. Every elder should be a martyr, a witness, one who sacrifices his life for Christ; nothing is more noble than living a martyr’s life and dying as a martyr for the Lord; whether a church is strong or weak depends upon the loyalty, faithfulness, and sacrifice of the elders—cf. 1 Pet. 4:13.
- 1 Pet 4:13 But inasmuch as you share in the ^asufferings of Christ, ^brejoice, so that also at the ^crevelation of His glory you may rejoice ^dexultingly.
4. The main thought here is that the eldership depends not on what we can do but on what we are and the kind of life we live; the qualifications of the elders are not matters of ability but altogether matters of their life, living, and person.
- B. “Shepherd the flock of God among you”—5:2a:
1. Peter heard the Lord say, “I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep”; the Lord laid down His soul-life so that His sheep may have His divine life—John 10:11.
- John 10:11 I am the good ^aShepherd; the good Shepherd ^blays down His ¹life for the sheep.
2. After His resurrection the Lord found Peter, restored Peter’s love for Him, and charged Peter to shepherd His sheep; then He prophesied that Peter would be martyred—21:15-19.
- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to ¹Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you ²love Me ^amore than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I ³love You. He said to him, ^{4b}Feed My ⁵lambs.
- John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, ^{1a}Shepherd My ²sheep.
- John 21:17 He said to him the ¹third time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You ^{2a}know ^ball things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, ^eFeed My sheep.
- John 21:18 Truly, truly, I say to you, When you were younger, you girded yourself and ^{1a}walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish *to go*.
- John 21:19 Now this He said, ^asignifying by what ^{1b}kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He said to him, ^eFollow Me.
3. Eventually, Peter was martyred because of his shepherding of the Lord’s flock; today the Lord is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4a), and as His fellow shepherds, we must follow His pattern to sacrifice and live His suffering life as martyrs for the flock of God.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief ^aShepherd is manifested, ...
4. Acts 20:28-29 indicates that because there are wolves, the elders must be martyrs to shepherd the Lord’s flock; when we consider 1 Peter 5 together with John 10 and 21

and Acts 20, we can see that to be an elder requires a spirit of martyrdom.

- Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.
- Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce ^awolves will come in among you, not ¹sparing the flock.
- 1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:
- 1 Pet 5:2 ^{1a}Shepherd the ^{2b}flock of God among you, ^{3c}overseeing not under compulsion but ^dwillingly, ⁴according to God; not by ^eseeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- 1 Pet 5:3 Nor as ^{1a}lording it over your ²allotments but by ³becoming ^bpatterns of the ⁴flock.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief ^aShepherd is manifested, you will receive the ^{1b}unfading ^ccrown of glory.
- 1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, ^ayounger men, be ^bsubject to ¹elders; and all of you ²gird yourselves with ^{3e}humility toward one another, because God ^{4d}resists the ^{5c}proud but ^fgives ^{6g}grace to the ^{7h}humble.
- 1 Pet 5:6 Therefore ^abe ^{1b}humbled under the mighty ^chand of God that He may ^{2d}exalt you in due time,
- 1 Pet 5:7 ^{1a}Casting ²all your ^{3b}anxiety on Him because ⁴it matters to Him concerning you.
- 1 Pet 5:8 Be ^{1a}sober; ^{2b}watch. Your ^{3c}adversary, the ^{4d}devil, as a ⁵roaring ^elion, ⁶ⁱwalks about, ⁷seeking someone to devour.
- 1 Pet 5:9 Him ^{1a}withstand, being ^bfirm in your ²faith, knowing that the same ^{3c}sufferings are being accomplished among your ⁴brotherhood in the world.
- 1 Pet 5:10 ^{1a}But the God of ²all grace, He who has ^bcalled you ³into His ^ceternal glory ^{4d}in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a ^elittle while, will ⁵Himself ^{6f}perfect, ^{7g}establish, ^{8h}strengthen, and ⁹ⁱground you.
- 1 Pet 5:11 ^aTo Him be ¹the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.
- 1 Pet 5:12 Through ^aSilvanus, the faithful brother, as I account *him*, I have written to you briefly, ^bexhorting and ^{1c}testifying fully that this is the ²true grace of God; *enter into this grace and ^dstand in it.*
- 1 Pet 5:13 The ^{1co-a}chosen in ²Babylon and ³Mark my son greet you.
- 1 Pet 5:14 Greet one another with a ^akiss of love. ^{1b}Peace to you all who are ^{2c}in *Christ*.
- John 10:1 Truly, truly, I say to you, He who does not enter through the ^{1a}door into the ²sheepfold, but climbs up from somewhere else, he is a ^{3b}thief and a robber;
- John 10:2 But he who enters through the ^adoor is the ^bshepherd of the sheep.
- John 10:3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the ¹sheep ^ahear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them ^bout.
- John 10:4 When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep ^afollow him because they know his ^bvoice.
- John 10:5 But they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.
- John 10:6 This ^aparable Jesus spoke to them, but they did not know what those things meant that He spoke to them.
- John 10:7 Jesus therefore said to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you that I am the ^adoor of the sheep.
- John 10:8 All who came before Me are ^athieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.
- John 10:9 I am the ^{1a}door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and go out and shall find ²pasture.
- John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I ^ahave come that they may have ¹life and may have *it* abundantly.
- John 10:11 I am the good ^aShepherd; the good Shepherd ^blays down His ¹life for the sheep.
- John 10:12 He who is a hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*.
- John 10:13 *He flees* because he is a hireling and it does not matter to him concerning the sheep.
- John 10:14 I am the good ^aShepherd, and ^bI know ^cMy own, and My own know Me,
- John 10:15 Even as the ^aFather knows Me and I know the Father; and I ^blay down My life for the sheep.
- John 10:16 And I have ^{1a}other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be ^{2b}one flock, one ^cShepherd.

John 10:17 For this *reason* the ^aFather loves Me, because ^bI lay down My life that I may take it again.

John 10:18 No one takes it away from Me, but I ^alay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to ^btake it again. This commandment I received from My Father.

John 10:19 ^aA division again took place among the Jews because of these words.

John 10:20 And many of them said, He ^ahas a demon and is ^binsane. Why do you listen to Him?

John 10:21 Others said, These are not the words of one *who is* demon possessed. Can a demon ^aopen the eyes of the blind?

John 10:22 At that time the ¹Feast of the Dedication occurred in Jerusalem, *and* it was winter.

John 10:23 And Jesus was walking in the temple in the ^aportico of Solomon.

John 10:24 The Jews therefore surrounded Him and said to Him, How long will You hold our soul in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us ^aplainly.

John 10:25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The ^aworks which I do ¹in My Father's name, these testify concerning Me;

John 10:26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep.

John 10:27 My sheep ^ahear My voice, and ^bI know them, and they ^cfollow Me;

John 10:28 And I give to them ^{1a}eternal life, and they shall by ^bno means perish forever, and no one shall ^csnatch them out of My hand.

John 10:29 My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all, and no one can ^asnatch *them* out of My ¹Father's hand.

John 10:30 ¹I and the Father are ^aone.

John 10:31 The Jews again ^atook up stones that they might stone Him.

John 10:32 Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these works are you stoning Me?

John 10:33 The Jews answered Him, We are not stoning You for a good work, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, are making Yourself ^aGod.

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, "I said, ^aYou are gods"?

John 10:35 If He said they *were* gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken,

John 10:36 Do you say of Him whom the Father ^ahas sanctified and ^{1b}sent into the world, You are blaspheming, because ^cI said, I am the Son of God?

John 10:37 If I do not do the ^aworks of My Father, do not believe Me;

John 10:38 But if I do *them*, even if you do not ^abelieve Me, believe the works so that you may come to know and continue to know that the ^bFather *is* in Me and I *am* in the Father.

John 10:39 Then they sought again to ^aseize Him, yet He went forth out of their hand.

John 10:40 And ¹He went away again ^aacross the Jordan, to the place where John was baptizing at first, and He remained there.

John 10:41 And many came to Him and said, John did no sign, but ^aall the things John said concerning this man were true.

John 10:42 And ^amany believed into Him there.

John 21:1 ¹After these things Jesus ^{2a}manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. And He manifested *Himself* in this way:

John 21:2 Simon Peter and ^aThomas, called ¹Didymus, and ^bNathanael from Cana of Galilee and the ^csons of Zebedee and two others of His disciples were *there* together.

John 21:3 Simon Peter said to them, I am ¹going ^afishing. They said to him, We also are coming with you. They went forth and ^bgot into the boat, and that night they caught ²nothing.

John 21:4 Now as soon as the morning broke, Jesus stood on the shore; however the disciples did ^anot know that it was Jesus.

John 21:5 Then Jesus said to them, ^aLittle children, you do not have any ^{1b}fish to eat, do you? They answered Him, ²No.

John 21:6 And He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find *some*. They cast therefore, and they were no longer able to haul it *in* because of the ¹abundance of fish.

John 21:7 Then that ^adisciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord! Therefore when Simon Peter heard that it ¹was the Lord, he put his outer garment around himself, for he was naked; and he threw himself into the sea.

John 21:8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about ¹two hundred cubits away, dragging the net of fish.

John 21:9 Then when they got out onto the land, they saw a fire of coals laid *there*, and ^{1a}fish lying on *it* and ^bbread.

John 21:10 Jesus said to them, Bring *some* of the fish that you have just now caught.

John 21:11 Simon Peter therefore went up and hauled the net to the land full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

John 21:12 Jesus said to them, ¹Come *and* have breakfast. But none of the disciples dared to inquire of Him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord.

John 21:13 Jesus came and ^atook the ¹bread and gave *it* to them, and the fish likewise.

John 21:14 This was now the ^athird time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples after He had been ^braised from the dead.

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to ¹Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you ²love Me ^amore than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I ³love You. He said to him, ^{4b}Feed My ⁵lambs.

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, ^{1a}Shepherd My ²sheep.

John 21:17 He said to him the ¹third time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You ^{2a}know ^ball things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, ^cFeed My sheep.

John 21:18 Truly, truly, I say to you, When you were younger, you girded yourself and ^{1a}walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish *to go*.

John 21:19 Now this He said, ^asignifying by what ^{1b}kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He said to him, ^cFollow Me.

John 21:20 Peter, turning around, saw the ^adisciple whom Jesus loved following, who also ^breclined on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is the one betraying You?

John 21:21 Peter therefore, seeing him, said to Jesus, Lord, and what about this man?

John 21:22 Jesus said to him, If I want him to ^aremain until I ^{1b}come, what *is that* to you? You ^cfollow Me.

John 21:23 This word therefore went out among the brothers, that that disciple would not die, yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, If I want him to remain until I ¹come, what *is that* to you?

John 21:24 This is the disciple who ^atestifies concerning these things, and the one who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

John 21:25 And there are also ^{1a}many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself could contain the books written.

Acts 20:1 And after the uproar had ceased, Paul, having sent for the disciples and having exhorted *them*, took leave *of them* and went off to go into ^{1a}Macedonia.

Acts 20:2 And when he had passed through those parts and had exhorted them with many words, he came into Greece,

Acts 20:3 And spent ¹three months *there*. And when a ^aplot was made against him by the ^bJews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he ²resolved to return through Macedonia.

Acts 20:4 And Sopater of Berea, *the son* of Pyrrhus, accompanied him, as well as ^aAristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians and ¹Gaius of ^bDerbe and ^cTimothy and the Asians, ^dTychicus and ^eTrophimus.

Acts 20:5 These had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.

Acts 20:6 And we sailed away from ^aPhilippi after the days of ^bUnleavened Bread and in five days came to them in ^cTroas, where we spent seven days.

Acts 20:7 And on the ^{1a}first day of the week, when ²we gathered together to ^bbreak bread, Paul conversed with them since he was to go forth on the next day; and he extended his message until midnight.

Acts 20:8 And there were a considerable number of lamps in the ^aupper room where we were gathered together.

Acts 20:9 And a certain young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window and began to sink into deep sleep while Paul conversed longer; *and* when he had been overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

Acts 20:10 But Paul went down and fell ^aupon him, and embracing *him*, he said, Do not make a commotion, for his soul is in him.

Acts 20:11 And when he had gone up and ^abroken the bread and ¹eaten and had spoken for a considerable time, until daybreak, he therefore went forth.

Acts 20:12 And they brought the boy alive and were comforted, *and that* not moderately.

Acts 20:13 But we, going ahead onto the ship, set sail for Assos, from there intending to pick up Paul, for so he had arranged *it*, himself intending to go by foot.

Acts 20:14 And when he met us in Assos, we picked him up and came to Mitylene.

Acts 20:15 And sailing away from there, on the following day we arrived opposite Chios; and on the next day we put in at Samos. And on the day following we came to Miletus,

Acts 20:16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying *so that* if possible he might be in ^aJerusalem on the ¹day of ^bPentecost.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the ^aelders of the ^bchurch.

Acts 20:18 And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in ^aAsia, ^bhow I was with you all the time,

Acts 20:19 ^aServing the Lord as a slave with all ^bhumility and ^ctears and ^dtrials which came upon me by the ^eplots of the Jews;

Acts 20:20 How I did not ^awithhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring *them* to you and by *not* teaching you publicly and from ^bhouse to house,

Acts 20:21 Solemnly ^atestifying both to Jews and to ^bGreeks ^crepentance unto God and ^dfaith ¹in our Lord ²Jesus.

Acts 20:22 And now, behold, I am going ¹bound in the ²spirit to ^aJerusalem, not knowing what will meet me ³there,

Acts 20:23 ¹Except that the Holy ^aSpirit solemnly testifies to me in city after city, saying that ^bbonds and ^cafflictions await me.

Acts 20:24 But I ¹consider my ^{2a}life of no account *as if* precious to myself, in order that I may finish my ^bcourse and the ^cministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly ^dtestify of the ^egospel of the ^fgrace of God.

Acts 20:25 And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the ^{1a}kingdom, will see my ^bface ²no more.

Acts 20:26 Therefore I testify to you ¹on ^athis day that ²I am clean from the ^bblood of all men,

Acts 20:27 For I did not ^ashrink from declaring to you all the ^bcounsel of God.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.

Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce ^awolves will come in among you, not ¹sparing the flock.

Acts 20:30 And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to ^{1a}draw away the disciples after them.

Acts 20:31 Therefore ^awatch, remembering that for ^bthree years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with ^ctears.

Acts 20:32 And now I ^acommit you to ¹God and to the word of His ^{2b}grace, which is able to ^ebuild *you* up and to give *you* the ^{3d}inheritance among all those who have been ^{4c}sanctified.

Acts 20:33 I have ^acoveted no one's silver or gold or clothing.

Acts 20:34 You yourselves know that these ^{1a}hands have ministered to my needs and to those who are with me.

Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that ^atoiling in this way we ought to support ¹the ^bweak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ²It is more blessed to ^cgive than to receive.

Acts 20:36 And when he had said these things, he ^aknelt down with them all and prayed.

Acts 20:37 And there was considerable weeping by all; and ^afalling on Paul's neck, they kissed him affectionately,

Acts 20:38 Especially pained over the word which he had spoken, that they would no longer behold his ^aface. And they ^bescorted him to the ship.

C. “Overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly”—1 Pet. 5:2b:

1. To oversee the church is not to rule it but to safeguard, preserve, and protect it as a shepherd oversees a flock; it means that we take the oversight, looking diligently to be aware of the situation.

2. *Not under compulsion but willingly* means not by constraint, pressure, or force; this is like a mother's care for her child—1 Thes. 2:7.
1 Thes 2:7 But we were ^agentle in your midst, as a ^{1b}nursing mother would ^{2c}cherish her own ^dchildren.
 3. To shepherd the flock “according to God” means that we shepherd it according to God's nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to man's preference, interest, and purpose.
 4. We must overcome the temptation to seek gain through base means; we must earnestly love the saints and be willing to give our life for them without any thought of material gain—cf. 1 Tim. 5:17; 6:5.
1 Tim 5:17 Let the ^aelders who ^btake the lead well be counted worthy of double ¹honor, ²especially those who labor in ³word and teaching.
1 Tim 6:5 ¹Perpetual wranglings of men ^acorrupted in mind and ²deprived of the ³truth, ⁴supposing ^bgodliness to be a *means of* ^egain.
- D. “Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock”—1 Pet. 5:3:
1. The elders should not lord it over the saints, because the church is not their possession; the church, which includes the elders, is God's possession.
 2. Among the believers, besides Christ there should be no other lord; all should be servants, even slaves—Matt. 20:25-27; 23:10-11.
Matt 20:25 ^aBut Jesus called them to *Him* and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.
Matt 20:26 It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become ^agreat among you shall be your ¹servant,
Matt 20:27 And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your ^{1a}slave;
Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.
Matt 23:11 And the ^agreatest among you shall be your servant.
 3. The elders' being patterns indicates that they are on the same level as the other saints; to be a pattern is to take the lead to serve and care for the church, that the believers may follow.
- E. “When the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory”—1 Pet. 5:4:
1. The crown given by the Lord to the faithful elders will be a reward for their loyal service; the glory of this crown will never fade.
 2. This crown will be a portion of the glory for the overcomers' enjoyment of the manifestation of the kingdom of God and Christ—2 Pet. 1:11.
2 Pet 1:11 For in this way the ^aentrance into the ¹eternal ^bkingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly *and* ^cbountifully ²supplied to you.
- F. “In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble”—1 Pet. 5:5:
1. The phrase *in like manner* indicates that the elders are on the same level as the younger brothers; also, the phrase *all of you* places us all on the same level.
 2. The word *gird* is derived from a noun meaning “a slave's apron”; such an apron girded up the slave's loose garments in the service; it is used here as a figure of speech, signifying the putting on of humility as a virtue in service—cf. Luke 22:27.
Luke 22:27 For who is greater, the one who reclines *at table* or the one who ^aserves? Is it not the one who reclines *at table*? But I am in your midst as the one who serves.
 3. The pride of the elders frustrates God's grace from coming to the church, but the humility of the elders keeps a living flow of grace coming into the church.
- G. “Be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time”—1 Pet. 5:6:
1. To be submissive to God's mighty hand, to be willing to be made lowly, is to take the God-honoring way that gives Him the ground to exalt us in His time.

2. To be willing to be made low by God’s humbling hand in His discipline is a prerequisite to being made high by God’s exalting hand in His glorification.
- H. “Casting all your anxiety on Him because it matters to Him concerning you”—v. 7:
1. The anxiety mentioned in this verse should come from our concern for the church’s condition and for the saints’ growth in life; as elders, we should be concerned to the uttermost for the church and the saints.
 2. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul writes, “There is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.”
 2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which *have* ¹*not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares* pressing upon me daily, the ²*anxious concern* for ³*all the churches*.
 3. At times when we are in extreme anxiety for the church, we need to learn to cast all our anxiety on the Lord because He cares for the church and the elders, and “it matters to Him concerning you”—1 Pet. 5:7.
 1 Pet 5:7 ^{1a}Casting ²all your ^{3b}anxiety on Him because ⁴it matters to Him concerning you.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PETER’S EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS

Prayer: Lord, show us Your way in the eldership. We ask You to cleanse us with Your precious blood. Because we are often polluted by our old man, our fallen nature, and our flesh, we need Your cleansing and Your forgiveness. Lord, open Your heart and open our mind so that we may have a way to get into Your Word.

“The Elders among You I Exhort, Who Am a Fellow Elder and Witness of the Sufferings of Christ, Who Am Also a Partaker of the Glory to be Revealed”

First Peter 5:1 says, “The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed.” Peter’s main thought concerning the elders is about the same as that of Paul. We should pay special attention to the main points in Peter’s charge.

First, he exhorts the elders as a fellow elder, a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed. Although Peter is directly referring to only his own status, all the elders should be witnesses of Christ, especially of His sufferings, and partakers of the glory to be revealed. This indicates that we should live a life that is absolutely one with Christ, a life that is Christ Himself. Such a life is a life of sufferings in this age and a life of glory in the future. The Greek word translated “witness” also means “martyr.” If we are martyrs, those who share in the sufferings of Christ, we will be partakers of the glory in the coming age.

The qualifications of the elders are not matters of ability but altogether matters of their life, living, and person. Being a witness who shares in the sufferings of Christ and being a partaker of the glory to be revealed are matters not of what we can do but of what we are. It is possible to be a very capable person yet not be a witness of Christ or a partaker of glory. Therefore, we should care more for what we are than for what we can do. An elder should be a martyr, sharing in the life of Christ. We should live a suffering life because Christ, who is still the suffering One today, is life to us. Such a living prepares and qualifies us to be partakers of the coming glory. It is a basic thought in the New Testament that suffering comes first and glory follows (Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 1:11). If we suffer with Christ, we will surely reign with Him. However, the main thought here is that the eldership depends not on what we can do but on what we are and the kind of life we live.

“Shepherd the Flock of God among You”

First Peter 5:2a says, “Shepherd the flock of God among you.” He also calls the Lord Jesus the Chief Shepherd (v. 4). In order to understand the concept of shepherding and martyrdom in 1 Peter 5, we must remember the words of the Lord that Peter heard in John 10 and 21. Peter heard the Lord say, “I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (10:11). The Greek word translated “life” in this verse is *psuche*, which refers to the soul-life. The Lord laid down not His divine *zoe* life but His human life. As the good Shepherd, He sacrificed His *psuche* life for His flock. After the Lord’s resurrection, He found Peter and asked him, “Do you love Me?” Peter said, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” The Lord responded, “Shepherd My sheep” (21:16). After the Lord charged Peter to be a shepherd, He prophesied that Peter would be martyred (vv. 18-19). Eventually, Peter was martyred because of his shepherding of the Lord’s flock. Because the Lord laid down His life for His sheep, He was the first martyr—He lived a life of suffering for His flock. Peter was also a martyr. The elders today must live as martyrs, sacrificing their lives for the church, the flock of God.

To be an elder requires us not only to be humble, temperate, and sober but also to be ready to suffer as a martyr for the church. As the good Shepherd, the Lord laid down His life for His sheep. Today He is the Chief Shepherd, and as His fellow shepherds, we must follow His pattern to sacrifice and live His suffering life as martyrs for the flock of God. The eldership requires not only that we give hospitality but also that we give our soul-life in martyrdom. We must give our life and our being for the church. If we have such a spirit of martyrdom, we will be a proper elder even if we cannot speak or pray eloquently. We must be willing and even aspire to give our life for the church. We should love the saints under our care to the extent that we would give our soul-life for them. If we do this, we will be partakers of the glory to be revealed. In order to be proper shepherds caring for God’s flock, we must be witnesses of the sufferings of Christ and partakers of the glory to be revealed.

In Acts 20:28-29 Paul said to the elders in Ephesus, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” In Matthew 10:16 the Lord said, “I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” Because there are wolves, the elders must be martyrs in order to shepherd the flock. The wolves in the Lord’s time and the apostles’ time were mainly the Judaizers, who were the Jewish religionists. In the same principle there are religionists today who seek as wolves to damage and destroy the flock of God. When we consider 1 Peter 5 together with John 10 and 21 and Acts 20, we can see that to be an elder requires a spirit of martyrdom. Although we may not suffer physical martyrdom, we must be willing to sacrifice our life for the church.

**“Overseeing Not under Compulsion but Willingly, according to God;
Not by Seeking Gain through Base Means but Eagerly”**

First Peter 5:2b says, “Overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly.” Here Peter uses the word *overseeing* in his word to the elders. Paul similarly uses the word *overseer* to refer to the elders (1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7). To oversee the church is not to rule it but to safeguard, preserve, and protect it as a shepherd oversees a flock. *Not under compulsion but willingly* means not by constraint, pressure, or force. This is like a mother’s care for her child.

According to 1 Timothy 5:17, in the ancient times some elders were supported financially by the churches. Thus, there was a temptation for material gain. Therefore, Peter writes, “Not by seeking gain through base means” (1 Pet. 5:2). Paul uses similar terms in 1 Timothy 6:5, which says, “Perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.” Paul knew of some who pretended to be godly in order to get money from others. This is shameful. Brother Watchman Nee purposely avoided having special contact with wealthy saints, because he was not seeking base gain. We must overcome the temptation to seek gain through base

means. We must earnestly love the saints and be willing to give our life for them without any thought of material gain.

**“Nor as Lording It over Your Allotments but
by Becoming Patterns of the Flock”**

First Peter 5:3 says, “Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.” We daily lord it over our possessions, such as our house, furniture, and cars, but elders should not lord it over the saints, because the church is not their possession. The church, which includes the elders, is the possession of God. An elder should not be the lord and should not consider the church or the saints his possession. Instead, he should be a pattern. The elders’ being patterns indicates that they are on the same level as the other saints.

**“When the Chief Shepherd is Manifested,
You Will Receive the Unfading Crown of Glory”**

Verse 4 says, “When the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” To receive the unfading crown of glory is to be a partaker of the glory to be revealed. The Lord is the Chief Shepherd, and He became a martyr for His flock. In a sense, He is still suffering. Therefore, the elders, who are His fellow shepherds, must also suffer for the flock with the view that some day they will be with Him in glory.

**“In Like Manner, Younger Men, Be Subject to Elders;
and All of You Gird Yourselves with Humility toward One Another,
Because God Resists the Proud but Gives Grace to the Humble”**

Verse 5a says, “In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another.” The phrase *in like manner* implies that the elders are on the same level as the younger brothers. According to our natural thought, the young ones should be humble toward the older ones, but the older ones do not need to be humble toward the young ones. This thought places the elders and the young ones on different levels and creates ranks with the young ones of the lower rank submitting to the elders of the higher rank. However, the phrase *all of you* in verse 5 places us all on the same level. In the church there is no rank. The word *gird* describes the way a servant puts on a serving apron. The elders’ girding themselves with humility indicates that they are serving ones. This thought is precious. The elders must reject any thought that they are higher than others. They should not rule but should serve the saints. Paul has the same basic thought when he writes, “Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment suffered by the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). These two apostles had the same concern about pride among the elders.

In the eldership there are two main temptations: base gain and pride. If a leading brother’s love for the church causes him to labor to take care of the church full time, the saints may honor him by giving him material support. However, if his intention is to gain the support, he is seeking gain through base means. We must reject this temptation. The other temptation for the elders is to think that because they are elders, they have a special rank and are higher than others. Those who think this way have fallen into the pit of pride. We must be on the alert against these temptations.

In his exhortation Peter does not rank the elders above the other saints but puts all the believers on the same level. This is important. As elders, we must not rank ourselves differently from the other saints. Instead, we must consider ourselves lower than the others because we serve the saints. The serving ones are always lower than those being served (cf. Luke 22:27). Because we elders are the serving ones, we must continually gird ourselves with humility.

First Peter 5:5b says, “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” The church needs genuinely humble elders, for they will bring in grace. I have seen churches where the grace was lacking because of the elders’ pride. The pride of the elders frustrates God’s grace from coming to the

church, but the humility of the elders keeps a living flow of grace coming into the church. Therefore, whether the elders are humble or proud makes a great difference.

**“Be Humbled under the Mighty Hand of God
That He May Exalt You in Due Time”**

Verse 6 says, “Be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time.” Verses 5 and 6 both concern humility. We need to humble ourselves because pride frustrates God’s grace from coming to us. If we are humbled, God will exalt us in due time, in the next age. Verses 1 and 4 also allude to the coming age. The present age is not the time to be exalted but the time to be humbled.

**“Casting All Your Anxiety on Him
Because It Matters to Him concerning You”**

Verse 7 says, “Casting all your anxiety on Him because it matters to Him concerning you.” Because this verse is often quoted out of context, we need to see that it continues the thought in the foregoing verses. Hence, the anxiety mentioned in this verse is the anxiety that should come from our concern for the churches. As elders, we should not be anxious for our possessions or family, but we must be concerned for the church and the saints. We should not be indifferent to the condition of the church. There should be times when we are so burdened and anxious for the church that we cannot sleep. At such times, we need to learn to cast all our anxiety for the church on the Lord because He cares for the church and the elders. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul writes, “There is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.” Paul probably had no anxiety other than his concern for the church. The elders should follow this pattern. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 69-75)

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Six

Needing to Know the Self and the Old, Natural Being

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:21-26; Luke 9:23-25; John 12:24-26; Gen. 3:1-6

- Matt 16:21 ^aFrom that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He ¹must go to ^bJerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be ^ckilled and on the third day be raised.
- Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by ¹no means happen to You!
- Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, ^{1a}Satan! ²You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are ³not setting your ^bmind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him ¹deny ²himself and take up his ^{3a}cross and ⁴follow Me.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his ^asoul-life shall ¹lose it; but whoever ²loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his ¹soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
- Luke 9:23 And He said to *them* all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his ^across ^bdaily and follow Me.
- Luke 9:24 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall ¹lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it.
- Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he ¹gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, ^aUnless the grain of wheat ¹falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears ^{2b}much fruit.
- John 12:25 ^aHe who loves his ^{1b}soul-life loses it; and he who ^chates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto ²eternal life.
- John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
- Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than every other animal of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?
- Gen 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;
- Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.
- Gen 3:4 And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die!
- Gen 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.
- Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

I. The self is the embodiment of Satan—Matt. 16:21-26; Luke 9:23-25; Gen. 3:1-6:

- Matt 16:21 ^aFrom that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He ¹must go to ^bJerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be ^ckilled and on the third day be raised.
- Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by ¹no means happen to You!
- Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, ^{1a}Satan! ²You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are ³not setting your ^bmind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him ¹deny ²himself and take up his ^{3a}cross and ⁴follow Me.
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- Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his ¹soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
- Luke 9:23 And He said to *them* all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his ^across ^bdaily and follow Me.

Luke 9:24 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall ¹lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it.

Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he ¹gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than every other animal of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

Gen 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

Gen 3:4 And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die!

Gen 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.

Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

A. The self is the soul plus the satanic mind, the mind of Satan—Matt. 16:23; Gen. 3:1.

Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, ^{1a}Satan! ²You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are ³not setting your ^bmind on the things of God, but on the things of men.

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than every other animal of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

B. Before Eve took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into her body, the thought, the mind, of Satan was injected into her soul.

C. In the process of man's fall, man failed to use his spirit to contact God, thus bypassing God and putting God aside; instead, he exercised his soul—reasoning with the serpent in his mind, desiring the tree of knowledge in the emotion, and deciding in the will to take the fruit and eat it—vv. 1-6.

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than every other animal of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

Gen 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

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Gen 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.

Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

D. By this time every part of the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will—had been poisoned by Satan.

II. The self is the soul declaring independence from God, and the self is the enemy of the Body:

A. Whenever we do something by ourselves without depending on the Lord, we are in the self; because Peter was independent of the Lord, the Lord turned to Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan!”—Matt. 16:22-23a.

Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by ¹no means happen to You!

Matt 16:23a But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, ^{1a}Satan! ...

B. We should be dependent not only on the Lord but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters; when we are independent and isolated from the brothers and sisters, we are independent and isolated from the Lord.

C. Having the Lord's presence depends on whether or not we are dependent on the Body and rightly related to the Body; if we are rightly related to the Body, we will have the Lord's presence in every place.

- D. If we are independent of the Lord, we are in the self; if we are dependent on the Lord, we are spontaneously dependent on the Body and are full of peace— cf. Col. 3:15.
 Col 3:15 And let the ^{1a}peace of Christ ²arbitrate in your hearts, to ³which ⁴also you were called in ^bone Body; and be ^{5c}thankful.
- E. The world is against the Father (1 John 2:15), the devil is against the Son (3:8), the flesh is against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17), and the self is against the Body (Matt. 16:18, 24; cf. 1 Cor. 12:24-25).
 1 John 2:15 ¹Do not love the ^{2a}world nor the things in the world. If anyone ^bloves the ^cworld, ^{3d}love for the ⁴Father is not in him;
 1 John 3:8 He who ^{1a}practices sin is of the ^{2b}devil, because the devil has sinned ³from the beginning. ⁴For this purpose the Son of God was ^cmanifested, that He might ^{5d}destroy the works of the devil.
 Gal 5:17 For the ¹flesh lusts ^aagainst the ²Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these ³oppose each other that you would not do the things that you ^bdesire.
 Matt 16:18 And I ¹also say to you that you are ^{2a}Peter, and upon ³this ^brock I will ^{4c}build My ^{5d}church, and the ^{6e}gates of ^fHades shall not prevail ^aagainst it.
 Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him ¹deny ²himself and take up his ^{3a}cross and ⁴follow Me.
 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely *members* have no need. But God has ¹blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the *member* that lacked,
 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no ^adivision in the body, but *that* the members would have the ¹same care for one another.
- F. When we are in the self, we are incorporated with Satan; in this corporation the self is the general manager, and Satan is the president.
- G. The greatest problem, the greatest frustration and opposition, to the Body is the self; the self is the independent “I,” the independent “me.”
- H. If we would be built up in the Body, the self must be condemned, denied, rejected, and renounced; day by day the self must be renounced in all things— Luke 9:23.
 Luke 9:23 And He said to *them* all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his ^across ^bdaily and follow Me.
- I. Only when the self is renounced will we have the Body and be genuine members of the Body.

III. We need to see the distinction between the old man, the “I,” the soul-life, the natural man (natural constitution, natural being), and the self:

- A. The old man refers to our very being, the created and fallen man—Rom. 6:6.
 Rom 6:6 ¹Knowing this, that our ²old man has been ^{3a}crucified with *Him* in order that the ^{4b}body of sin might be ⁵annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;
- B. “I” is the title that the old man calls himself—Gal. 2:20a.
 Gal 2:20a I am ^{1a}crucified with Christ; and *it is* ²no longer I *who* live, but *it is* ^{3b}Christ *who* lives in me; ...
- C. The soul-life is the life of the old man—John 12:25.
 John 12:25 ^aHe who loves his ^{1b}soul-life loses it; and he who ^chates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto ²eternal life.
- D. The natural man, the natural constitution, the natural being, is our natural ability, capability, strength, talent, methods, wisdom, and knowledge.
- E. The self denotes the soul-life in its opinions, likes, dislikes, and choices; opinions are a matter of the mind; likes and dislikes, or preferences, are a matter of the emotion; and choices are a matter of our will:
- When the Lord told His disciples that He would be crucified, Peter’s self was expressed in his opinion—Matt. 16:22.
 Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, *God* be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by ¹no means happen to You!

2. Immediately after Peter expressed his opinion to the Lord, the Lord said, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me”—v. 24.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him ¹deny ²himself and take up his ³cross and ⁴follow Me.

3. Eventually, Peter’s preferences and choices would be terminated, and he would be martyred to glorify God—John 21:18-19.

John 21:18 Truly, truly, I say to you, When you were younger, you girded yourself and ^{1a}walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish *to go*.

John 21:19 Now this He said, ^asignifying by what ^{1b}kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He said to him, ^cFollow Me.

IV. There is no place in the Lord’s recovery for the self and the old, natural being; in the Lord’s recovery we must crucify, reject, and deny the self with its opinions, preferences, and choices—cf. 1 Cor. 3:12:

1 Cor 3:12 ¹But if anyone builds upon the foundation ²gold, silver, precious stones, ³wood, grass, stubble,

- A. We need to realize that God’s economy is altogether a matter of the new creation; our old, natural being must be put aside—Gal. 6:15.

Gal 6:15 For neither is ^{1a}circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a ^bnew creation *is what matters*.

- B. In the church there is a place for us as regenerated persons who are being sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified, but there is no place for our natural man.
- C. The kingdom of God in this age is the church; the natural man cannot enter into the church, because we must be regenerated to enter into the church— Rom. 14:17; John 3:3, 5.

Rom 14:17 For the ^{1a}kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but ^{2b}righteousness and ^cpeace and ^djoy in the Holy Spirit.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is ^{1a}born anew, he cannot ²see the ^{3b}kingdom of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is ^aborn ¹of ²water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

- D. In order to enter into the practical Body life, which is the real practice of the church life, we need to be transformed—Rom. 12:2.

Rom 12:2 And do ¹not be ^afashioned according to ²this ^bage, but be ^{3c}transformed by the ^{4d}renewing of the ^emind that you may ^{5f}prove what the ^{6g}will of God is, that which is good and ^hwell pleasing and perfect.

- E. The will of God is the Body of Christ, and the living of the Body is in the church life—vv. 2-16.

Rom 12:2 And do ¹not be ^afashioned according to ²this ^bage, but be ^{3c}transformed by the ^{4d}renewing of the ^emind that you may ^{5f}prove what the ^{6g}will of God is, that which is good and ^hwell pleasing and perfect.

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the ^agrace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to ¹think more ^bhighly of *himself* than he ought to think, but to think so as to be ^csober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a ^dmeasure of faith.

Rom 12:4 For just as in ^aone body we have ^bmany members, and all the members do not have the ^csame ¹function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body ¹in Christ, and individually ^{2a}members one of another.

Rom 12:6 And having ^{1a}gifts that differ according to the ^bgrace given to us, whether ^{2c}prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the ^dproportion of faith;

Rom 12:7 Or ¹service, *let us be faithful* in that service; or he who ^ateaches, in that teaching;

Rom 12:8 Or he who ^aexhorts, in that exhortation; he who ^{1b}gives, in simplicity; he who ^{2c}leads, in diligence; he who ³shows ^dmercy, in cheerfulness.

Rom 12:9 ¹Let ^alove be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; ^bcling to what is good.

Rom 12:10 ^aLove one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another.

Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, *but* be ^{1a}burning in spirit, ^{2b}serving the Lord.

- Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope; ^aendure in tribulation; ^bpersevere in prayer.
 Rom 12:13 ^{1a}Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue ^bhospitality.
 Rom 12:14 ^{1a}Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
 Rom 12:15 ¹Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.
 Rom 12:16 Be of the ^asame mind toward one another, not ^bsetting your mind on the high things but going along with the ¹lowly; do not be ^cwise in yourselves.

- F. Regeneration is our entry into the church, and transformation is for our remaining and going on in the church life:
 1. Regeneration and transformation nullify our old being; they do not give it any ground.
 2. When the old being has been dealt with, we can practice the proper church life, which is the new creation.

- G. When we realize that our natural being must be put aside and we deny our self, we see much light in the Scriptures.

- H. Second Corinthians 4:16 says, “Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day”:

2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do ^anot lose heart; but though our ^{1b}outer man is ²decaying, yet our ^cinner man is being ^{3d}renewed day by day.

1. The outer man is the old being, the natural man, and includes any natural ability, strength, eloquence, and talent; the inner man is the spiritual being, the new creation—cf. Ezek. 36:26.

Ezek 36:26 I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

2. We must realize that nothing of our old, natural being should remain in the church life.

V. The Lord’s recovery is a matter of taking up the cross, denying the self, losing the soul-life, and living Christ:

- A. If we know what the Lord’s recovery is and see that in the recovery there is no place for the self, we will take up the cross.

- B. To take up the cross means to remain on the cross; we were crucified with Christ, and we need to remain on the cross—Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:13.

Gal 2:20 I am ^{1a}crucified with Christ; and *it is* ²no longer I *who* live, but *it is* ^{3b}Christ *who* lives in me; and the ⁴life which I now live in the flesh I ^clive in ⁵faith, the ^dfaith ⁶of the ⁷Son of God, who ^{8e}loved me and ^fgave Himself up for me.

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must ¹die, but if by the Spirit you ^{2a}put to death the ³practices of the body, you will live.

- C. Apparently, the Lord was crucified after the three and a half years of His ministry; actually, He was crucified from the very beginning of His ministry, when His baptism, which signifies death and burial, took place—Matt. 3:16-17.

Matt 3:16 And ¹having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the ²heavens were ^aopened to Him, and He saw the ³Spirit of God descending like a ^{4b}dove and coming ^cupon Him.

Matt 3:17 And behold, a ^avoice out of the heavens, saying, ¹This is My ^bSon, the Beloved, in whom I have found My ^cdelight.

- D. Throughout the three and a half years of His ministry, He lived a crucified life, continually denying Himself for the accomplishment of the Father’s will—John 5:30; 4:34; 6:38; 5:19.

John 5:30 ^aI can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and ^bMy judgment is just, because I do not seek My own ^cwill but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 4:34 Jesus said ^ato them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and ^bto finish His work.

John 6:38 For ^aI have come down from heaven ^bnot to do My own ^cwill but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, ^aThe Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

- E. In order to follow the Lord, we must follow His pattern by taking up His cross and denying the self; we need to remain under the killing of the cross by denying our opinions, preferences, and choices.
- F. In order to follow the Lord, we must lose our soul-life; to lose our soul-life is to not live in our old, natural being—Matt. 16:25; John 12:24-26.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his ^asoul-life shall ¹lose it; but whoever ²loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, ^aUnless the grain of wheat ¹falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears ^{2b}much fruit.
- John 12:25 ^aHe who loves his ^{1b}soul-life loses it; and he who ^ehates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto ²eternal life.
- John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
- G. We need to see that our old man, our old “I,” has been crucified already; based upon that accomplished termination, we deny the self—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20.
- Rom 6:6 ¹Knowing this, that our ²old man has been ^{3a}crucified with *Him* in order that the ^{4b}body of sin might be ⁵annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;
- Gal 2:20 I am ^{1a}crucified with Christ; and *it is* ²no longer I *who* live, but *it is* ^{3b}Christ *who* lives in me; and the ⁴life which I now live in the flesh I ^elive in ⁵faith, the ^dfaith ⁶of the ⁷Son of God, who ^{8e}loved me and ^fgave Himself up for me.
- H. Because we are regenerated and are being transformed, our natural man will be terminated not by our own doing but by our living another person, Christ— Phil. 1:19-21a.
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to ^{1a}salvation through ²your ^bpetition and *the* ³bountiful ^csupply of the ^{4d}Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to ^ashame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be ¹magnified ^bin my body, whether through life or through ^edeath.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to ^{1a}live is Christ ...
- I. We need to see that the death in Romans 6, the crucifixion of our old man (v. 6), can be realized and experienced only by the Spirit in Romans 8 (vv. 2, 4, 6, 10-11, 13).
- Rom 6:6 ¹Knowing this, that our ²old man has been ^{3a}crucified with *Him* in order that the ^{4b}body of sin might be ⁵annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;
- Rom 8:2 For the ^{1a}law of the ²Spirit of ³life has ⁴freed ⁵me in Christ Jesus from the ⁶law of sin and of death.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be ¹fulfilled in us, who do not ^{2a}walk according to the flesh but according to the ³spirit.
- Rom 8:6 For ⁴the mind set on the flesh is ²death, but ³the mind set on the spirit is ^alife and ^bpeace.
- Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.
- Rom 8:11 And if the ¹Spirit of ²the One who raised Jesus from the dead ^{3a}dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also ^{4b}give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
- Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must ¹die, but if by the Spirit you ^{2a}put to death the ³practices of the body, you will live.
- J. If we truly see the Lord’s recovery, we will realize that there is no place for whatever we are, have, or can do in our old being; this vision kills our pretense and kills our selfishness, causing us to lose interest in selfish gain and honor.
- K. The elders need to see this so that it will become a ruling, controlling, and directing vision to them; the church life is altogether of the new creation— 2 Cor. 5:17.
- 2 Cor 5:17 ¹So then if anyone is ^{2a}in Christ, *he is* a ^{3b}new creation. The ^{4c}old things have ^dpassed away; ⁵behold, ⁶they have become ^enew.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THERE BEING NO PLACE IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY FOR THE SELF OR THE OLD, NATURAL BEING

There is no place in the Lord's recovery for the self. The New Testament leaves no place for any part of our old being. The speaking of the Lord Jesus and the writings of the apostle Paul show that in God's economy nothing of our old being should remain. We need to realize that God's economy is altogether a matter of the new creation. Our old being must be put aside.

Most Christians do not see that our old being must be put aside. Many Christian teachers do not even know the meaning of the self. As a result, many denominations promote, build up, and use the old being. This situation should cause us to mourn. The Lord's recovery is different from denominational Christianity, because in the Lord's recovery there is no place for the old man except the tomb. In order to know the Lord's recovery, we must know that our old being has to be terminated. Although there is no place for our old being in the Lord's recovery, in the sense of the new creation there is a place for us in the church. There is a place for us as regenerated persons who are being sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified, but we need to see that there is no place for our natural man.

The Lord said to Nicodemus, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), and "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (v. 5). The kingdom of God in this age is the church. Therefore, these verses indicate that the natural man cannot enter into the church, because we must be regenerated to enter into the church. Some Christian teachers do not consider the church to be the kingdom of God in this age. They say that the kingdom will exist only in the coming age. However, Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." This verse does not use the future tense verb *will be* but the present tense verb *is*, showing that the kingdom of God is present today. Furthermore, the context in Romans 14 concerns the practical church life in the present age, and Romans 12 deals with the Body life. This proves that the kingdom of God in this age is the church. Since regeneration is the way to enter the kingdom of God, which is the church today, there is no place for the natural man in the church.

Romans reveals that in order to enter into the practical Body life, which is the real practice of the church life, we need to be transformed. Romans 12:2 says, "Be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." The will of God is the Body of Christ, and the living of the Body is in the church life (vv. 3-16). Therefore, we need to be transformed for our living of the practical church life. Regeneration is our entry into the church, and transformation is for our remaining and going on in the church life. In the church life all the old, natural things must be put aside. Regeneration and transformation nullify our old being; they do not give it any ground. When the old being has been dealt with, we can practice the proper church life, which is in the new creation. We need to see this in a practical way.

In order to see the Lord's recovery in life and truth, we must know that there is no place for our self or natural man. Many Christians, including theologians who study the Bible, do not see the truth revealed in God's Word, because their natural being remains untouched and veils them. Our own experience confirms this. When we are natural, we do not see the truth. In our natural being the natural concepts cover our inner eyes. When we realize that our natural being must be put aside, and we deny our self, we see much light in the Scriptures.

NEEDING TO TAKE UP THE CROSS AND DENY THE SELF

The self denotes the soul-life in its opinions, likes, dislikes, and choices. Opinions are a matter of our mind; likes and dislikes, or preferences, are a matter of our emotion; and choices are a matter of our will. When the Lord told His disciples that He would be crucified, Peter rebuked Him, saying, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" (Matt. 16:22). Peter's self

was expressed in his opinion. We need to see that the Lord's recovery has no place for our opinions, preferences, or choices. If we mean business with the Lord and have received some vision, we must condemn the self.

Immediately after Peter expressed his opinion to the Lord, the Lord said, "If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (v. 24). Contrary to the understanding of most Christians, taking up the cross does not primarily mean suffering; instead, it means killing. Crucifixion was a historical method of carrying out a death sentence. To crucify a person is not mainly to cause him to suffer but to terminate him. If we know what the Lord's recovery is, and we see that in the recovery there is no place for the self—our natural being in our opinions, preferences, and choices—we will take up the cross.

To take up the cross means to remain on the cross. We were crucified with Christ, and we need to remain on the cross. Apparently, the Lord was crucified after the three and a half years of His ministry. Actually, He was crucified from the very beginning of His ministry, when His baptism, which signifies death and burial, took place. Throughout the three and a half years of the Lord's ministry, He bore the cross, living a crucified life. He continually denied the self during His human life on earth for the accomplishment of the Father's will. The Lord bore the cross from His baptism to His crucifixion.

In order to follow the Lord, we must follow His pattern by taking up the cross and denying the self. We need to remain under the killing of the cross by denying our opinions, preferences, and choices. In John 21:18-19 the Lord told Peter, "When you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go...Follow Me." Here the Lord indicated that Peter's preferences would be terminated, and He prophesied that Peter would be martyred. History tells us that this indeed occurred.

We need to see that in the Lord's recovery we must crucify, reject, and deny the self with its opinions, preferences, and choices. This is a crucial matter. It does not work merely to advise or exhort the saints not to have opinions or to be opinionated. We need a basic dealing with our opinion, which requires a vision that causes us to see that our old man and our old "I" have been crucified already (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). Based upon that accomplished termination, we deny our self.

In the Lord's recovery there is no place for the self with its natural opinions, preferences, and choices. If these things come in, they will annul the nature of the Lord's recovery. Christianity has lost the genuine church life through centuries of promoting the self with its opinions, preferences, and choices. In order to remain in the Lord's recovery, we need the light and the vision to see what the self is and that in the recovery it has no place.

NEEDING TO LOSE THE SOUL-LIFE

The Lord said, "Whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). To lose our soul-life is to not live in our old, natural being. In our old being we may be quick or slow, proud or humble, selfish or generous. No matter what kind of person we are in our old being, we should not live that person. This is difficult because we naturally live our old person. If we have the vision, we will see that we still mostly live our old person, our old being. Because we are regenerated and are being transformed, our natural man will be terminated not by our own doing but by our living another person, Christ.

The natural concept concerning the Christian life is often a matter of ethics and morality. According to our natural concept, we may think that if a man has a bad temper, when he is saved, he should improve his behavior and no longer lose his temper. However, according to this concept, if a man is naturally timid, he does not need to change his behavior, because he already has a pleasant natural man. We need to see that transformation is altogether not a matter of ethics or morality. Whether or not we are naturally ethical or moral, we need to be transformed. Whether we are naturally slow or quick, bold or timid, pleasant or short-tempered, we need to be transformed and live Christ.

The Lord's recovery is a matter of taking up the cross, denying the self, losing the soul-life, and living Christ.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: How can we tell real transformation from natural ability in those who are serving in the church?

Answer: With genuine transformation there will be the mark of the cross. When a capable and ethical man is saved and comes into the church life, the leading brothers should recognize that his ability is natural if they see no mark of the cross. If a man who is naturally capable but not ethical is saved and comes into the church, he may become ethical but remain natural. If this is the case, there will still be no mark of the cross. In recent turmoils many forgot about the mark of the cross and were deceived by natural ability. If we know the Lord's recovery, we will know that our old being should be on the cross. Our ability to discern the mark of the cross and natural ability in others also depends on how much of the cross we have experienced ourselves. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 120-125)

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

Knowing the Lord's Recovery in Life

Scripture Reading: John 1:4; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6; Rom. 8:2, 10-11

- John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.
- John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I ^ahave come that they may have ¹life and may have *it* abundantly.
- John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the ^alife; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall ^blive;
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.
- Rom 8:2 For the ^{1a}law of the ²Spirit of ³life has ⁴freed ⁵me in Christ Jesus from the ⁶law of sin and of death.
- Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.
- Rom 8:11 And if the ¹Spirit of ²the One who raised Jesus from the dead ^{3a}dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also ^{4b}give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

I. In order to see life and to know the Lord's recovery in life, we need to be unveiled—2 Cor. 3:14-17:

- 2 Cor 3:14 But their ^{1a}thoughts were ^bhardened; for until the present day the same veil remains at the ^creading of the old covenant, ²it not being unveiled *to them* that *the veil* is being done away with in Christ.
- 2 Cor 3:15 Indeed unto this day, whenever ¹Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart;
- 2 Cor 3:16 But whenever ¹their heart turns to the Lord, the ^aveil is taken away.
- 2 Cor 3:17 ¹And the ²Lord is the ^{3a}Spirit; and where the ^{4b}Spirit of the Lord is, there is ^{5c}freedom.
- A. For centuries the human mind has been in captivity to religious and natural concepts; for this reason, we may read the Bible without seeing what it reveals—v. 15; John 5:39-40.
- 2 Cor 3:15 Indeed unto this day, whenever ¹Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart;
- John 5:39 You ¹search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me.
- John 5:40 Yet you are not willing to ¹come to Me that you may have life.
- B. Many in the local churches are still natural in their understanding of spiritual things; they remain under the veil of natural concepts—2 Cor. 3:14.
- 2 Cor 3:14 But their ^{1a}thoughts were ^bhardened; for until the present day the same veil remains at the ^creading of the old covenant, ²it not being unveiled *to them* that *the veil* is being done away with in Christ.
- C. From experience we know that there are different kinds of veils—v. 15:
- 2 Cor 3:15 Indeed unto this day, whenever ¹Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart;
1. Believers are veiled by religious concepts, and everyone is veiled by certain natural concepts or ideas—Matt. 11:25.
- Matt 11:25 ^aAt that time Jesus ¹answered and said, I ²extol You, Father, ^{3b}Lord of heaven and of earth, because You have hidden ⁴these things from the ⁵wise and intelligent and have revealed them to ⁶infants.
2. Veils are often related to the kind of people we are by our natural constitution—1 Cor. 2:14.
- 1 Cor 2:14 ¹But a ^{2a}soulish man does ^bnot receive the ^{3c}things of the Spirit of God, for they are ^dfoolishness to him and he is ⁴not able to know *them* because they are ^{5e}discerned ⁶spiritually.- 3. We may be veiled by our racial and national character; the various national characters, dispositions, habits, and customs are veils that keep us from seeing the vision concerning life—Phil. 3:3-6.

Phil 3:3 For we are the ^{1a}circumcision, the ones who ²serve by the Spirit of God and ^bboast in Christ Jesus and ³have no confidence in the ^{4c}flesh,

Phil 3:4 Though I myself have *something* to be confident of in the ³flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more:
 Phil 3:5 Circumcised the ^{1a}eighth day; of the ^{2b}race of Israel, of the ³tribe of Benjamin, a ^{4c}Hebrew *born* of Hebrews; as to the ^{5d}law, a ^{6e}Pharisee;
 Phil 3:6 As to ^{1a}zeal, ^bpersecuting the church; as to the ^crighteousness which is in the law, become ^{2d}blameless.

4. Everyone has four layers of veils: the natural makeup with its ethical element, culture, religion, and the ethics acquired through teaching and training—Rom. 7:21-23; Phil. 3:3-6.

Rom 7:21 I find then ¹the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the ²evil is present with me.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the ¹law of God according to the inner man,

Rom 7:23 But I see a different ^{1a}law in my members, ²warring against the law of my mind and making me a ³captive to the law of sin which is in my members.

Phil 3:3 For we are the ^{1a}circumcision, the ones who ²serve by the Spirit of God and ^bboast in Christ Jesus and ³have no confidence in the ^{4c}flesh,

Phil 3:4 Though I myself have *something* to be confident of in the ³flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more:

Phil 3:5 Circumcised the ^{1a}eighth day; of the ^{2b}race of Israel, of the ³tribe of Benjamin, a ^{4c}Hebrew *born* of Hebrews; as to the ^{5d}law, a ^{6e}Pharisee;

Phil 3:6 As to ^{1a}zeal, ^bpersecuting the church; as to the ^crighteousness which is in the law, become ^{2d}blameless.

- D. Instead of assuming that we do not have any veils, we need to look to the Lord and pray, “Lord, take away anything that is covering me. O Lord, remove my veils!”

II. Organized Christianity has deviated from the central line of life; the degradation in Christianity is a deviation from life—Eph. 4:18; Rev. 3:1.

Eph 4:18 Being ^{1a}darkened in their understanding, alienated from the ^{2b}life of God because of the ^{3c}ignorance which is in them, because of the ^{4d}hardness of their heart;

Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in ¹Sardis write: These things says He who has the ^{2a}seven Spirits of God and the ^bseven stars: I ^cknow your works, that you have a ³name that you are ^dliving, and yet you are ^edead.

III. We need to know the Lord’s recovery in life—John 1:4; 1 John 1:1-2:

John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.

1 John 1:1 ¹That which was ²from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ^aseen with our ^beyes, which we ³beheld and our hands ^{4c}handled, concerning the ⁵Word of ⁶life

1 John 1:2 (And the ^{1a}life was ^{2b}manifested, and we have seen and ^etestify and report to you ³the ^deternal life, which was ^{4c}with the ⁵Father and was ⁶manifested to us);

- A. Our eyes must be opened to see that the Lord’s recovery is a recovery back to life—John 1:1, 4; 14:6; 1 John 1:1-2.

John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.

John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

1 John 1:1 ¹That which was ²from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ^aseen with our ^beyes, which we ³beheld and our hands ^{4c}handled, concerning the ⁵Word of ⁶life

1 John 1:2 (And the ^{1a}life was ^{2b}manifested, and we have seen and ^ctestify and report to you ³the ^deternal life, which was ^{4c}with the ⁵Father and was ⁶manifested to us);

- B. The purpose of the Lord’s recovery is to bring us back to God Himself as our life—Eph. 4:18; Rom. 5:10; 8:2, 10-11.

Eph 4:18 Being ^{1a}darkened in their understanding, alienated from the ^{2b}life of God because of the ^{3c}ignorance which is in them, because of the ^{4d}hardness of their heart;

Rom 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were ^{1a}reconciled to God through the death of His Son, ²much more we will be ³saved ⁴in His ^{5b}life, having been reconciled,

Rom 8:2 For the ^{1a}law of the ²Spirit of ³life has ⁴freed ⁵me in Christ Jesus from the ⁶law of sin and of death.

Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.

Rom 8:11 And if the ¹Spirit of ²the One who raised Jesus from the dead ^{3a}dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also ^{4b}give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

C. The Lord's recovery is absolutely a matter of life—a recovery to bring us back to the Triune God in order to possess, experience, and enjoy Him as life— 2 Cor. 13:14.

2 Cor 13:14 The ^{1a}grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the ^blove of God and the ^cfellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

D. In order to have an adequate vision of the Lord's recovery, we need to know the recovery in the Triune God—1 John 1:1-2; 2:25; 5:11-13.

1 John 1:1 ¹That which was ²from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ^aseen with our ^beyes, which we ³beheld and our hands ^{4c}handled, concerning the ⁵Word of ⁶life

1 John 1:2 (And the ^{1a}life was ^{2b}manifested, and we have seen and ^ctestify and report to you ³the ^deternal life, which was ^{4e}with the ⁵Father and was ⁶manifested to us);

1 John 2:25 And this is the promise which ¹He Himself ²promised us, the ^{3a}eternal life.

1 John 5:11 And this is the ^atestimony, that God ¹gave to us ^beternal ^clife and this life is in His Son.

1 John 5:12 He who ¹has the Son has the ^alife; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

1 John 5:13 I have written ¹these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who ^abelieve into the name of the Son of God.

IV. To know the Lord's recovery in life is to know the Triune God as life in our experience—John 1:4, 14, 16-17; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6:

John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.

John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.

John 1:16 For ¹of His ^afullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

John 1:17 For the ¹law was given through Moses; ^agrace and reality ²came through Jesus Christ.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I ^ahave come that they may have ¹life and may have *it* abundantly.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the ^alife; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall ^blive;

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

A. Life is the Triune God, for the Father is in the Son, and the Son became the Spirit to be our life—1:14; 20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45b:

John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He ^abreathed into *them* and said to them, ^bReceive the Holy ^{1c}Spirit.

1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam *became* a ^clife-giving Spirit.

1. Life is the Triune God Himself coming into us so that we may experience Him, enjoy Him, be one with Him, and express Him—Rom. 8:2, 10-11.

Rom 8:2 For the ^{1a}law of the ²Spirit of ³life has ⁴freed ⁵me in Christ Jesus from the ⁶law of sin and of death.

Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.

Rom 8:11 And if the ¹Spirit of ²the One who raised Jesus from the dead ^{3a}dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also ^{4b}give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

2. Life is a person—the Triune God, who in Christ has passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension and has come into us as the life-giving Spirit to be our life and to mingle with us— 1 Cor. 15:3-4, 45b; 6:17.

1 Cor 15:3 For I delivered to you, first of all, that which also I ^areceived, that ¹Christ ^bdied for our ^csins according to the ^{2d}Scriptures;

- 1 Cor 15:4 And that He was ^aburied, and that He has been ^braised on the ^cthird day according to the ^dScriptures;
- 1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam *became* a ^elife-giving Spirit.
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is ^{1a}joined to the Lord is ^{2b}one spirit.
3. Life is the Triune God Himself—the God who created the universe, was incarnated, lived on the earth in humanity for thirty-three and a half years, died on the cross, passed through death and Hades, entered into resurrection, ascended to the heavens as a man, and became the life-giving Spirit to enter into us as our life—John 1:14, 29; 12:24; 14:9-10, 17-18, 20.
- John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.
- John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the ^{1a}Lamb of God, who takes away the ^bsin of the ²world!
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, ^aUnless the grain of wheat ¹falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears ^{2b}much fruit.
- John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has ^aseen Me has seen the Father; how *is it that* you say, Show us the Father?
- John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am ^ain the ^bFather and the Father is in Me? The ^{1c}words that I say to you I do not speak ^dfrom Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.
- John 14:17 *Even the ^{1a}Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because ²He abides with you and shall be ^{3b}in you.*
- John 14:18 ¹I will not leave you *as* orphans; I am ^{2a}coming to you.
- John 14:20 In that ^{1a}day you will know that I am ^bin My Father, and you ^cin Me, and I ^din you.
- B. Our standard must be God Himself, who is our life—1:1, 4; 11:25; 14:6:
- John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.
- John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.
- John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the ^alife; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall ^blive;
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.
1. If we know God in all the items from creation to our glorification, then we know what life is—1 John 1:1-2; 5:13.
- 1 John 1:1 ¹That which was ²from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ^aseen with our ^beyes, which we ³beheld and our hands ^{4c}handled, concerning the ⁵Word of ⁶life (And the ^{1a}life was ^{2b}manifested, and we have seen and ^ctestify and report to you ³the ^deternal life, which was ^{4e}with the ⁵Father and was ⁶manifested to us);
- 1 John 5:13 I have written ¹these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who ^abelieve into the name of the Son of God.
2. God ordained that His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people should live this life—the processed God, who is real, practical, available, and even one with us—John 6:57; 7:37-39; Col. 3:4.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I ^alive because of the Father, so he who ¹eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- John 7:37 Now on the ¹last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone ^athirsts, let him ^bcome to Me and ^cdrink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his ^ainnermost being shall ¹flow ^{2b}rivers of living water.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the ^{1a}Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for *the* Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been ^bglorified.
- Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

C. Regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification are the work of life within us, and this life is the processed Triune God, who became the life-giving Spirit to dwell in our spirit and to be one with us—Rom. 6:19; 8:16, 29-30; 12:2.

Rom 6:19 I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness ¹unto lawlessness, so now ^apresent your members as slaves to righteousness unto ^{2b}sanctification.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself ^awitnesses ¹with ²our ^bspirit that ³we are ^cchildren of God.

Rom 8:29 Because those whom He ¹foreknew, He also ^{2a}predestinated *to be* ³conformed to the ^bimage of His Son, that He might be the ^{4c}Firstborn among ⁵many ^dbrothers;

Rom 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also ^{1a}justified; and those whom He justified, these He also ^{2b}glorified.

Rom 12:2 And do ¹not be ^afashioned according to ²this ^bage, but be ^{3c}transformed by the ^{4d}renewing of the ^emind that you may ^{5f}prove what the ^{6g}will of God is, that which is good and ^hwell pleasing and perfect.

D. Christ is the processed Triune God, who is dwelling within us as our life and mingling Himself with us to sanctify, renew, transform, conform, and eventually glorify us—John 1:1, 14; 14:9-10, 17-18; Col. 3:4.

John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.

John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has ^aseen Me has seen the Father; how *is it that* you say, Show us the Father?

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am ^ain the ^bFather and the Father is in Me? The ^{1c}words that I say to you I do not speak ^dfrom Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

John 14:17 *Even* the ^{1a}Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know *Him*; but you know Him, because ²He abides with you and shall be ^{3b}in you.

John 14:18 ¹I will not leave you *as* orphans; I am ^{2a}coming to you.

Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

E. Life is a wonderful person who is both God and man, who passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and who is now the indwelling Spirit; this is what we mean by life, and we need to see a vision of this profound reality—2:9; 3:4; 1:9.

Col 2:9 For in Him dwells all the ^{1a}fullness of the ²Godhead ^{3b}bodily,

Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of *it*, do not cease ^apraying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of ¹His ^bwill in all ²spiritual ^cwisdom and understanding,

V. **If we see the vision of the churches as the golden lampstands—the embodiment and expression of the Triune God—we will truly know what life is—Rev. 1:12, 20; 2:1:**

Rev 1:12 And I ¹turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw ^aseven ²golden ^{3b}lampstands,

Rev 1:20 The ¹mystery of the ^aseven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the ^bseven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the ²messengers of the ^cseven churches, and the seven ^dlampstands are the seven churches.

Rev 2:1 ¹To the messenger of the church in ^{2a}Ephesus write: These things says ³He who ⁴holds the ^bseven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the ^cmidst of the ^dseven golden lampstands:

A. The churches can be golden, having God's nature, because His life is being worked into the believers through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification; apart from this process, there is no way for the church to be a golden lampstand—John 3:6; Rom. 8:11.

John 3:6 That which is ^aborn ¹of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the ²Spirit is spirit.

Rom 8:11 And if the ¹Spirit of ²the One who raised Jesus from the dead ^{3a}dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also ^{4b}give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

- B. The church is the Triune God's reproduction, not in the Godhead as a deity to be worshipped but in life, nature, and expression—Eph. 4:4-6; Rev. 1:12, 20.

Eph 4:4 ¹One ^aBody and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one ^{2b}hope of your ^ccalling;

Eph 4:5 One ^{1a}Lord, one ^{2b}faith, one ^cbaptism;

Eph 4:6 One ^{1a}God and ^bFather of ²all, who is ³over all and through all and in all.

Rev 1:12 And I ¹turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw ^aseven ²golden ^{3b}lampstands,

Rev 1:20 The ¹mystery of the ^aseven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the ^bseven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the ²messengers of the ^cseven churches, and the seven ^dlampstands are the seven churches.

- C. Life is not only something in our experiences, such as the law of life, the sense of life, and the fellowship of life, but primarily the Triune God dispensing Himself into us and making us one in Him to be the golden lampstands—2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-6, 12, 20.

2 Cor 13:14 The ^{1a}grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the ^blove of God and the ^cfellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Rev 1:4 John to the ^{1a}seven ^bchurches which are in ²Asia: ^cGrace to you and ^dpeace from ^{3c}Him ⁴who is and who was and who is coming, and from the ^{5f}seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful ^aWitness, the ^bFirstborn of the dead, and the ^cRuler of the kings of the earth. To Him who ^dloves us and has ¹released us from our sins ²by His ^eblood

Rev 1:6 And made us a ^{1a}kingdom, ^{2b}priests ^cto His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.

Rev 1:12 And I ¹turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw ^aseven ²golden ^{3b}lampstands,

Rev 1:20 The ¹mystery of the ^aseven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the ^bseven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the ²messengers of the ^cseven churches, and the seven ^dlampstands are the seven churches.

VI. The Christian life has the individual aspect and the corporate aspect; the individual aspect is for the corporate aspect—John 3:3, 5-6; 17:22-23:

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is ^{1a}born anew, he cannot ²see the ^{3b}kingdom of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is ^aborn ¹of ²water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:6 That which is ^aborn ¹of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the ²Spirit is spirit.

John 17:22 And the ^{1a}glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be ^{2b}one, even as We are ^cone;

John 17:23 I ^ain them, and You ^bin Me, that they may be perfected into ^cone, that the world may know that You have ^dsent Me and have ^{4c}loved them even as You have loved Me.

- A. Outside the church life, people can be regenerated to receive the divine life, but without the church life, they will not have the abundance of life—1:12-13; 3:3, 5-6, 15-16.

John 1:12 But as many as ^{1a}received Him, to them He gave the authority to become ²children of God, to those who believe into His name,

John 1:13 Who were begotten not ¹of ²blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is ^{1a}born anew, he cannot ²see the ^{3b}kingdom of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is ^aborn ¹of ²water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:6 That which is ^aborn ¹of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the ²Spirit is spirit.

John 3:15 That every one who believes into Him may have ¹eternal life.

John 3:16 For God so ^aloved the ¹world that He ^bgave His ^conly begotten Son, that every one who ^{2d}believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

- B. We experience life individually, but because our individual experience is for the corporate aspect, we must be in the practical church life in order to have the abundance of life—10:10.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I ^ahave come that they may have ¹life and may have *it* abundantly.

VII. We need to pray that the Lord will show us a clear vision of life so that we may know the Lord's recovery in life—Col. 1:9; Eph. 1:17:

Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of *it*, do not cease ^apraying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of ¹His ^bwill in all ²spiritual ^cwisdom and understanding,

Eph 1:17 That the ^{1a}God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ²Father of glory, may give to you a ^{3b}spirit of ^{4c}wisdom and ^drevelation in the ^efull knowledge of Him,

A. If we see the revelation in the Bible concerning life, we will know what the Lord's recovery is; we will know that the recovery is not a matter of any kind of activity, movement, or practice, because these things are not the Triune God Himself as life—Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.

Rom 8:2 For the ^{1a}law of the ²Spirit of ³life has ⁴freed ⁵me in Christ Jesus from the ⁶law of sin and of death.

Rom 8:6 For ¹the mind set on the flesh is ²death, but ³the mind set on the spirit is ^alife and ^bpeace.

Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.

Rom 8:11 And if the ¹Spirit of ²the One who raised Jesus from the dead ^{3a}dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also ^{4b}give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

B. If we see life in a practical way, we will be able to discern life and not be misled if some try to lead the church in a wrong direction—Col. 3:4.

Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

C. If we have the vision of the Lord's recovery in life, no matter what happens, we will be kept in the recovery without any change, distraction, or deviation— Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:19.

Prov 29:18a Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; ...

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly ¹vision,

Excerpts from the Ministry:

NEEDING TO KNOW THE LORD'S RECOVERY IN LIFE

Although in the local churches we have seen something concerning life, there have been periods in our history when we deviated from life. We forgot what we were doing for a time and missed the mark. Sometimes even the so-called release of the spirit has not been on the line of life—it was not the genuine release of the spirit.

Life is mysterious and difficult to define and share with others, but our eyes must be opened to see that the Lord's recovery is a recovery back to life. The degradation of Christianity is a deviation from life. Even a deviation to doctrines concerning life is still a deviation from life.

The Bible establishes the principle that the degradation of Christianity, which began from the last part of the first century, is a deviation from life. The last ministry in the Bible is John's mending ministry, which uniquely brings the believers back to life. Yet many who read the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John, and Revelation do not realize that the purpose of these writings is to bring us back to life. The deviation of Christianity from life has continued from the New Testament time down to the present.

We need to pray that the Lord would cause us to see life. Although we may have heard many messages concerning life, it is possible that we may have never seen life. As genuine believers, we have life, but if we have seen life in a practical way, we will be able to discern life and not be misled if some try to lead the church in a wrong direction. No man's speaking alone can give us a vision or cause us to see life. Our seeing of life depends entirely on the Lord, but we need to have a seeking heart. We must not be content with the situation in Christianity or with our own situation. Our standard must be God Himself, who is our life. If we know God in all the items from creation to our glorification, we know what life is.

The elders should not try to learn methods for establishing, organizing, and pasturing a local church. These kinds of subjects are taught in seminary courses. We do not need any such techniques.

Instead, we need to see a vision concerning what life is. To know the Lord's recovery in life is to know God as our life in experience. We should be able to tell others how we definitely experienced the Lord as our life.

Seeing such a vision concerning life will make us different. This is what we need. In past turmoils many saints in the local churches were deceived because their vision concerning life was inadequate. If a man does not know what real gold looks like, he can be cheated by someone selling a lesser substitute. If we have a proper and definite vision, a clear view, concerning life, no one will be able to deceive us. For this reason, we all need to pray definite prayers asking the Lord to show us a clear vision of life. Along with such prayer, we also need to study particular verses and books in the Bible. Reading certain ministry books concerning life can also help us. However, studying alone is not adequate to see life—we must have the prayer.

Many in the local churches are still quite natural in their concepts concerning the spiritual things and their understanding of the Bible. They remain under a thick veil of their natural concepts. Some are still distracted by miracles, thinking that miracles and divine healing are life. These things are not life, for their effects are temporary, but life is eternal.

We need to see that life is a person—the Triune God, who in Christ has passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension and has come into us as the life-giving Spirit to be our life and to mingle with us. Because we have received Him, we have been regenerated, are being transformed, and will be conformed to His image and glorified. The Christian life is not an exchanged life but a grafted, mingled, regenerated, transformed, conformed, and glorified life. This is beyond our human thought.

We need to see that life is a wonderful person who is both God and man, who passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and who is now the indwelling Spirit. John 7:39 says, "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." At that time the Spirit was not yet. But since the Lord's resurrection, the Spirit has been, and He is now within us and is everything to us. This is what we mean by life. We need a vision of this profound reality.

Revelation depicts the churches as golden lampstands (1:12, 20; 2:1). The church can be golden, having God's nature, because His life is being worked into the believers through their regeneration, transformation, conformation, and glorification. Apart from this process, there is no way for the church to be a golden lampstand, a shining testimony of God's nature. The churches are seen as golden lampstands in Revelation because in God's eyes, in His eternal view, the church is altogether divine. The church is divine because Christ, the divine person, has been wrought into it. The lampstand was patterned to depict the Triune God (Exo. 25:31-40). The golden substance signifies God the Father in His divine nature, the form of the lampstand signifies God the Son as the embodiment and expression of the Father, and the seven lamps signify God the Spirit as the seven Spirits of God for His expression. This implies that the church is the Triune God's reproduction not in the Godhead as a deity to be worshiped but in life, nature, and expression. Life is not only our experiences, such as the law of life, the sense of life, the fellowship of life, and the anointing, but primarily the Triune God dispensing Himself into us and making us one in Him to be the golden lampstands. We need to see a vision of the churches as the lampstands—the embodiment and expression of the Triune God. When we see this vision, we will know what life is.

The New Testament revelation concerning life is that the Triune God becomes one with His chosen and redeemed people and that they become His embodiment. This is what the Bible means by life. The Lord Himself told us that He is life (John 11:25; 14:6), and Paul in Colossians 3:4 says, "When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory." Christ is our life, and glory is His expression. When we are manifested with Him in glory, we will be exactly the same as He is in life, nature, and expression.

If we see the revelation in the Bible concerning life, we will know what the Lord's recovery is. It is not any kind of work, movement, activity, teaching, or practice but a living of the life that is the

Triune God. Once we see this, nothing will distract us, because nothing else is as valuable, precious, or high. The churches in the Lord's recovery are the lampstands in Revelation, which are the testimony of Jesus and the embodiment of the Triune God. We have to know the Lord's recovery in life. This vision will keep us; it has kept me. It was this vision that kept Brother Nee while he was imprisoned for twenty years. Perhaps no other Christian in history has been in prison for the Lord's sake for so long without changing his belief. I believe that what kept him without any change was this vision. I can testify concerning him because I was with him.

If we have the vision of the Lord's recovery in life, no matter what happens, we will be kept in the Lord's recovery without any change. No one will be able to persuade us to change, because we have the best. If a man possesses costly gold and realizes what he has, no one will be able to convince him to exchange it for something less valuable. Nothing is better or higher than what the Lord has revealed to us in His recovery. If we see this, we will never be convinced to change. I have seen the vision clearly for forty-five years, since 1933. In myself I am weak, but I cannot deny what I have seen. This is what burdens me to share with others. We need to see the Lord's recovery in life—the Triune God in Christ realized as the indwelling Spirit to be our life. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 86-90, 98-101)

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight Knowing the Lord's Recovery in Truth

Scripture Reading: John 8:32; 11:25; 14:6; 17:17; 1 John 1:1-2, 5-7

- John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.
- John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the ^alife; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall ^blive;
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.
- John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.
- 1 John 1:1 ¹That which was ²from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ^aseen with our ^beyes, which we ³beheld and our hands ^{4c}handled, concerning the ⁵Word of ⁶life
- 1 John 1:2 (And the ^{1a}life was ^{2b}manifested, and we have seen and ^ctestify and report to you ³the ^deternal life, which was ^{4e}with the ⁵Father and was ⁶manifested to us);
- 1 John 1:5 ¹And this is the ^amessage which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that ²God is ^{3b}light and in Him is no ⁴darkness at all.
- 1 John 1:6 If we say that we ¹have fellowship ²with Him and yet ³walk in the ^adarkness, we ^{4b}lie and are not ⁵practicing the ⁶truth;
- 1 John 1:7 But if we ^awalk in the light as He ¹is in the light, we ²have fellowship with one another, and the ^{3b}blood of ⁴Jesus His Son ⁵cleanses us from every ⁶sin.

I. It is crucial for us to see that the Lord's recovery is altogether a matter of life and truth; life and truth characterize the recovery—John 8:32; 14:6:

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

A. Life is the Triune God Himself in all His processes to reach man, and truth is God Himself as the reality—1:1, 14, 29; 14:9-10, 16-17; 17:17; 1 John 5:6.

John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.

John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the ^{1a}Lamb of God, who takes away the ^bsin of the ²world!

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has ^aseen Me has seen the Father; how *is it that* you say, Show us the Father?

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am ^ain the ^bFather and the Father is in Me? The ^{1c}words that I say to you I do not speak ^dfrom Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another ^{1a}Comforter, that He may be with you forever,

John 14:17 *Even* the ^{1a}Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know *Him*; *but* you know Him, because ²He abides with you and shall be ^{3b}in you.

John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.

1 John 5:6 This is ¹He who came through ^awater and ^bblood², Jesus Christ; not ³in the water only, but ³in the water and ³in the blood; and the ^cSpirit is He who ⁴testifies, because the Spirit is the ⁵reality.

B. In order to have an adequate vision of the Lord's recovery, we need to know the recovery in the Triune God and through the Bible, the content of which is the truth—John 17:3, 17; Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9.

John 17:3 And this is ¹eternal life, that they may ^aknow You, the only ^btrue God, and Him whom You have ^{2c}sent, Jesus ^dChrist.

John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.

- Eph 1:17 That the ^{1a}God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ²Father of glory, may give to you a ^{3b}spirit of ^{4c}wisdom and ^drevelation in the ^efull knowledge of Him,
- Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of *it*, do not cease ^apraying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of ¹His ^bwill in all ²spiritual ^cwisdom and understanding,

II. In New Testament usage, the word *truth* denotes Christ as the reality— John 1:14, 17; 8:32, 36; 14:6:

- John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.
- John 1:17 For the ¹law was given through Moses; ^agrace and reality ²came through Jesus Christ.
- John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.
- John 8:36 If therefore the Son ^asets you free, you shall be free indeed.
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

- A. According to the natural concept, the word *truth* means “doctrines” or “principles,” but verses such as John 1:17; 4:24; and 1 Timothy 3:15 show that truth is not a doctrine or a principle but the reality.

- John 1:17 For the ¹law was given through Moses; ^agrace and reality ²came through Jesus Christ.
- John 4:24 ¹God is ²Spirit, and those who ³worship Him must worship ^ain ⁴spirit and ⁵truthfulness.
- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know ¹how one ought to conduct himself in the ^{2a}house of God, which is the ^bchurch of the ^{3c}living God, the ^{4d}pillar and base of the ^{5e}truth.

- B. Whenever we read the New Testament, we should not understand the word *truth* according to the natural concept but realize that it refers to Christ as the reality—John 8:32, 36; 14:6.

- John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.
- John 8:36 If therefore the Son ^asets you free, you shall be free indeed.
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

III. In order to know what truth is, we need to know the Gospel of John:

- A. John is composed with the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—the Word, life, light, grace, and reality, or truth; all these factors are actually God Himself—1:1, 4-5, 14, 16-17; 14:9-10, 16-17, 26.

- John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.
- John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.
- John 1:5 And the ^alight shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
- John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.
- John 1:16 For ¹of His ^afullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
- John 1:17 For the ¹law was given through Moses; ^agrace and reality ²came through Jesus Christ.
- John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has ^aseen Me has seen the Father; how *is it that* you say, Show us the Father?
- John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am ^ain the ^bFather and the Father is in Me? The ^{1c}words that I say to you I do not speak ^dfrom Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.
- John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another ^{1a}Comforter, that He may be with you forever,
- John 14:17 *Even* the ^{1a}Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know *Him*; *but* you know Him, because ²He abides with you and shall be ^{3b}in you.
- John 14:26 But the ^{1a}Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the ²Father will send in ³My name, He will ^bteach you ^call things and remind you of all the things which I have said to you.

- B. John 8:32 and 36 use *the truth* and *the Son* interchangeably, revealing that the truth is actually a person, Christ the Son.

- John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.
- John 8:36 If therefore the Son ^asets you free, you shall be free indeed.

- C. On God's side, truth is God revealed, and on our side, truth is God realized; when God reveals Himself, that is truth, and when we realize and touch God, that is also truth—1:14, 17; 8:32.

John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.

John 1:17 For the ¹law was given through Moses; ^agrace and reality ²came through Jesus Christ.

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

IV. Truth is the shining of light, the expression of God as light—vv. 12, 32:

John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the ^{1a}light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the ^blight of life.

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

- A. Light is the source of truth, and truth is the issue of light—1 John 1:5-6.

1 John 1:5 ¹And this is the ^amessage which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that ²God is ^{3b}light and in Him is no ⁴darkness at all.

1 John 1:6 If we say that we ¹have fellowship ²with Him and yet ³walk in the ^adarkness, we ^{4b}lie and are not ⁵practicing the ⁶truth;

- B. Truth is the shining of the divine light on the facts of the Bible to “televise” a heavenly vision of those facts into our being—Psa. 119:130.

Psa 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, Imparting understanding to the simple.

- C. Truth is the Triune God shining into us; thus, knowing the Lord's recovery in truth requires that we experience God shining as the divine light—John 1:1, 4-5, 9; 8:12, 32.

John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.

John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.

John 1:5 And the ^alight shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1:9 *This* was the ^atrue light which, coming into the world, ^benlightens every man.

John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the ^{1a}light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the ^blight of life.

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

- D. Because of the degraded situation of Christianity today, there is the urgent need of truth as the shining of light to free God's people from the darkness of degradation—2 Tim. 2:15, 18, 25.

2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to ^apresent yourself ^bapproved to God, an unashamed workman, ¹cutting straight the ^csword of the ^{2d}truth.

2 Tim 2:18 Who concerning the ^{1a}truth have ^{2b}misaimed, saying that the ^cresurrection has ³already taken place, and overthrow the ^{4d}faith of some.

2 Tim 2:25 In ^ameekness correcting those who ^boppose, if perhaps God may give them ^{1c}repentance unto the ^{2d}full knowledge of the truth,

V. In order to know the Lord's recovery in truth, we need to know the Bible in the way of truth—John 17:17:

John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.

- A. When we know the Bible in truth and not only in doctrine, we have the shining of light, which causes us to have life—8:12; 1:4-5.

John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the ^{1a}light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the ^blight of life.

John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.

John 1:5 And the ^alight shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

- B. Truth—the content of the Bible—is between doctrine and light—2 Cor. 3:6; 4:6; John 8:12, 32:

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us ^asufficient as ^bministers of a ^cnew covenant, *ministers* not of the ¹letter but of the ^{2d}Spirit; for the ³letter kills, but the ^{4e}Spirit gives life.

2 Cor 4:6 ¹Because the God who said, Out of ^adarkness ^blight shall shine, is the One who shined ²in ³our ^chearts to ^{4d}illuminate the knowledge of the ^eglory of God in the ⁵face of Jesus Christ.

- John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the ^{1a}light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the ^blight of life.
- John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.
1. The truth is the reality conveyed in the doctrines—17:17:

John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.

 - a. When we realize the truth, we have the reality that is conveyed in the doctrines; such reality can be revealed to us and realized by us only through the Spirit—14:17; 15:26; 16:13.

John 14:17 Even the ^{1a}Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know *Him*; but you know Him, because ²He abides with you and shall be ^{3b}in you.

John 15:26 But when the ^aComforter comes, whom I will ^bsend to you ^{1c}from the Father, the ^dSpirit of reality, who proceeds from the Father, He will ^etestify concerning Me;

John 16:13 But when He, the ^aSpirit of ^breality, comes, He will ¹guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak ^cfrom Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you ^dthe things that are coming.
 - b. Truth is the reality conveyed in the doctrines and realized through the Spirit—17:17; 16:13.

John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.

John 16:13 But when He, the ^aSpirit of ^breality, comes, He will ¹guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak ^cfrom Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you ^dthe things that are coming.
 - c. Through the Spirit's enlightening, the doctrines become truth and the shining of the divine light in us; then we are joined to the light, and the light becomes life to us—1:4-5; 8:12, 32.

John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.

John 1:5 And the ^alight shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the ^{1a}light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the ^blight of life.

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.
 2. As we read the Bible, we first receive doctrines; when the Holy Spirit enlightens the words of the Bible, the doctrines become truth, reality—16:13:

John 16:13 But when He, the ^aSpirit of ^breality, comes, He will ¹guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak ^cfrom Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you ^dthe things that are coming.

 - a. The truth is conveyed in doctrines, yet the truth in the doctrines can be realized only by the enlightening of the Spirit—2 Cor. 4:4, 6.

2 Cor 4:4 In whom the ^{1a}god of ^bthis age has ^{2c}blinded the ^{3d}thoughts of the unbelievers that the ^{4e}illumination of the gospel of the ^fglory of Christ, who is the ^gimage of God, might not ⁵shine *on them*.

2 Cor 4:6 ¹Because the God who said, Out of ^adarkness ^blight shall shine, is the One who shined ²in ³our ^chearts to ^{4d}illuminate the knowledge of the ^eglory of God in the ⁵face of Jesus Christ.
 - b. When the Spirit enlightens us, the doctrines we know become truth, which brings light, and light brings life—John 8:12, 32; 1 John 1:5-6.

John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the ^{1a}light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the ^blight of life.

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

1 John 1:5 ¹And this is the ^amessage which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that ²God is ^{3b}light and in Him is no ⁴darkness at all.

1 John 1:6 If we say that we ¹have fellowship ²with Him and yet ³walk in the ^adarkness, we ^{4b}lie and are not ⁵practicing the ⁶truth;

- c. For this, we need to pray much in a proper way, opening our entire being to the Lord; the more we pray in this way, the more the Spirit will enlighten us to cause the doctrines to become truth—Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9.

Eph 1:17 That the ^{1a}God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ²Father of glory, may give to you a ^{3b}spirit of ^{4c}wisdom and ^drevelation in the ^efull knowledge of Him,

Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of *it*, do not cease ^apraying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of ¹His ^bwill in all ²spiritual ^cwisdom and understanding,

VI. Truth is nothing less than God Himself—John 1:1; 14:6:

John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

- A. Truth is God revealed and realized in His many aspects, as unveiled, for example, in the Gospel of John—16:13.

John 16:13 But when He, the ^aSpirit of ^breality, comes, He will ¹guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak ^cfrom Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you ^dthe things that are coming.

- B. The content of the Bible is the truth because the Bible reveals God to us; thus, our receiving of the truth is our experience of God as truth—Col. 1:6.

Col 1:6 Which has come to you, even as it is also in all the world, bearing fruit and growing, as also in you, since the day you heard and knew the ^{1a}grace of God in ^{2b}truth;

- C. The Bible is the revelation of God as reality—John 1:1; 17:17:

John 1:1 ^{1a}In the beginning was the ^{2b}Word, and the Word was ³with ^cGod, and the ⁴Word was ⁵God.

John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.

1. The Bible itself is not the reality; the Bible is God's speaking, His utterance, and God Himself is the content, the reality, of the Bible.

2. When we touch the content of any doctrine, if we do not touch God Himself, we still do not have the truth; only when we touch God do we have the truth—2 Cor. 3:6.

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us ^asufficient as ^bministers of a ^cnew covenant, *ministers* not of the ¹letter but of the ^{2d}Spirit; for the ³letter kills, but the ^{4e}Spirit gives life.

3. Whether a teacher ministers truth to us or merely doctrine depends on whether his teaching ministers God to us; if God is ministered in his teaching, what he speaks is not merely doctrine but truth—1 John 5:13, 16.

1 John 5:13 I have written ¹these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who ^abelieve into the name of the Son of God.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not ¹unto death, he shall ^{2a}ask and he ³will give ^{4b}life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a ⁵sin unto ^cdeath; I do not say that he should ^dmake request concerning that.

- D. If we reject a particular teaching from the Bible, we are rejecting God in that aspect and thus cannot experience Him as such—John 8:37-38, 40.

John 8:37 I know that you are Abraham's seed; but you ^aseek to kill Me because My word has no place in you.

John 8:38 ^aI speak the things which I have seen with My Father; so then, you also do the things which you have heard from ^byour father.

John 8:40 But now you are ^aseeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; Abraham did not do this.

VII. The goal of knowing the truth is that we would have the riches and the abundance of life—10:10:

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I ^ahave come that they may have ¹life and may have *it* abundantly.

- A. In order to have the riches of life, we must have the truth, the shining of the Triune God; the shining of the divine light in its many aspects is the riches of life—1:4-5; 10:10; 11:25.

John 1:4 In Him was ^{1a}life, and the life was the ^{2b}light of men.

John 1:5 And the ^alight shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
 John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I ^ahave come that they may have ¹life and may have *it* abundantly.
 John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the ^alife; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall ^blive;

B. All the riches of life are in the truth; every truth is an aspect of the riches of life.

C. The rivers of living water are different aspects of life—7:37-39:

John 7:37 Now on the ¹last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone ^athirsts, let him ^bcome to Me and ^cdrink.

John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his ^ainnermost being shall ¹flow ^{2b}rivers of living water.

John 7:39 But this He said concerning the ^{1a}Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for *the* Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been ^bglorified.

1. These rivers flow out through the truth; actually, every river is a truth—14:6.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

2. The way to have the abundance of life and to flow out the riches of life is the way of the truth—8:32:

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

a. The more truth we have, the more riches of Christ as life we enjoy— Eph. 1:13; 3:8.

Eph 1:13 In whom you also, having heard the ^aword of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were ^{1b}sealed with the ^cHoly Spirit of the ²promise,

Eph 3:8 To me, ¹less than the ^aleast of all saints, was this ^bgrace given to announce to the ^cGentiles the ²unsearchable ^{3d}riches of Christ as the gospel

b. Eventually, we will have the abundance of life; the abundance of life is altogether in the truth—John 10:10; 8:32; 14:6.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I ^ahave come that they may have ¹life and may have *it* abundantly.

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

D. The increase in truth results in the growth in life; as a believer receives more truth, life becomes more abundant in his experience—Eph. 4:15-16.

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
 Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

VIII. We are truly in the Lord's recovery if we know the Triune God and the Bible, have life and truth, and are full of light—John 8:32; 11:25; 14:6:

John 8:32 And you shall know the ^{1a}truth, and the truth shall ^bset you free.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the ^alife; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall ^blive;

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the ¹way and the ^{2a}reality and the ^blife; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

A. The Lord's recovery is not an activity, movement, or ordinary Christian work but a matter of life and truth in light—1 John 1:1-2, 5-7.

1 John 1:1 ¹That which was ²from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ^aseen with our ^beyes, which we ³beheld and our hands ^{4c}handled, concerning the ⁵Word of ⁶life

1 John 1:2 (And the ^{1a}life was ^{2b}manifested, and we have seen and ^ctestify and report to you ³the ^deternal life, which was ^{4c}with the ⁵Father and was ⁶manifested to us);

1 John 1:5 ¹And this is the ^amessage which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that ²God is ^{3b}light and in Him is no ⁴darkness at all.

- 1 John 1:6 If we say that we ¹have fellowship ²with Him and yet ³walk in the ^adarkness, we ^{4b}lie and are not ⁵practicing the ⁶truth;
- 1 John 1:7 But if we ^awalk in the light as He ¹is in the light, we ²have fellowship with one another, and the ^{3b}blood of ⁴Jesus His Son ⁵cleanses us from every ⁶sin.

B. Those who are truly in the Lord's recovery know the Triune God in a living way and know the Bible in the way of light; we should pray for this to be our experience—Heb. 8:10-11; John 17:3, 17; Psa. 119:130.

- Heb 8:10 For ^athis is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My ¹laws into their ²mind, and on their hearts I will ³inscribe them; and ⁴I will be God to them, and ⁵they will be a people to Me.
- Heb 8:11 And they shall by no means each ^ateach his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, ¹Know the Lord; for all will know Me from the little one to the great one among them.
- John 17:3 And this is ¹eternal life, that they may ^aknow You, the only ^btrue God, and Him whom You have ^{2c}sent, Jesus ^dChrist.
- John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.
- Psa 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, Imparting understanding to the simple.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

NEEDING TO KNOW THE LORD'S RECOVERY IN TRUTH

The truth is the content of the Bible. In between doctrine and light is the truth. According to the human mentality, the Bible appears to be a book of many doctrines concerning matters such as God, man's fall, and salvation. Anyone who is literate can read the Bible and learn such doctrines. The truth is the reality conveyed in the doctrines. It is possible to know the doctrines but not have the truth, the reality.

When we realize the truth, we have the reality. Christ becomes living to us, and His death becomes real to us as an event that took place specifically for the forgiveness of our sins. We receive the reality that is conveyed in the doctrines. Such reality can be revealed to us and realized by us only through the Spirit. For this reason, if two speakers give more or less the same message, one may preach only doctrine, but the other ministers the reality, because the power of the Holy Spirit is in his preaching. The power of the Holy Spirit makes preached doctrines real to the listeners—it gives them the reality, the fact. Truth is the reality conveyed in the doctrines and realized through the Spirit. The Bible has many doctrines, but few readers of the Bible receive the truth. Anyone can read the term *the church* in the Bible, but few have seen or touched the reality of the church. When the Spirit operates, the church becomes no longer only a doctrine but a truth, a reality, to us.

If we have truth, we have light, for truth is the shining of light, just as grace is the expression of love. In the Gospel of John we see grace and reality, which is truth. John 1:17 says, "Grace and reality came through Jesus Christ." Grace and reality in the Gospel of John become love and light in 1 John. First John 4:8 says, "God is love." First John 1:5 says, "God is light." Love is the source of grace, and grace is the expression of love. In the same principle, light is the source of truth, and truth is the shining of light. If we know only doctrine and lack the truth, we do not have light. Once doctrine becomes truth to us, light shines within us, and we have light. To know the Lord's recovery in truth implies both doctrine and light, for the doctrines in the Bible convey truth, and truth is the shining of God as the divine light.

DOCTRINE BECOMING TRUTH, TRUTH BECOMING LIGHT, AND LIGHT BECOMING LIFE

Truth is the shining of light, and the divine light is life (John 1:4). This brings us back to life. We may know that life is the Triune God, but we still need the truth, the shining of the Triune God in many aspects, in order to have the riches of life. The shining of the divine light in its many aspects is the riches of life.

We first must have the doctrines in order to have the truth. Thus, Christian workers and the fundamental denominations that lack life are still helpful if they preach correct doctrines, for eventually those doctrines may become the truth. Without the doctrine, the truth cannot come...Through the doctrines we see the truths. Doctrine becoming truth in us is the shining of light, and the light is life.

Concerning the proper ground of the church, we first must know the doctrine. Then, perhaps through our prayer and hunger for the truth, the Lord will enlighten us, giving us the shining of light. Through the Lord's enlightening, the doctrine of the ground of the church becomes truth, a shining within us. This shining joins us to the light, and the light becomes life. Thus, even the ground of the church is an aspect of the riches of life. To see the light, the truth, of the ground of the church makes us different in life. One who truly sees the ground of the church is different from one who remains in the church yet does not know or see anything concerning the truth of the ground of the church.

We need to know the Lord's recovery both in life and in truth, which means in the Triune God and in the Bible. For this reason, we need to study the Bible daily, because from the Bible we first receive the doctrines. Through God's enlightening, the doctrines become truth and the shining of the divine light in us. Then we are joined to the light, and the light becomes life to us. This is what we need.

All the riches of life are in the truth. Every truth is an aspect of the riches of life. In our experience it is first a doctrine; then it becomes a truth, which joins us to the light, and that particular aspect of the light becomes life to us in one of life's rich aspects. This is difficult to explain and analyze, but our experience confirms it. When we read the Bible, we first get doctrine, then the truth, then light, and finally life. This is the procedure. We cannot have life first. We first learn the doctrine by reading, then we see the truth, then the light shines, then light becomes life, and we receive the riches of life. Often during one time in the Word, we experience all four—doctrine, truth, light, and life. However, it takes a long time to realize some truths. After knowing a doctrine for several years, in one particular time of prayer with the Lord it may become real to us as truth and the shining of light, bringing us the riches of life.

We must know the Lord's recovery in life and truth. Those who are truly in the Lord's recovery know God in a living way and know the Bible in the way of light. We have to pray for this to be our experience. The Lord's recovery is not an activity, movement, or ordinary Christian work but a matter of life and truth in light. We are truly in the Lord's recovery if we know God and the Bible, have life and truth, and are full of light. Christians who are not genuinely seeking the Lord will not understand what we are doing and teaching in the Lord's recovery. They may be offended and criticize us. We cannot avoid this, but there are always a few like Nicodemus, who are sincere, hungry, and seeking after the Lord's heart. The Lord reveals Himself to such ones, and they become part of His recovery. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 90-93)

The truth is in between doctrine and light. We have also seen that the truth is the content of the Bible. When people read the Bible, they first receive doctrines. When the Holy Spirit enlightens the words of the Bible, the doctrines become reality, truth. Without the enlightening of the Spirit, we have only empty doctrines. The truth is conveyed in doctrines, yet the truth in the doctrines can be realized only by the enlightening of the Spirit. When the doctrines become the truth, it brings light, for the truth is the shining of the light. When we see the truth, light shines within us. The purpose of our having truth is so that life would be imparted to us. When the Spirit enlightens us, the doctrines we know become truth, which brings light, and light brings life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE BIBLE AND PROPER PRAYER

We need to see why the truth is the necessary step to our receiving God as light. In other words, we need to see why, in addition to God, we need the Bible. Without God, the Bible is not light or life to us. The Bible itself is not the reality. The Bible is God's speaking, His utterance, and God Himself is

the content, the reality, of the Bible. However, without the Bible man could not know God. Without God's word recorded in the Bible, we could not know God as light or life.

In order to know the Lord's recovery in truth, we need to know the Bible not only in the way of doctrine but also in the way of truth. When we know the Bible in truth, we have the shining of light, which causes us to have life. Therefore, how much life we have depends on how much truth we know. An ignorant believer, even if he loves the Lord to the uttermost, cannot have the abundance of life, because he is lacking in truth.

We must spend time in the Word, which will first be doctrine to us. Then the doctrine must become truth to us by the enlightening of the Spirit. There is no need to pray to get doctrine; whoever reads the Bible can get doctrine. However, in order for doctrine to become truth to us, we need to pray much and in the proper way. For this, we need to deal with the Lord and be dealt with by Him, and we need to have a clear conscience and a purified mind, will, and emotion. Then we need to open our entire being from our spirit and pray. The more we pray in this way, the more the Spirit will enlighten us to cause doctrines to become truth. Unbelievers and believers alike can read the Bible and learn doctrines. However, in order for doctrines to become truth to us, we need to pray, be dealt with, open to the Lord, and be willing to give up our desires, choices, and preferences, which can be veils to us. There will be no shadows, veils, or coverings to frustrate the Spirit's enlightening, which causes the doctrines we know to become truth to us. The truth is the shining of light, which brings life to us. This is why we need to know the Lord's recovery in truth. (*Basic Principles concerning the Eldership*, pp. 105-107)

BEING A PROPER PERSON IN LIFE TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Nine

God's Intention, Satan's Strategy, and the Lord's Recovery

Scripture Reading: Prov. 29:18a; Eph. 3:8-10; Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18b; Eph. 4:3; 1 Pet. 2:5

- Prov 29:18a Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; ...
- Eph 3:8 To me, ¹less than the ^aleast of all saints, was this ^bgrace given to announce to the ^cGentiles the ²unsearchable ^{3d}riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the ^{1a}economy of the ^{2b}mystery is, which ³throughout the ages has been ^chidden in God, who created all things,
- Eph 3:10 In order that now to the ^{1a}rulers and the authorities in the ^bheavens the multifarious ^{2c}wisdom of God might be made known through the ^{3d}church,
- Matt 16:18 And I ¹also say to you that you are ^{2a}Peter, and upon ³this ^brock I will ^{4c}build My ^{5d}church, and the ^{6e}gates of ^fHades shall not prevail ^gagainst it.
- Col 1:18b ... He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to ¹keep the ^{2a}oneness of the Spirit in the uniting ^{3b}bond of ^cpeace:
- 1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as ¹living ^astones, are being ^{2b}built up as a ³spiritual ^{4c}house ⁵into a ⁶holy ⁷priesthood to offer up ⁸spiritual sacrifices ^dacceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

I. God's intention in His economy is to dispense Christ with all His riches into His believers chosen by God for the constitution and building up of the Body of Christ, the church, to consummate the New Jerusalem for the full expression of the processed Triune God—Eph. 3:8-10; cf. Jer. 2:13.

- Eph 3:8 To me, ¹less than the ^aleast of all saints, was this ^bgrace given to announce to the ^cGentiles the ²unsearchable ^{3d}riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the ^{1a}economy of the ^{2b}mystery is, which ³throughout the ages has been ^chidden in God, who created all things,
- Eph 3:10 In order that now to the ^{1a}rulers and the authorities in the ^bheavens the multifarious ^{2c}wisdom of God might be made known through the ^{3d}church,
- Jer 2:13 For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew out for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, Which hold no water.

II. Because the church has become degraded through the many centuries of its history, it needs to be restored according to God's original intention and standard as revealed in the Scriptures—cf. 2 Kings 22:8; Ezra 1:3-11; Neh. 2:11, 17; Rev. 18:4.

- 2 Kings 22:8 Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.
- Ezra 1:3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—He is God—who is in Jerusalem.
- Ezra 1:4 And everyone who is left, in whatever place he sojourns, let the men of his place support him with silver and with gold and with goods and with cattle, besides the freewill offering for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem.
- Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.
- Ezra 1:6 And all those around them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with cattle and with precious things, besides all that was offered willingly.
- Ezra 1:7 Also King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods;
- Ezra 1:8 And Cyrus the king of Persia had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and had them enumerated to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.
- Ezra 1:9 And this was their number: thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives,

Ezra 1:10 Thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten silver bowls of a different kind, and one thousand other vessels.
 Ezra 1:11 There were five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver in all. Sheshbazzar brought up all of them with those of the captivity who were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.
 Neh 2:11 Thus I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.
 Neh 2:17 Then I said to them, You see the bad state we are in, that Jerusalem lies in waste and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.
 Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, ^{1a}Come out of her, My people, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues;

III. The word *recovery* means the restoration or return to a normal condition after a damage or a loss has been incurred:

A. After Satan's destruction, God came in to redo the things that He had done before; this redoing is His recovery, which is to bring back whatever has been lost and destroyed by God's enemy, Satan—1 John 3:8b.

1 John 3:8b ... ⁴For this purpose the Son of God was ^smanifested, that He might ^{sd}destroy the works of the devil.

B. In Matthew 19:8 we see the principle of recovery: "from the beginning it has not been so":
 Matt 19:8 He said to them, Moses, because of your ^hhardness of heart, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the ¹beginning it has not been so.

1. Recovery means to go back to the beginning; we need to go back to the beginning, receiving the Lord's grace to go back to God's original intention, to what God ordained in the beginning.

2. The word *recovery* means that something was there originally and then was damaged or lost; thus, there is a need to bring that thing back to its original state and to its normal condition—Dan. 1:1-2; Ezra 1:3-11; 6:3-5.

Dan 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim the king of Judah Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Dan 1:2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim the king of Judah into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

Ezra 1:3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—He is God—who is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:4 And everyone who is left, in whatever place he sojourns, let the men of his place support him with silver and with gold and with goods and with cattle, besides the freewill offering for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:6 And all those around them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with cattle and with precious things, besides all that was offered willingly.

Ezra 1:7 Also King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods;

Ezra 1:8 And Cyrus the king of Persia had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and had them enumerated to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

Ezra 1:9 And this was their number: thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives,

Ezra 1:10 Thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten silver bowls of a different kind, and one thousand other vessels.

Ezra 1:11 There were five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver in all. Sheshbazzar brought up all of them with those of the captivity who were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Ezra 6:3 In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: Let the house be built, the place where they offer sacrifices; and let its foundations be raised, its height being sixty cubits, and its width sixty cubits,

Ezra 6:4 With three layers of large stones, and one layer of timber; and let the expenses be given out of the king's house.

Ezra 6:5 And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple which is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought again to the temple which is in Jerusalem, to its place; and you shall put them in the house of God.

C. The words *recovery* and *economy* refer to one thing as seen from two different viewpoints—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9:

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to ^{1a}myths and unending ^{2b}genealogies, which produce ^cquestionings rather than God's ^{3d}economy, which is in ^{4e}faith.

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the ^{1a}economy of the ^{2b}mystery is, which ³throughout the ages has been ^chidden in God, who created all things,

1 ith God, it is a matter of economy; with us, it is a matter of recovery.

2. God's economy was unveiled through the apostles, but because the believers lost the proper understanding of God's economy, there is the need for it to be recovered—vv. 3-5; Acts 2:42.

Eph 3:3 That by ^{1a}revelation the ^bmystery was ^cmade known to me, as I have ^dwritten previously in brief,

Eph 3:4 By which, in reading *it*, you can perceive my understanding in the ^{1a}mystery of Christ,

Eph 3:5 Which in other generations was ^{1a}not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been ^brevealed to His holy ^{2c}apostles and prophets in ³spirit,

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the ¹teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the ^abreaking of bread and the ^bprayers.

3. We in the Lord's recovery must have a clear vision of God's economy and then be governed, controlled, and directed by this vision, for we are here to carry out God's economy in His recovery—26:19; Prov. 29:18a.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly ¹vision,

Prov 29:18a Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; ...

IV. Satan's strategy is versus the Lord's recovery—Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-19; John 14:30; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 6:10-11:

Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, O Daystar, son of the dawn! How you have been hewn down to earth, You who made nations fall prostrate!

Isa 14:13 But you, you said in your heart: I will ascend to heaven; Above the stars of God I will exalt my throne. And I will sit upon the mount of assembly In the uttermost parts of the north.

Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

Isa 14:15 But you will be brought down to Sheol, To the uttermost parts of the pit.

Ezek 28:12 Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, O you who sealed up perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty,

Ezek 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald, with gold. The workmanship of your tambourines and your pipes was prepared with you on the day that you were created.

Ezek 28:14 You were the anointed cherub who covered the Ark; indeed I set you, so that you were upon the holy mountain of God; you walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezek 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.

Ezek 28:16 By the abundance of your trading they filled your midst with violence, and you sinned. So I cast you out as profane from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezek 28:17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness. I cast you to the ground; I presented you before kings that they may look at you.

Ezek 28:18 By the multitude of your iniquities in the unrighteousness of your trading you have profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I sent forth fire from your midst; it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all those who look at you.

- Ezek 28:19 All who know you among the peoples are astonished at you. You have become a source of terror, and you will be no more forever.
- John 14:30 I will no longer speak much with you, for the ^aruler of the world is coming, and in Me he has nothing;
- Matt 16:18 And I ¹also say to you that you are ^{2a}Peter, and upon ³this ^brock I will ^{4c}build My ^{5d}church, and the ^{6e}gates of ^fHades shall not prevail ^gagainst it.
- Eph 6:10 ¹Finally, ²be ^{3a}empowered ^{4b}in the Lord and in the ^cmight of His strength.
- Eph 6:11 ^{1a}Put on the ²whole ^barmor of God that you may be able to ^{3c}stand against the ^{4d}stratagems of the ^edevil,

- A. The first category of Satan's activity is to produce many substitutes for Christ:
1. In Colossae human philosophy was brought in as a substitute for Christ— Col. 2:8; 1:12.

Col 2:8 Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his ¹philosophy and ^aempty deceit, according to the ^{2b}tradition of men, according to the ^{3c}elements of the world, and not according to ^{4d}Christ;

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has ¹qualified you for a share of the ²allotted ^aportion of the saints in the ^{3b}light;
 2. Hebrews reveals that Satan utilized Judaism to replace Christ—8:6; 9:23; 10:5-10.

Heb 8:6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ¹ministry inasmuch as He is also the ^{2a}Mediator of a ^{3b}better ^ccovenant, which has been ⁴enacted upon ⁵better ^dpromises.

Heb 9:23 It was necessary therefore for the ^aexamples of the things in the heavens to be purified by these, but the ¹heavenly things themselves, by ^{2b}better sacrifices than these.

Heb 10:5 Therefore, coming into the world, He says, "^aSacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a ^bbody You have prepared for Me.

Heb 10:6 In ^aburnt offerings and ^bsacrifices for sin You did not delight.

Heb 10:7 Then I said, Behold, I have come (^ain the ¹roll of the book it is written concerning Me) to do Your ^{2b}will, O God."

Heb 10:8 Saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You did not desire nor delight in" (which are offered according to the law),

Heb 10:9 He then has said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the ¹first that He may establish the second,

Heb 10:10 By which ^awill we have been ^bsanctified through the ^coffering of the ^dbody of Jesus Christ ^{1e}once for all.
 3. Galatians reveals that the Judaizers were making the law a substitute for Christ—3:1-3, 24; 1:15-16a; 2:20; 4:19.

Gal 3:1 O foolish ^aGalatians, ^bwho has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly portrayed ^{1c}crucified?

Gal 3:2 This only I wish to learn from you, Did you ¹receive the ^{2a}Spirit out of the ^{3b}works of law or out of the ^chearing of ^dfaith?

Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having ¹begun by the ²Spirit, are you now being perfected by the ^aflesh?

Gal 3:24 So then the ^alaw has become our ¹child-conductor unto ^bChrist that we might be justified out of ^cfaith.

Gal 1:15 But when it ^apleased God, who ¹set me apart ²from my mother's ^bwomb and ^{3c}called me through His ^{4d}grace,

Gal 1:16a To ^{1a}reveal His ^{2b}Son ³in me that I might announce ⁴Him as the gospel among the ^{5c}Gentiles, ...

Gal 2:20 I am ^{1a}crucified with Christ; and *it is* ²no longer I *who* live, but *it is* ^{3b}Christ *who* lives in me; and the ⁴life which I now live in the flesh I ^clive in ⁵faith, the ^dfaith ⁶of the ⁷Son of God, who ^{8e}loved me and ^fgave Himself up for me.

Gal 4:19 My ^{1a}children, with whom I ^{2b}travail again in birth until ^{3c}Christ is ⁴formed ^din you,
 4. In Corinth the gifts, signs, and wisdom were used by the enemy to replace Christ—1 Cor. 1:22-23; 12:31.

1 Cor 1:22 For indeed Jews require ^{1a}signs and Greeks seek wisdom,

1 Cor 1:23 But we ^apreach ¹Christ ^bcrucified, to Jews a ^cstumbling block, and to Gentiles ^dfoolishness,

1 Cor 12:31 But ¹earnestly ^adesire the ^{2b}greater gifts. And moreover I show to you a ³most excellent way.

5. Anything that replaces Christ or occupies the position of Christ is an idol that becomes a burden to the worshipper—Isa. 46:1; 1 John 5:21.

Isa 46:1 Bel has bowed down; Nebo stoops; Their idols are on beasts and cattle; The things which you carry are a burden, A load for a weary beast.

1 John 5:21 ¹Little children, ²guard yourselves from ^{3a}idols.

B. The second category of Satan's work is to divide the Body of Christ; the sects, denominations, and divisions in the Body wipe out the corporate expression of Christ—1 Cor. 1:10-13a; Gal. 5:19-20.

1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the ^{1a}name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all ^{2b}speak the same thing and *that* there be no ^{3c}divisions among you, but *that* you be ⁴attuned in the ^dsame mind and in the same ^{5c}opinion.

1 Cor 1:11 For it has been made clear to me concerning you, my brothers, by those of *the household of* ¹Chloe, that there are ^astrifes among you.

1 Cor 1:12 Now ^{1a}I mean this, that each of you says, I am of ^bPaul, and I of ^cApollos, and I of ^dCephas, and I of ²Christ.

1 Cor 1:13a Is ¹Christ ^adivided? Was Paul ²crucified for you? ...

Gal 5:19 And the ¹works of the flesh are manifest, which are such things as ²fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Gal 5:20 ¹Idolatry, ^asorcery, ²enmities, ^bstrife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, ³factions, ^cdivisions, ^{4d}sects,

C. The third category of Satan's work is to kill the function of all the members of Christ's Body by the clergy-laity system; we need to have the Lord's hate for the works of the Nicolaitans—Rev. 2:6; 1:5b-6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.

Rev 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the works of the ^{1a}Nicolaitans, which I also ^bhate.

Rev 1:5b ... To Him who ^dloves us and has ¹released us from our sins ²by His ^eblood

Rev 1:6 And made us a ^{1a}kingdom, ^{2b}priests ^cto His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.

1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as ¹living ^astones, are being ^{2b}built up as a ³spiritual ^{4c}house ⁵into a ⁶holy ⁷priesthood to offer up ⁸spiritual sacrifices ^dacceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a ^achosen ¹race, a ²royal ^bpriesthood, a ³holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may ⁴tell out the ^{5c}virtues of Him who has ^dcalled you out of ^{6c}darkness into His marvelous ^flight;

V. **The Lord's recovery is the recovery of Christ as our center, reality, life, and everything—Col. 1:18b; Rev. 2:4, 7, 17; 3:20:**

Col 1:18b ... He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Rev 2:4 But I have *one thing* ^aagainst you, that you have left your ¹first ^{2b}love.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ^{1a}ear, let him hear what the ^{2b}Spirit says to the ³churches. To him who ^{4c}overcomes, to him I will give to ^{5d}eat of the ^{6c}tree of life, which is in the ^{7f}Paradise of God.

Rev 2:17 He who has an ^aear, let him hear what the ^bSpirit says to the churches. To him who ^{1c}overcomes, to him I will give of the ^{2d}hidden ^emanna, and to him I will give a white ^{3f}stone, and upon the stone a ^{4g}new name written, which ^hno one knows except him who receives *it*.

Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the ^{1a}door and ^bknock; if anyone ^chears My ^dvoice and ²opens the door, then I will ^ecome in to him and ³dine with him and he with Me.

A. Christ is preeminent:

1. In the Triune Godhead—Phil. 2:9; John 15:26; Col. 1:18b-19; 2:9.

Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly ^{1a}exalted Him and ²bestowed on Him the ³name which is ^babove every name,

John 15:26 But when the ^aComforter comes, whom I will ^bsend to you ^{1c}from the Father, the ^dSpirit of reality, who proceeds from the Father, He will ^etestify concerning Me;

Col 1:18b ... He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 1:19 For in Him ¹all the ^{2a}fullness was pleased to dwell

Col 2:9 For in Him dwells all the ^{1a}fullness of the ²Godhead ³bodily,

2. In God's old creation—1:15b; Heb. 2:14a.
 Col 1:15b ... the ^{2c}Firstborn of all creation,
 Heb 2:14a Since therefore the children have shared in ^ablood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner ^bpartook of the same, ...
3. In God's new creation—Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:20; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:20-23.
 Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
 1 Cor 15:20 ¹But now Christ has been ^araised from the dead, the ^{2b}firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
 Rom 8:29 Because those whom He ¹foreknew, He also ^{2a}predestinated to be ³conformed to the ^bimage of His Son, that He might be the ^{4c}Firstborn among ⁵many ^dbrothers;
 Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in ^{1a}raising Him from the dead and ^{2b}seating Him at His ³right hand in the ^{4c}heavenlies,
 Eph 1:21 Far above all ^{1a}rule and authority and power and lordship and ²every ^bname that is named not only in this ^eage but also in that which is to come;
 Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,
 Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.
4. In God's exaltation—Acts 2:33a; Eph. 1:22b; Phil. 2:9b.
 Acts 2:33a Therefore having been ^aexalted to the ^bright hand of God and having received the ¹promise of the Holy ^cSpirit from the Father, ...
 Eph 1:22b ... ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,
 Phil 2:9b ... ²bestowed on Him the ³name which is ^babove every name,
- B. Christ is the governing principle of all genuine wisdom and knowledge, the reality of all genuine teaching, and the only measure of all concepts acceptable to God; Christ is our everything—Col. 2:8.
 Col 2:8 Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his ¹philosophy and ^aempty deceit, according to the ^{2b}tradition of men, according to the ^{3c}elements of the world, and not according to ^{4d}Christ;
- C. Christ is everything to the believers:
1. He is the God-allotted portion to the saints—1:12; 1 Cor. 1:2.
 Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has ¹qualified you for a share of the ²allotted ^aportion of the saints in the ^{3b}light;
 1 Cor 1:2 To the ^{1a}church of God which is ²in ^bCorinth, ³to those who have been ^{4c}sanctified ⁵in Christ Jesus, the ^{6d}called saints, ⁷with all those who ^{8e}call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, *who is* ^{9f}theirs and ours:
2. He is our life—Col. 3:4a; Gal. 2:20a; Phil. 1:20-21a; Gal. 4:19; Col. 2:19b.
 Col 3:4a When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, ...
 Gal 2:20a I am ^{1a}crucified with Christ; and *it is* ²no longer I *who* live, but *it is* ^{3b}Christ *who* lives in me; ...
 Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to ^ashame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be ¹magnified ^bin my body, whether through life or through ^cdeath.
 Phil 1:21a For to me, to ^{1a}live is Christ ...
 Gal 4:19 My ^{1a}children, with whom I ^{2b}travail again in birth until ^{3c}Christ is ⁴formed ^din you,
 Col 2:19b ... ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
3. He is the hope of glory—1:27.
 Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the ^{1a}riches of the glory of this ^bmystery among the Gentiles, ²which is ^{3c}Christ ⁴in you, the ^dhope of ^{5c}glory,
4. He is our necessities and our enjoyment—John 8:12; 6:51, 57b; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 20:22; Gal. 3:27; John 15:7a; Col. 2:16-17; Matt. 11:28.
 John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the ^{1a}light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the ^blight of life.
 John 6:51 I am the ¹living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, ^ahe shall live forever; And the bread which I will give is My ²flesh, *given* ³for the life of the ^bworld.

John 6:57b ... so he who ¹eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
 1 Cor 10:4 And all drank the same ¹spiritual ^adrink; for they drank of a ²spiritual rock which followed *them*, and the rock was Christ.
 John 20:22 And when He had said this, He ^abreathed into *them* and said to them, ^bReceive the Holy ^{1c}Spirit.
 Gal 3:27 For as many of you as were ^abaptized ¹into Christ have ^bput on Christ.
 John 15:7a If you abide in Me and My ^{1a}words abide in you, ...
 Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you ¹in ^aeating and in drinking or in respect of a ^{2b}feast or of a ^{3c}new moon or of the ^{4d}Sabbath,
 Col 2:17 Which are a ^{1a}shadow of the things to come, but the ²body is of ^{3b}Christ.
 Matt 11:28 ^aCome to Me all who ^{1b}toil and are burdened, and I will give you ²rest.

D. Christ is the divine provision:

1. He is God's power to us—1 Cor. 1:24a.
 1 Cor 1:24 But to ¹those who are ^acalled, both ^bJews and Greeks, Christ the ^{2c}power of God ...
2. He is wisdom to us from God as our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—vv. 24b, 30.
 1 Cor 1:24b ... the ^dwisdom of God.
 1 Cor 1:30 But ^{1a}of Him you are ^bin Christ Jesus, who became ^cwisdom to us from God: both ^{2d}righteousness and ^esanctification and ^fredemption,

E. Christ is everything to the church:

1. He is the Head of the Body—Col. 1:18a.
 Col 1:18a And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; ...
2. He is the Body of the Head—1 Cor. 12:12.
 1 Cor 12:12 ¹For even as ²the body is ^aone and has many ^bmembers, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
3. He is the foundation—3:11.
 1 Cor 3:11 For ^{1a}another foundation no one is able to lay besides ^bthat which is laid, which is Jesus ^cChrist.
4. He is the cornerstone—Eph. 2:20.
 Eph 2:20 Being ^{1a}built upon the ^{2b}foundation of the ^eapostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the ^{3d}cornerstone;
5. He is all the members of the new man—Col. 3:10-11.
 Col 3:10 And have ^{1a}put on the ^{2b}new man, which is being ^{3c}renewed unto full knowledge according to the ^{4d}image of Him ⁵who ^ecreated him,
 Col 3:11 ¹Where there ²cannot be ³Greek and ^aJew, ^{4b}circumcision and uncircumcision, ^{5c}barbarian, ⁶Scythian, ⁷slave, ⁸free man, but ^{9d}Christ is ¹⁰all and in all.

F. Christ is every part of God's New Testament economy in His full ministry of three stages (incarnation, inclusion, and intensification); the Lord's recovery is God becoming the flesh, the flesh becoming the life-giving Spirit, and the life-giving Spirit becoming the sevenfold intensified Spirit to build up the church that becomes the Body of Christ and that consummates the New Jerusalem— Ezek. 1:15; Col. 1:17; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 4:5; 5:6.

Ezek 1:15 And as I watched the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of their four faces.
 Col 1:17 And He is ¹before all things, and all things ^{2a}cohere in Him;
 John 1:14 And the ¹Word became ^{2a}flesh and ^{3b}tabernacled among us (and ^{4c}we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten ⁵from the Father), full of ^{6d}grace and ^ereality.
 1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam *became* a ^elife-giving Spirit.
 Rev 4:5 And out of the throne come forth ^alightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* ^{1b}seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the ^{2c}seven Spirits of God;
 Rev 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a ^{1a}Lamb ²standing as ³having *just* been ^bslain, having ⁴seven ^ehorns and ^{5d}seven ^eeyes, ⁶which are the ^fseven Spirits of God sent forth into ^gall the earth.

VI. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the oneness of the Body of Christ— John 17:11b, 21; Eph. 4:3-4a; Rev. 1:11:

John 17:11b ... ¹Holy Father, ^ckeep them ²in Your ^dname, which You have given to Me, that they may be ^eone even as We are.

John 17:21 That they all may be ^{1a}one; even as You, Father, are ^bin Me and I ^cin You, that they also may be ^din Us; that the ^eworld may believe that You have ^fsent Me.

Eph 4:3 Being diligent to ¹keep the ^{2a}oneness of the Spirit in the uniting ^{3b}bond of ^epeace:

Eph 4:4a ¹One ^aBody and one Spirit, ...

Rev 1:11 Saying, What you ^asee ^bwrite in a scroll and ¹send *it* to the ^cseven ^dchurches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

A. The oneness of the Lord's aspiration and prayer is the oneness of the Body, which is the enlarged oneness of the Divine Trinity—John 17:11b, 21; Eph. 4:4; Rom. 12:4-5:

John 17:11b ... ¹Holy Father, ^ckeep them ²in Your ^dname, which You have given to Me, that they may be ^eone even as We are.

John 17:21 That they all may be ^{1a}one; even as You, Father, are ^bin Me and I ^cin You, that they also may be ^din Us; that the ^eworld may believe that You have ^fsent Me.

Eph 4:4 ¹One ^aBody and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one ^{2b}hope of your ^ccalling;

Rom 12:4 For just as in ^aone body we have ^bmany members, and all the members do not have the ^csame ¹function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body ¹in Christ, and individually ^{2a}members one of another.

1. This oneness is in the Father's name by His divine life—John 17:2, 6, 11.

John 17:2 Even as ¹You have given Him ^aauthority over all flesh to give ²eternal ^blife to all whom You have ^cgiven Him.

John 17:6 I have manifested ¹Your ^aname to the men whom You ^bgave Me out of the world. They were ^cYours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your ²word.

John 17:11 And I am no longer in the world; yet they are ^ain the world, and I am ^bcoming to You. ¹Holy Father, ^ckeep them ²in Your ^dname, which You have given to Me, that they may be ^eone even as We are.

2. This oneness is in the Triune God through sanctification by the holy word—vv. 14-21.

John 17:14 I have ^agiven them Your ¹word, and the ²world has ^bhated them, because they are ^cnot ³of the world even as ^dI am not of the world.

John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them ¹out of the world, but that You would ^akeep them out of *the hands of* the ^{2b}evil one.

John 17:16 They are ^anot of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:17 ^{1a}Sanctify them ²in the truth; Your ³word is truth.

John 17:18 As You have ^{1a}sent Me into the world, I also have ^bsent them into the world.

John 17:19 And for their sake I ¹sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be ^asanctified in truth.

John 17:20 And I do not ^aask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word,

John 17:21 That they all may be ^{1a}one; even as You, Father, are ^bin Me and I ^cin You, that they also may be ^din Us; that the ^eworld may believe that You have ^fsent Me.

3. This oneness is in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God— vv. 22-24.

John 17:22 And the ^{1a}glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be ^{2b}one, even as We are ^cone;

John 17:23 I ^ain them, and You ^bin Me, that they may be perfected into ^cone, that the world may know that You have ^dsent Me and have ^{1c}loved them even as You have loved Me.

John 17:24 Father, *concerning* that which You have ^agiven Me, I desire that they also may ^{1b}be with Me ^bwhere I am, that they may behold My ^cglory, which You have given Me, for You ^dloved Me ^ebefore the foundation of the world.

B. The oneness of the Lord's aspiration became the oneness in actuality, the oneness of the Spirit—Eph. 4:3.

Eph 4:3 Being diligent to ¹keep the ^{2a}oneness of the Spirit in the uniting ^{3b}bond of ^cpeace:

C. The practice of this oneness is the one accord—Matt. 18:19; Eph. 4:1-4; Acts 1:14; Phil. 1:27; 2:2; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:10.

- Matt 18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are ¹in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ²ask, ³it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.
- Eph 4:1 ¹I beseech you therefore, I, the ^{2a}prisoner ^bin the Lord, to ^{3c}walk worthily of the ^dcalling with which you were ^ecalled,
- Eph 4:2 With all ^{1a}lowliness and ^bmeekness, with ^clong-suffering, bearing one another in ^dlove,
- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to ¹keep the ^{2a}oneness of the Spirit in the uniting ^{3b}bond of ^cpeace:
- Eph 4:4 ¹One ^aBody and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one ^{2b}hope of your ^ccalling;
- Acts 1:14 These all ^{1a}continued steadfastly ²with ^bone accord in ³prayer, together with the ^cwomen and ⁴Mary the ^dmother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
- Phil 1:27 Only, conduct yourselves in a manner ^aworthy of the ^bgospel of Christ, that whether coming and seeing you or being absent, I may hear of the things concerning you, that you ^cstand firm in ^{1d}one spirit, with one soul ^{2e}striving together *along* with ³the faith of the gospel,
- Phil 2:2 ¹Make my ^{2a}joy full, that you ^{3b}think the ⁴same thing, having the same love, ^{5c}joined in soul, thinking ⁶the one thing,
- Phil 4:2 I exhort Euodias, and I exhort Syntyche, to ^{1a}think the same thing in the Lord.
- 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the ^{1a}name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all ^{2b}speak the same thing and *that* there be no ^{3c}divisions among you, but *that* you be ⁴attuned in the ^dsame mind and in the same ^{5e}opinion.

D. The practice of this oneness is on the unique ground of the locality in which a local church is established and exists—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:11; Acts 14:23; cf. Titus 1:5.

- Acts 8:1 And Saul ^aapproved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great ^bpersecution against the ^{1c}church which was in Jerusalem; and all were ^dscattered throughout the regions of ^eJudea and Samaria, except the apostles.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in ^aAntioch, in the local ^{1b}church, ^{2c}prophets and ³teachers: ^{4d}Barnabas and Simeon, who was called ⁵Niger, and ⁶Lucius the Cyrenian, and ⁷Manaen, the foster brother of ^{8e}Herod the tetrarch, and ^{9f}Saul.
- Rev 1:11 Saying, What you ^asee ^bwrite in a scroll and ¹send *it* to the ^cseven ^dchurches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.
- Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

E. The one accord is the master key to every blessing in the New Testament— Acts 1:14; Psa. 133.

- Acts 1:14 These all ^{1a}continued steadfastly ²with ^bone accord in ³prayer, together with the ^cwomen and ⁴Mary the ^dmother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
- Psa 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell in unity!
- Psa 133:2 It is like the fine oil upon the head That ran down upon the beard, Upon Aaron's beard, That ran down upon the hem of his garments;
- Psa 133:3 Like the dew of Hermon That came down upon the mountains of Zion. For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: Life forever.

VII. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the function of all the members of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 14:4b, 26, 31:

- Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.
- 1 Cor 14:4b ... but he who prophesies builds up the ^bchurch.
- 1 Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you ^acome together, each one ¹has a ^bpsalm, has a ^cteaching, has a ^drevelation, has a ^etongue, has an ^finterpretation. Let all things be done for ^{2a}building up.
- 1 Cor 14:31 For ¹you can ^aall prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be ²encouraged.

A. The gifts, the gifted persons, perfect the saints to do what they do for the organic building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:11-16; Acts 20:20, 31:

- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave ¹some as ^aapostles and some as ^bprophets and some as ^cevangelists and some as ²shepherds and ^dteachers,
- Eph 4:12 For the ^{1a}perfecting of the saints ²unto the work of the ^{3b}ministry, unto the ^{4c}building up of the ^dBody of Christ,
- Eph 4:13 Until we all ¹arrive at the ^{2a}oneness of the ^bfaith and of the full ^cknowledge of the ^{3d}Son of God, at a ^{4e}full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the ^{5f}fullness of Christ,
- Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer ^{1a}little children tossed by ²waves and carried about by every ³wind of ^bteaching in the ⁴sleight of men, in ^ccraftiness with a view to a ⁵system of error,
- Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.
- Acts 20:20 How I did not ^awithhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring *them* to you and by *not* teaching you publicly and from ^bhouse to house,
- Acts 20:31 Therefore ^awatch, remembering that for ^bthree years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with ^ctears.

1. The gifted persons perfect the saints by nourishing them with the life supply for their growth in life—6:4; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 3:2, 6; 1 Pet. 2:2.

- Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in ^{1a}prayer and in the ^bministry of the word.
- Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.
- 1 Cor 3:2 I ¹gave you ^{2a}milk to drink, not solid ^bfood, for you were ^cnot yet able *to receive it*. But ³neither yet now are you able,
- 1 Cor 3:6 ^aI ¹planted, ^bApollos watered, but ^cGod caused the growth.
- 1 Pet 2:2 As ¹newborn ^ababes, long for the ²guileless ^bmilk ³of the word in order that by it you may ^{4c}grow ⁵unto ^dsalvation,

2. The gifted persons perfect the saints in the priesthood of the gospel for the carrying out of God's eternal economy—vv. 5, 9; Rev. 1:6; Rom. 15:16; 12:1; Col. 1:28-29.

- 1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as ¹living ^astones, are being ^{2b}built up as a ³spiritual ^{4c}house ⁵into a ⁶holy ⁷priesthood to offer up ⁸spiritual sacrifices ^dacceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- 1 Pet 2:9 But you are a ^achosen ¹race, a ²royal ^bpriesthood, a ³holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may ⁴tell out the ^{5c}virtues of Him who has ^dcalled you out of ^{6e}darkness into His marvelous ^flight;
- Rev 1:6 And made us a ^{1a}kingdom, ^{2b}priests ^cto His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.
- Rom 15:16 That I might be a ¹minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a ²laboring ^{3a}priest of the gospel of God, in order that the ^boffering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been ^csanctified in the Holy Spirit.
- Rom 12:1 I ^{2a}exhort you therefore, brothers, through the ^{3b}compassions of God to ^{4c}present your bodies a ⁵living ^dsacrifice, holy, ^ewell pleasing to God, *which is* your ⁶reasonable ^{7f}service.
- Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man ^{1a}full-grown ²in Christ;
- Col 1:29 For which also I labor, ^{1a}struggling according to His ^boperation which operates in me in ²power.

3. The Body is built directly by all the members of Christ functioning, each in his own measure—Eph. 4:16.

- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

- B. The saints who are willing and ready to be perfected will be the overcomers who constitute the bride of Christ to end this age and usher in the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ—Rev. 11:15; 17:14; 19:7-9.

Rev 11:15 And the ^{1a}seventh angel ^{2b}trumpeted; and there were loud ^cvoices in heaven, saying, The ^{3d}kingdom of the world has become the ^ekingdom of our Lord and of ^fHis Christ, and He will ^{4g}reign forever and ever.

Rev 17:14 These will make ^{1a}war with the ^bLamb, and the Lamb will ^covercome them, for He is ^dLord of lords and King of kings; and they who are ^ewith Him, the called and ^{2f}chosen and ^gfaithful, *will also overcome them.*

Rev 19:7 Let us ^arejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the ^{1b}marriage of the Lamb has come, and His ^{2c}wife has made herself ^dready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be ^aclothed in fine linen, bright *and* ^{1c}clean; for the fine linen is the ^{2b}righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, ^aBlessed are they who are called to the ^{1b}marriage ²dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the ^ctrue words of God.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE SAINTS' DIRECT BUILDING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

We have seen that God's intention is to give the gifted persons—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers—to perfect the saints that all the saints may participate in the work of the building up of the Body of Christ. These gifted persons perfect the saints to be what they are. This is similar to the professors in a teachers' college who perfect their students to become teachers like they are. A local church may be likened to a teachers' college, and the gifted persons are like professors teaching different courses. They perfect the saints to be what they are—apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. The gifts' perfecting of the saints results in a proper local church.

Perfecting in the Priesthood

The New Testament tells us that all the believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). In order to help us understand the perfecting of the saints, we need to look at the type of the priesthood in the Old Testament. To serve in the priesthood, a priest had to be of age. When a person was twenty-five, he could be an apprentice in the priesthood (Num. 8:24). This apprenticeship lasted for five years until he was thirty years of age (4:3). Then he was considered a full-grown man and was fully qualified to be a priest.

The priests were perfected to do mainly four things. First, they were perfected to offer the sacrifices (Lev. 6:8—7:38). They had to learn how to offer the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the peace offering, and the other offerings. They had to learn how to work at the altar. The altar typifies the cross. We must help people to offer Christ as their sacrifices at the cross. We may say that offering the offerings equals preaching the gospel.

Second, the priests also had to learn how to enter into the Holy Place to display the showbread (Lev. 24:5-8; Exo. 25:30). They had to take care of this every day. The showbread signifies Christ as our life supply. As the New Testament priests, we should learn how to display Christ as the showbread to all of God's worshippers. We have to help the saved ones by showing them how to enter into the Holy Place to enjoy Christ as their life supply. That means that we also have to learn how to dispense Christ into people as the life supply.

Third, the priests took care of the lampstand in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:1-4). They trimmed the wicks and filled the lamps with oil to make the lampstand shine brightly. As the New Testament priests, we should do the same thing. We have to learn to be filled with the Spirit as the oil, and we must minister Christ as the divine light with and in the Spirit to the saints. This is to make Christ as the light shine with the Spirit. We have to help the saints to realize and enjoy Christ as their divine light, shining

within them with the sevenfold Spirit. To minister such a Christ with the sevenfold Spirit to the saints is to perfect them.

Fourth, the priests had to burn the incense (Exo. 30:6-8). Burning the incense signifies getting into the presence of God and talking to God. We converse with God to enjoy God's presence, the Triune God Himself. As the New Testament priests, we must learn to fellowship with God in prayer, and we must be able to perfect the saints to do the same thing.

The priesthood perfects the saints to present Christ as the offerings, the sacrifices, at the brass altar, the cross. It perfects the saints in ministering Christ as the life supply and in displaying Christ as the shining light, as the lampstand with the seven lamps, the sevenfold Spirit. It also perfects the saints to present Christ to God at the golden incense altar as the all-inclusive incense that they may converse with God. The saints need to be perfected to fellowship with God in a conversational way to enjoy His presence, to enjoy the Triune God Himself. We need to be perfected to take care of these four major items of the priesthood, and we must perfect others to do the same thing. The gifted persons need to perfect the saints in these aspects. All the believers need to learn these four things.

The New Testament uses the word "priesthood" to refer to the priestly office (Heb. 7:12) and to the priestly body, the corporate body of priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). The Old Testament priesthood was a corporate body of priests with the high priest as their head. In the New Testament, we also are the priesthood in the sense of a priestly body. We are not separate, individual priests serving God. We serve God as priests in a corporate way. We believers are a corporate body of priests with the High Priest, Christ, as our Head. Christ as the Head of the church is the High Priest with all His saints as priests to form a priesthood. The corporate priesthood with Christ as the High Priest bearing all the people of God on His shoulders with strength and on His breast with love in the presence of God is the church life (Exo. 28:9-12, 15, 17, 21, 29-30; Heb. 7:24-26). The entire church is on the breast and on the shoulders of the Head of the priesthood.

Such a church life needs four classes of gifted persons—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers—to perfect all the saints to do the same thing that they do. Can we see such a scene in today's church life? By the Lord's mercy, we may have a little bit of perfecting work among us in each of the four major aspects typified in the priesthood, but we must admit that we are short of the perfected and perfecting priestly services. We do not have the reality of Ephesians 4:11-16 among us in a definite way. In the Lord's recovery, we are short of the services of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. This is why I have the burden to do my best to help all the saints in all the local churches realize where we should go. Ephesians 4:13 uses the phrase "until we all arrive." Paul included himself and all the serving apostles and gifted ones in saying that we all have to go on to arrive. Our having to arrive indicates that we are traveling on the way. We need to be like the runners in an Olympic race. We have to strive, to struggle, to run the course until we arrive at the goal. By the Lord's mercy, He has given us a vision of His desire to build up the Body of Christ. The Lord has brought us into His recovery and put us on the course. We are running this course. We are on the way, and we have a goal. The goal is the full expression of Christ on this earth.

We have seen that there is the need for the gifted persons to perfect all the saints. In this chapter we want to go further to see the saints' direct building of the Body of Christ. The building up of the Body of Christ is through the gifted persons' perfecting of the saints. Then the perfected saints do the direct building of the Body of Christ.

Being Willing and Ready to Be Perfected

The Lord desires all the saints to be perfected (Eph. 4:13), but the Bible shows us that the Lord is calling for overcomers. In the seven epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord is sounding the trumpet for overcomers. His call for the overcomers indicates that not all the saints will be perfected. Just some of them will be perfected. The ones who are willing to be perfected will be the overcomers. These overcomers will eventually constitute the bride of Christ, and this bride will be the

fighting army, following Christ to fight against and defeat the Antichrist (Rev. 19:11-21). According to Revelation 17:14 the army of overcomers that follow the Lamb are “called and chosen and faithful.” The choosing of the Father in eternity past was for salvation, but the choosing in Revelation 17 at the end of this age is for overcoming. Thank God that we have been chosen by Him in eternity for salvation, but now we are under the test to be approved. If we are faithful to follow the New Testament teaching to run the course, to pass the test to be approved, we will be chosen to be the overcomers who constitute the army and the bride of Christ. The army is formed in Revelation 17. These chosen ones constitute a ready to fight army. Then these ready to fight chosen overcomers will be the bride in Revelation 19 to attend the wedding feast of the Lamb (vv. 7-9). After the marriage feast, Antichrist will fight directly against the descending Christ. Christ will fight him with His bride, who is the chosen army.

I am concerned for some of the saints because they are still not willing or ready to be perfected. By the Lord’s mercy and under the covering of His blood, I would ask you as you are reading this book—are you willing and ready to be perfected? If you are not willing and ready, you will make yourself a dropout. The door is open for everyone to be perfected. I hope that we all would have a hearing ear to hear the calling of the Lord. Everyone who is contented with the present situation of the church life is not ready to be perfected, to go on with the Lord. This means that they are in the risky situation of becoming a dropout. In these days, I believe that the Lord has given me a vision with a burden for His churches, His recovery. Our present situation is not something with which we should be contented. We should feel sorry for our present situation. The recovery has been in the United States for over twenty-five years. During this period of time, we may have heard many messages, yet our situation is not up to a level with which we can be satisfied. We have to realize that we are far off from the goal. We need to say, “Lord, I am ready and willing to be perfected by You. I will take the perfecting word through Your gifted persons.”

All the members of the Body of Christ are parts of the one organism. What a privilege, what a mercy, and what an all-sufficient grace that we are now in the one organism of the Triune God! As living members of this organism, we need the organic perfecting. We need to be perfected to do what the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers do. We have to be perfected so that the entire Body of Christ functions in the same way that the gifted members do.

There is much hope that we can be perfected to do what the gifted members do. In a local church, some can do the apostles’ work to preach the gospel, teach the truth, establish churches, and appoint elders. The Lord needs many apostles, not just one or two. God’s intention is to perfect every saint to do what the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers do. Some saints will do the apostles’ work. Some will be perfected to do the prophets’ work to speak God, speak for God, and speak forth God, ministering Christ to all the people. They will be perfected not merely to give a testimony but to give a living word of revelation. Some of the saints who were not evangelists may be perfected to be evangelists. They will be those who are on fire and burdened for the preaching of the gospel. They will have the ability and the knowledge to talk to people about sin, the fall of man, the love of God, the person of Christ, redemption, forgiveness, and regeneration. Then there will be no need for the saints to bring their unbelieving contacts to a gifted person because the saints will have been perfected to do the work of an evangelist. Some of the saints also need to be perfected to shepherd. Today very few of the ones that we baptize are under the proper care because of a lack of shepherding. This is why we lose many of the ones that we baptize. But if the saints are perfected to be shepherds, every baptized one will have a nursing mother (1 Thes. 2:7). Immediately after the new ones are baptized, the saints will pick up the burden to care for them. They will care for the new ones as they would care for newborn babes, nourishing and cherishing them.

The saints in a local church must be perfected to do the same work that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers do. Because the situation is not like this today, we have to strive and to struggle by fighting. There are many resistances that we have to fight through. We all

should pray, “Lord, make me willing and ready to be perfected. I will receive the perfection from the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers. I am not content with my present situation.” This is my intimate fellowship with you all. I hope that you are willing to accept my fellowship. (*The Building Up of the Body of Christ*, pp. 21-26)