

Guidelines for the exercise of the Lord's day Prophesying Message Three : The Factor of the Church Being in the Triune God, the Local Churches Being Expressions of the Body of Christ, and the Believers Practicing the Church Life

I. Overview:

The church is in the Triune God; in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 we have the revelation of that the church is in the unique God and that this God is our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The church being in God the Father implies that the church is in God's purpose, plan, selection, and predestination. In the Lord Jesus Christ we have the termination of everything of the old creation; to be in the Lord Jesus Christ is to be united with Christ organically in all that He is and has done. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality. The church revealed in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, whereas the church revealed in 18:17 is the local church. In practicing the church life, we need to have the consciousness of the Body, be full of feeling for the Body, and take the feeling of the Head as our own feeling. Therefore, whenever we do something, we must have a proper consideration of the Body. Among all the churches that compose the one universal Body of Christ, there is no organization, but there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ; the circulation of the divine life in the Body brings all the members of the Body into oneness.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Expound what the spiritual revelation of the word in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 has.

This indicates that such a local church is born of God the Father with His life and nature and is united with the Lord Jesus Christ organically in all He is and has done. Hence, it is of men (such as the Thessalonians), yet in God and in the Lord organically. Such an organic union in the divine life and nature is the vital base for the believers to live a holy life for the church life.

B. Explain that the church is not merely in God, but is in the Father.

Father here indicates a relationship of life. God is no longer only our Creator; He is our Father. God is the Father of the church people, for we have all been born of Him. It is a wonderful fact that we have been born of God and that He is now our Father! The church in God the Father is the church in the One who is the initiator and originator.

Day 2 —

A. Expound what it means for the church to be in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a great matter to be in Christ. To be in Christ means that there is no sin, flesh, self, natural life, old creation, death, or Satan. If we are in Christ, everything negative has been terminated. Sin, death, the self, the flesh, Satan, and the old creation have all been terminated. For those who are in Christ everything other than God has been terminated.

B. Explain the experience of the church in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the church to be in the Lord Jesus Christ in a practical way, we all need to be terminated and buried. We need to die and then be placed in the tomb. This is to be in the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 6:3 says that to be baptized into Christ is to be baptized into Christ's death. How, then, can we be in Christ without also being in His death? To be in Christ is to be buried, terminated.

Day 3 —

A. Explain what the relationship between the local churches and the Body is.

We can use a family as an illustration of this. If we do not have a father, we are orphans. An orphan does not receive the profit, the benefit, from a father, so he suffers a lot. But a man who does not have any children also suffers. This is a good illustration of how the Body of Christ is the source of the local churches. Such a universal Body is like the father to all the churches, and all the churches are like the children to the father.

B. Expound the church that Christ is building is the universal church.

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said to Peter, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." Christ Himself is the very rock upon which the church is built. The church in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the one church in the entire universe. The universal church is the unique Body of Christ. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, Christ is the Head, and the church is His Body.

Day 4 —

A. Explain what the genuine ground of the church is.

We need to consider what the genuine ground of the church is. The ground denotes the site on which a building is built. The proper ground for the building of the church is the ground of locality. For example, the church is now being built in Seoul, Korea. Thus, the city of Seoul has become its ground. We may say that there are many churches, yet the many churches are still just one church.

B. Expound that the ground of the church is not only local, but also be universal.

You are a member of the universal church, which Jesus Christ is building, by being a member of a proper local church. Locally, the ground of the church is the ground of locality; universally, the ground of the church is the genuine oneness. Christ has only one Body. The oneness of Christ's Body is the universal ground of the church.

Day 5 —

A. Expound as the members of the Body, we should have a feeling for the Body.

First, we must take the feeling of the Head as our own feeling. In Philippians 1:8 Paul says, "I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus." Christ's feeling became his feeling for the Body. We all should be like Paul, taking the feeling of the Head as our own feeling. This is most necessary for our living the Body life.

B. How to say turmoil having transpired in the church due to our not knowing the Body? When Brother Nee taught about the Body, he said that with whatever we do, we have to consider how the churches would feel about it. Whenever we do something, we must have a proper consideration for the Body. We need to consider how the Body would feel about what we are doing. If we take care of the Body and are concerned for the Body, there will be no problems.

Day 6 —

A. Explain that among all the churches, there is no organization, but there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Among all the churches that compose the one universal Body of Christ, there is no organization, but there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Just as the human body does not have organization but does have circulation, so we should not have organization, but we should have fellowship. If all the churches stay in this circulation, in the fellowship of the Body, they will be healthy.

B. Testify a proper church life the administration being local, but the fellowship universal.

Although the administration of the church is separate and equal locally, the fellowship of the church is one universally. In fellowship there is no separation. The fellowship of the church is one not merely in a particular nation but in the entire universe. In these nations there are separate churches in many cities, but there is only one fellowship in the entire universe.

III. Conclusion:

The Gospel of Matthew reveals two aspects of the church; the church revealed in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the unique Body of Christ, whereas the church revealed in 18:17 is the local church, the expression of the unique Body of Christ in a certain locality. Just like our physical bodies, though the whole body has many members and different parts, yet it is united by the circulation of blood. This one universal church, one body, includes all the local churches. There may be thousands of local churches, but together they constitute one universal church. Every local church is only a part of the universal church. In the proper church life, the administration is local, but the fellowship is universal. Therefore, if one of the local churches in its locality only mingled with his own local church, regardless of other churches. This unity is a sect and also a division.