

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five
Keeping Ourselves in the One Flow of the Lord's Work
for the Spreading of the Church
and Receiving the Lord's Mercy to Be Saved from Satan's Schemes

EM Hymns: 840

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20

Acts 1:8	But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
Acts 5:20	Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.
Acts 6:4	But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.
Acts 6:7	And the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith.
Acts 9:31	So then the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied.
Acts 12:24	But the word of God grew and multiplied.
Acts 19:20	Thus, the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

I. The book of Acts reveals that in the move of the Lord there is only one divine stream of the Lord's work and that we need to keep ourselves in this stream:

- A. The divine stream, which has been flowing throughout the generations, is uniquely one; since there is only one divine stream and since the flow is uniquely one, we need to keep ourselves in this one flow—1 John 1:3; Rev. 22:1.
- 1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- B. Where the divine stream flows, we have the life of God, the fellowship of the Body, the testimony of Jesus, and the work of God—Gen. 2:10-14; Psa. 36:8-9; 46:4a; John 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1.
- Gen 2:10 And a river went forth from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided and became four branches.
- Gen 2:11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that goes around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.
- Gen 2:12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.
- Gen 2:13 And the name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that goes around the whole land of Cush.
- Gen 2:14 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one that goes east of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.
- Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.
- Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.
- Psa 46:4a There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God, ...
- John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- C. When we give the Lord the preeminence in our entire being, taking Him as our first love, He becomes the divine stream to us, flowing within us and out of us as the first works; the first works are works that are motivated by, issue from, and express the Lord as our first love; only works that are motivated by the first love are gold, silver, and precious stones—v. 1; 2:4-5; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:9; 3:12.
- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.
- Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- 1 Cor 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
- 1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,
- D. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this day, is just one stream for God's goal to build up the church for His corporate expression—Matt. 16:18; cf. Ezek. 47:1-12.
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- Ezek 47:1 Then He brought me back to the entrance of the house, and there was water flowing out from under the threshold of the house to the east (for the house faced east); and the water flowed down below the south side of the house, on the south of the altar.
- Ezek 47:2 Then He brought me out by the way of the north gate and led me around on the way outside to the outer gate, on the way to the gate that faces east; and there the water was running out on the south side.
- Ezek 47:3 When the man went out to the east with the line in His hand, He measured a thousand cubits; and He led me through the water, water that was to the ankles.
- Ezek 47:4 Then He measured a thousand cubits and led me through the water, water that was to the knees. Then He measured a thousand cubits and led me through the water, water that was to the loins.
- Ezek 47:5 Then He measured a thousand cubits, and it was a river that I could not pass through; for the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be crossed.
- Ezek 47:6 And He said to me, Son of man, have you seen this? Then He led me and brought me back along the bank of the river.
- Ezek 47:7 And when I returned, there were very many trees on the bank of the river, on one side and on the other.
- Ezek 47:8 Then said He to me, This water flows out toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah and goes to the sea; when it flows into the sea, the water of the sea is healed.
- Ezek 47:9 And every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes shall live, and there will be very many fish when this water comes there. And the water of the sea shall be healed, and everything shall live wherever the river comes.
- Ezek 47:10 And fishermen will stand beside the sea from En-gedi even to En-eglain; it will be a place for the spreading of nets. Their fish shall be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many.
- Ezek 47:11 But its swamps and its marshes will not be healed; they shall be left for salt.
- Ezek 47:12 And on the banks on both sides of the river will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail; but they will bring forth new fruit every month, because the water for them flows out of the sanctuary. And their fruit shall be for food, and their leaves for healing.

II. The basic principle of the church is that it is eternal and universal, so the church must constantly spread on the earth; the growth of the church and the building up of the church are based on spreading—Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:31:

- Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
- Acts 9:31 So then the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied.
- A. The spreading of the church is brought about by the growth in the Lord's life and the flowing out of the Lord's life, the overflow of life—Eph. 4:16; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:42, 46-47; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20.
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
- Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,
- Acts 2:47 Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.
- Acts 5:20 Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.
- Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.
- Acts 6:7 And the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith.
- Acts 12:24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.
- Acts 19:20 Thus, the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.
- B. When the church begins to spread, erroneous concepts are shattered, regardless of whether the concepts are regional, racial, or mutually discriminatory; it is through spreading that all our close-mindedness is eliminated—cf. 1 Cor. 12:24; Col. 3:10-11.
- 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- C. Acts 8 shows that the first step in the church's spread was to Samaria (vv. 1-25), and the second step was to Ethiopia, to Africa (vv. 26-39); this shows that we must preach the gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation because the church is universal and needs to spread (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9).
- Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
- Acts 8:2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.
- Acts 8:3 But Saul was devastating the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he delivered them to prison.

Acts 8:4 Those therefore who were scattered went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel.

Acts 8:5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them.

Acts 8:6 And the crowds gave heed with one accord to the things said by Philip as they heard and saw the signs which he did.

Acts 8:7 For with many of those who had unclean spirits, the spirits came out crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

Acts 8:8 And there was much joy in that city.

Acts 8:9 And a certain man named Simon had previously been practicing magic in the city and had been amazing the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great.

Acts 8:10 To him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the power of God which is called Great.

Acts 8:11 And they gave heed to him because for a considerable time he had amazed them with his magic.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip, who announced the gospel of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 8:13 And even Simon himself believed, and once he had been baptized, he continued steadfastly with Philip. And as he beheld the signs and great works of power taking place, he was amazed.

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,

Acts 8:15 Who went down and prayed for them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit;

Acts 8:16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 8:17 Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:18 But when Simon saw that through the laying on of the hands of the apostles the Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying,

Acts 8:19 Give me also this authority that on whomever I lay my hands he may receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:20 But Peter said to him, May your silver go with you into destruction, because you thought that you would acquire the gift of God through money.

Acts 8:21 You have no part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not straight before God.

Acts 8:22 Repent therefore from this wickedness of yours and beseech the Lord if perhaps the intent of your heart may be forgiven you;

Acts 8:23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of unrighteousness.

Acts 8:24 And Simon answered and said, You beseech the Lord on my behalf, so that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.

Acts 8:25 They therefore, having solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem; and they announced the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Acts 8:26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Rise up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is the desert route.

Acts 8:27 And he rose up and went. And behold, an Ethiopian man, a eunuch, a man in power under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship.

Acts 8:28 And he was returning and was sitting in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.

Acts 8:29 And the Spirit said to Philip, Approach and join this chariot.

Acts 8:30 And when Philip ran up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, Do you really know the things that you are reading?

Acts 8:31 And he said, How could I unless someone guides me? And he entreated Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "As a sheep He was led to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so He does not open His mouth.

Acts 8:33 In His humiliation His judgment was taken away. Who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth."

Acts 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I beseech you, Concerning whom does the prophet say this? Concerning himself or concerning someone else?

Acts 8:35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he announced Jesus as the gospel to him.

Acts 8:36 And as they were going along the road, they came upon some water, and the eunuch said, Look, water. What prevents me from being baptized?

Acts 8:37 And Philip said, If you believe from all your heart, you will be saved. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Acts 8:38 And he ordered the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

Acts 8:39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away; and the eunuch did not see him anymore, for he went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:40 But Philip was found in Azotus; and passing through, he announced the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

Rev 5:9 And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Rev 5:10 And have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth.

Rev 7:9 After these things I saw, and behold, there was a great multitude which no one could number, out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands.

- D. Acts 9 shows God's choosing of Saul (later Paul), which is against the human concept; our narrow, erroneous human concept needs to be broken and shattered through the spreading of the church; we must believe that a person can be persecuting the church one hour and preaching the gospel the next hour—vv. 10-22.

Acts 9 be omitted.

Acts 9:10 And there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

Acts 9:11 And the Lord said to him, Rise up and go to the lane called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas a man from Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying;

Acts 9:12 And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he may receive his sight.

Acts 9:13 But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many concerning this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem;

Acts 9:14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Your name.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

Acts 9:16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer on behalf of My name.

Acts 9:17 And Ananias went away and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent Me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming—so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight and rose up and was baptized.

Acts 9:19 And once he had taken food, he was strengthened. And he was with the disciples in Damascus for some days.

Acts 9:20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, that this One is the Son of God.

Acts 9:21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, Is this not the one who ravaged those who call upon this name in Jerusalem and came here for this, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests?

Acts 9:22 But Saul was all the more empowered, and he confounded the Jews dwelling in Damascus by proving that this One is the Christ.

- E. Acts 10 indicates that the Lord's evangelistic move on earth is under His administration on the throne in heaven and that the gospel needs to be spread to the four corners of the inhabited earth to collect all kinds of unclean (sinful) people, cleansing them with the redeeming blood of Christ and washing them with the renewing Holy Spirit—vv. 11-12, 15, 28; cf. Heb. 8:1; Acts 7:56.

Acts 10 be omitted.

- Acts 10:11 And he beheld heaven opened, and a certain vessel like a great sheet descending, being let down by four corners onto the earth,
- Acts 10:12 In which were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of heaven.
- Acts 10:15 And a voice came to him again a second time: The things that God has cleansed, do not make common.
- Acts 10:28 And he said to them, You understand that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to join himself to or come near one of another race; yet God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.
- Heb 8:1 Now in the things which are being said the chief point is this: We have such a High Priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
- Acts 7:56 And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.
- F. Acts 13 reveals that in the church in Antioch, the five prophets and teachers who were ministering to the Lord were composed of Jews and Gentiles, each having a different background, education, and status; this indicates that the church is composed of all races and classes of people regardless of their background, and that the spiritual gifts and functions given to the members of the Body of Christ are not based on their natural status—v. 1; 4:36; Rom. 16:21; Luke 9:7-9; Acts 22:3:
- Acts 13 be omitted.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 4:36 And Joseph, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a Cyprian by birth,
- Rom 16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, as well as Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.
- Luke 9:7 And Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening and was utterly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead,
- Luke 9:8 And by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that a certain prophet of the ancients had risen up.
- Luke 9:9 And Herod said, John I beheaded, but who is this concerning whom I hear such things? And he sought to see Him.
- Acts 22:3 I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city and trained at the feet of Gamaliel, according to the strictness of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as you all are today.
1. Through these five faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ, the Lord took a great step to set apart Barnabas and Saul for His work and move to spread the gospel of His kingdom to the Gentile world.
 2. It was absolutely a move by the Spirit, in the Spirit, and with the Spirit through the coordination of the faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ on the earth with the Head in the heavens—13:1-4a.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- Acts 13:4a They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; ...
- G. On the apostle Paul's first trip to spread the gospel, he went to Cyprus and then to Asia Minor to establish many local churches—v. 4b—14:28; Rev. 1:4.
- Acts 13:4b-14:28 be omitted.
- Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

- H. After Paul separated from Barnabas, he went out on his second ministry journey to Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and returning through Ephesus back to Antioch)—Acts 15:35-40; 16:6—18:22.
- Acts 15:35 And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and announcing the word of the Lord as the gospel with many others also.
- Acts 15:36 Now after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brothers in every city in which we announced the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.
- Acts 15:37 And Barnabas intended to take John, who is called Mark, along with them also;
- Acts 15:38 But Paul did not consider it suitable to take with them this one who withdrew from them in Pamphylia and did not go with them to the work.
- Acts 15:39 And there was a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; and Barnabas, taking Mark along, sailed away to Cyprus.
- Acts 15:40 But Paul chose Silas and went out, having been commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers.
- Acts 16:6-18:22 be omitted.
- I. Paul's third journey was from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece to Jerusalem—v. 23—21:17.
- Acts 18:23-21:17 be omitted.
- J. Paul's fourth journey was from Caesarea to Rome—27:1—28:31.
- Acts 27:1-28:31 be omitted.

III. We must receive the Lord's mercy to be saved from Satan's schemes to frustrate the spreading and building up of the church, and we must keep ourselves in the flow of the age for the building up of His Body—cf. Heb. 4:16; Lam. 3:22-25:

- Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.
- Lam 3:22 It is Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, / For His compassions do not fail;
- Lam 3:23 They are new every morning; / Great is Your faithfulness.
- Lam 3:24 Jehovah is my portion, says my soul; / Therefore I hope in Him.
- Lam 3:25 Jehovah is good to those who wait on Him, / To the soul that seeks Him.
- A. We must be saved from outward and dead ordinances, human opinions, and the self with its old concepts; whoever receives mercy from the Lord will be saved in these matters; the degree to which we are saved is the degree to which the church can be built up—Rom. 5:10; Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:12-16; Acts 15:1-12; Gal. 2:21; 5:1; 2:4.
- Rom 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;
- Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- Phil 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and reasonings
- Phil 2:15 That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world,
- Phil 2:16 Holding forth the word of life, so that I may have a boast in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.
- Acts 15:1 And certain men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

Acts 15:2 And when no little dissension 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 elders in Jerusalem concerning this question.

Acts 15:3 They therefore, having been sent forward by the church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, telling in detail about the turning of the Gentiles; and they brought great joy to all the brothers.

Acts 15:4 And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared the things that God had done with them.

Acts 15:5 But certain men from the sect of the Pharisees who had believed rose up from among them, saying, It is necessary to circumcise them and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

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

Acts 15:7 And when much discussion had taken place, Peter rose up and said to them, Men, brothers, you know that from the early days God chose from among you that through my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Acts 15:8 And God, the Knower of hearts, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit even as also to us;

Acts 15:9 And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Acts 15:10 Therefore why are you now testing God by placing a 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 grace of the Lord Jesus we are saved in the same way also as they are.

Acts 15:12 And all the multitude became silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul relating all the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

Gal 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness is through law, then Christ has died for nothing.

Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not be entangled with a yoke of slavery again.

Gal 2:4 And this, because of the false brothers, brought in secretly, who stole in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into slavery.

B. We must learn from the lesson of Peter to be saved from the veils of our religious traditions and old background so that we may see and live under the vision of God's eternal economy to hold the truth of the gospel—Acts 10:9-16; Gal. 2:11-14.

Acts 10:9 And on the next day as they were journeying and drawing near to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray around the sixth hour.

Acts 10:10 And he became very hungry and wanted to eat. And while they were preparing, a trance came upon him;

Acts 10:11 And he beheld heaven opened, and a certain vessel like a great sheet descending, being let down by four corners onto the earth,

Acts 10:12 In which were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of heaven.

Acts 10:13 And a voice came to him: Rise up, Peter; slay and eat!

Acts 10:14 But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common and unclean.

Acts 10:15 And a voice came to him again a second time: The things that God has cleansed, do not make common.

Acts 10:16 And this occurred three times; and immediately the vessel was taken up into heaven.

Gal 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

Gal 2:12 For before some came from James, he continually ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to shrink back and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision.

Gal 2:13 And the rest of the Jews also joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away in their hypocrisy.

Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they were not walking in a straightforward way in relation to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like the Jews?

- C. We must learn from the lesson of Barnabas to be saved from human opinions and natural relationships—disputes that arise among the co-workers because of personal relationships are terrible; remember this well!—Acts 13:13; 15:35-40; Col. 4:10.
- Acts 13:13 And putting out to sea from Paphos, Paul and his companions came to Perga of Pamphylia; and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem.
- Acts 15:35 And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and announcing the word of the Lord as the gospel with many others also.
- Acts 15:36 Now after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brothers in every city in which we announced the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.
- Acts 15:37 And Barnabas intended to take John, who is called Mark, along with them also;
- Acts 15:38 But Paul did not consider it suitable to take with them this one who withdrew from them in Pamphylia and did not go with them to the work.
- Acts 15:39 And there was a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; and Barnabas, taking Mark along, sailed away to Cyprus.
- Acts 15:40 But Paul chose Silas and went out, having been commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers.
- Col 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, as well as Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, (concerning whom you received commandments, If he comes to you, receive him),
- D. We must learn from the lesson of Apollos to be saved from a ministry that lacks a complete revelation of God's New Testament economy and from not being fully one with the ministry of the age—Acts 18:24—19:2; 1 Cor. 1:12; 16:10-12.
- Acts 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent man, arrived at Ephesus, and he was powerful in the Scriptures.
- Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.
- Acts 18:26 And this man began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to themselves and expounded the way of God to him more accurately.
- Acts 18:27 And when he intended to pass through into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he arrived there, he helped much through grace those who had believed;
- Acts 18:28 For he vigorously confuted the Jews publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.
- Acts 19:1 Now while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper districts, came down to Ephesus and found some disciples,
- Acts 19:2 And he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said to him, On the contrary, we did not even hear whether there is a Holy Spirit.
- 1 Cor 1:12 Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.
- 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
- 1 Cor 16:11 Let no one therefore despise him, but send him forward in peace that he may come to me; for I am awaiting him with the brothers.
- 1 Cor 16:12 And concerning our brother Apollos, I urged him many times to come to you with the brothers; yet it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.
- E. We must learn from the lesson of Paul in Acts 16:6-12; these verses indicate the problem of workers coming to a place and tending to become set and settled down, not wanting to move; old relationships, old affections, old inclinations, and old concepts keep us from following the inner leading of the indwelling Spirit:
- Acts 16:6 And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.
- Acts 16:7 And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.
- Acts 16:8 And bypassing Mysia, they came down to Troas.

- Acts 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul during the night: A certain man, a Macedonian, was standing and entreating him and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.
- Acts 16:10 And when he had seen the vision, we immediately endeavored to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to announce the gospel to them.
- Acts 16:11 And putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the following day to Neapolis,
- Acts 16:12 And from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of that part of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we spent some days in this city.
1. The Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his co-workers, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; the Holy Spirit's forbidding separates us, sanctifies us, and the Spirit of Jesus either allows us or does not allow us—vv. 6-7.

Acts 16:6 And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

Acts 16:7 And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.
 2. The Holy Spirit says no to sanctify us, and the Spirit of Jesus says go to send us out in the humanity of Jesus to accomplish the will of God under the cross.
- F. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to practice the Body life and to take the word of the Spirit through the members of the Body, obeying it as a word from the Head—20:23; 21:4, 7-8, 11-14.
- Acts 20:23 Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in city after city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.
- Acts 21:4 And when we had sought out the disciples, we remained there seven days. These told Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.
- Acts 21:7 And when we finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the brothers and remained with them one day.
- Acts 21:8 And on the next day we went forth and came to Caesarea; and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we remained with him.
- Acts 21:11 And he came to us and took Paul's belt; and having bound his own feet and hands, he said, Thus says the Holy Spirit, In this way will the Jews in Jerusalem bind the man whose belt this is and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.
- Acts 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we and those in that place entreated him not to go up to Jerusalem.
- Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.
- Acts 21:14 And since he would not be persuaded, we became silent, saying, The will of the Lord be done.
- G. We must learn from the mistake of James and the devastating mixture of the church in Jerusalem—vv. 18-21; Matt. 22:7; 24:1-2:
- Acts 21:18 And on the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.
- Acts 21:19 And having greeted them, he related one by one the things which God did among the Gentiles through his ministry.
- Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified God and said to him, You observe, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed; and all are zealous for the law.
- Acts 21:21 And they have been informed concerning you that you are teaching all the Jews throughout the nations apostasy from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs.
- Matt 22:7 And the king became angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.
- Matt 24:1 And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away, and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple.
- Matt 24:2 But He answered and said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, There shall by no means be left here a stone upon a stone, which shall not be thrown down.

1. Jeremiah spoke of the law of life that could be written upon our hearts (Jer. 31:31-34), and Paul spoke of the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit (Rom. 8:2, 4, 6), but James treasured and uplifted the law of letters (Acts 21:20).
 - Jer 31:31 Indeed, days are coming, declares Jehovah, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
 - Jer 31:32 Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by their hand to bring them out from the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was their Husband, declares Jehovah.
 - Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will put My law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.
 - Jer 31:34 And they will no longer teach, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for all of them will know Me, from the little one among them even to the great one among them, declares Jehovah, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.
 - Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
 - Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
 - Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
 - Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified God and said to him, You observe, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed; and all are zealous for the law.
2. Paul spoke of being crucified with Christ and being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of Christ's resurrection; it is this life that produces the Body life that consummates in the New Jerusalem; self-cultivation does not carry out God's economy, but self-denial does—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; Matt. 16:24.
 - Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 - Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
3. James boasted that there were myriads of believing Jews in the church in Jerusalem who were zealous for the law, but Paul was zealous to gain Christ, be found in Christ, know Christ, lay hold of Christ, pursue Christ, and uplift Christ for the fullest enjoyment of Christ—Acts 21:20; Phil. 3:6-14; Col. 1:18b.
 - Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified God and said to him, You observe, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed; and all are zealous for the law.
 - Phil 3:6 As to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless.
 - Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
 - Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
 - Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
 - Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 - Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
 - Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Col 1:18b ... He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

H. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to be saved from the mixing of Judaic practices with God's New Testament economy; this mixing is not only erroneous but also abominable in the eyes of God—Acts 21:18-27, 31, 36; Heb. 10:29.

- Acts 21:18 And on the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.
- Acts 21:19 And having greeted them, he related one by one the things which God did among the Gentiles through his ministry.
- Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified God and said to him, You observe, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed; and all are zealous for the law.
- Acts 21:21 And they have been informed concerning you that you are teaching all the Jews throughout the nations apostasy from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs.
- Acts 21:22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.
- Acts 21:23 Therefore do this that we tell you: We have four men who have a vow on themselves;
- Acts 21:24 Take these and be purified with them, and pay their expenses that they may shave their heads. And all will know that there is nothing to the things that they have been informed of concerning you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the law.
- Acts 21:25 But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we have already written, having decided that they should keep themselves from idol sacrifices and blood and anything strangled and fornication.
- Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men and on the following day, being purified with them, entered into the temple, giving notice of the completion of the days of the purification, until the offering was offered for each one of them.
- Acts 21:27 And when the seven days were about to be concluded, the Jews from Asia saw him in the temple and threw all the crowd into confusion; and they laid their hands on him,
- Acts 21:31 And as they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.
- Acts 21:36 For the multitude of the people were following and crying out, Away with him!
- Heb 10:29 By how much do you think he will be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

I. We must learn from the lesson of Paul's appealing to Caesar, utilizing his Roman citizenship to save himself from his persecutors so that he might fulfill the course of his ministry—Acts 22:25-29; 23:10-11; 25:8-12; 26:32:

- Acts 22:25 But as they stretched him out with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion standing by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?
- Acts 22:26 And when the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported, saying, What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.
- Acts 22:27 And the commander came and said to him, Tell me, are you a Roman? And he said, Yes.
- Acts 22:28 And the commander answered, With a large sum of money I acquired this citizenship. And Paul said, But I was even born a Roman.
- Acts 22:29 Immediately therefore those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander also was afraid, realizing that he was a Roman and that he had bound him.
- Acts 23:10 And when much dissension had taken place, the commander, fearing that Paul might be torn to pieces by them, ordered the detachment of soldiers to go down and seize him from their midst and bring him into the barracks.
- Acts 23:11 But in the night following, the Lord stood by him and said, Take courage, for as you have solemnly testified to the things concerning Me in Jerusalem, so also you must testify in Rome.

Acts 25:8 While Paul said in his defense, Neither against the law of the Jews nor against the temple nor against Caesar have I sinned in anything.

Acts 25:9 But Festus, wanting to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and be judged there before me concerning these things?

Acts 25:10 And Paul said, I am standing before Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know.

Acts 25:11 If therefore I am doing wrong and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if there is nothing to the things which these accuse me of, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.

Acts 25:12 Then when Festus had conferred with the council, he answered, To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.

Acts 26:32 And Agrippa said to Festus, This man could have been released, had he not appealed to Caesar.

1. Paul was willing to sacrifice his life for the Lord, but he still endeavored to live longer so that he might carry out the Lord's ministry as much as possible—20:24.
 Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
2. God in His sovereignty rescued Paul so that He might separate him from all the dangerous situations and entrapments and sent him to a quiet prison; this was to afford him a quiet environment and give him time, whether in Caesarea (24:27) or in Rome (28:16, 23, 30), that through his last Epistles he might release exhaustively to the church throughout the generations the revelation of the mystery of God's New Testament economy that he received from the Lord.
 Acts 24:27 And when two years were completed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and wanting to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul bound.
 Acts 28:16 And when we entered into Rome, Paul was permitted to remain by himself with the soldier who was guarding him.
 Acts 28:23 And once they had appointed a day for him, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he expounded these matters, solemnly testifying of the kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning until evening.
 Acts 28:30 And he remained two whole years in his own rented dwelling and welcomed all those who came to him,
3. The benefit and profit that the church throughout the generations has received from these Epistles will take eternity to measure (see 25:11, footnote 1).
 Acts 25:11 If therefore I am doing wrong and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if there is nothing to the things which these accuse me of, no one can hand me over to them. I ¹appeal to Caesar.
 note 1 For his defense Paul wanted to appeal to Caesar (see notes 12 in ch. 22 and 322 in ch. 26). This would allow him to fulfill his desire to see Rome for the furtherance of the Lord's testimony (19:21) and was according to the Lord's indication to him (23:11). Without this appeal he would have been killed by the Jews who plotted against him (cf. 23:12-15; 25:1-3, 9) and would not have been able to write his last eight Epistles. Before his appeal to Rome, he had written only six Epistles: 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians. During his first imprisonment in Rome he wrote Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. After that imprisonment he wrote 1 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews. Then, during his second imprisonment he wrote 2 Timothy. Without these last eight Epistles, what a lack the divine revelation would have and what a loss the church would have suffered! His appeal did render great profit and benefit to the Lord's interest.

IV. All of us should follow the pattern of the apostle Paul to do the same one work universally for the unique Body—1 Cor. 3:12; 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:11-16:

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

- 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
- 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- A. The work in the Lord's recovery is for the building up of the local churches unto the building up of the universal Body of Christ—2:21-22; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
- 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
- B. Today there are four kinds of workers:
1. The first kind is the co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age; this is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord.
 2. The second kind is the younger co-workers; they are willing to receive direction and to come under the coordination of the older co-workers, and they are willing to follow and to learn in humility.
 3. The third kind is those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers and who do not belong to the denominations, but who are happy to remain in fellowship with us.
 4. The fourth kind is the preachers and free evangelists among the denominations.
- C. What we need today are the first and second kind of co-workers; concerning the third and fourth kind of workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway; with some people God has not assigned them to take the same way as we do, and we dare not say anything to them.
- D. Whatever the situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us; we cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here tearing down others' work.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE DIVINE STREAM

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:8-12; Psa. 36:8-9; John 4:10, 14; 7:38-39;
1 Cor. 10:4; Rev. 21:6; 7:17; 22:1-2; 21:23; Ezek. 47:1, 5, 7-9, 12

The Scriptures reveal to us that man's need is met in God alone. To all of man's need God Himself is the supply, the only supply, and all the supply. God's intention is to be life to man, for it is as life to man and the life of man that God could be the supply to all of man's need. Thus, in order to be life to man, God must come to man and enter into him as the living supply. Only in such a way can man enjoy Him and live by Him.

THE STREAM OF LIFE

In the beginning of Genesis we see that after man was created, he was placed in the garden of Eden beside a tree called the tree of life. Near it there was a river. By the help of further revelations of the Scriptures, we understand that this is a picture that shows how God comes to man. He comes as the flowing of a stream to be contacted and received by man. In Psalm 36:8-9 the psalmist praises God, saying, "You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures./For with You is the fountain of life." This means that with God is the fountain of life, from which flows the river of God's pleasures. God is a fountain of life, and from this fountain of life flows the river of God's pleasures. Man may drink of this divine river and enjoy the pleasures of God and be satisfied. The pleasures of God and the fatness of God go along with the flowing of this divine river. If we drink of this river, we will enjoy the pleasures of God and be satisfied with the fatness of God.

God as life to man first flows out in His Son, our Lord Jesus. Thus, the Lord can give us the living water, and the water that He gives will become in us a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). God flows out in His Son and through His Son. God is the fountain of the divine water of life, and the Lord Jesus is the springing up of the fountain. He is the Rock smitten for us that out of Him may flow the living water of the divine life to be taken by us.

Second, God flows out as the living water in His Spirit and through His Spirit. The Lord tells us that he who believes into Him will have rivers of living water flowing from within him. He spoke this of the Spirit (7:37-39). By this we know that the Holy Spirit is the second channel by which God Himself flows out as the living water to us.

Hence, the Scriptures show us that God comes to us as life as the flowing of living water. The Scriptures tell us that whoever is thirsty may come to the Lord and drink the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17) and that in eternity the Lord will be our Shepherd and will guide us to springs of waters of life (7:17). The water of life is God Himself as our life. We drink of Him, we enjoy His pleasures, and we are satisfied with His fatness.

The book of Revelation tells us that this stream of living water flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1). This is another picture showing us the source of this living water. It means that the life of God flows out of God Himself in the redeeming Savior, the Lamb, with ruling authority to be life to us now.

Within this stream is the life of God. We read that in the river of living water is growing the tree of life, yielding its fruit each month (v. 2). This shows that the life that supplies all our need is something growing in the river of living water. Thus, it proves to us that the river of living water is the supply of the divine life. In the book of Ezekiel we see that in this river of life there is the power to swallow up death, for where it flows, it heals the salty water and makes it fresh. It has healing power. We also see that it has the power to produce, for where it goes, vegetable life as well as animal life is produced. Where it flows, all kinds of trees grow, yielding various kinds of fruits. Moreover, the waters themselves are swarming with living creatures. This is a most meaningful picture (47:6-12). By meditating on it, we realize its significance. Here is a stream that flows out of God Himself to bring life to supply all our need. This is a stream that will both heal and produce, both swallow up death and supply us with life. This is the stream of life.

THE STREAM OF FELLOWSHIP

From this picture of the stream in the Scriptures, we may realize that it is also a stream of fellowship. Consider the situation of the New Jerusalem. In the whole city there is only one street, and in the midst of that street is the stream of living water. By contemplating this scene, we realize that this stream is the stream of fellowship. It flows throughout the entire city, and the whole city can have fellowship only through or by this stream of living water. This reveals that the fellowship of the Body of Christ is the stream of divine life. Wherever the stream of the divine life flows, there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. What is the fellowship of the church? It is the flowing of the divine life. As the stream of the divine life flows within us, there is the fellowship of the Body among us. This

fellowship started from the day of Pentecost, and from Jerusalem it flowed to Antioch, to Asia, to Europe, and then to America and throughout the world. The fellowship of the Body that we are enjoying is such a tremendous thing. We are in this stream of the fellowship of the Body, and this flowing is ever increasing and being enriched. The more it flows, the greater and the richer it becomes.

THE STREAM OF TESTIMONY

Where this stream flows, there is also the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know that this is so? Consider again the situation of the New Jerusalem, and suppose that you are one who is coming into the city from the outside. When you enter the gate, you immediately come upon the one street of the city in which is flowing the stream of living water. If you follow the stream, it will bring you to the place where the Lord Jesus is. This means that the stream will bring you into contact with the Lord. In other words, this stream of living water will cause you to know something of Christ; it will testify to you something of Christ. Where could you find Christ? Where could you meet Christ? Here is the channel; here is the way; here is the means by which you can touch Christ, by which you can experience Christ. The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is with the very stream of divine life. Where the stream of the divine life flows, there is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we must ask, What does it testify? The answer is most significant. It testifies that there is a Lamb, that within the Lamb is God Himself, and that this Lamb is on the throne. This is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the redeeming One; He is the Lamb of God who was slain for our sins. He was crucified on the cross, shedding His blood for our redemption. After accomplishing redemption, He was resurrected and exalted to the heavens, to the throne. In the Lamb on the throne is God Himself. These three items are the summary of the testimony of the Lord Jesus—the *Lamb* on the *throne* with *God in Him*. The stream of the divine life brings this testimony to us. It is the testimony of the Lord Jesus.

THE STREAM OF THE WORK OF GOD

This stream is also the stream of God's work. Where the stream flows, there is the work of God. This is clear in the book of Acts, a book that speaks to us of the work of God. What is that kind of work that is the work of God? It is a work in the stream of living water. Where the stream of living water flows, there is the work of God. God works along the flowing of the stream of the divine life. If you consider the whole record of the book of Acts, you will see the picture quite clearly. On the day of Pentecost this stream of divine life flowed out of God Himself in Christ with ruling power from the throne. It began to flow from Jerusalem. From there it flowed to Antioch, and then from Antioch it turned to the west; it flowed to Asia, and through Asia it flowed to Macedonia, to Europe. Here is a picture of the flowing of the stream of divine life, and with the flowing of this stream is the work of God. By flowing God works; by flowing God preaches His gospel; by flowing God brings people to be saved. There is a stream that we could call the stream, or the current, of the work. Where it flows, there is the work of God.

Notice that there is no end, no conclusion, to the book of Acts. There are twenty-eight chapters, but in the book of Acts in heaven today there may be twenty-eight hundred chapters. The twenty-eight chapters in our Bible are the record of only sixty or seventy years of history. There is an opening, but no closing, no conclusion. This is because this stream of life is still flowing and never stops flowing. The history of the church shows that this stream has continued to flow from generation to generation right up to this very day, and it is flowing still. Where it flows, there is the life of God; where it flows, there is the fellowship of the Body; where it flows, there is the testimony of Jesus; and where it flows, there is also the work of God. It is the stream of life, the stream of fellowship, the stream of testimony, and the stream of the work of God.

Brothers and sisters, we must be in this stream. If we are not in this stream, we are out of life, we are out of the fellowship of the Body, we are out of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and we are out of the work of God. Oh, if we are simply in this stream, we will have everything. From where does it

flow? It flows from the throne. What kind of a throne is this? It is the throne of the Lamb with God in Him. God is in the Lamb, and the Lamb is on the throne, and this stream flows out of this throne. If you have this stream, you have the throne, you have the Lamb, and you have God within the Lamb. If you have this stream, you have everything. If you are in this stream, then you are in God, you are in the Lamb with the throne, you are in the life, you are in the fellowship, you are in the testimony, and you are in the work of God. Are you in the stream? You need to know. If you are not in the stream, you will have to make a turn. We must be in the stream.

In the universe there is a divine stream that starts in the beginning of the Scriptures and flows throughout the whole book. We can trace this stream from the beginning of the Bible right to the end. In many places there is reference to this flowing stream. It is still flowing today. It is flowing, flowing all the time, and will be flowing to eternity. The Lord said that the water that He gives would be a fountain of water springing up unto eternal life. This stream shall flow to eternity; it can never and will never cease. Throughout the whole history of the church there has ever been and still is such a divine stream.

This stream has flowed back to the Western world as a supply to His Body. We look to the Lord that it will be increasing in this country and even to all parts of the world. May we remember this in our prayers, and may we be ready to go along with the Lord so that this stream may have a free way to flow without any hindrance in us. We must be faithful to the flowing of this stream of the divine life, of the fellowship of the Body, of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and of the work of God.

THE STREAM IN RELATION TO GOD'S PURPOSE

The eternal purpose of God is to mingle Himself with humanity. He is working toward this one thing today. This oneness is not simply a joining or a uniting together; it is far more than this. It is a mingling together, a blending together, which is much deeper. It is a mingling of the divine nature with the human nature until they become one. The entire Scripture is concerned with this one basic and central matter, that of God mingling Himself with us.

We must now ask, How will God accomplish this? It is clearly revealed in the Word that in order for God to do this, He must come into us. When God becomes our life, He will automatically be mingled with us.

How can God come into us as our life? This is divine and quite mysterious. Not only with the divine life but also with human life, there is an element of mystery. If asked, What is life? one would find it difficult to define. In the Scriptures God uses a figure to describe how He could be life to us. This figure is a stream of water. He comes into us to be our life just as a stream of water flowing out and flowing in, flowing out from heaven and flowing into us. I think it is easy to understand how this flowing stream can come into us. We simply drink of it. God Himself is the stream of the water of life. God flows out of heaven onto this earth, and flows into you and me.

Is there a stream of God flowing within you today? There is a stream within me that is always flowing. Sometimes when I wish to sleep, this stream stirs me. I say, "Lord, I would like to rest; I am tired"; but this stream flowing within does not agree. It gives me the impression, "You are tired, but I am not tired. I am still flowing, and My flowing will strengthen you." There is a stream continually flowing. Oh, brothers and sisters, do you have the flowing?

THE SOURCE AND NATURE OF THE STREAM

We have seen that after man was created, he was put before a tree called the tree of life. By the side of the tree of life there was a river, and by the flowing of this river there were some precious materials: gold, pearl, and onyx stone. What is the meaning of these items? They are most significant. Remember that this is in the second chapter of the whole of Scripture. At the end of the Scriptures, we find the same things again in the last two chapters. There we see a city made of gold, pearls, and precious stones, the same kind of materials listed in Genesis 2. There we also see a river flowing, and in its midst grows the tree of life. Here you have the river and the tree of life once more.

How many times throughout the Scriptures God is spoken of as a flowing stream of water! “You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures. / For with You is the fountain of life” (Psa. 36:8-9). The Lord Jesus tells us that the water that He gives will become a fountain of living water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). He says again that whoever is thirsty may come to Him and drink, and whoever believes into Him will have rivers of living water flowing from within him (7:37-38). All these words relate to one thing—that God has flowed out and is still flowing on this earth into humanity as the life. We may ask, In what form has God flowed out? He has flowed out first in His Son, in Christ, and then He has flowed out as the Spirit. God is the fountain, the very source; Christ the Son is the spring of this divine water; and the Holy Spirit is the living stream, flowing all the time.

On the day of Pentecost the Lord poured Himself out in the Holy Spirit. Notice the word *poured* in Acts 2:33. He poured out the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit became the flowing stream of the divine water. For almost two thousand years since that time, the Holy Spirit has been flowing in this world. This flowing has never stopped and will flow to eternity. God the Father is the very source. Christ the Son is the reservoir, the Rock smitten that the divine water stored within may be released. What is this living water that flows from Him? It is the very Spirit of the life of God. The Holy Spirit is the flowing Spirit of the divine life. “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this” (vv. 32-33). He has poured out the Holy Spirit, flowing with the divine life. From that time there is a flowing of the divine life, and this flowing is the Holy Spirit Himself.

We must consider the source of this stream. On the highest peak of the universe there is a throne, one throne, and on this throne the Lamb is sitting. I would ask, Who is the Lamb? The Lamb is the crucified, buried, resurrected, and exalted Christ. Christ is the Lamb. And who is Christ? This Christ is Someone most wonderful. This Christ is the divine nature mingled with the human nature. He is God incarnated, who died on the cross, who was buried in the tomb, who went down to Hades, who was raised up from Hades and from death, and who was exalted to the heaven of heavens, to the right hand of God. He is the very God in human nature. He is the One who died to redeem us from our sins and who has been exalted to the highest place in the universe. Please notice that He is the Lamb, and yet He is on the throne. A lamb is a very humble thing, and a throne is full of authority. As the Lamb slain, the crucified Jesus has now been exalted to the throne to have the full authority of the universe. Do you realize this? How meaningful it is! Within the Lamb is God Himself. How can we know that God is within Him? We are told that God is the light, and the Lamb is the lamp. Just as the light is within the lamp, so God is within the Lamb on the throne. Oh, how I wish that this picture would impress you! This is the highest point of the whole universe. Christ, the Lamb, with God within Him is sitting on the throne, and from this very throne flows out the river of divine life.

I would ask you to notice what is included in this stream of water. Since it flows out from such a place, then all that Christ has obtained and attained, all that He has and all that He is, must be included in it. How I wish I had here a cup of all-inclusive water as an illustration, a cup of water with everything included in it! Then, if we could make an opening in this cup so that its contents could flow out, I would ask you to tell me what would be included in such a flow. You would have to answer that everything would be included. Obviously, everything would be included. From the throne where Christ is sitting, there flows out a stream of water, the contents of which can never be exhausted. The all-inclusiveness of the Triune God is here; humanity is here; the element of the crucifixion and of the burial is here; the resurrection, the ascension, the authority, the Lordship, the Headship, and everything is included here in this stream. How rich! How all-inclusive! This is the stream that is flowing within you today.

The Scriptures tell us that within this stream grows the tree of life. What is the tree of life? It is simply Christ as the life. Think of the many times the Scriptures refer to a tree as a figure of Christ. The fact that this tree grows in the living water shows us that Christ as life is in the flowing of the Holy

Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit flows, there Christ is found as the life. The Holy Spirit brings Christ to us as our life just as the stream of living water brings to the whole city the tree of life as the supply of life. Look once more at the picture. Here is a stream of living water, and within the stream, growing all the way, is the tree of life. Thus, the stream brings the supply of life to the entire city. The Holy Spirit brings Christ to us as food, as the life supply. Since this is such a vital matter, I wish to press it by asking, Do you have this stream flowing within you? Is it flowing within you at this very moment? Unbelievers do not have it, but alas, there are some believers who, although they have had this stream flowing into them, have not kept themselves within its flow. They have the life of the Triune God within them, but they are not keeping themselves in the flowing of this life. Many times you are conscious that you are out of the flowing of this stream. Then sometimes you know that you are in its flowing. What have you to do then? It is really quite simple. You simply have to keep yourself in the flowing of the stream. Whenever you feel that the flowing of the stream within you is cut off, you must turn to the Lord immediately to seek the reason. Why has the stream within you stopped flowing? You must discover the reason and deal with the Lord about it until the flowing is recovered. Wherever you are going and whatever you are about to do, if there is the sense that the flowing of the stream will be stopped by proceeding in that matter, then you must stop. Stop in order to maintain the flowing. To maintain the flowing you must refrain from all those activities which are not of the Lord, that is, which are not of the flowing of the stream within you.

THE ONE STREAM

The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this very day, is only one stream. Wherever it goes, wherever it flows, it is not many streams; it is only one. Read the book of Acts, and you will see that there is one stream, one current. This stream started from Jerusalem and flowed to Antioch, and from Antioch it turned to Asia and was flowing there. Then one day the Lord wanted the stream to strike forth into Europe, to Macedonia, but the apostle who was working in the flowing of the stream was not clear about it. Eventually, however, he became clear that the flowing was striking forth from Asia to Europe, and he had to go along with it. It is a familiar story. From Macedonia the stream went in its path to Corinth, to Rome, to Spain, and to all parts of Europe. History tells us that from Europe it flowed to the west, to America, and from the west it flowed to the east and to the south. In reading the history of the church we find that this flowing stream has never been stopped, and we notice that everywhere that this stream flowed, it was just one. It was one in Jerusalem, one to Antioch, one to Asia, one to Europe, and one everywhere it has flowed. Please be clear that there have never been two streams. There is only one stream, and you have to keep yourself in this one stream.

If you read Acts and the Epistles written by the apostle Paul, you will see that quite a number of people at that time, who were preaching the gospel and working for the Lord, were not in the stream. According to the record of the Scriptures, they were not in the stream. For instance, in the first chapter of Philippians the apostle tells us that there were some who preached the gospel because of envy (v. 15). They were preaching the gospel, but they were not working together with the apostle. Although they preached the gospel, they were not in the one stream of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts you can find another example. Consider Barnabas. At the beginning Barnabas was working with the apostle Paul. Both were in the one stream. But after a certain time, Barnabas for some reason would not agree to go along with the apostle Paul. The two were divided. Do you find any record in Acts of Barnabas after that division? No! He was out of the stream. He was still working for the Lord, but he was out of the stream. Are you clear about this matter? If you study carefully the history of the church, you will find that throughout the generations there has been one stream of the Holy Spirit flowing all the time. Many have been working for the Lord, but not all have been in the flowing of that one stream. If you will accept the mercy and the grace of the Lord, you will be brought into that very stream that is flowing today.

At this point, I would like to offer a personal testimony on this matter. In 1933 I went from

northern China to Shanghai for the first time in order to visit Brother Watchman Nee. I stayed with him there for several months. When I was about to leave to return to my home city in northern China, Brother Nee came to me and said, "Brother Lee, we feel it is the Lord's mind that you move your family to Shanghai and stay with us for the Lord's work. Would you bring this matter to the Lord?" When I went to the Lord with this matter, I received the light. The Lord showed me that in the book of Acts the current of the Lord's work, the stream of the Holy Spirit, is one. He showed me that in the Acts there was only one line on the map, starting from Jerusalem and running to Antioch, from there to Asia, and from there to Europe. I saw that there never have been two streams but always one. I said to the Lord, "Lord, I thank You. There can never be two streams of Your work in China. If there is something done for You or by You or through You in northern China, it must first be that I go to Shanghai to be mingled together in the one stream, in order that out from there something will flow forth to northern China. Thus, there will be one stream." On the very next day Brother Nee came to see me. I said to him, "Brother, I am clear about this matter. I must do what you suggest. From this day I am working with you in Shanghai."

From that time, what a flowing there has been! I can never tell you how rich and how wonderful it is. It is all because I moved into the flowing of the stream at that very time. Oh, the light of the Scripture has flowed as a tide! The life, the power, the energy, and the authority have flowed into me. Wherever I have gone, I have not gone on my own. I have been just as a boat in the current; wherever the current has gone, I have been carried on. It has been so easy. It has not been my strength, my energy, or my endurance; it has been the flowing of the stream. From that time, the Lord has been gradually showing me the flowing of the life, the flowing of the work, the flowing of the testimony, and the flowing of the fellowship of the Body.

THE CIRCULATING OF THE STREAM

The flowing of this stream of the Holy Spirit is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It is similar to the circulation of the blood in our physical bodies. The blood is flowing all the time from one part to another and then back again. In just such a way the stream of the Holy Spirit as the fellowship of the Body is flowing among the saints upon this earth.

It is quite clear to me that in these days the flowing of the divine stream is toward the Western world. This flowing to the West is something of the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It started from the throne of the exalted Lamb and has been flowing through all generations to this present time. It has been flowing through many regions and nations, and now it has turned to the Western world. This is the stream of the fellowship of the Body, the stream of the testimony of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, and the stream of the work of the Holy Spirit.

When I was young, Brother Nee came one day to have a talk with me. I was a young learner under his hand, and many times he gave me some basic lessons. He said, "Brother, do you know that we can never go to any place to start a work unless the current of the Holy Spirit is there already?" Oh, how I have remembered this word! Unless the current of the Holy Spirit is already in a place, you and I can never go there to work. Brother Nee continued to say, "Oh, brother, if you realize where the current of the Holy Spirit is, simply go along with it! To work there for the Lord will be a rest to you; it will be a bed upon which you can lie. The work in the flowing of the Holy Spirit is not a burden but a rest." I cannot tell you how much these words have helped me. From that time I have learned the lesson that I must go along with the flowing of the stream of the Holy Spirit. I cannot go to any place to work for the Lord or to start a work for the Lord without the flowing of the current of the Holy Spirit. I am unable to do that, I am not qualified to do that, and I am not ordered by the Lord to do that. What I must do is simply go along with the flowing.

Let me give you a further personal word. I had no intention of coming to the United States, but the flowing of the Holy Spirit carried me here. I could not help it. Furthermore, my intention was that I would soon return to the Far East. But the flowing is still westward, and I could not return. My direction was eastward, but the flowing of the Spirit was westward. All I can do is simply be carried

along by this flow. How wonderful to be in this stream! Oh, here is the life, here is the fellowship, here is the testimony, and here is the work of God!

What we must do today is just go along with the stream, just subject ourselves to the current of the work of the Holy Spirit. In this matter I have no personal liberty. It is not according to my thoughts but according to His flowing. The words of a hymn say,

Not where we elect to go,
But where Jesus leads the way,
There the living waters flow,
There our darkness turns to day.

(Hymns, #907)

THE STREAM IN RELATION TO THE BUILDING

Out of the flowing of the stream come the gold, the pearls, and the precious stones. Look at the picture in Genesis 2. These precious substances are for the building of God's dwelling place. Wherever the flowing is, material will be produced for the building of the church. Look at the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God in the Old Testament. On the shoulder pieces and on the breastplate of the high priest were precious stones set in gold. The apostle Paul tells us that the church is built with gold, silver, and precious stones. These are the materials that come out of the flowing of the current of the Holy Spirit. In Revelation we are told that the entire city, the New Jerusalem, is built with gold, with pearls, and with precious stones. How did all these materials come into being? They came simply from the flowing of the current of the divine life. Where the stream of the divine life is, there some material, some precious material, for the building of the church will come into being. You and I can never produce material for the building of the church. Only the flowing of the divine life, the current of the Holy Spirit, can do this. It has been flowing through the generations and is flowing today, and wherever it goes, gold, pearls, and precious stones are produced for God's building.

May the Lord grant us to be impressed by this picture. May He always keep us in the flowing of the life, in the fellowship, in the testimony, in the work, and in the building of the house of God. May we also pray toward this end. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1963*, vol. 1, "The Divine Stream," pp. 169-181)

FOUR KINDS OF WORKERS

Today there are four kinds of workers. First, there are co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age. This is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord. Second, there are younger co-workers who are willing to receive direction and come under the coordination of the older co-workers. They are willing to follow and to learn in humility. Third, there are those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers and who do not belong to the denominations, but who are happy to remain in fellowship with us. Fourth, there are preachers and free evangelists among the denominations. Today we need the first and second kind of co-workers.

When a co-worker is in a certain place, he has to cooperate with the local church there. The work and the church cannot be separated from each other. When a co-worker is working in a certain place, he is at the same time one of the local brothers. When the church assigns work to the saints, the co-workers should stand on the same ground as local brothers and accept assignments in the same way.

Concerning the third and the fourth kind of co-workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway. God has not assigned some people to take the same way that we have, and we dare not say anything to them. Whatever their situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us. We cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here to tear down others' work. (*Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry*, vol. 1, pp. 153-154)