

## HWMR - Thanksgiving Conference 2018

General Subject:

### The Reality of the Body of Christ

Message Four

#### Living in the Reality of the Body of Christ by Living in the Inward Parts of Christ Jesus

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:22-23; 3:16-17a, 19b; 4:16; Phil. 1:8

- Ephesians 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things **to the church**,  
 Ephesians 1:23 Which is **His Body**, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.  
 Ephesians 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to **be strengthened** with power through His Spirit into the **inner man**,  
 Ephesians 3:17 That **Christ may make His home** in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,  
 Ephesians 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may **be filled** unto all the fullness of God.  
 Ephesians 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.  
 Philippians 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the **inward parts of Christ Jesus**.

The regular procedures of the church work in the Lord's recovery today consist of four steps: **begetting**, **nourishing**, **teaching** (perfecting), and **building**. **Begetting** is to have sinners saved and regenerated to become the members of Christ (1 Cor. 4:15b; Matt. 28:19); **nourishing** is to feed the new believers for their growth in the divine life (1 Thes. 2:7; John 21:15, 17); and **teaching** is to perfect the saints that they may mature to be built (Matt. 28:20a; Eph. 4:12-16). The steps of begetting, nourishing, and perfecting are all for another higher step, that is, for the building up of the Body of Christ (vv. 12b, 16) in the local churches (Rev. 1:4a, 11). However, we need to ask ourselves, "**Where is such a building?** Where is the Body of Christ today? Within and among the many local churches, where is the reality of the Body of Christ?" According to my observation, we cannot see the reality of the Body of Christ anywhere today.

The **highest peak of the Lord's recovery** that can really, practically, and actually carry out God's economy is for God to produce **not** many local churches in a physical way **but** an **organic Body to be His organism**. We all have a physical body, but our body actually is not the reality of our being. My body is me, but it is not the reality of my being. Likewise, the **churches** set up around the globe are a **physical frame**, but among the churches there may be no reality of the Body of Christ. If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that this is our situation today. **Where is the reality of the Body of Christ?**

### DAY 1

#### I. If we would **have the reality** of the Body of Christ, we must **allow** Christ to make His home in our hearts—Eph. 1:22-23; 3:17a; 4:16:

- The Body of Christ is built up by Christ as the Spirit **entering** into our spirit and **spreading** Himself from our spirit into our mind, emotion, and will to **occupy** our entire being—3:16-17a; 4:16.
- The reality of the Body of Christ is the **inner experience of the indwelling Christ**—Col. 1:27; 2:19; 3:4, 10-11, 15-16; 4:15-16.
- It is only by the inner experience of Christ as life that we can have the reality of the Body of Christ—1:27; 3:4, 10-11; 2:19.
- When Christ makes His home in our hearts, we will **be filled unto all the fullness of God**; this fullness is the church, the Body of Christ, as the corporate expression of the Triune God—Eph. 3:17a, 19b.
- The reality of the Body life is the issue of the immeasurable Christ **making His home in our hearts**—vv. 17-18; 4:16.
- The **content** of the church as the Body of Christ is the Christ who has been **wrought into our being**—Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; Col. 3:4, 10-11.

#### Being Filled unto All the Fullness of God

Finally, verse 19 says, "*To know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.*" We are not being filled with material things, scriptural knowledge, or the so-called spiritual gifts but **unto all the fullness of God Himself**. It is in this way that we are built up together, and it is in this way that we can realize the Body life. Otherwise, we can talk about the Body, but we still will not have its reality. **The reality of the Body is this very indwelling Christ experienced by us in an inward way.**

We all need a further time to kneel by ourselves in our room to pray over these verses until the heavenly vision is **revealed** into our spirit. This will revolutionize us, and our whole concept will be changed. What we need is not something outward or mere knowledge, gifts, signs, powers, and other such matters. What we absolutely need is the **inner experience of the indwelling Christ**. Ephesians 3 says that we are **strengthened** into the inner man, **that Christ makes His home in our heart**, and that we are **filled** (not covered or clothed) unto all the fullness of God, that is, the very being, essence, and element of God. The riches of Christ and His immeasurable dimensions include so much that we would need many days to explain even a little of our experience. It is through this inner experience of the indwelling Christ that we apprehend **with all the saints** the unlimited measure of Christ, and it is by this that we are built up. (The Vision, Practice, and Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ, Chapter 5, Section 4)

## II. If we would live in the reality of the Body of Christ, we need to live in the inward parts of Christ Jesus—Phil. 1:8; Eph. 4:16:

- A. As a man, Christ had the human **inward parts** with their various functions, and Christ's experiences in His inward parts were His experiences in His mind, emotion, will, soul, heart, and spirit, including His love, desire, feeling, thought, decision, motive, and intention—Luke 2:49; John 2:17; Matt. 26:39; Isa. 53:12; 42:4; Mark 2:8.
- B. Paul was a person who **continually experienced** Christ in His inward parts— Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16b; Rom. 8:6:
1. Paul was one with Christ even in His inward parts—in His affection, tender mercy, and sympathy—Phil. 1:8.
  2. Paul did not keep his own inward parts but **took Christ's inward parts as his**:
    - a. Paul took not only Christ's mind but also His entire inner being.
    - b. Paul's inner being was **changed, rearranged, and remodeled**.
    - c. His inner being was **reconstituted** with the inward parts of Christ.
  3. What was in Christ as **truthfulness**—honesty, faithfulness, and trustworthiness—was also in Paul—2 Cor. 11:10.
  4. Paul's love for the saints was not his natural love but the love in Christ, which is Christ's love; thus, Paul loved the saints not by his natural love but by the love of Christ—1 Cor. 16:24.
- C. To live Christ requires that we **remain** in the inward parts of Christ Jesus Phil. 1:21a, 8:
1. Paul experienced the inward parts of Christ; he was one with Christ in His inward parts in longing after the saints—v. 8.
  2. Paul did not live a life in his natural inner being; he **lived a life in the inward parts of Christ**—Col. 3:12.
  3. If we would be those who are in Christ, we must be in His inward parts, in His tender and delicate feelings—John 15:4a.
  4. **To live Christ is to abide in His inward parts and there to enjoy Him as grace**—Phil. 1:7; 4:23.
- D. In the book of Philemon we have a picture of the Body life lived in the inward parts of Christ Jesus—vv. 7, 12, 20.
- E. Paul lived in the reality of the Body of Christ by **taking Christ's feeling as his own feeling**; Christ's feeling for the Body became his feeling for the Body—Phil. 1:8:
1. Paul took the inward parts of Christ Jesus as his own inward parts in caring for the Body of Christ—v. 8.
  2. Like Paul, we should take the feeling of the Head as our own feeling; this is most necessary for our living in the reality of the Body of Christ—Col. 3:12.
- F. If we as members have the feeling of the Head in everything, we will **consider** the Body and **care** for the Body—1 Cor. 12:12-27.

Instead of only outwardly understanding the inward parts of Christ Jesus, Paul was **in the inward parts of Christ Jesus**. Paul was not only in Christ, but even more he was in the inward parts of Christ Jesus. This shows us that we who believe in the Lord Jesus are **joined to Him** and **are one with Him**; hence, **His inward parts are our inward parts**. Before we were saved, we did not have the inward parts of the Lord Jesus; we had only ours. After we are saved, **the Lord Jesus enters into our being, and we have His inward parts**. Hence, we no longer walk or conduct ourselves according to our inward parts but according to His inward parts. (The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ, Chapter 6, Section 1)

Ephesians 3:17 does not say that "Christ may make His home in you." Instead, it explicitly says that "*Christ may make His home in your hearts.*" Our heart is composed of all the parts of our soul—**mind, emotion, and will**—plus our **conscience**, the main part of our spirit. Our heart is joined to our soul and is also connected with our spirit. The real center of our being is not in our outward body but in our inward heart. **Our heart**—which is joined to the soul, connected with the spirit, and composed of the mind, the emotion, the will, and the conscience—is the **totality of all our inward parts**. When **Christ makes His home in our heart, He controls our entire inward being, and He also supplies and strengthens every inward part with Himself**. This is not just an illustration; it is a fact.

Christ not only **enters** into us, but He also wants to make His home in our heart. When Christ comes into us, He comes into our spirit. Yet it is very likely that He merely stays there and has not entered into the different parts of our heart. Hence, He is waiting within us for us to love Him and cooperate with Him, and He is also waiting for us to know Him and take Him as life. If we love Him and cooperate with Him, we afford Him the opportunity to come into our mind to become its content. This is just like the thumb of our hand getting into the thumb of a glove to be its content. You have believed in the Lord, **yet your mind may be void of Christ**. Instead, your mind may be filled with your children and your spouse and your property. In your mind there is no Christ; rather, there are just yourself and things that are outside of Christ. You have shut Christ outside the door of your mind. Therefore, although He is in your spirit, **He is suffering because He cannot get into your mind**. This is the real situation of many among us. (The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ, Chapter 4, Section 3)

## III. The more we live in the inward parts of Christ Jesus, the greater will be our consciousness of the Body of Christ and the stronger will be our feeling for the Body of Christ—vv. 26-27; Rom. 12:15:

- A. As members of the Body of Christ, we need to have the **consciousness of the Body** and a **feeling for the Body**; the Body is universal, and the consciousness of the Body and a feeling for the Body are also universal—1 Cor. 12:26-27; Phil. 1:8.
- B. In order to live in the reality of the Body of Christ, we need to be **conscious** of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5, 15.
- C. The **consciousness of the Body of Christ** is the **sense of Christ's life within us**—Col. 3:4, 15; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5:
1. If we **exercise** this sense, it will cause us to be conscious of matters related to the Body—v. 15.
  2. If we **cultivate** this sense, it will enable us to detect problems in the Body.

3. If we exercise this sense often and if we love the Lord and care for the church, this sense will become the sense, the consciousness, of the Body—2 Cor. 11:28-29.
- D. When others suffer or are blessed, we will **identify** with them and feel the same hardship or blessing if we have the consciousness of the Body—1 Cor. 12:26-27.
- E. **We cultivate the consciousness of the Body of Christ by living in the inward parts of Christ**—Phil. 1:8; Col. 3:10-12, 15; Philem. 7, 12, 20:
1. Since we are members of the Body of Christ, we need to have the consciousness of the Body and have a feeling for the Body by living in the inward parts of Christ Jesus—1 Cor. 12:26-27.
  2. By **living in the inward parts** of Christ Jesus, **taking** His feeling and view as our feeling and view, we will **practice** the church life in the reality of the Body of Christ—Phil. 1:8.

### THE FEELING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

#### BROTHERLY LOVE

First let us consider love. One amazing thing about love is that the Bible says, "*We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers*" (1 John 3:14). All those who have passed from death into life love one another. **All those who are members in the Body love one another.** This **love is produced by life and is spontaneous.** You do not have to ask a person in the meeting whether he is a Christian, and if he says yes, you do not have to ask whether Christians should love one another. In the same way, he does not have to say that he will start loving other Christians just because you have told him so. This is not the way God's children behave. **Everyone who is genuinely born of God has God's life.** Those who are saved by God spontaneously **love their fellow members.** Whether or not a person has been told to love another one, he will have a feeling of love for his brothers. It is true that we often have to remind others to love their brothers. But these reminders will not supply what they do not already have; it will only make them more zealous for what they have. **If love is there, it is there.** If it is not there, it is not there. **Once we meet one of God's people, we spontaneously love him.** We cannot explain, but within there is such a feeling; within there is such a love.

#### NO DIVISION

Those who have seen the Body of Christ have a **feeling for the Body of Christ.** Once they do anything sectarian or anything that divides God's children from one another, they feel uneasy inside. Since they love all those who belong to God, they cannot divide God's children from one another. In the Body, love is something **spontaneous**, while division is something **unnatural.** A man has two hands, and it would not matter how many things one hand said against the other hand, the two hands can never be separated from each other; it is impossible to divide the two. Some think that as long as they have left the sects, they know the Body of Christ. But in reality, **leaving the sects does not necessarily mean that one has seen the Body of Christ.** **Those who have seen the Body of Christ will surely forsake the sects,** but it does not follow that those who have left the sects have seen the Body of Christ. Many people have outwardly left a sect, but actually they build up another sect for themselves. Their leaving of a sect is only an attempt to accentuate their "distinctiveness"; they do not see that all the members are our brothers and are equally lovable. All sectarian spirits, all divisive attitudes, and all outward moves and inward thoughts that cause separations between God's children are proof of the lack of vision concerning the Body of Christ.

#### DELIVERANCE FROM INDIVIDUALISTIC WORKS

If we have Body-consciousness, we immediately will see that **the Body is one.** Once we see this, we will not be individualistic in our spiritual work. If we want to participate in the Lord's work, we need to deal with this one matter—**individualistic works.** Some people can only do things well when they are doing it alone. If they cannot do it alone, they cannot do it well. They only regard the things that they are doing as having any spiritual value, and what others do has no spiritual value at all. When they preach and no one is saved, they feel sorry. When others preach and some are saved, they feel strange. This is being individualistic in one's work. **Whenever God's children see the oneness of the Body, they will also see the oneness of the work, and they will be delivered out of individualistic work into the work of the Body.** This does not mean that we no longer work by ourselves. It means that we no longer consider any work to be our own. It does not matter whether a work is done by us or not, as long as someone is doing it, we are satisfied.

#### THE NEED OF FELLOWSHIP

Those who see the Body will spontaneously see the need of fellowship. They will spontaneously see that they cannot act independently. **Fellowship** is not a formal acquaintance but a **spontaneous issue of the life of the Body.** **The common notion of fellowship among God's children is to visit a brother or a sister when we are free and chat with them a little.** For most people this is fellowship. But fellowship really means a realization that we cannot go on alone, that we need to do everything together, with other members and with the Body as a whole. Although we cannot have all the brothers and sisters in the whole church come together, we can have two or three brothers come together and work according to the principle of the Body. We have to learn the principle of fellowship when we pray. We have to learn to fellowship when we encounter difficulties, and we have to learn to fellowship when we are seeking God's will, when we are not clear about our future, and when we do not understand God's Word. **Fellowship means I cannot pray by myself, that I have to find two or three brothers to deal with a matter together.** It means that I do not understand God's will by myself and that I seek to understand it together with two or three brothers. It means that I am confused about my own future and that I seek fellowship and I consider my future together with two or three other brothers and sisters. It means that I do not understand God's Word by myself and that I find two or three brothers to study God's Word together with me. **Fellowship is to acknowledge that we are short, that we are inadequate, and that we need the Body.** **Fellowship is the acknowledgment of our own limitations and of the possibility of making mistakes by ourselves; it is receiving help from those who have spiritual discernment before the Lord.** (This does not mean to ask for help only from those who are affectionate towards us.) I cannot go on by myself; I need the help of other brothers and sisters. **The Body of Christ is a matter of life, and this life has feelings.** This feeling will tell you that without fellowship, you cannot go on.

### ON BEING A MEMBER

Once a person has a feeling for the Body, he will **see his place in the Body at the same time**. In other words, he will see that he is only a member in the Body. **Every member has its use**. A member is different from a cell. A body can survive without a cell, but it cannot survive without a member. Of course, every cell has its use too. But the Bible tells us that we are members in the Body of Christ; we are not cells in the Body of Christ. Unfortunately, many Christians are like cells in the Body; they do not act like members. They do not have any specific function in the Body of Christ, and they never take care of their responsibility. It seems that their presence in the meeting is not indispensable and that nothing is missing when they are not there. They do not function in the Body because they have never seen the Body. They never realize their ministry when they are among the brothers and sisters. They do not see what they should do. If they see the Body, they will spontaneously see that they are members; they will realize that unless they minister life to the Body of Christ, the Body will suffer. Brothers and sisters, **none of us can be a passive member in the Body. As long as we are a member of the Body, we cannot be passive, and we cannot be a bystander in the meetings. When we come to the meeting, we should realize that we are a member in the Body of Christ and that we have to pray.** They may be audible prayers or silent prayers. But we must at least pray and minister life to the Body. Some Christians are suppliers of life; once they come to a meeting, the meeting receives their supply even when they do not open their mouth to speak. Their very presence is a life supply to others. Wherever they go, death is swallowed up. Brothers and sisters, once we see the Body of Christ, we will inevitably see ourselves as members.

We are members of the Body of Christ. As members severally of this Body, we should **seek to profit the Body**. We should **seek for ways to supply life and power to the Body**. Even if we do not open our mouth in the meeting, we should pray silently, and even if we do not speak, we should always be looking to God. This is being Body-conscious. **Once we see the Body, we will no longer say that we are dispensable or unimportant. Once we see the Body, we will say that we are a member of the Body and that we have a responsibility to fulfill.** We should speak, and we should pray. When we come to the meeting, we will do whatever God tells us to do. We cannot be a bystander. Brothers and sisters, if we see the Body, we will not act in any other way. When we function this way, the life of the meeting will swallow up all death. Many meetings do not have enough power because the presence of death is too strong; there are too many bystanders in these meetings.

### SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY

If you see the Body of Christ, you will also have the sensation that you are **under the authority of the Head**. You will feel that God's children are lovable, that division is wrong, and that fellowship is vital. You will also feel that as a member of the Body of Christ, there are responsibilities that you have to fulfill. These feelings are feelings of the Body. At the same time, once you feel that you are in the Body, you will feel that you are under the Head. **Those who feel that they are in the Body also feel that they are under the Head.** If a man knows the life of the Body of Christ, and if he is conscious of the fact that he is a member, he will also be conscious of the authority of the Head.

Moreover, we must submit not only to the **direct authority** of the Head, but also to the **indirect authority of the Head**. My arms are not only under the authority of my head; when my shoulders move, my arms move with them also. My arms submit to the Head by submitting to the shoulders. Those who see the Body of Christ surely see the need for submission to God's appointed authorities in the Body of Christ.

...**Authority** is the **law of the body**, while **insubordination** is a **disease in the body**. If a man does not know authority, how can he say that he knows the Body of Christ? When three or five people come together, **those who know the Body can always find who the authority is and to whom they should submit. Everyone has his authority to whom he should submit.** The hands submit to the arms, while the arms submit to the shoulders. This is something very spontaneous and comely. Even if there are only three or five persons, if they practice this, they will see the Body of Christ manifested among them.

Many Christians speak carelessly and act carelessly. They do not listen to others, and they think that they themselves are the greatest; it seems as if they have never found anyone to whom they can submit. This proves that they have never been **restricted by the Body**, and they have never submitted themselves to the authority of the Head. May the Lord be merciful to these ones. If we are truly dealt with by the Lord, if our flesh is truly touched, and if the "backbone" of our natural life is truly broken, we will immediately see that our hands and our mouth can no longer be free. **The Body will restrict us, and we will no longer be able to rebel against God's appointed authority.**

May the Lord deliver us from mere doctrines. May the Lord lead us on to **a full knowledge of the Body of Christ**. May this feeling follow us all the time so that we no longer act according to our own will or live foolishly or carelessly. If we do this, we will receive a rich supply from the Body, and through the Body we will **express the Lord's testimony on the earth**.

(Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 2) Vol. 37: General Messages (1), Chapter 37, Section 1)