

HWMR: ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Week 5)

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

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

- 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.

Day 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.
- Revelation 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.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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. 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. 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.

(CWWL, 1963, vol. 1, "The Divine Stream,")

Day 2

- 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.

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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).

God's intention is that there would be a **church in the universe**; He does not want the church to be in only one locality. In other words, the church that God wants is a church in the whole universe and **not simply a church in one place**. Even though the church has representative manifestations in many different localities, it is universal, not local. Thus, when the church was produced on the day of Pentecost, even though it was produced in Jerusalem, its nature was not merely that of the church in Jerusalem. The church is universal, not only in Jerusalem. The church was produced in Jerusalem, but it could not be kept in Jerusalem. The church was produced in Jerusalem, but it did not grow only in Jerusalem. The church can be produced in one place, but it is impossible to continue the church in one place forever and force it to grow only there. Because the church is universal, it must not only be **produced**, but it must also **spread**. The church is universal, so it must spread.

Both the cross and the Lord's incarnation at Bethlehem have a universal impact. Although the Lord was born in Bethlehem, His birth was not merely for Bethlehem. The incarnation was not local; it was for the universe. The church is the same; even though it was produced in Jerusalem, it is for more than Jerusalem alone. **The church is for the whole universe**; it is **eternal**, and it transcends time and space. The church can appear in time and in a certain place, but it is not merely in time and of that place. The church transcends time and place; the church is universal. (*CWWL*, vol. 2, "Three Aspects of the Church, Book 2: The Course of the Church," ch. 2)

Day 3

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 10:45 - *And the believers who were of the circumcision, as many as had accompanied Peter, were amazed, because on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out;*

- 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.
- 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.
- 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:
 - 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- I. Paul's third journey was from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece to Jerusalem—v. 23—21:17.
- J. Paul's fourth journey was from Caesarea to Rome—27:1—28:31.

If a local church does not spread, the nature of that church is too low, and it will lose its universal and eternal character. In principle, the **church must spread**, and the faster, the farther, and the more it spreads, the better. But when we speak of the spread of the church, we must be careful. This spreading is not promoted by human methods, nor is it worked out by human hands. The **spreading of the church is brought about by the growth in the Lord's life**. On man's side, the church cannot grow quickly, and we should not be greedy for speed. However, on God's side, the church must spread. Not long after the church in Jerusalem was raised up, God caused His children to be scattered to various places by persecution

Because the church is universal, it is also spreading. The most blessed church is the **church that spreads the most**. If there is a local church that never spreads, it will have more and more problems until it becomes very weak. On the one hand, we must be careful and serious about the spreading of the church, not being loose or careless and using human methods to promote it. We must allow the Lord to work. On the other hand, we must be clear that the church needs to spread, and we must do our best to raise up churches in every place. Although this does not depend on human effort, **we should not limit the spreading**.

We should not have the slightest limitation that could cause the church to stop spreading. Promoting the church's spread through human work is ineffective and will not last, but we should **bear the responsibility to allow the church to spread in order to eliminate our narrow concepts**. The basic principle of the church is that it is eternal and universal; the church must constantly spread on the earth. The growth of the church and the building up of the church are based on spreading. (*CWWL*, vol. 2, "Three Aspects of the Church, Book 2: The Course of the Church," ch. 2)

Day 4

Acts 16:6-7 - And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

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:

- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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:
 - 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.
 - 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.

Day 5

Romans 8:2 - For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Galatians 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 of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- 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:
 - 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).
 - 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.
 - 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.
- 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.
- 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:
 - 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.

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.
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).

We must always **keep ourselves in the flow of the inward current**. There is no need to argue about this. Argument gets us nowhere. Even while we are arguing or doing something else against the Lord, we have the inner sense that the flow within us is stopped. When this happens, we need to stop in order to recover the fellowship. We may have many questions, but to care for the inward flow of life is the one answer which is good for all of them. There is no need to ask about many things. We must simply care for whether or not the current within us is stopped or is flowing.

To be a Christian is very simple, but often people do not believe this. The **divine life constantly flows** as a current; this is the **fellowship of life**. To be a Christian with this flow within is simple, but to be a Christian without the inward flow is very complicated. Brothers and sisters, we must practice to be inward Christians, not outward ones. To do this will save us much trouble, and we will understand many things more deeply because we are in the inward flow, the **inward fellowship**.

We must make the Christian life so simple. We should not check with many persons and talk about many matters. **The more we ask and the more we talk, the more we are complicated and confused**. We simply lose our direction; we do not know what is "north, south, east, or west," and our way is foggy. However, if we come back to the inward flow, the sky is clear. We are heavenly clear, eternally clear and transparent. All the "smog" is gone. Try this. Make the Christian life simple in the flow, the fellowship, of life.

We have life. Now we need to be in the **fellowship of life**. Then we will have the **light**, we will enjoy the **cleansing of the blood**, and we will share the **anointing**. Then the anointing will bring more fellowship, more light, and more cleansing of the blood in a cycle. This is wonderful! This is the way of growth, and this is the proper spiritual way to go on with the Lord. I hope we will not take this message lightly or merely as a doctrine or teaching. May we take this as a direction for our day-by-day exercise. (*Basic Principles of the Experience of Life, Chapter 7, by Witness Lee*)

Day 6

1 Corinthians 3:12-13 - But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble, The work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is.

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:

- 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.
- 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.