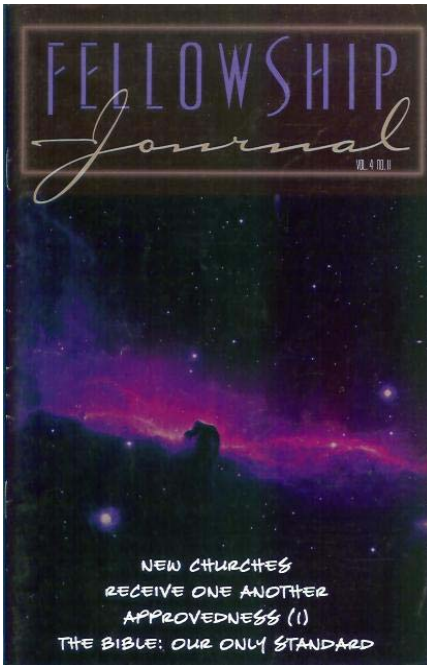


# FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

VOLUME 4, NO. 11 • NOVEMBER 2005



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# *A Letter from the Editor*

Often times these days I find myself thinking on Ignatius, the early church “father” who had known the apostle John and was a contemporary of Polycarp. Both Ignatius and Polycarp were church leaders, and both were eventually martyred. There seemed to be a difference between them, however, in what one emphasized and what the other did not.

Brother Lee had referred to Ignatius on a number of occasions as someone who deviated from God’s ordained way by promoting the idea of one elder in a church being chosen to be “bishop” above the others, even though in the New Testament these terms refer to the same person, the first term referring to his function, and the second to his spiritual maturity. This opened the door to hierarchy, for from among the local bishops were raised archbishops, and so on, until one among those of the highest “college,” that of the cardinals, was chosen to be pope.

How could someone who genuinely seemed to love the Lord and the church promote such a thing that wasn’t found in the Bible? Earl Cairns, in his *Christianity Through the Centuries*, writes: “This early church father...lays great emphasis on subjection to the bishop as the way to achieve unity and to avoid the growth of heresy...” (p. 74). Ignatius was trying to address real needs, but in a way that departed from what God had ordained in His Word.

I recently got down my copy of Lightfoot’s *Apostolic Fathers*, and read through the six letters Ignatius wrote to churches while being taken to his martyrdom in Rome. Some of the cities he wrote to were familiar (Ephesus, Smyrna, Philadelphia, Rome) and some not (Magnesia and Tralles). On the way, he also wrote a letter to Polycarp. Ironically, the only church he didn’t stress the matter of bishop to was Rome! To the other churches, however, he was very strong, writing as to the Ephesians: “So then it becometh you to run in harmony with the mind of the bishop...For your honourable presbytery [group of elders]...is attuned to the bishop, even as its strings to a lyre. Therefore in your concord and harmonious love Jesus Christ is sung. And do ye, each and all, form yourselves into a chorus, that being harmonious in concord and taking the key note of God ye may in unison sing with one voice through Jesus Christ unto the Father.” (To Ignatius, it seems that one accord depended upon obedience to the bishop, which in turn depended upon giving preeminence to one elder to the exclusion of the others.) Further down he wrote: “For as every one whom the

Master of the household sendeth to be steward over His own house, we ought so to receive as Him that sent him. Plainly therefore we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself.” Although this sounds good, it is clergy-laity and not, as Brother Lee said, something according to the Bible!

Yet when Ignatius writes to Polycarp, it is as if Polycarp, who had likewise learned at the feet of the apostle John, needed exhortation in this matter that seemed so fundamental in the eyes of Ignatius. He instructs Polycarp, whom he addresses as bishop of Smyrna, to “Give ye heed to the bishop, that God may also give heed to you”! Perhaps Polycarp was much younger than Ignatius, but I have not found any evidence for this. It also seems strange that Ignatius wrote this to Polycarp just after he had seen him in Smyrna, as if to remind him of this (though one of his other motives was to ask Polycarp to send his letters out to other churches “that ye may be glorified by an ever memorable deed”...indicating how firmly Ignatius seems to have regarded what he was teaching as being crucial to God’s work.)

And what of Polycarp? We have a letter of his, written around the same time as those by Ignatius. His writing seems almost lackluster in comparison—he sounds much more humble—yet in his writing he much more frequently refers to the Bible. Does he join Ignatius in emphasizing the need for a “monarchial” bishop? Not at all, and yet he was writing to the church in Philippi which at that time had no such bishop.

On the back of this issue are the words of Watchman Nee that Nigel Tomes refers to in his article in this issue, affirming that we dare not take any authority other than the Bible to confirm what we practice corporately or individually as believers. It should seem safer to us, as it did to Luther, even as he faced such a threatening convocation of that hierarchy at the Diet of Worms, to say: “My conscience is captive to the Word of God...to go against conscience is neither right nor safe.” Thus the Lord was able to begin His work of recovery.

We must believe that the Lord is able to vindicate the sufficiency of the way of the life for the needs of His church. And if we are going to exclude anything, our exercise is more safely aimed against what is external to the Word rather than anything within it, for whatever God has prepared for our way is certainly to be found only there. May we be those who prove this is so.

*John Berglund*

# The Church Life in The North Hills

When we moved here to the North Hills, near Pittsburgh, our primary burden was to reach the people here. As we drove around we saw many young families with little children and many singles in their twenties. We desired to see the gospel have a dynamic impact on these people. Since we were all moving in from out-of-state we needed some means to get an idea of who these people were.

During the Gospel Odyssey we used a survey to determine the spiritual history and the spiritual perspective of the people. In the North Hills 4,000 doors were reached and 600 surveys were taken. It became very evident that a spiritual vacuum existed for those between the ages of 15 to 40. Since our first meeting didn't begin until six weeks after the Gospel Odyssey, the time was used to visit all the interested "contacts." As we visited the people, the results of the surveys were confirmed. Many in the age group between 25-35 showed the most interest. Many of these families had young children. Most of their time was spent trying to keep up with work and family. Due to the busyness of their lives, many only had a small number of friends in their social lives.

At our first meeting on September 18, 2005, ten families with a number of Junior High schoolers (children in the families) came. Over the last five weeks we have been able to build relationships and trust with these families. Their comment of the church life is that it is a real home! It is a place where they are loved and appreciated. Many have been touched by our burden to bring the gospel to their community.

The Lord's presence and blessing can also be seen in the effect of the children. One couple brought their two daughters who just seemed angry for some reason. The younger of the two went to the third to fifth grade children's meeting with Asher McNaughton and Christy Neider. Later that afternoon Asher and some of the other young saints who moved here to pioneer a new church life were outside of a fast food establishment. The mother of the girl came up to the saints and asked who had cared for her daughter. When Asher

said that he was one, she thoroughly thanked him and said that her daughter really enjoyed her time. Because of that she said that she would see them again next week. Since that time we have seen this family every week and have had them to our homes for dinner. Many more saints have met the two girls and are spending time with them and praying for their salvation.

Another story took place during the first meeting. Marianne Uechi told Ethan Uechi and Zachery Neill (both four years old) that that morning there would be other children that wouldn't know anyone else. She explained that they should be extra friendly with other kids and make them feel welcomed. The first boy their age that came was Travis. Ethan immediately went up to Travis and said, "Hi Travis!" Zachery followed right behind and said, "Do you want to play?" Travis' family have also come every week and Travis, Ethan, and Zachery along with other children have become good friends.

Beginning this coming weekend, we will begin to go back out to knock on more doors. Even after meeting with the first group of families, we still feel the necessity to keep going out to meet more people. The need of the gospel is great here, but the challenge is to find ways to meet and connect particularly with the unsaved ones. Our burden is driving us to think creatively. We are trying to meet the youth through music. We are trying to meet mothers through a children's play time. We feel many more avenues are needed to be able to connect with people.

What is growing and developing here is a culture of reaching and connecting with people. Christ's love for people is a powerful force. Many in their twenties and thirties actually live very lonely lives. The church life is becoming a place that is very receiving, warm, and open to people. People's guards are coming down. They are able to be who they are without having to live up to any standard or expectation. This kind of environment is a place of real healing where oil and wine are able to be poured into everyone's emotional wounds.

We are also looking to see what the Lord will initiate and how He will burden these families to serve. Already two mothers have offered to serve with the children on the Lord's day. One of the husbands said that his wife was very joyful serving. He said, "Isn't this what it's all about?"

We are all very joyful that the people of the North Hills are able to experience a church life that is warm and receiving as well as being able to provide a place for those who have a desire to serve. We expect many more families to be introduced to such a corporate experience of Christ. We expect many more brothers and sisters to be perfected to serve the Lord. We expect the gospel to have a dynamic impact on the people of the North Hills.

## THE MINISTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY (4)

“...RECEIVE ONE  
ANOTHER AS CHRIST  
ALSO RECEIVED YOU...”

(ROMANS 15:7)

*“When our ability to honor one another is lost, the ground to build up the church is lost.”*

### HOLDING TO THE GROUND OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

According to the Bible, God’s move on this earth has two major aspects: the churches and the work. God gained a group of workers and gave them as gifts to the churches. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, “And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.” These are the gifts given by God to the churches. They are workers God has given to supply and perfect the saints and to serve the churches, bringing them into God’s desire so that the churches might be built up as the Lord’s golden lampstands on this earth for His testimony.

We must see the church. In order to build up the church, we must be in the local churches, because God has only given us the churches in their localities as the places for His church to be built up. This is clearly portrayed in the Bible. God only has one church in each locality. The local churches bear no name, for the church universal bears no name. The church is the church. You cannot say that any church is a church of somebody or something. If you do, you divide the children of God into sects.

The Bible tells us that in Rome there is a simply the church in Rome, and in Corinth, the church of God in Corinth. We cannot find any other names used for the local assemblies in the Bible. Why has God insured this? It is because His desire is to keep His people in oneness. There is no other way ordained by God. It is God’s wisdom to cause us to see that there is but one church in this universe, which includes all saints everywhere

throughout time, and that when the church is manifested on the earth, it is manifested through the local churches. Every local church is the appearance of the universal church on this earth. This is the ground we are standing on today.

However, we cannot say that we are the local church, and then go on to refer to some other believer as Presbyterian, etc. To say such a thing reveals a sectarian spirit. You cannot just draw a circle and identify only those meeting with you as the church, and mentally assign others to other circles labeled "Presbyterian," "Lutheran," "Baptist," and so on. There is only one church in each locality. In Cleveland there is the church in Cleveland. There might be some who call themselves as Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Baptists, etc., but all the believers are included in the local church. They are all our brothers and sisters. If we do not include them, the ground of our so-called local church will be wrong, and what we call the church will not be the local church, but rather a local sect. This is a very serious matter.

We must have a spirit today to receive all the children of God. This is the right spirit. Whenever I meet a brother or sister who meets in the denominations, I always try to show them I love them. We cannot accept the denominations they attach themselves to, but we should love all our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We should endeavor to fellowship with them. If we have such a spirit, we truly are practicing the local ground. If a worker goes out to preach the gospel, he can never make those he

helps to get saved, his group. Instead, he should bring people to meet upon the local ground of oneness. The local churches do not belong to anyone; they belong to God and they belong to the saints. They do not belong to any of God's workers. We all should understand this.

#### RECEIVING ALL THE BELIEVERS

Brother Lee once asked, "If three elders are serving together, and one of them insists upon sprinkling, what then should be done?" Some answered, "We should explain the truth to him clearly that the whole person should be dipped into the water." Brother Lee answered, "It is not so. If someone insists on sprinkling, I will even hold the bowl of water for him." Brother Lee was very broad in receiving others. If you insist that Christ is not God, or teach that God is not triune, we can never accept that. Things such as this are heresy. Sprinkling, tongue-speaking, and even the forms of baptism, however, are not such fundamental things. Who has such a measure today, to accommodate all the different practices? Practically speaking, we should be able to bear such differences. Otherwise, there is no oneness. We really need the Lord's mercy to walk in the Lord's recovery properly.

#### HONOR AMONG THE LOCAL CHURCHES

Allow me to give another example. The elders in Taipei once went to see Brother Lee and said, "We have an idea how to lead the churches in Taiwan. And after

Taiwan, we will go on to work in South-east Asia." Brother Lee answered, "If you are elders in Taipei, then take care of Taipei. You should not extend your influence to other churches." Brother Lee's comment had to do with their standing. If they were coming to him as elders in Taipei, they had no authority to care for other churches in Taiwan or Southeast Asia. However, if they were apostles in the work, their plan could have been something to fellowship about. Peter, who was an elder in Jerusalem, went out among the churches as an apostle. When he was in Jerusalem, he took care of the church in Jerusalem and shepherded the saints in the church there. But when he went out, he did not go out according to his status as an elder in Jerusalem, but rather in his status as an apostle of the Lord. Thus, he labored in two different statuses.

A local church should not control or interfere in the affairs of another local church. I fear that many today are condemning churches in other localities for what they are or are not practicing. Paul said, "Do not judge anything before the time" (1 Cor. 4:5). How serious this is!

#### HONOR AMONG THE WORKERS

How did workers such as Peter, Paul, and Apollos labor together? In Titus 3:13, Paul charged Titus to take care of the needs of Apollos. This means that the workers were doing the same work and helping one another. How beautiful what is portrayed here is! If there are groups of coworkers serving the churches,

serving the saints, cherishing one another, honoring one another, and taking care of one another, how wonderful is such a situation. They will be the workers you can trust. And they will be able to build up the churches. On the other hand, if they attempted to "deal" with one another and reviled and criticized one another, then you would not trust that they were those who could build up the churches.

After Paul went to Corinth and built up the church there, he did not feel he had the right to prohibit other workers from going to Corinth. The Bible shows us that such a thing is not justified. For example, if there is a meeting hall in Taipei, and the elders in Taipei came to the United States and built another meeting hall, declaring that it belonged to Taipei, that would not be Biblical. We must see that what a worker must do is to present his portion to the local churches. He cannot do anything else besides this. He can never put any church in his pocket and make it his church. Such a practice could only be something of the flesh.

Therefore, the workers have to be very careful. They should not spread any rumors against other workers, either privately or publicly, otherwise they are not qualified to work in God's New Testament economy. If there is any problem among the workers, they should come together in fellowship to take care of the matter. They should never revile one another. Such a thing will only cause the churches to experience damage.



The workers should also perfect the saints in the local churches. Once a worker feels he has carried out his burden, he should depart. Paul never had any desire to gain a local church so that it might belong to him. What he did was to fulfill his apostleship by perfecting the saints unto the building up of the Body of Christ. This is the pattern revealed in the Bible, and this is also what we should pay attention to today. If we labor according to our own concept and attempt to build up many branches of our own church, that would be a human endeavor. In God's economy it is not so. The church in Corinth did not belong to Paul; Cephas could come, and not only Cephas, but Apollos also, and Barnabas as well, even though Paul was the one who raised that church up. Paul never closed the door, saying, "I charge you, saints in Corinth, not to allow Apollos to come to you." Indeed, not only Apollos came, but Cephas as well. I believe that Barnabas also visited, for Paul's mention of Barnabas in First Corinthians 9:6 indicates that the saints in Corinth were very familiar with Barnabas.

Once the matter of mutual honoring is lost among us, we lose the ground upon which the church is built. Therefore, this matter is extremely serious.

#### **WALK ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD**

Life is crucial, and pursuing the Lord and loving the Lord are also crucial. The way we take, however, is also crucial. If we do not

walk properly, we will lose much of the Lord's blessing. Therefore, may the Lord be merciful to us. We really desire to walk in the way of His recovery in this age, the way that is fully according to the Bible. We do not have a headquarters which directs all the local churches, nor are the churches united together in a federation, nor can one local church establish "branches" in other cities. Such things are not according to the Bible.

If someone were to come to us and say, "Brothers, you are off, therefore we must raise up our own congregation," then, brothers and sisters, you should tell such a one, "Get behind me. There is no such thing. You are dividing the Body of Christ." Let us discern things accurately and walk according to the Bible. May we be kept in the Lord's recovery to follow the Lord with a pure heart, and may these words be of benefit to you. If anyone is to judge us, he should be able to see that what we practice is according to the word of God, and that we are serving the Lord with a pure and clear conscience. May the Lord be merciful to us.

Frank Lin

*(This is the last of four messages given by Brother Lin this past January in Cleveland, Ohio. The first three may be found in Fellowship Journal Issue Numbers 5, 6, and 7 of this year. All are translated from the Chinese printed messages.)*

# THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

## MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE: APPROVEDNESS (1)

“BUT I HOPE IN THE LORD JESS TO SEND TIMOTHY TO YOU SHORTLY, THAT I ALSO MAY BE ENCOURAGED BY KNOWING THE THINGS CONCERNING YOU. FOR I HAVE NO ONE LIKE-SOULED WHO WILL GENUINELY CARE FOR WHAT CONCERNS YOU; FOR ALL SEEK THEIR OWN THINGS, NOT THE THINGS OF CHRIST JESUS. BUT YOU KNOW HIS APPROVEDNESS...” PHIL. 2:19-22

### INTRODUCTION

According to Paul, the Philippian saints knew of Timothy's approvedness (Phil. 2:22). This implies that the church in Philippi and the saints approved of Timothy's service. Paul, the servant of the Lord who was laboring among the churches, also approved Timothy, as well as Epaphroditus. Since Paul had been approved by God, his approval also carried weight. Therefore, approvedness is not only something that those who serve must possess before God; it is also something that should be acknowledged by the churches, the saints, and the workers who labor among the churches.

Approvedness, however, only comes after testing. If, after testing, we are found approved by both God and the saints, we can become a source of blessing to the churches, for God only entrusts His economy to those who are approved.

### PAUL'S APPROVEDNESS AS AN APOSTLE

The Bible is very explicit about Paul's approvedness (1 Thes. 2:4). Because of his approvedness, Paul's ministry and service were of great and lasting value. Due to Paul's approvedness, we have received so much!

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “If to others I am not an apostle, yet surely I am to you; for you in the Lord are the seal of my apostleship” (1 Cor. 9:2). The Corinthians' spiritual existence in the Lord was proof of Paul's apostleship. Paul had begotten them through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15) and had experienced building up through his ministry (2 Cor. 12:19). Paul's apostleship had the seal of approvedness.

There are eight factors that fostered approvedness in Paul: (1) his sincerity, (2) his clear stand, (3) his pursuit of the truth, (4) his desire for fellowship, (5) his living unto the Lord, (6) his submission to God's sover-

eighty, (7) his fruitfulness and effectiveness, and (8) his ability to teach.

### I. SINCERITY AND DESPERATION

The first factor for Paul's approvedness was his sincerity, a virtue very much related to desperation and burden. Anyone who sincerely loves the church will also be desperate and burdened for whatever profits it. Anyone who sincerely loves someone will be desperate and burdened for that person's profit. In order to be approved, it is not sufficient merely to say, "I love the Lord." You must also exhibit a kind of exercise that indicates your sincerity.

Even before his salvation, Paul was marked by sincerity. Because he was so sincere in his zeal towards God, he went as far as to track down the followers of Jesus and drag them off to prison and even to their deaths. The zeal with which he "served" God was outstanding!

Paul's sincerity also manifested itself in how earnestly he prayed and fasted after the Lord appeared to him. The Lord Himself took note of Paul's sincerity when He said, "Behold, he is praying" (Acts 9:11)!

Then, immediately after he was received by the brothers, he was so burdened to preach about Jesus that the Jews sought to kill him. The disciples had to lower him in a basket so he could escape (Acts 9:24-25). He then went to Jerusalem and disputed with the Hellenists until they also wanted to kill him (9:29). Wherever Paul went, there was a strong reaction! The Jews in

Thessalonica said that Paul and those with him "upset the world" (17:6). Before Felix the governor, Paul was charged with being "a pest and an agitator of insurrections" (24:5). Paul's sincerity was irrepresible.

Paul was so sincerely burdened that perhaps he should have been called, "Paul the Burdened"! Of course, he was also very rich in truth, experience, and vision. In every way he was a great apostle. But what primarily characterized Paul was his sincerity and burden.

Brother Witness Lee was a good example of a brother who was always very burdened. When he was in China in the 1930's, there was a revival in the church raised up in his hometown of Chefoo. Satan attacked this move of the Lord. Brother Lee was imprisoned by the Japanese army and became very ill. Later, he was released by the Japanese and his health recovered. Instead of the church being devastated, the saints began to offer what they owned to the Lord and to the church. Out of this corporate consecration, much was offered for a migration to inner Mongolia. Many churches were raised up through this migration. But the Lord did not stop there. After this, Brother Lee was used to restore Brother Nee's ministry. Why was the Lord able to do so much? Brother Lee exercised himself with much burden.

Soon afterwards, the communists took over China. Brother Lee moved to Taiwan, and the Lord brought about another revival. The

number of saints meeting in Taipei increased from 500 to 50,000 over a brief period of time. Brother Lee, however, did not rest in the midst of a spiritual success. He was burdened for the Lord to do more. He traveled to Malaysia, the Philippines, and Hong Kong. Much like in China, the enemy attacked and a turmoil broke out in Taiwan. This did not stop Brother Lee. He traveled to the United States, and the Lord continued to accomplish much. Decade after decade, Brother Lee seemed to continually revolutionize himself. He was always burdened that the Lord would advance in him and among the churches. He always wanted to see the Lord gain a further breakthrough. This is what made him a great servant of the Lord. He was someone who was always burdened.

#### ARE WE DESPERATE?

Thus, the first characteristic that garners a person approvedness is his sincere burden. If we are someone who is sincere and desperate, within us there will be a burden, a drive. It is very easy to take spiritual things for granted and handle them in a common way. Many are pure, faithful, and even operative in their serving life; their person may be very respectable; their motive pure; they may love the Lord and be rich in truth and experience, but if a person is not desperate and burdened, he will not possess genuine approvedness, nor will he see much blessing from the Lord.

Desperation and burden make us "salty." When we are desperate

and burdened, the things we do will bear a particular fragrance. Our preaching of the gospel will have impact, for others will respond to the element of approvedness.

Unfortunately, Americans do not know what it means to be desperate about much of anything. If, however, we are not desperate and charged for the Lord to advance, we are merely playing around. Be desperate for the profit of the church. Your desperation decides your approvedness, and such desperation is a result of your sincerity. Do not just say that you are sincere and that you love the Lord. Ask yourself whether or not you are desperate. Being desperate in sincerity is the first characteristic necessary for approvedness.

#### II. STAND UPON YOUR BURDEN

The second factor that produced Paul's approvedness as an apostle was his clarity of burden. You must be very clear about what is burdening you so that others will be able to realize it as well. They should be able to see that you are giving your whole person and your whole life to carry out your burden. Even the way you walk and live should reveal that your life is a burdened life. Those who live such a life possess approvedness.

When Paul preached the gospel, everyone knew what he was doing. Immediately after his baptism, Paul proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues (Acts 9:20). As we have already mentioned, Paul's speaking caused others even to seek his death, for he stood squarely upon what he real-

ized had been committed to him.

In Second Corinthians 11, Paul declared that as a minister of Christ he was in labors more abundantly, in imprisonments more abundantly, in stripes excessively, and even in deaths often. He was whipped five times and beaten three times. Once he was stoned. Three times he was shipwrecked. He even spent a night and a day “in the deep.” Paul’s living clearly testified to others that he was a person charged with a burden.

If you are burdened, you will desire to see that the Lord would accomplish His work and that the saints would receive the highest profit, even to the point that you may appear to have lost your reason. If you are burdened like Paul was, you will live and die for the saints. Your time and your manner of life will have the saints in view. Whether or not you offend others will be of no concern. When others disapprove of what you are doing, you will not be put off, for your burden will drive you to see that the saints receive what they need to receive. Thus, in order to be approved, your living and person should match your burden and desperation.

### III. PURSUE THE TRUTH

The third factor related to Paul’s approvedness was his pursuit after truth. In Galatians 1:17 we are told that at one point Paul went away to Arabia. The Bible never says how long he remained there. However, the Bible does reveal that the length

of time between his salvation and his visit to Jerusalem was three years (Gal. 1:15-18; Acts 9:17-26). It was during this time that he went to Arabia. Many Bible scholars believe that Paul devoted himself to study the Word during this time. Afterwards, the Old Testament was no longer the same book Paul had come to know at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3). It had instead become a book full of vision and revelations of Christ. Paul’s understanding of the Old Testament even far surpassed that of the original twelve apostles. He understood the Old Testament according to the revelation of the New Testament. All of this took place because Paul sought the truth in the Bible immediately after his salvation.

Approvedness cannot be manifested in you if you are someone who handles the Bible indifferently. You must be a person who pursues the truth with your whole being. When you are young, rather than paying attention to matters concerning service, pay attention to equipping yourself in the truth of the Bible. When you are young, how much you can do for the Lord should be secondary to becoming equipped, enriched, and constituted with the riches of the divine truth.

You must know the divine revelation found in the Word; and you must know the riches of all the revelations the Lord has given to us through His servants, especially brothers Watchman Nee and brother Witness Lee—you need to be in these things (1 Timothy 4:15).

If you do not develop a rich constitution in truth, how will the Lord be able to use you later in your life? You may be able to give a message or even a conference, but I am afraid that what you know will quickly be exhausted. If you want to be approved as a servant of the Lord, you must pursue the truth.

Spiritual truths cannot be bought cheaply. Therefore, every year work out a plan to memorize a certain number of verses. Develop a schedule to read the Bible a number of times each year. Devise a plan by which you read a number of spiritual books every year. Always consider how to further equip yourself with the divine riches.

In twenty or thirty years, how many among us will be sufficiently equipped? If none are pursuing in this way today, we have no future. Who will be able to minister the truth? Will there be anyone with an abundance of riches to dispense to the saints in the church life? If your riches are exhausted and spent after only four or five messages, you will lack approvedness as a servant of the Lord.

Brother Nee said that typically when the Lord moves, the first generation is full; the second generation is half-full; and the third generation is empty. Will you be a generation that is empty?

Pursue the truth earnestly. People should realize that you know both the Lord and the Word. If you are such a person, others will honor you. Such approvedness will be based on how much you have labored in the truth before the Lord.

#### IV. DESIRE FELLOWSHIP

The fourth factor of Paul's approvedness as an apostle was his continual exercise to keep himself in fellowship.

There is nothing more difficult for a Christian than learning to fellowship, because fellowship terminates, confines, limits, and decreases us. Instead of being limited by fellowship, Americans like to be free and left alone. We all feel that we are entitled to our own way and opinion. Whether it is politics, the national economy, or the best way to grow grass, everyone has an opinion. In our culture, everyone is even encouraged to express their opinions. However, spiritually speaking, we experience the greatest blessing when we fellowship, and to be truly wise is to seek and have fellowship. Fellowship indeed confines us, but while experiencing its confinement, we receive the greatest blessing.

#### PAUL SOUGHT FELLOWSHIP THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE

Even from the very beginning of his Christian life, Paul sought fellowship. After he escaped from Damascus by being lowered over the wall, Paul went to Jerusalem to seek fellowship (Acts 9:25-26). However, when he got to Jerusalem, no one wanted to have fellowship with him, because they all feared him since he had persecuted the churches. Only Barnabas was willing to take Paul and introduce him to the apostles.

Without Barnabas, Paul's Christian life would have been very different. Barnabas probably initiated the fellowship between Paul and Peter. When Paul met Peter, he may have begun to share all that he saw in Arabia. I believe Peter probably did not understand much of what Paul tried to communicate. Even 30 years later, Peter wrote that, apart from revelation, Paul's letters were hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:15-16), yet he still referred to them as Scripture.

Regardless of others' ability to apprehend what Paul had seen, Paul still sought fellowship in humility. Peter must have also had an understanding concerning many things. This fellowship would have been a mutual help to both of them. They would not have been comparing whose revelation was superior. They were both servants of the Lord who had been shown things by God.

Paul must have also realized that it would have been impossible for him to work with Peter in Jerusalem in the midst of all that Judaistic influence. Therefore they came to an agreement, and Peter, James, and John extended the "right hand of fellowship" to Paul and Barnabas, that they would bring the gospel to the uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7-10).

FELLOWSHIP SEEKS THE FLOW OF LIFE  
AND  
A MUTUAL DISPENSING OF THE RICHES  
OF CHRIST

We typically think that fellowship should result in some sort of decision. But in fellowship, there

does not need to be any conclusion. No one should insist on anything, no one should impose anything; and no one should be subdued by anyone. In fellowship, the only thing we should focus on is Christ. We fellowship to bring in a flow of life and a mutual dispensing of the riches of Christ. Whatever you have should become a blessing to others and what others have should become a blessing to you.

PAUL'S CHRISTIAN LIFE AND HIS  
CHURCH LIFE  
WERE CHARACTERIZED BY FELLOWSHIP

Paul always took this way. His was a life of fellowship. After people in Jerusalem sought to kill him, he returned to Tarsus (Acts 9:30), somewhat an outcast. During this time he seemed to be cut off from fellowship. What do you think he did while in Tarsus? I believe he simply continued seeking after Christ and the truth in the Word. There is no record that he raised up a church there.

Eventually Barnabas (whose name means "son of encouragement") came again to Paul (Acts 4:36; 11:25-26) and invited him to Antioch. The church life there brought Paul into a healthier and broader fellowship. In this fellowship his leadership began to develop. All races and all social classes were represented in Antioch. Then one day, while they were having fellowship and praying together, under the direction of the Holy Spirit Barnabas and Paul were sent out



(Acts 13:2-4). After their first journey, they decided to go back to visit those they had raised up (Acts 15:36). Unfortunately, Paul and Barnabas disagreed concerning whether or not to take Mark along with them. Ultimately Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and headed north overland (15:37-41). Seemingly, Barnabas fell out of the picture and was no longer in fellowship with Paul. At this point it would be very easy to judge Barnabas as a failure.

Barnabas' departure can indeed be seen as a mistake or a failure, but that did not mean that he was no longer of any use to the Lord. We are prone to think that if someone has a defect, they should just be tossed aside. But the secret of fellowship is to *not* toss anyone aside. Anyone who knows how to fellowship would never write off any brother. Fellowship never says, "Either you are for me or you are against me." Even in eternity, I believe Barnabas would say that he was sorry for not going with Paul on that journey. But I am so thankful that Paul was someone who knew what fellowship was. He not only had fellowship with Peter, James, and John in Jerusalem, but he even allowed Barnabas to fellowship with the churches he raised up. Barnabas did not seem to be any longer at the forefront of the work (no one said "I am of Barnabas" in 1 Corinthians 1:12) but Paul still encouraged him to go there.

Although Paul practiced a life of fellowship, he never compromised

with regards to his vision. When Barnabas wanted to take Mark on that second journey, the Lord led Paul to disagree, so he had to be faithful to that. Yet he still loved Barnabas and included him in his labor, even though Barnabas could not be one with him. He did not exclude him from any of the churches he raised up. He still cared for him.

#### FELLOWSHIP IS INCLUSIVE, NOT EXCLUSIVE

Fellowship has the principle of being inclusive, not exclusive. A life of fellowship enables you to realize how great and grand the one Body of Christ is. Therefore, be careful as you contact other brothers, for if you are selective, you will forfeit this approvedness. Due to our preferences we are naturally selective, but we all must realize that fellowship should be absolutely inclusive.

Apollos was someone who gave the apostle Paul many headaches in Corinth, but he said, "I planted, Apollos watered" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Instead of saying Apollos watered, I would have said that Apollos made a mess. He added very little of value to the church in Corinth. But Paul did not say this, for he knew what fellowship was. He knew how to appreciate the value of others. Thus he was able to speak about Apollos in such a sweet way.

As you seek fellowship, do not seek a so-called "unity." Do not seek after oneness in practice or sharing the same terminology. Seek after the enjoyment of the divine



life in the sweetness of fellowship.

Whoever practices fellowship and has the reality of the life of fellowship is very inclusive. This is absolutely in opposition to religion. Religious people must decide what side someone is on before they will fellowship with them.

The history of the Plymouth Brethren should be instructive to us. After a dispute on some truth, John Nelson Darby would no longer have fellowship with Benjamin Newton. Darby then took issue with George Mueller, for Mueller's locality had received some who had been in fellowship with Newton. Soon afterwards, the Brethren movement splintered into hundreds and hundreds of divisions. What was the problem? They all said that they were for Christ. But approvedness does not issue from whether or not you are for Christ. Approvedness practically issues from a willingness to fellowship.

If you meet a brother who meets with a denomination, are you able to have fellowship with him? Or do you disregard him, assuming he is religious? The principle of fellowship requires us to be inclusive. Is it not likely that a pastor in a Baptist church is someone who is for Christ? Suppose you meet someone who tells you that he has an inner-city ministry. It is very good that he has such a desire. Rather than appreciating his burden to reach the poor, however, some may tell him that he does not have the proper understanding of what a ministry is! Fellowship is characterized by inclusiveness. A person

who is able to fellowship is a person who is able to include rather than exclude others.

FELLOWSHIP NEED NOT ARRIVE AT  
CONCLUSIONS:  
IT IS SIMPLY THE FLOW OF LIFE

Fellowship is the flowing of life. In fellowship we establish our life-relationship with one another. Fellowship does not necessarily mean that some direction will be set. Many times we say we want to have fellowship, but what we really mean is that we want to come to some conclusion about a particular matter and decide on a course of action. That may happen, but conclusions and practical decisions are not the main objectives of fellowship.

Paul's life was a life of seeking after fellowship, yet the Bible rarely indicates that he sought some decision during fellowship with others. He made a determined effort to have fellowship with the church in Jerusalem, but he was not always successful. In Galatians 2:9, Paul was given the right hand of fellowship that he should go to the Gentiles. But in Acts 15:1, men from Judea came to Antioch and began to teach the Gentiles that they should be circumcised. The conclusion reached in fellowship between James, Peter, and John with Paul does not seem to have held. At that time James had concluded the fellowship with a solution to the issue of circumcision that was even put in writing (Acts 15:6-21). But it does not seem that this conclusion had

any effect on those causing the trouble. I believe Paul was happy to take the letter written by the brothers explaining how the Gentile believers should be free of the regulations. He probably read it from church to church as he traveled. However, the men from James (Galatians 2:12), the James that “settled the issue” at the conference in Jerusalem, still went from church to church to undo Paul’s work of the gospel. They still seemed to insist that Gentile believers needed to be circumcised. During Paul’s final visit to Jerusalem, he had a time of fellowship with James (Acts 21:17-30) and immediately afterwards he got into trouble and was thrown into prison. Regardless whether or not decisions made during fellowship are honored, fellowship is still to be valued.

Always seek after fellowship. Do not enter into arguments. Do not make issues. Do not try to correct matters. When these are the things being emphasized, fellowship ceases. Trust that fellowship is able to heal all wounds. While you are spending time with brothers who may not know you, fellowship brings in a relatedness through the divine life you both share.

## V. LIVING UNTO THE LORD ALONE

A fifth factor that determines whether someone possesses approvedness is whether or not he or she lives to the Lord alone.

Why does a wife love her husband? Is it because he gives her a hug before he leaves for work? Is it

because he makes enough money for her to live comfortably? No. A wife loves her husband because her heart is shut up to everything except him. Recently, I have had to care for my wife due to a sickness. She recently recovered some of her strength. So I asked her, “My dear wife, since you have a little strength, would you be able to cook something for me?” (for I really had been missing her cooking). She was so happy to make that one dish for me. It tasted wonderful to me, and she likewise experienced joy as someone who lives unto her husband.

Before you can bear the mark of approvedness, you must be tested as to whether or not you live unto Christ alone. We confront many things in our Christian lives. We like to sing songs about how much we are for the Lord and His recovery, but why is it so many have found it possible to leave? Many have departed because they were for the Lord’s recovery rather than for the Lord Himself! To be for the Lord is very simple. But when some say that they are for the Lord’s recovery, they may mean that they are for a certain feeling they experience when we come together. One day, however, they may find that things are no longer the same and they are stumbled. Others are attracted to the Lord’s recovery as something that is going to take over the whole earth, and then find they are not allowed to go to where the action seems to be. Many then also depart.

During the course of your life a number of things will present themselves as things to live to. You could

live unto a certain move of the Lord. You could live unto a certain work. You could live unto a certain teaching. You could live unto many different things. All these things may even be of Christ. I do not say they are wrong. But if you are for Christ, and if Christ is for His recovery, then you will be for His recovery. But if Christ is no longer clear to you, and you are only for what you consider to be His recovery, sooner or later you will become disillusioned.

Among us there is an absence of people between the ages of 28 and 40. The churches have been here for the past 30 to 35 years. There should be many among us who are under 40 years of age. Where are they? Many ended up being for something besides the Lord Himself. Many things may be very high and even spiritual, but if that something is not the Lord Himself, it will not be able to take you through the real testing when it comes. One can only obtain approvedness when one's stand is unto the Lord alone.

#### PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF LIVING UNTO THE LORD ALONE

Paul passed through a number of stages in his Christian life. At the end of his second ministry journey, while he was in Ephesus, he reasoned with many in the synagogue. They wanted him to remain with them a while longer, but Paul was desperate to leave and go to Jerusalem. Yet while he was in Jerusalem there was no record that any of the leading brothers saw him. Acts says,

"He greeted the church and went down to Antioch." It did not seem that anyone cared about his visit. Yet to Paul's feeling, he had to go for the Lord's interest. Therefore, he was willing to pay any price for the possibility of fellowship, for he was one who lived unto the Lord.

When a person decides to live a life solely unto the Lord, his life will become something above outward circumstances. It would be very difficult to find someone who experienced more tribulations than the apostle Paul. He could have said that he was very unfortunate, and that things were hard, but since he lived unto Christ, all these situations nourished him. Such hardships became the means of his strength.

A brother may become very successful in business and obtain a very comfortable living. Then he may decide to quit his job to pursue the Lord. Should he be prevented? Once the Lord told me concerning one such brother, "Do not frustrate My work. Let him live to Me." What price is too unreasonable? If it is for Christ and for Christ alone, the result will be something of the highest value.

Live your life unto the Lord. To live unto the Lord goes beyond just living for the Lord. Living unto the Lord means that Christ Himself is your goal. He becomes the center and focus of everything you do. Everyday Christ needs to be your aim. Live unto Christ.

When you are in the process of being tested, you will quickly find that you are for many things other than Christ. You may find that you

are for riches, that you are for teachings, or even that you are for revelations. You may find that you are for a happy church life and for healthy companionship. You may find that you are for being joyful. But no matter how good such things are, they should never replace Christ Himself. You will only experience approvedness when you are living unto Christ alone.

Throughout your whole life you will be tested in such a way. You will never be able to say that you are so mature that you no longer need to pursue the Lord and His riches, nor will you ever be so mature that you do not have to be sincere and burdened. The day you stop pursuing the Lord is the day you spiritually die. The day you turn from seeking fellowship is the day you become confined, narrow, and small. The day you cease living unto Christ is the day you lose your purity. At such a time, you will be discarded from the Lord's work.

You will find that the hardest thing for you to do in your spiritual life is to maintain your stand to live to Christ alone, for the more useful you become, the more your stand will be attacked, and the more you will find other things, even spiritual things, competing for Christ's place in your heart.

There was a time when Madame Guyon came under attack. Some even considered her to be a witch. Do you know what she did? She stayed in her room and wrote "A little bird I am, shut from the fields of air, and in my cage I sit and sing to Him who placed me there"

(Hymns #724). She was someone who had learned to live to Christ alone.

Every stage of your growth demands a further step of faithfulness unto the Lord. If you are not able to go on with the Lord, you may simply become a religious zealot. You have to seek the Lord's mercy, that throughout your whole life you are able to say that you live solely unto the Lord.

## VI. LIVING UNDER GOD'S SOVEREIGN ARRANGEMENT

In order to be approved by God, you must be one who receives God's sovereign arrangement.

In 2 Corinthians 11: 23 Paul wrote, "In labors more abundantly, in imprisonments more abundantly, in stripes excessively, in deaths often." Some might judge that Paul lived a life that was marked with misfortune. However, Paul was actually someone who knew how to live under God's sovereign arrangement.

When Paul was challenged about his apostleship by the Judaizers, he responded, "Ministers of Christ are they? I speak as being beside myself, I more so! In labors more abundantly, in imprisonments more abundantly, in stripes excessively, in deaths often" (2 Cor. 11:23). I like Paul's boldness. He realized that all the hardships he suffered were matters God had arranged on his behalf.

Brothers, remember that you must live solely unto the Lord. In addition, you must submit to all the

situations that God has arranged for you. The more you develop spiritually and become operational, the more difficult these things will become.

Paul informed us that he labored more excessively than anyone, and that he was imprisoned, flogged, and even in “deaths” (2 Cor. 11:23). If a person did not know the governmental arrangement of God, he would never be able to go through such things. Paul recognized God’s governmental arrangement. He passed through many hardships, believing that the Lord was with him, and continued to preach the gospel whenever the opportunity arose. He was always able to encourage others to fight for the Lord’s kingdom. Therefore, he said that he labored more abundantly, was in imprisonments more abundantly, was in stripes excessively, and in deaths often.

Paul did not become bitter due to such things, but instead experienced something of Christ, proving his apostleship to the Corinthians.

Paul also spoke about being beaten with rods. The Jews used whips and the Gentiles used rods. Which was more painful? I believe the punishment under the Jews was more painful to Paul. The persecution you receive from your brothers will usually be much more severe than from others. Eventually even those you love will persecute you.

Paul was in danger with so many things. He was in danger from those of his own race, and in danger from the Gentiles. He was in danger in

the wilderness, in the sea, and in the cities. Finally, he said that he was in danger among false brothers. Do not think that a false brother is someone who is not saved. A false brother may be someone who replaces Christ with a certain belief, even to the point that they are willing to die for that belief.

Paul further reported that he was in labor and hardship; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; and fastings. When Paul had no food to eat nor water to drink, he fasted and prayed. He worked for the Lord in spite of coldness and nakedness. These were the conditions that accompanied him. Let me ask you, what is the life of a servant of the Lord? Paul describes it. Be prepared if you wish to serve the Lord. To be approved, one must be able to discover and experience Christ within whatever circumstances God arranges.

#### NOT COMPLAINING, BUT PRAISING

We typically complain about things. We complain that our house is not big enough, that our bed is not soft enough, and that the thermostat is set too cold or too warm. Americans are very soft. It is very hard for an American to endure any hardship. If you desire to be approved, however, you must be able to receive all the governmental arrangements God has prepared for you.

If you have an elder who is unreasonable, simply praise the Lord. If you have a co-worker who is

impossible, praise the Lord. When you have to deal with people who seem to waste your time, praise the Lord. When you stand up to minister something for the Lord and everyone just looks at the floor, praise the Lord. To achieve approvedness is not an easy matter. Realize that in every situation, the Lord is there, especially in your hardships and failures. If you are to be approved, you will be approved by testing, and the most difficult testing will take place within your circumstances. God will raise up all kinds of situations in your environment to test you.

Every truth you know needs to be proven by testing. Once you see the oneness of the Body, that revelation will need to be tested. Once you say that you are for the local churches, it will need to be tested. Once you see that you are crucified with Christ, that too will be tested.

Every truth you think you know will be tested in your experience. In everything that goes on in your personal life, in your personal spiritual life, in your overcoming your personal defeated life, in your life at work, in your family life, in all the things that go on among all the churches... realize that the Lord is in command. Do not think that you are in control or that others are in control. No, the Lord is in control at all times and in all situations.

#### THE LORD IS IN CONTROL

There will come times when your personal relationships with others dear to you will also be

touched by Him. These are the situations that cause us the most agony. Such situations, however, are what form our relationship with the Lord into a romance.

When you discover that the Lord is truly involved in your life and in your relationships with others, you discover that there is more to life than the human things you seek to enjoy. There is more to life than the things you are able to do with your talent. There is a life that is higher and much better than this. When we exercise ourselves to be one with Christ, many things will begin to happen. If you tell me that not much happens in your life, then I would say that it is because you are not standing with the Lord. When you stand one with the Lord, many things will begin to happen. Every situation that occurs becomes profitable for your growth. But there is one thing you must be careful of, and that is not to lose heart.

In the past we often sang the song, "We are for the Lord's recovery." As we sang that song, we often became excited. Many of those who were shouting, however, have departed. Why? They never realized that the Lord is the government in the church life, in their personal lives, and that over all things, the Lord is in control.

SPIRITUAL THINGS ARE ONLY REAL WHEN  
WE ARE IN OUR SPIRIT

Spiritual things can only be real when you are in spirit. Even if you are experiencing a very high morale and you are very charged

emotionally, it doesn't mean much, for spiritual things can only be realized when you are in spirit.

It is one thing to be in the mood of something, and it is another thing to be in the reality. You can become very happy and may even feel that you are the future of the Lord's recovery. But when you come practically to the local church life, you may find that it not so easy, and you may begin to question everything. On the one hand, you realize that you cannot go back to the world. Yet, on the other hand, to invest yourself into the church life and into the Lord's work requires so much equipping in truth, so much experience of Christ, possessing a spiritual burden, and being genuinely committed by the Lord to carry it out. You find it easy to live within the structure of the church life, yet impossible to live organically in it. What should you do?

If you have given yourself to pursue the Lord, do not allow yourself to settle into a church life structure. Live organically within the church. At the same time always remember that there is the matter of the Lord's government. When you go back to your local church and you find it hard to operate, remember that the Lord's government is over you. One of the key things necessary for us to be approved is the ability to receive everything from the Lord as something of His government. There often will be no logical explanation or good reason for a thing. Many things will not seem fair. But all are according to the Lord's government. You must lay hold of reality in spirit.

## VII. BEING FRUITFUL AND EFFECTIVE IN ONE'S LABOR

Another factor necessary for approvedness is being fruitful and effective in one's labor. Do not look down at the fruitfulness. True, a person's fruit does not prove everything. If a person is very fruitful, that does not necessarily mean that he is spiritual. A person may be very successful, but that does not mean that he is with the Lord. Some people can develop a large work merely by natural means. But no one can say, "Hallelujah! I am spiritual because I never got one person saved!" just like no one can say they are spiritual if they have never shepherded anyone.

Your value has much to do with your operation. If your operation is limited, then everything about you will be limited. Wherever you are, you need to be burdened. Your burden will be manifested by your effectiveness in shepherding and laboring. When the saints are with you, they should be comforted. When the saints are with you, they should feel that there is hope. When the saints are with you, they should be able to grow. Whoever is with you should be able to develop.

Something is very wrong if you are without fruit for an entire year. Likewise, if after a year of serving the Lord, no one has been raised up by you to become operational or useful, there is also something wrong. I would refuse to live a life like that! I would not care about being tired, beat up, or having



difficulties. Regardless of the situation, I must be effective in my labor!

THOSE YOU SERVE SHOULD BE  
INSPIRED BY YOU

Those you serve should be inspired by you. Because of you, they should feel that the church life is worthwhile and that a life of serving the Lord is very meaningful. How good your meetings are does not matter. The only thing that matters is what is produced among the saints in life. The level of life must become so strong that people's understanding and manner of life begin to change before the Lord. If lives are being changed on account of your labor, then you know that you are approved by God.

Even the Lord considered the fruit He bore. He passed through so much suffering, but He did not boast in that. There is no verse in the whole Bible where the Lord boasted in His sufferings. Rather, He boasted in that which His sufferings produced. The Lord boasts of those begotten out of His crucifixion and resurrection. "Behold, I and the children whom God has given to Me" (Hebrews 2:13). He did not go through a process just for the sake of experiencing the process. He endured that process in order to bear fruit.

Brothers, if you desire to be approved by testing, you must pay attention to your ability to shepherd. You must consider your labor. If anyone declares himself to be a servant of the Lord, the fruit he pro-

duces and the effectiveness in his labor will speak for him. You cannot be the one to declare whether or not you are a servant of the Lord. Your fruit and your effectiveness will declare it. These are the two things that declare who you are. Every brother serving the Lord full-time must be desperate about his effectiveness, for it proves who you are and where you are with the Lord. It is abnormal for a full-time brother to labor in the same place for one or two years and have no fruit to show. If there is no fruit, then he should reconsider whether he should serve full-time. He should be fruitful. If he is not fruitful, then he should really be before the Lord. Our approvedness is determined by the fruit of our labor.

I like the Lord's proclamation, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me." Consider how many believers have been regenerated over the past twenty centuries through His work. All the glory is given to God, but they are still ones produced through the labor of the Lord Jesus.

In order to be approved by testing, your shepherding must bear a certain kind of effectiveness. Out of your labor a healthy church life must be raised up, or new churches must be developed. Something must be manifested from your labor. You must care for these things. A servant of the Lord cannot just tell others that they love the Lord and therefore everything is fine. Your approvedness must be borne out by testing.



## PAUL'S EXAMPLE

Paul was approved as a servant of the Lord. Why? First, he had a vision that brought about desperation and a burden. Second, he pursued to be equipped in the riches of truth. Third, he sought fellowship. Fourth, he insisted on Christ alone. (How much easier his life would have been if he had played politics even just a little!) Fifth, Paul lived as one under God's sovereign arrangement. He never complained about his situation. Sixth, Paul was very effective and fruitful in his labor.

Concerning Paul's labor among the churches, he said that the anxious concern for all the churches was a crowd of cares pressing upon him daily (2 Cor. 11:28). His concern for the churches crowded upon his heart. Paul lived to shepherd and to labor for the Lord's testimony. He cried out, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?" (11:29). It is a common matter to see a brother stumble. But it did not matter to Paul. If a brother was stumbled, he still burned. Then he said, "If I must boast, I will boast of the things of my weakness" (11:30).

Beginning with 2 Corinthians 11:23, Paul testified against the Judaizing apostles. "Ministers of Christ are they? I speak as being beside myself, I more so!" He was very buoyant. He could boast in testimony after testimony. He went through everything by trusting in the Lord and by trusting in God's governmental arrangement.

He did not have much food, much clothing, or a place to live. His travels were accompanied with hardships. But what really caused him to suffer in his daily life was not any outward hardship, rather his concern for all the churches.

He was not interested in how many brothers were in the meetings. He cared for those who really needed to be cared for. Everyone loves to labor upon those who are doing well and who possess potential. When Paul said that he cared for the churches, however, he referred to those who were weak. When they were weak, he was weak. He shared the sensation of their weaknesses and their limitations. Typically we try to ignore those who gamble or smoke or do other such things. Paul was different. He was weak when others were weak.

### THE OPERATING PRINCIPLE IN OUR LABOR AND SHEPHERDING: WE ARE IN WEAKNESS

Many times when we consider the saints in the church life, we consider who is for us or against us. Then, rather than giving the cold ones life, we bulldoze them out of the way and perhaps even feel victorious. However, when we labor or shepherd others, our realization should be that we are also those in weakness. When we desire that some would love the Lord more, we must see ourselves as someone struggling to love to the Lord. When we desire that someone consecrate himself to Christ, we must sense our own struggle to consecrate ourselves

to Him. When we desire that someone would give himself to Christ, we must realize that we are weak in giving ourselves to Christ. When we desire that the church would become prevailing, we must realize that we ourselves are just as weak as the weakest member.

When we look at the brothers and sisters, our deep sensation should be that we are impotent. This is why Paul said, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is stumbled and I myself do not burn?" When you see a brother who is not coming to the meetings, what should your feeling be? Your real feeling should be that you are burned. When a brother is offended because he was not ushered to the front row of the meeting or he thinks that an elder's speaking was a rebuke to him, you should say, "Who is stumbled and I myself do not burn? If I must boast, I will boast of the things of my weakness." This does not mean that you commit the weakness, but you should have the sensation of the weakness. Your feeling should be, "Lord, only You can build the church. Only You can cause people to love You. Only You can cause someone to consecrate themselves to You. Only You can draw people to pursue after You. In spiritual things, I can only be Your co-laborer. I cannot generate a love for You in anyone." To have this understanding is not a small thing.

Let me share an experience I had. I once caught an elder smoking. At that time I was a young brother and very pure. I thought

someone who had been with the Lord for a long time should be strong and prevailing, especially an elder. But rather than exposing him in his weakness, I prayed. In my prayer I shared a little in the feeling of his weakness. I prayed, "Lord, what should we do?" I can testify that this elder was not happy about his smoking at that time. Two or three weeks later, he gave a testimony, saying, "Do you realize we have no ability to overcome even the three inches of a cigarette?" Soon after that he dropped his smoking. It would have been easy to judge this brother and even expose him. However, that would have marked the end of my life before the Lord.

#### THE LORD IS A JEALOUS GOD

Young people like to see success. But the Lord hates any success we can claim for ourselves. The Lord is a jealous God. The Lord will come to any who seek success and trample it down. If you then ask the Lord what you should enjoy, since you cannot enjoy your success, He will tell you to enjoy the sensation of weakness. When you enjoy the sensation of weakness, you will labor more, become more burdened for the saints, and pray more for the saints. You will become more desperate for the saints and spend yourself more on the saints. You will know that there is no way that anyone can love the Lord, except through hard, diligent labor. This is a servant. A servant of the Lord does not live a life according to him-

self. A servant of the Lord lives a life according to Christ and according to the need of the saints. What a glorious life! This is a life that is approved by God.

### VIII. ABLE TO TEACH

The eighth factor to be approved is that one must have the ability to teach. Teaching is an art. It is very difficult to find a good teacher. Throughout my whole life, from grade one until I graduated from college, I can remember having one or two good Chinese teachers and one good philosophy teacher. Other than these few I cannot say that any of my teachers helped me much. Many teachers may have a lot to teach, but that does not necessarily mean that they are able to teach.

#### BEING ABLE TO TEACH WHAT THE LORD HAS CONSTITUTED IN YOU

Having the skill of teaching is more than just having eloquence. You must be able to teach what the Lord has constituted in you. You must be able to teach others that which the Lord has given you. If you are unable to teach according to what the Lord has given you, then you are merely a lecturer and not a teacher. Even in a university, teachers begin as instructors, and not as professors.

An instructor merely knows how to read the textbook to you. A professor, however, does not need a textbook. What he teaches is something constituted in him. He has built it up from many different

angles. This is what makes a good professor. Spiritually it is very much the same. In order to be approved, we must have the ability to teach what has been constituted into us.

#### BEING ABLE TO TEACH ACCORDING TO THE NEED OF THE SAINTS

A good teacher is also able to teach whatever the saints need. A good teacher is able to teach on the college level, as well as on the grade school level. His content may be the same for both students, but he realizes that each student will only understand according to the level he has reached.

When you teach according to the need of the saints, you do not try to sell your teachings to them. The saints should not feel as though they need to make a choice of either accepting what you have or rejecting it. They should not feel that if they are not one with you, then they are not one with the Lord. Your teachings should present a Christ that fits the need of whoever you are with.

The Lord went to see the Samaritan woman during the day, yet He went to see Nicodemus at night. When the Lord saw an educated person, He talked about high things. When the Lord talked with an uneducated person, He talked about simple things. The Lord Jesus was a good teacher who ministered according to the needs of whoever He met. This is a good teacher. In order to be approved, you must be able to teach the saints according to where they are at.

## TEACH ACCORDING TO THE ANOINTING

A good teacher is also able to teach according to the anointing. Without the anointing, any message will not be effective. You may have shared something at one time, but when you tried to repeat the same message, you probably found that it did not work as before. At one time with one congregation you may have found that what you shared was so anointed and so prevailing. At that time you may have felt that you finally have the perfect message, but in another meeting the Lord's presence was no longer with you. In order to be approved, you must be able to teach by Christ's anointing, and not rely merely on the content of your message.

### TEACHING NOT TO BE FOR ITSELF

A good teacher should never teach for the teaching itself. If you are a good teacher, your teaching should leave the saints with Christ Himself. With that Christ, there should be a dispensing of life and an operation of life. Your teaching should help the saints into God's economy. Your teaching should also result in an advance in the saints' practical living. Every teaching should help the saints come into a higher spiritual sphere. This is what is required to be approved as a servant of the Lord.

### PRESENT A CHARGE AND A BURDEN

A good teacher should always present a charge and a burden. I

am not satisfied when, after speaking to the saints, no charge or burden is generated. I do not like it when the saints merely say how good my message was, yet it has borne no effect to their living.

It is not sufficient for a teacher to produce Christ among the saints. It is not sufficient for a teacher to bring the saints into God's economy. It is not sufficient for a teacher to advance the saints in their growth in life and elevate their spiritual scope. A good ministering brother always produces some charge and burden among the saints. A good ministering brother should never feel relieved that the conference is over. A good conference should give everyone the feeling that something has just begun.

Due to your burden, your good teaching should always bring the saints into a further abiding in the Lord. Your teaching should be effective. Your teaching should be based on what you have received from the Lord, where the saints are spiritually, and how the Lord is leading with His anointing. Your teaching should bring people to the Lord, to God's economy, and elevate the saints to a higher level in their spiritual life. Your teaching should burden the saints. It should charge the saints. The saints should end up living another kind of life. If this is the case, then your teaching is effective and you are a good teacher. To be approved as Paul, you must be a good teacher.

-Titus Chu

## NO PARTICULAR TEACHING IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

*In the Lord's recovery we do not have any particular teaching. Some may say, "Brother Lee, have you not emphasized the matter of the church over the years? Isn't your teaching about the church particular? Certainly not. Although I have repeatedly ministered regarding the church, my teaching concerning it is not particular. My speaking about the church is like telling people that they must breathe—it is common and not particular. We may emphasize things that are common, not things that are particular. I could say over and over again that you must believe in the Lord Jesus and that you must live by Him. Although I may tell you a thousand times that you need to live by Christ, this is not a particular teaching. However, if I insist upon immersion and that only our immersion avails, that would be a particular teaching. Also, if I required you to speak in tongues and taught that unless you did so, you did not have the baptism of the Spirit, that would be a particular teaching. To say that we need the church is not to teach a particular doctrine. It is like saying that we all need a home. You cannot wander in the street — you must have a proper life in your home. To tell people that they all should have a home is not a particular teaching. However, to say that you must cut your hair in a certain way is to give a particular teaching. I hope that we all can make this differentiation.*

*No teaching in the Lord's recovery is particular. Rather, we say that the Bible is the holy Word verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit. Is this a particular teaching? Of course not. We also say that our God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—that the Son of God became flesh to be our Savior, and that He died on the cross for our redemption. I have been preaching these things for more than forty-five years. They absolutely are not particular teachings. Furthermore, we tell people that today the Lord Jesus Christ is our life in our spirit and that we must love Him, live by Him, and walk according to Him. We also say that everyone who has been reborn has the life of the Lord Jesus and is a member of His Body. We teach that God's intention is to have a proper church life on earth to express His Son for His glory. These are not particular teachings... (Witness Lee, Young People's Training, Message 14, pp. 191-192, Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim CA)*

# THE BIBLE: OUR ONLY STANDARD

Before a modern skyscraper in downtown Taipei, Taiwan, stands a large granite boulder. Engraved upon that rock in large Chinese characters is a bold declaration: "***The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree even if everyone approved of it.***"

These words appeared in the first issue of Watchman Nee's publication, *The Christian*, in 1925. They encapsulate his unflinching faithfulness to God's Word. Today they mark the entrance to the exhibit: *A Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, housed in Taipei. This principle characterizes the Lord's recovery. In Witness Lee's words, "*The very great, particular characteristic in the Lord's recovery is to do everything according to the Bible*" (*Elders' Training Book 7*, p. 107). The Bible is our only standard and the unique measure in evaluating any teaching or practice.

The issue of "one publication" has been raised most recently in a booklet entitled, "Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery" (LSM, June 2005). This document decrees that "**All the saints and all the churches everywhere should ... be restricted to one publication in**

**the Lord's recovery"** (p. 8). "One publication" means materials produced by Living Stream Ministry and the Taiwan Gospel Book Room. It further states that other publications produced among us should not be given "any more credence among the churches than anything else that can be published today, secular or religious" (p. 8).

Concerning "one publication," it has been publicly admitted by one of its proponents that "**it is not a matter of right or wrong, biblical or non-biblical.** It is a matter of whether there is one sound or more than one sound." (*Ministry Magazine*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, p. 186). To this a response must be made that **it does indeed matter** whether such a policy is biblical or non-biblical! Watchman Nee charges, "**Whatever the Bible does not have, the church must by all means reject.** Otherwise, all those who follow the Lord faithfully will leave when they see the church having what the Bible has not" (*Further Talks*, p. 64). Let us ask then the question, is this matter of "one publication" scriptural?

First of all, the Bible does not explicitly teach such a thing. Nowhere in the New Testament are



the believers restricted to literature from one publishing center nor the writings of one New Testament minister. We are charged to keep the seven “ones” of Ephesians 4. However, these seven “ones” do not include “one publication”!

Neither does the Bible teach “one publication” implicitly. The verse, “if... the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle.” (1 Cor.14:8) refers to speaking in tongues without interpretation. Paul’s trumpet analogy has been applied to publications. However, this illustration has been borrowed and applied to a foreign context. That was not Paul’s point! Using a biblical illustration does not impart biblical authority to a non-scriptural teaching.

Furthermore, the New Testament gives no example of such a restriction—which apostle restricted

the believers under his care to receive **only** his writings? Which minister prohibited the churches from receiving the writings of other New Testament ministers? Instead, rather than prohibition, we see inclusion. Peter’s epistles were sent to Galatia and Asia (1 Pet. 1:1), which were located in Paul’s area of labor. Moreover, Peter’s First Epistle was sent the same year Paul wrote to Ephesus and Colossae (AD 64). That year the church in Ephesus received letters from both Paul and Peter, possibly even during the same month or week, yet Paul did not prohibit the churches under his ministry from receiving “other publications” such as Peter’s. Indeed, rather than restriction, we see recommendation (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Witness Lee notes, “*Peter commends Paul, and says that both of them teach the same things... although their style, terminology, utterance, aspects of their views, and presentations of their teachings differed one from another, [they] participated in the same unique ministry, the ministry of the New Testament*” (2 Pet 3:16, fn. 2). It is also notable that, although the apostle John was aware of heretical teachings, he did not restrict the saints solely to his own writings. John instead commended the saints to the Anointing (1 John 2:22-27)!



## HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

Consider how the New Testament came to being. Did the New Testament authors submit their writings to a "Central Review Committee"? Did the "blended brothers" (the first apostles) review Mark and Luke's writings before their acceptance in the 'one publication' (the New Testament)? Luke simply remarks "it seemed good to me also" to write (Luke 1:3).

The New Testament authors wrote under the Spirit's inspiration. Others also wrote, as evidenced by early books such as "The Gospel of Thomas," "The Epistle of Barnabas" and "The Shepherd of Hermas" etc. Scholars tell us, however, "There is no evidence of a central and official clearinghouse for inspired writings" (Geisler & Nix, p. 101). No policy of "one publication" existed, but the saints and churches had their inner "taste" for life and the Spirit. The saints rejected some writings (the Gnostic gospels, etc.) as unhelpful and even damaging. The writings that were accepted were accepted due to their spiritual merit. They were recognized, copied, circulated, and eventually gathered together to become the New Testament. The councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD) ratified the 27 New Testament books (Geisler & Nix, p. 111), yet this "official recognition" occurred 300 years after the New Testament was written! As professor Lightfoot says, "It is necessary to emphasize that **no Church through its councils made the canon of Scripture**" (Lightfoot, p.

112). Rather, the councils ratified the divine writings already acknowledged by the saints and churches. No teaching or policy of "one publication" existed, yet, under God's sovereignty, the New Testament was produced. Shouldn't this guide us today?

Nigel Tomes

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