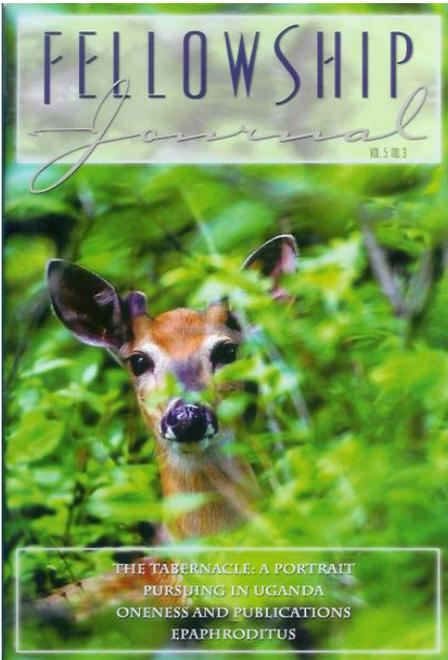


# FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

VOLUME 5, NO. 3 • MAY 2006



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## A BRIEF REPORT ON THE APRIL 14-16 WEEKEND

During the weekend of April 14-16, fifteen "Psalms conferences" took place, as well as a conference in Cleveland, attended by between five and six hundred Chinese-speaking saints, and a gathering of Spanish-speaking saints at Huntington House. For the Psalms conferences, seventy brothers traveled to fifteen locations in Canada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Indiana, after a time of preparation at Huntington House on March 24-26 and their team-labor afterwards. This was the first time some of these churches had hosted a conference. In a number of cases, saints from other localities joined with the host locality to receive the supply. It was also the first time some of these brothers had been sent to minister in such a way. We have received a few reports from this weekend, both from those who attended and those who ministered, all of which were encouraging. **Here are some excerpts:**

*"[We] fellowshiped the Psalms 25, 26, 27 materials and verses prior to going [to this locality] so much that the Spirit had the capital to work with so that we could give the brothers and sisters something from the heart of God. By following the practical fellowship we received from Titus at Huntington House...we had the freedom to release a helpful word..."*

"I can say that the whole conference...was, in my opinion, a huge success! We had wonderful fellowship with the saints there and I feel this may be the way to further blend the churches together in a very positive way. Also I think that this opportunity provided a lot of brothers a chance to function as a minister of God's word, when these brothers may not usually get that chance. Praise the Lord! Thank you brothers for your service and care for the churches..."

*"It was surely a good time of mutual fellowship and blending..."*

"We took the theme of the Tabernacle to share these Psalms. Chapter 25 began from the Outer Court with one lifting up his soul to Jehovah, chapter 26 continues to the brazen altar where David can be examined and judged and then wash his hands at the laver, chapter 27 continues to the Holy Place where Jehovah is the light of his salvation and his strength by means of the Lampstand and the Bread of Presence, chapter 28 continues to the Incense Altar where David intercedes on behalf of the people and chapter 29 continues to the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctuary, where David is abiding in the operation of God's word. Chapter 30 is a wonderful acknowledgment of dwelling in the House of God which ushers into praise and abundant glory, expressing the infinite God..."

*“We had a sweet time of fellowship with them beginning with a meeting on Saturday morning which included a review of the first book of Psalms and focused mainly on the growth in life and entering into a living before the face of God. Fellowship continued with lunch, then a love feast and meeting in the evening in which 5 brothers...shared from Psalms 25-30. There were 6 young people in the group... who joined with some of our young people for a very enjoyable time together. Many of the young people spoke of how much they enjoyed the meetings and gave testimonies throughout the conference. There was also much sweet fellowship in the homes among the saints in the giving and receiving of hospitality which added to the fresh, rich atmosphere of the weekend...”*

*“We shared what we enjoyed of the process of being saved into God’s house from Psalms 25-30. I hope we helped the saints. There were more there than we expected...”*

*“I got much, much more out of the word through laboring with the brothers and preparing to speak than I could have alone. We had a lot of the Lord’s fresh speaking to us through His word. Psalm 25 leads us to lift up our soul unto the Lord. Psalm 27 reminds us of what it is like to have the Lord as our first love. Psalm 30 tells us how to come back to the Lord as our first love when He has hidden His face from us. Psalm 34 is a picture of the beginning of the church life in the cave at Adullam with all the misfits that the Lord brought. In Psalm 37, our favorite, David, speaking as a mature old saint, tells us how to be an overcomer in difficult times. As a confirmation, during the conference, the Lord gave me Zechariah 12:8, which says that when the overcomers return with Christ at the end of the battle of Armageddon, the weakest one among them will be “like David”, the author of all these Psalms, and corporately, they as the “house of David” (cf. Heb 3:6) will be as God and as Christ...”*

**The seventy who went out will be returning to Huntington House May 5-7 beginning at 7:30 pm to share their experiences so that all might learn and all might be encouraged.**

#### **REQUEST FOR TESTIMONIES**

It has become evident that much blessing among the Chinese-speaking has been experienced by means of “**discipleship camps**”. One saint sent a testimony of blessing that, due to tardiness in layout, could not be included in this issue. We propose a fuller report in the upcoming issue. Therefore, we ask that whoever wishes to submit testimonies about these times together to please do so, so that we (the so-called English-speaking) may benefit as well! - *Editor*

THE LORD IS MOVING IN AFRICA!

“...AND YOU SHALL BE  
MY DISCIPLES...”

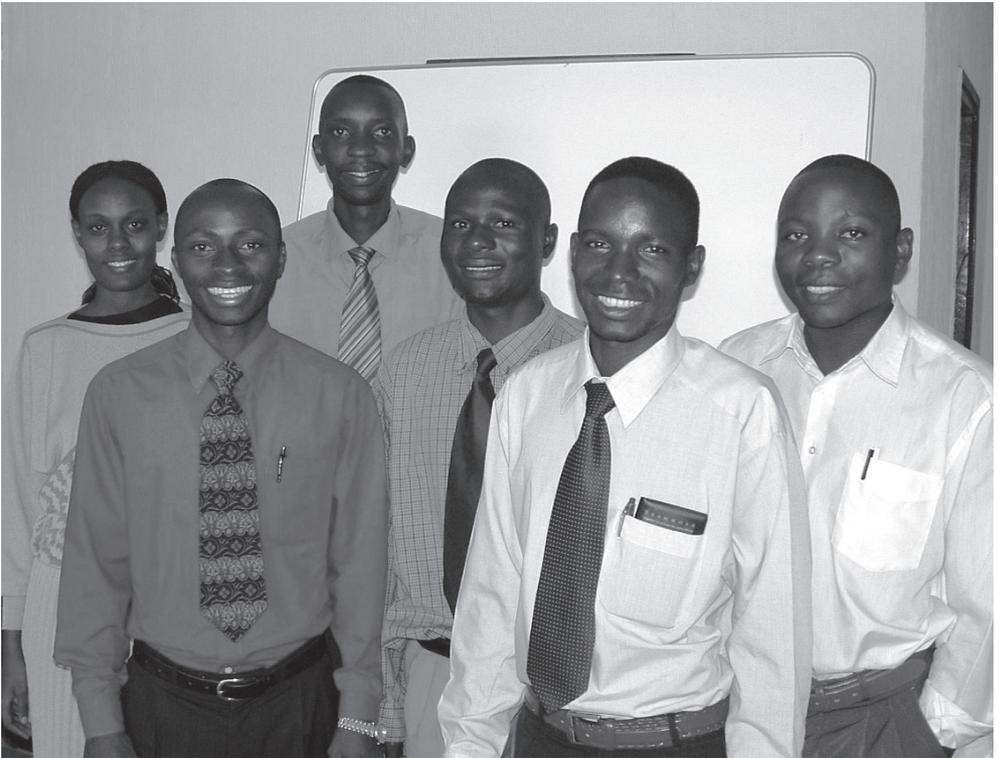
(A GROUP OF PURSUERS  
IN UGANDA)

*KAMPALA - This report comes from Keith Miller, who, along with his wife Tina, has been laboring in the gospel with campus students at Makerere University. Out of the many that have been saved, a number have a desire to give themselves further.*

The discipleship program originated out of a desire among some students to seriously pursue the Lord. All of the classes, activities, and missions in the discipleship program are based upon the three elements of life, truth, and operation. The *life* aspect of the program emphasizes the necessity of a daily relationship with the Lord and an understanding of what hinders it. Participants learn to come to the Lord through various means to develop a strong daily inner life. Regarding the *truth*, a variety of classes, interactive sessions, assigned readings, and missions are provided to help participants gain a good overall understanding of the Bible and specific truths related to Christ, the church, and the gospel. *Operation* is developed as the outgrowth of life and truth. The focus is on “doing” through practice that which issues practically in the building up of the church. While many areas of operation may become manifest in the participants, the program focuses upon gospel preaching, shepherding others, and speaking for the Lord in the church meetings.

## **Program Schedule and Participants**

The discipleship program is one semester in length (February to mid-June). Program sessions are held three days a week for a total of 8 hours per week. In addition to attending scheduled sessions, full-time participants attend the regular church meetings, preach the gospel, do weekly reading assignments, have a daily morning time with the Lord, and memorize selected verses. At present, four are participating on a full-time basis, two others were able to commit part-time, and others attend as their schedule permits.



**Primary participants in the discipleship program:  
Eva, Adam, Thaddeus, Lawrence, Kizito, and George**

**Eva** is a full-time student at Makerere University. She is in her second year of study in Biomedical Lab Technology. We met Eva outside the main library in March 2005. She was immediately drawn to the Lord after singing some spiritual songs with others in that small group. She

now meets regularly with the church and participates in the discipleship program on a part time basis around her university coursework. She stays on campus at one of the residence halls. Eva is number fourteen among seventeen brothers and sisters!

**Adam** received the Lord in August 2005 after hearing the gospel for only five minutes as he drove the taxi. Prior to his conversion he was a practicing Muslim. As an orphan, Adam was raised by a legal guardian who was given specific instructions to raise and educate him according to the Muslim religion. When it was apparent that Adam had become a Christian his guardian told him, "We can not have two holy books in this house (the Bible and the Koran)!" When Adam refused to renounce his faith in the Lord Jesus, he was forced to leave his home and forfeit his education. Adam has recently moved close to the campus and is participating full-time in the discipleship program.

**Thaddeus** graduated from Makerere University in May 2005 with a BA in Urban Planning. He is still actively looking for work. In spite of the fact that Makerere is the best university in this part of Africa, those who graduate from it still find it difficult to find jobs. Thaddeus was first contacted in February 2005 while he was walking to one of the administration buildings on campus. Since that time he has participated in a session at the Christian Learning Center (sponsored by the church in Kampala) and recently began meeting with the church. He is also participating full-time in the discipleship program. Thaddeus resides with his parents just outside Kampala and commutes to participate in the program.

**Lawrence** graduated from Makerere University with a BA in Education in 2003. In spite of his efforts, he has still not been able to find employment as a teacher. We first met Lawrence in early 2005 when one of his friends brought him to one of the small group meetings outside the main library. He has a real heart for the gospel and wants to be able to speak for the Lord, especially in the church gatherings. He is one of the most committed and faithful brothers in the church who refuses to allow his timid disposition to limit his growth or operation in the Lord. Lawrence grew up in a small town named Masaka located about three hours outside Kampala. He is now participating full-time in the discipleship program.

**Kizito** completed his coursework in Economics at Makerere University in May of 2005. He is still awaiting his formal graduation papers. Raised a Catholic, Kizito's parents had high aspirations for him to one day become a priest. At age 14, he was enrolled in a seminary for minors. Due to his outgoing personality, he was quickly recognized as one who should represent his class to go before the administration with some proposals to relax some of the strict rules at the seminary. Instead, he was expelled! We met him in October 2004 during his senior year in a large grassy area at campus known as Freedom Square. After hearing the gospel, Kizito gladly accepted the Lord. Now he is pursuing the Lord and is quite active in the church life. He is learning to minister to the saints in the meetings and attends the discipleship program on a full-time basis.

**George** was first contacted when Tim and Steve initially came to Uganda in 2003. After seeing the vision of the church, George resigned as pastor of his congregation and began serving as a full-time worker for the church in Kampala. He labors along with Steve Lietzau in Kampala's Naguru-Go Down community. George has a real heart for people, especially those in the Naguru community. He rises early and spends much of his time preaching the gospel, ministering from the Bible, and shepherding the saints. He is also working to raise up a core group of saints in the community who can spiritually support the church's burden and work.



**Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda**

## CHAPTER EXCERPT

# THE TABERNACLE:

## THE PATHWAY TO GLORY

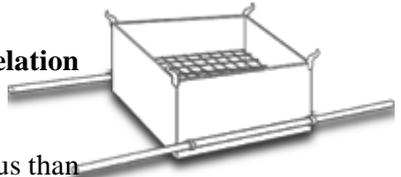


### **CHAPTER 2:** *The Experience of the Tabernacle: The Process of the Growth of the Divine Life*

*·EXODUS 25:1-9*

*"THEN JEHOVAH SPOKE TO MOSES SAYING, "TELL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO TAKE FOR ME A HEAVE OFFERING. FROM EVERY MAN WHOSE HEART MAKES HIM WILLING YOU SHALL TAKE MY HEAVE OFFERING. AND THIS IS THE HEAVE OFFERING WHICH YOU SHALL TAKE FROM THEM: GOLD AND SILVER AND BRONZE, AND BLUE AND PURPLE AND SCARLET STRANDS, AND FINE LINEN, AND GOATS' HAIR, AND RAMS' SKINS DYED RED, AND PORPOISE SKINS, AND ACACIA WOOD, OIL FOR THE LIGHT, SPICES FOR THE ANOINTING OIL AND FOR THE FRAGRANT INCENSE, ONYX STONES AND STONES TO BE SET FOR THE EPHOD AND FOR THE BREASTPLATE. AND LET THEM MAKE A SANCTUARY FOR ME THAT I MAY DWELL IN THEIR MIDST. ACCORDING TO ALL THAT I SHOW YOU, THE PATTERN OF THE TABERNACLE AND THE PATTERN OF ALL ITS UTENSILS, EVEN SO YOU SHALL MAKE IT."*

## The Revelation of the Tabernacle—the Revelation from God to Moses in the Mountain



The tabernacle must come to mean much more to us than a historical structure. It must also become more to us than a set of teachings about that structure with its dimensions and contents. To us, the tabernacle must become a revelation from God.

The tabernacle testifies of what God is. The moment you see the tabernacle, you see God! It also unveils who we are; whenever someone sees the tabernacle, they are observing a particular group of people. Moreover, this marvelous type also reveals God's desire and His way of salvation.

### The Tabernacle Testifies of What God is

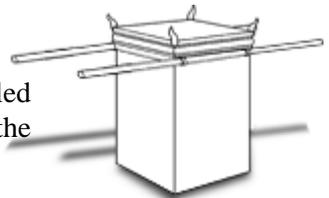
The tabernacle testifies of what God is. He is the heavenly God, the God of economy, God the Savior, the God who is sanctifying us, the God who is obtaining us, the God who is renewing us, the God who is becoming our enjoyment, the God uniting and supplying us, the God working in us for His testimony, the God with whom we can work, the God full of divine testimony, the God with abundant supply, and the God who possesses resurrection authority. All these aspects regarding God's being are portrayed in the tabernacle.



### God Is the Heavenly God

God is heavenly. This was emphasized when God called Moses up to the top of the mountain in order to reveal the pattern of the tabernacle to him.

According to Exodus 24:12-25:9, the God of glory called Moses to go up to Him at the top of the mountain, where He appeared to Moses and spoke with him for forty days and forty nights. It was upon the mountain that God blessed Moses and charged him to take the blueprint of the tabernacle back to the children of Israel.



God is heavenly. Therefore, in the entire type of the

tabernacle there is not one depiction of anything of sin or the world. Instead of these sorts of things normally found on the earth, in the tabernacle we see the stages of God's complete salvation. In fact, what you really see is God Himself among us as the heavenly One!

Because God is heavenly, our salvation is heavenly, our consecration is heavenly, the enlightenment we receive is heavenly, our living with God is heavenly, and our holy enjoyment is heavenly as well. Therefore, do not bring the things of the world or the things of your natural being into the church life! In the tabernacle, which represents your entire Christian experience and the corporate testimony God is after, there is nothing earthly. Instead, everything of the tabernacle is heavenly. Joy unspeakable is ours whenever we realize this. We can tell the Lord, "I never dreamed that when I received Your salvation that I would not only be delivered from hell but that I would also become a heavenly person. I am not on the earth, but in the heavens; I belong not to the world but to the heavens; now I am no longer connected with the earth, but with the heavens; what I am applying is not of the world, but of the heavens; what I am enjoying is no longer of the earth but something of the heavens; I am not carrying out something that has to do with the world, but something that has to do with the heavens! Why? Because my God is of such!"

### **God is the God with an Economy**

God is also the One who is carrying out His economy. The accomplishment of God's economy is depicted by the tabernacle's becoming filled with God's glory.

*The accomplishment of God's economy is signified by the glory filling the tabernacle.*

When the tabernacle was completed, it was filled with the glory of Jehovah (Exodus 40:34), which typified the accomplishment of God's economy. In the Old Testament, God's desire was that His glory would fill the tabernacle. Today, in His New Testament economy, His desire is that His life with its glory would fill each one of us, His children. His desire is that the entire church would express Him. This is glory, and the fulfillment of His economy.

Watchman Nee wrote, "My King will soon come back again, the sky be filled with Him" (Hymns #960). This sentence corresponds to how the glory filled the tabernacle. The phrase "the sky be filled with Him" indicates that which comes on that Day will not only be a man, but also an accompanying glory

that will fill the entire earth. Therefore what follows in Brother Nee's hymn is the statement, "The universe to be redeemed will see His light therein." What is this? This is God's economy. The accomplishment of God's economy is signified by the glory of God filling the tabernacle. Today, we can proclaim that one day God will fill the whole earth. Even the sky will be filled with Him! Praise the Lord!

***The dispensing of the divine life is what achieves God's eternal purpose.***

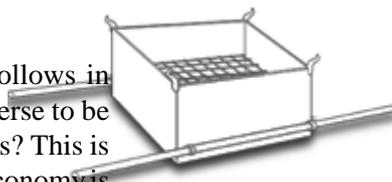
What is God's economy? God's economy is not merely a term. Rather, God's economy is the dispensing of His divine life, through which He achieves His eternal purpose.

When God called us out of the world, that calling was something of God's economy. God dispensed something into us of His divine, heavenly life. God saved us, called us, and then asked us to follow Him. The very process of following God also causes us to experience His dispensing; hence, it is also a matter of God's economy. As you follow the Lord, you must live the church life for the testimony of the local church, which is also a matter of God's economy.

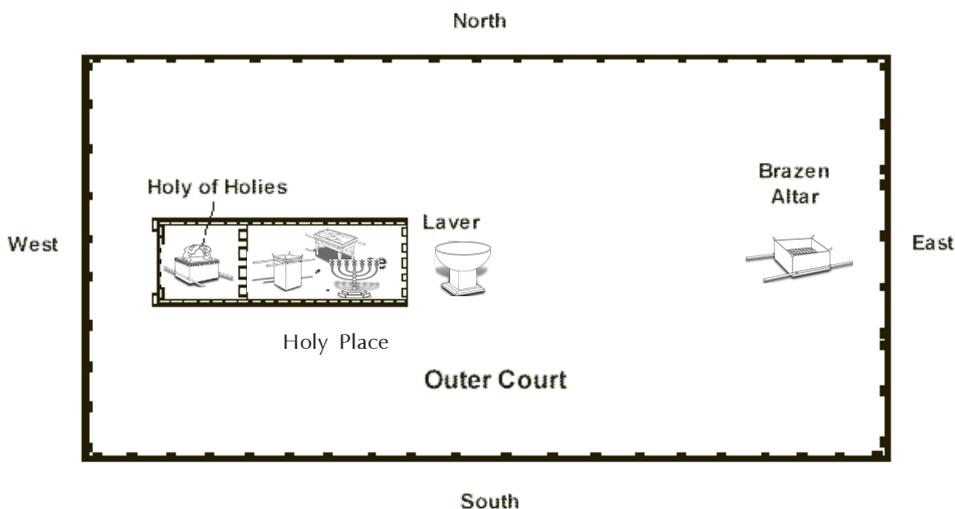
The God seen in the tabernacle is the very God who is carrying out His economy. He is the One who declares, "The world has nothing in Me! Therefore, My children, My church, and My testimony are separated from the world. Today, I am not merely saving them from what is negative! By dispensing Myself into them I am also causing them to grow into what is heavenly!" This is God's economy.

***The Lord's recovery is the substantiation of God's economy.***

The Lord's recovery is the substantiation of God's economy. Among all the local churches, there are many blessed saints who, due to God's grace and mercy, have experienced God, labored on the Lord, perceived His will, seen His working, and have been able to carry out something of the Lord's recovery.



## A Bird's Eye View of The Tabernacle



The Lord's recovery is a sweet recovery—it is the recovery of life; the recovery of the life stream, the recovery of the revelation of the truth; the recovery of the divine testimony; the recovery of the Lord's expression in every locality; the recovery of Christ's sovereignty; the recovery of the operation and move of the divine Trinity; the recovery of the boundless work of the Spirit; the recovery of the Spirit having absolute freedom among His children; and the recovery that brings God into oneness, mingling, and incorporation with man. This recovery is the substantiation of God's economy.

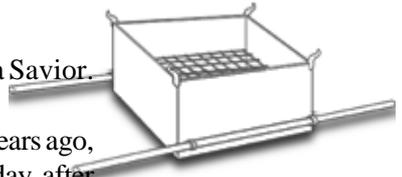
### God Is God the Savior

God is the Savior. This is testified to by **the entrance** to the tabernacle's Outer Court.

At the gate of the court, there are five pillars, which form four entrances. Why are there four entrances? "Four" is a number representing God's creation, signifying that this gate is related to us, His created human beings.

The gate is tall enough to fit everyone's stature, so as you enter the tabernacle, the entrance doesn't "care" what height you are. For instance, regardless how proper or improper we have been in the past, we are all able to enter through the gate to enjoy God's salvation. Today, regardless how much we have spiritually grown, the gate still is able to accommodate us and

allows us to enter. This indicates how God is such a Savior.



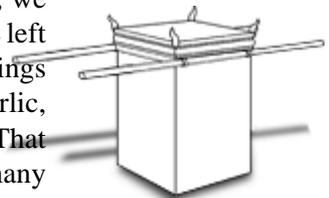
Many times I realize that although I was saved fifty years ago, today I still need to be saved. Furthermore, the day after tomorrow, I will need even more salvation. Sometimes, when I feel that I am so victorious, I find that I still need to be saved, and other times, realizing I am weak to the uttermost, I perceive my need for salvation all the more. Our God is the saving One. If God limited our experience of His salvation to just one occasion, our carcasses would eventually all end up strewn along the spiritual path. But, this is not what happens. God saves us today and God saves us tomorrow, in big things and small things, whether we are strong or weak, victorious or defeated—in everything He is able to save. Because God is saving us constantly, we may continually enjoy the various rich experiences represented by the tabernacle.



### God Is the God of Sanctification

What is typified by the tabernacle's **Outer Court**? It is that God is our Sanctifier!

The curtains surrounding the Outer Court are hangings made of fine linen which hang upon sixty bronze pillars; thus, whenever you enter the outer court, you become separated from everything that is outside. It's a pity that in our experience today, after entering the Outer Court, we still frequently seem to call to mind so many things we left behind in Egypt (which represents the world). Many things in Egypt—typified by the cucumbers, leeks, onions, garlic, and fleshpots—are still too attractive for us to forget. That is why, even after having experienced the tabernacle, many Christians continue to love the things of the world. Do not say, "I will never love the world!" After you believe in Jesus, you will still have some love for the world. If you indeed experience being freed from loving something in the world, it is only because of the sanctifying work of the Lord. God is a God who sanctifies. Whenever you become involved with some defiling thing, God saves you in sanctification; and should you fall into sin, God works to



save you as the Sanctifier. Repeatedly He tells us, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). He is the God of sanctification, therefore He calls us in sanctification.

### **God is the One who will Obtain Us**

God obtains us by means of what is revealed by the first item of furniture seen as one enters the tabernacle—**the bronze altar of burnt offering**.

In the Old Testament age, the priest consecrated the sacrifice by placing it on the altar and burning it to ashes so that no one but God could have it. Today, God lays hold of us by meeting with us. Every time we touch God, we meet with God. Hence, God should not be touched casually, for once we touch God, and once He meets with us, He lays hold on us. To all who desire the world, a future, a career, fame, wealth or power—be advised not to touch God!

### ***God should not be touched casually.***

Never touch God without realizing it is a life-changing matter! A group of believers studying in the University of Communications in China once went to Watchman Nee and declared, “We will do our best to serve the Lord.” Brother Nee’s reply was, “Forget about it and go home. You don’t know what you are talking about.” In like manner, sometimes I myself would like to remind people not to declare so easily, “I want to serve the Lord!” In fact, I would like to warn them, “Take notice, for once you truly touch the Lord, you will find it impossible to escape Him.” A mother once warned her son, “My son, if you believe in Jesus, you will lose everything,” which is true.

Let me emphasize again—God cannot be touched without consequence. The moment you touch Him, you will be obtained by Him. Some may reply, “Ha! God hasn’t gotten me yet!” It is not that God hasn’t yet gotten you, but that you have not yet really touched Him! I advise you to get on your knees tonight and tell Him, “God, I know that You are not to be approached lightly. In my experience thus far I have touched everything except You because I know that when I touch You I will definitely be obtained by You. Such a thing will be the end of my way of life.” Even though you pray such a sorry prayer, you will still touch God. As long as you touch Him, your career and future will be finished, for our God is the God who lays hold of men.

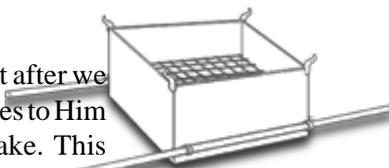
When we follow the Lord, it never turns out the way we imagined it would.

It was totally beyond our imagination to think that after we believed in the Lord, we would consecrate ourselves to Him and drop everything else in our lives for His sake. This undoubtedly will happen, however, because of the kind of God who has laid hold of us! Once you touch Him, meet with Him, experience Him, and fellowship with Him, you will be obtained by Him.

***There is nothing in the world better than having God!***

I graduated from National Taiwan University. While there, I observed that most of my classmates were very ambitious. Now, forty years have passed and many of them have Ph.D.'s and have developed their own companies. We are getting old. When I think of my classmates I realize that, although many have received doctorates and have built up successful businesses, the Lord has obtained me. I am so thankful. How wonderful my life has been! How meaningful is my existence! How worthwhile is my labor! In the Lord's presence, in the eyes of others, and even to my own feeling, I can say that I have experienced that which is worthy. I can tell the entire human race that I haven't lived my life in vain! This is because for nearly my entire life, I have been possessed by God.

Why do some become so fearful whenever they hear about praying to God and touching Him? It is because they still have their hair to dye and more clothes to buy. Nevertheless, God is the God who obtains man. Even though you pray, "Lord, You may lay hold of anyone, but not me. Please save me, but please do not gain me," through this very prayer you will touch God, and you will begin to lose your taste for whatever it is in the world that you love. Why? Because you will have God, and nothing is better than having God! Every one of us should be boldly able to declare, "I don't have a future in the world, but I have God! I don't have a promising career, but I have God! I don't possess much "wealth," but I possess God! I don't have much in the way of earthly pleasure, but God is with me! I don't know what kind of beauty I now possess, but I do possess God!" There is nothing on this earth that is better than being able to say, "I have God!"



## **God is the One Renewing Us**

God's renewing work is typified by the second item we come to in the tabernacle's Outer Court—the **bronze laver**.

Exodus 30:18 says, “You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing...” Titus 3:5 says, “Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.” As we follow the Lord, daily washing and renewing are indispensable. Whenever we meet with God, we experience the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Not only does this renewing bring us to God in a fresh way, but it also allows the God we enjoy and experience to become more beautiful, more lively, more practical, and more operative in our experience. Not only does His renewing work repeatedly strengthen us, but it also brings to us an ever-newer appreciation and realization of God Himself and of the things of God.

Renewing comes about when we touch God. The moment we touch God, we become different—this is renewing. Everytime we touch God in a certain matter, we become different in that very matter, and every time we touch God in a certain environment, we become different toward that very environment. This is because God is a God who is renewing us.

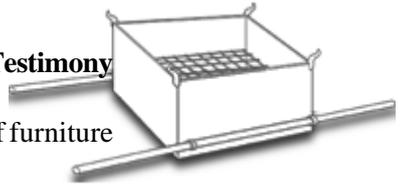
## **God is the Enjoyable, Uniting, and Supplying One**

God is the enjoyable, uniting, and supplying One. This is portrayed by something we encounter as soon as we enter the tent itself—the **table of the bread of Presence**.

On the table of the bread of Presence were twelve loaves of bread set in two rows, having pure frankincense placed upon them. This was an offering by fire to Jehovah. But the loaves were also for Aaron and his sons, indicating that the perfect supply for us comes from God (Lev. 24:5-9).

God gains us, renews us, and also supplies us in His bountiful riches by being our spiritual drink, our spiritual food, and the spiritual rock. God is edible, drinkable and enjoyable! By eating, drinking and enjoying Him, we experience the boundless supply of what He is. As a result, we are satisfied and strengthened to follow Him and to become a person who is hungrily pursuing and gaining Christ.

## God Is the God Working In Us to Obtain His Testimony



God’s work in us is portrayed by the next piece of furniture found in the tabernacle—the **lampstand**.

The lampstand is a beaten work made of pure gold. Its base, shaft, cups, and blossoming buds are all of one piece. In today’s terms, one who is sanctified and who enjoys God’s bountiful supply is also the one into whom God works Himself so that there may be something formed in him. He is the God who works within us in different ways until eventually, we, men of earth, together become a golden lampstand. This is what we call transformation and the fruit of transformation.



## God is the God with Whom We Work

God is also bringing us into His own work. This is portrayed by another piece of furniture in the tabernacle—the **golden incense altar**.



Exodus 30:6 states, “And you shall put it [the incense altar] before the veil that is over the Ark of the Testimony, before the expiation cover that is over the testimony, where I will meet with you.” The golden incense altar is where God meets with man. Here, all the operations brought forth through prayer have God as the initiator, God in the process, and God’s heart desire as the goal. We testify in such fellowship and prayer, “Lord, as You are in the heavens, so we will be in the world; what You seek to do in the heavens, so we will pray for on the earth; how You operate in the heavens, we will co-operate together with You here below. We are working with You, co-laboring with You, and walking with You. Our being is in fellowship and correspondence with You.” This is due to the fact that God is the God with whom we work.



## God is the One Full of the Holy Testimony, the Bountiful Supply, and the Authority of the Resurrection of Christ

The authority of Christ in resurrection is testified by the most meaningful item of furniture within the tabernacle—



## **the Ark of Testimony.**

The Ark of Testimony represents the highest point of a believer's growth, for here no distance remains between the believer and His God. The testimony of God's being—represented by the tablets of the covenant—has been constituted into him; God's boundless supply in His divine nature—represented by the golden pot with the hidden manna—has become his practical enjoyment; and God's power of resurrection in Christ—represented by Aaron's budding rod—has been experienced by him and leads him to experience God's authority. Brothers and sisters, such a God is just too wonderful! Such a marvelous, detailed picture of God is displayed here in the tabernacle.

## **The Tabernacle Expresses the Desire of God's Heart**

God desires a group of people able to bear His testimony through their growth in life.

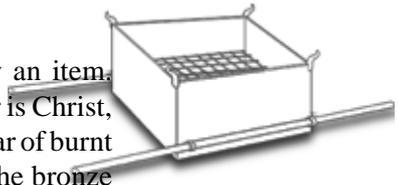
The tabernacle speaks of God's heart's desire. It reveals to us that what God wants is a testimony borne by people who have grown in life. Such growth (by consecration, the renewing of the spirit, the enjoyment of God's perfect supply, and taking up God's work) causes them to work with God, manifest God, supply others and exercise His authority in resurrection.

## **The Tabernacle Portrays the Pathway of Growth**

There is indeed a path upon which Christian growth may be traced. This path of growth, according to the various items in the tabernacle, follows the path of consecration, being renewed, enjoying God, experiencing God's working, co-working with God, manifesting God, supplying others, and eventually becoming a person exercising divine authority in resurrection.

Consecration is represented by the bronze altar of burnt offering; renewing is depicted by the bronze laver; divine enjoyment is seen in the table of the bread of Presence; experiencing God's work upon us is portrayed in the golden lampstand; co-working with God is typified by the golden incense altar; manifesting God is depicted by the tablets of the covenant in the Ark of Testimony; enjoying God's bountiful supply so as to supply others is revealed by the hidden manna inside the golden pot in the Ark; and exercising the authority in resurrection is seen in Aaron's budding rod in the Ark.

Therefore, no item in the tabernacle is simply an item. Rather, all these items are you! The bronze laver is Christ, and yet it is you, too. Your consecration is the altar of burnt offering; your experience of being renewed is the bronze laver; your enjoyment, the bread of Presence; your experience of the testimony of God's work, the golden lampstand; your operation and move as you walk, work, and labor with God is the golden incense altar; you, manifesting who God is (the tablets of the covenant); you, experiencing the limitless supply of God in His nature (the golden pot with hidden manna); you, as a person carrying out God's economy in Christ's resurrection (Aaron's budding rod).

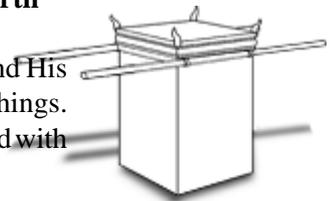


How wonderful and glorious the Christian life is! It is not a life that when you think of going to a meeting, you pick up a book, copy something from somewhere and prepare for your sermon. Brothers, don't read something to give a message, but read it to pursue, to be nourished, and to get equipped. A certain brother told me that he experienced so many riches being poured out constantly through him. Why? Due to his constitution. Nothing but such a constitution can provide such a flow. Such a constitution is the issue of many years of following the Lord, living a consecrated life, being renewed, enjoying the Lord, being worked upon by the Lord, and working and laboring together with Him.



### **The Tabernacle is the Center of the Whole Earth**

God's pleasure is to dwell in the midst of man; He and His people are to become the center and focal point of all things. His people will be His testimony by being incorporated with Him.



If you were able to look upon the entire earth, where would the center of the world have been after Moses led the Israelites in the wilderness? In Egypt? In China? Or Assyria? No. The center of the whole earth was located in the Sinai wilderness. Why? Because that's where the tabernacle was. It was the center of the children of Israel, and the children of Israel were the center of the world.



In like manner, God and His people are the center and focal point of the human race today. God is the center of the church, and the church is the center of the earth. What God desires are local churches; what He treasures is the church. The testimony that God is after is manifested through the churches in every locality. Therefore, today in the New Testament age, God's work in us is the most precious matter to be found on this earth. His intention is that the tabernacle might become our experience and constitution throughout our life and that we, by experiencing the tabernacle, may be joined, mingled and incorporated with Him until eventually we fully become His testimony.

### **The Tabernacle Describes God's Salvation**

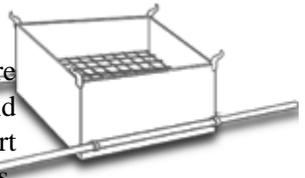
Not only does God's salvation deliver His people out of the authority of darkness and transfer them into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13), but it also opens the way for His people to continually experience Him as their life, life supply, enjoyment, and authority. Even more, it enables them to know and depart from their flesh, natural constitution, and self.

### **Delivering Us out of the Authority of Darkness and Transferring Us into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love**

As the people of God, in God's salvation, we have been delivered out of the authority of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of His love. To be in the kingdom of the Son of His love is to be delivered out of darkness into light. There is no middle ground or any gray area to exist between these two kingdoms. From the Bible, we know that we are either in the darkness or in the light. To be in darkness is to be under its authority, while to be in the light is to be in "the kingdom of the Son of His love". What is the kingdom of the Son of His love? It is typified by the tabernacle. The tabernacle symbolizes the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

Praise the Lord! We have been delivered out of the authority of darkness and now we are in the kingdom of the Son of His love! Nonetheless, many Christians have a very good pair of roller skates and night-vision goggles with which they often slip back into darkness. Sometimes after backsliding, we are reluctant to come back, and therefore in His mercy the Lord disciplines us to lead us back. One of the Chinese hymns has the words, "Though often we waver and move, He is unchanging and sure; His promises never empty prove, and will stand longer than heaven and earth endure. He will never

leave us in despair, all we've committed Him, He will care for. This love of His that He has revealed to us to the end will bear us, though we treat Him poorly, neglect and hurt Him, being ever-changing in our hearts, and adoring idols, and this we continually do without any remorse. And when the idols we adore fall and are broken, and stripped away unwillingly from us, we come to seek Him whom we have betrayed and abandoned, such an everlasting Friend so meek! Yet He receives and comforts us, and draws us unto Himself; as though nothing has happened...can anything separate us from His love?"( from the Chinese #352). This is the Lord. And this is our experience.

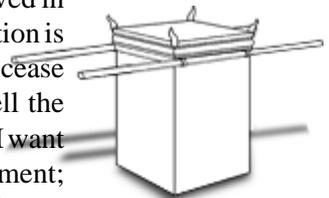


### **Knowing and Departing from the Flesh, Natural Constitution, and Self**

After entering the tabernacle, there are three things we need to know and depart from: one is our flesh, another is our natural constitution, and yet another is our self. Flesh refers to our fallen being; natural constitution refers to our being by nature; and self is our existential being. In the entire process of our experience of the tabernacle, God doesn't use anything of man. Instead, God Himself must be everything. Therefore neither our fallen being, our inborn being, or our existential being can be allowed to remain.



Brothers and sisters, though we may have long believed in the Lord, the flesh is still with us, our natural constitution is still with us, and our self is still with us. When will they cease to exist? When the Lord returns. So you need to tell the Lord, "Lord, I want to continually live in Your supply. I want to consecrate myself to You; I want Your enlightenment; I need to enjoy You; I would like to allow You to work in me; I would like to work with You; and I want to manifest You."



### **The Experience of the Tabernacle**

#### ***It Is Revealed through His Servants***

When the Lord appears to you, it is the Lord Himself who calls you and speaks with you. But such speaking often



comes through the Lord's servants. A spiritual man does not merely fix his eyes on the Lord; a spiritual man also hears what the Spirit is speaking through the Lord's servants. Thus he follows the Lord and lives in the divine supply, and as he does, he applies all the riches of the Body of Christ.

It is a shame that so many saved ones, after following the Lord for a period of time, become preoccupied with how to be manifested, how to gain a reputation, how to do a work, and how to increase their influence. Such thoughts may unconsciously produce an unhealthy relationship between us and the Lord's servants. Some brothers may set their minds on the future of their spiritual work, and thus seek to flatter or please or gain the favor of the Lord's servants. On the other hand, some may regard only their own vision and commitment, and therefore avoid fellowship with the Lord's servants. Few of us have seen that in the Old Testament the tabernacle is a corporate testimony in which every individual saint walks. Likewise, today the church life, signified by the tabernacle, is a corporate testimony. The church life is the life of the Body of Christ manifested in different localities. This very manifestation is a corporate one which must be experienced by every individual saint.

Throughout all these processes, we should give heed to maintaining a healthy relationship with the Lord's servants. We need to learn how to receive revelation, equipping, guidance, and supply from the servants of the Lord, and we also need to properly appreciate their place. Without help from the Lord's servants, few saints would be able to grow well. On the other hand, regardless of the help they may render to the saints, all the saints belong to Christ alone, follow Christ alone, are faithful to Christ alone, and live and die to Christ alone.

### ***It Is for God's Habitation and Testimony***

The subjective experience of the tabernacle is totally different from what many seem to think. A saved one who loves and pursues the Lord may desperately hope to grow; yet not realize that our growth is not for us only, and that God never intended merely to obtain a number of spiritual men with full maturity of life. What God is seeking to gain is His habitation, His glorious testimony. We should thank God for this. If our growth were merely for ourselves, what would be the value? But our growth is so that God may gain His habitation, to obtain His testimony. In this sense, what a holy and heavenly thing our growth is! We are growing individually, and the church is growing corporately. What will our growth produce? Our growth will produce God's resting place, which is His habitation, and also God's testimony, which testifies His glory.

### *It Is Exhibited through the Saints' Growth in Life*

Every matter portrayed in the tabernacle is something for us to experience, including every furnishing, every material used and even every number involved. Everything is to be substantiated through our experience. This is the experience of growth by all those who have been blessed by God. In the Old Testament, the tabernacle was built based upon the blueprint shown to Moses, the freewill offerings given by the Israelites, and the workmanship of the skilled workmen. In the New Testament, the genuine tabernacle is Christ. As for the reality of the New Testament tabernacle, it is produced through the growth of all who are in Christ, recognize Christ, hold to Christ, follow Christ, are constituted with Christ, and live out Christ.



### **The Process of the Growth of Life**

All those who love the Lord and have consecrated themselves to Him have grown in life. The life of a saved one is a life of growth.

**According to revelation:** This process of life growth is from the Holy of Holies, to the Holy Place, to the Outer Court.

**According to experience:** The progress is from the Outer Court, through the Holy Place, into the Holy of Holies. This illustrates our growth, which begins with the substantiation of our union with Christ, and progresses through the mingling of His divine nature until we grow into oneness with the person of Christ.



God's revelations proceed from the Holy of Holies; yet in our experience we grow from the Outer Court until we arrive at the depths revealed in the Holy of Holies. It will require our entire life to experience all that is revealed here. Although sometimes we forget the revelations, they leave a mark like a brand. A man bearing such a brand will not always feel it, but once there, it is there forever. At a meeting, in a training or during a certain period of time, you might touch something that is revealed in you. Once a revelation is given to you, it will take your entire life to lay hold of it. In 1956, I attended a training held



by Witness Lee. The subject of that training was “The History and Process of the Church.” Most of the details I have forgotten, but the revelations I received during that time were “branded” deep inside me. Without realizing it, I have been enjoying, experiencing, applying, and presenting all these riches. This indicates that the “branding” that occurred through those revelations has remained, controlling my whole life. The revelations are high, heavenly, and divine, and come one after another, but experiencing these revelations will require the rest of our lives.

## **An Experience of Growth at Three Levels**

There are three parts in the tabernacle: the Outer Court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, which symbolize the three levels of our growth. Ours is a “three-leveled” experience of growth. The experience of the Outer Court is mainly that we are attracted in our spirit and thus present our body. During this time we have a realization of our “old man” under the shining of the divine light. In the experience of the Holy Place we are focused upon the constitution of the divine element in our soul growing into the reality of becoming mingled with the Triune God. All this happens through the enjoyment in our spirit and God’s work in His sovereignty upon us. The experience of the Holy of Holies signifies the maturity of the divine life which is in our spirit and our incorporation with God so we might carry out God’s economy together with Him.

The experience of the Outer Court is the consecration of our body and the understanding of our old man. The experience of the Holy Place is the constitution of the divine element into our soul—our soul becomes a soul of nobility and in accordance with God. Our soul is no longer dishonorable or earthly, but rather it becomes a soul in oneness with God’s being and God’s desire. When we come to the experience of the Holy of Holies, we find that it is one hundred percent a story in the spirit. God’s being is in our spirit; God’s bountiful supply, that is, Him granting to us the Spirit without measure, is in our spirit; Christ’s resurrection, the resurrection power, ascension, the transcendence of ascension, and His exercising the kingship in the heavens—all these are in our spirit. Our healthy growth will help us truly substantiate whatever we have received in our spirit through growth. In a word, we may conclude that the experience of the Outer Court focuses on union, the experience of the Holy Place centers on mingling, and the experience of the Holy of Holies produces incorporation. This is God’s economy. It is also what we need to experience throughout our life. May the Lord have mercy on us! - *Titus Chu*

# The Campaign for One Publication



**“One publication”** is a contentious issue in the Lord’s recovery. Claims<sup>1</sup> have been made that the *“intrinsic sense of life and spiritual discernment”* within the saints in the Lord’s recovery requires *“one publication.”* For example, it has been asserted<sup>2</sup> that *“it is apparent to all the saints everywhere”* that the messages of the *“blended co-workers”* produce the *“same taste as has been enjoyed by all the churches since Brother Nee’s time.”* Thus the saints’ *“taste for life”* is used to justify the ministry of the *“blended co-workers.”* On the other hand, it is argued that the saints’ *“taste”* condemns the ministry of other brothers. One ministering brother was told, *“there is a flavor and an atmosphere produced by your ministry that **many, many saints cannot agree with.**”* According to the writers, it is self-evident that this brother’s ministry has problems because *“that is what the saints feel and taste.”*

Such assertions are based upon subjective evaluations of the saints’ *“sense of life.”* Who determines what *“all the saints everywhere”* feel? Moreover, that *“sense of life”* itself depends upon the believer’s knowledge which influences what they *“feel and taste.”* The



Greek word for conscience, *suneidesis*, means “with (*sun*) knowledge (*oida*),” indicating a person’s spiritual sense is affected by their knowledge. In the present context, we suggest that the “feeling of the saints” concerning one publication has not arisen in a vacuum. Rather, it is influenced by what they have been taught concerning this matter. Here we document the systematic teaching concerning “one publication,” which has occurred in messages at LSM trainings and conferences since 2002. These messages, published in *The Ministry* magazine, have been reinforced by additional LSM publications on this topic distributed at the LSM 2004 Winter, and 2005 Summer trainings.

### 1. Adding “One Publication” to the “Seven ones” in Ephesians 4?

The practice of “one publication” has been promoted by the “blended co-workers” in recent years. Indeed, there has been something of

a “crusade” to persuade people of this viewpoint. In terms of spoken messages, this campaign became evident in 2002 at the LSM Thanksgiving conference in San Diego. In his spoken message, one “blended co-worker” went so far as to suggest that **“one publication” should be added to the seven “ones” in Ephesians 4.** This speaking does not appear in the published version<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, to our knowledge, this word (heard by many at the conference and through web-cast) has never been retracted. In retrospect, this seems to have been the “trial balloon,” launching the “one publication” campaign.

### 2. Different Views of “One Publication” — *“Somebody is not holding the Head.”*

Subsequently another “blended co-worker” addressed this topic in the 2004 LSM Summer Training. He said<sup>4</sup>, **“Many are governed by Brother Lee’s word, which follows Brother Nee’s word, concerning the principle (not the organizational structure) of having one publication work. Others may honestly have a different view. What should we do? We are not here to fight, to argue, or to debate. Let us identify the real issue behind all the differences that arise – somebody is not holding the Head.”** This word was published in *The Ministry* magazine, after passing through LSM’s “discerning check.”<sup>5</sup>

This is a strong, dogmatic statement – any difference in viewpoint indicates **“somebody is not holding the Head.”** The obvious implication concerning

publications is that those who disagree with “one publication” are condemned for “*not holding the Head.*” We assert that many saints would interpret the brother’s word in this way. It appears that the podium was used to denigrate those who honestly hold a divergent view on this topic.

### 3. “One Publication – *“Not a matter of biblical or non-biblical”*”

Later, at the 2004 LSM Winter Training, another “blended co-worker” touched on this topic. He said<sup>6</sup>, “... whenever we have many different publication works, it means that there are many trumpet sounds. These many different trumpet sounds cause the army of God to be confused. **It is not a matter of right or wrong, biblical or non-biblical.**...” Elsewhere we have pointed out the contrast between this statement and Watchman Nee’s famous utterance<sup>7</sup>: “**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.” If the Bible is our only standard, **it does indeed matter** if “one publication” is biblical or non-biblical.

### 4. “One Publication – *“Not a matter of freedom of speech”*”

The same brother went on to criticize the idea that “one publication” could be related to the freedom of speech<sup>8</sup>. “*One strong characteristic of this country is the freedom of speech, which means the freedom of opinion ... However, the*

*Lord’s Body is the place with the least freedom.*” We are aware that “freedom of speech” was strongly argued in the co-workers’ meeting in Phoenix, AZ (February 2003), by some senior and respected brothers who disagreed with the “one publication” policy. In this instance the “blended co-workers” used their “monopoly of the podium” to promote their own views and depreciate alternative perspectives sincerely expressed by others<sup>9</sup>.

### 5. Another Publication – *“Like Saul setting up a monument for himself”*”

Further examples include the speaking of a “blended co-worker” at the International Training for Elders in Anaheim CA. April 10-12, 2005. He said<sup>10</sup>, “*To do a work within the work, to carry out another ministry within the*



one ministry, is a very serious matter. Suppose a **brother decides to set up his own publishing house** in order to send out his messages to the recovery and to develop his own ministry. **This will cause trouble. This is like Saul setting up a monument for himself. This is serious.**" This word appears to condemn anyone who publishes his own material as a "Saul," one who is rebellious, seeking his own kingdom and is rejected by God.

This brother then went on to say<sup>11</sup> "Please understand that this is simply an illustration and is **not directed at anyone in particular.**" However, we would ask, are the saints that naïve? Wouldn't some entertain the thought that this **might** be directed at someone in particular? Might not some saints endeavour to "connect the dots"? This "illustration," which stigmatizes others as "Saul," could potentially apply to only a few brothers in the recovery. Surely it was applied by some saints to those particular brothers. After receiving these teachings, are we surprised if saints question publications which do not bear the LSM logo? Again, the power of the podium was used to disparage others and sow seeds of suspicion among the saints.

These are merely some examples of the "one publication" teaching documented in published messages of the "blended co-workers." We could elaborate at length based upon other Wednesday-night and conference messages. Moreover, the impact of these spoken and printed messages is enhanced by their being re-spoken as "prophesies" in many local church meetings. We note that these messages were given prior to the release of the document "**Publication Work in the**

**Lord's Recovery,**" (June 30, 2005). Hence these teachings were given while "one publication" was still an item of fellowship among the co-workers.

### The "One Publication" Campaign Has Sown Seeds of Suspicion

Evidently there has been a crusade from the platform, beginning Nov. 2002, to indoctrinate the saints in the Lord's recovery with the "one publication" teaching. Simultaneously the podium was being employed to deprecate alternative viewpoints on this topic. "One publication" has been systematically taught to the saints over an extended period. At the same time "seeds of suspicion" were sown, via suggestions that producing "another publication" was "*to do a work within the work,*" "*not holding the Head,*" "*to carry out another ministry within the one ministry,*" and to "*cause the army of God to be confused,*" etc. Are we surprised if the saints' "taste" and "sense of life" are affected?

Inevitably these seeds have sprouted and produced fruit. Fruit is manifested in (what is now termed) "**protests of the sense of life**" within the saints against "other publications." Fruit is also evident in "**problems**" perceived by co-workers in various places. The "blended co-workers" now claim that they are merely responding to the "feelings of the saints." They assert — "*that is what the saints feel and taste.*" However, we would counter that these feelings — "**protests of the sense of life**" — **are not independent** of the campaign promoting "one publication" conducted by the "blended co-workers." **The power of the**



THE  
SOUTH AMERICAN  
SOCIETY

podium, the printing press, the web-cast and the practice of prophesying have all been utilized to propagate the “one publication” doctrine, deprecate alternative views and prejudice the saints against the ministry and publications of others who have been laboring for the Lord among them.

### Is It Really the Saints?

Now, after waging a “successful campaign,” the claim is made that it is “**the saints.**” It has been asserted that “Even if the blended brothers ... endorse[d]... [Brother X’s] good intentions, **the saints could not ignore... the protests of the sense of life within themselves.**” Moreover, the claim is made that this situation cannot be rectified by “a few comments made from the platform.” We agree. The present situation is the result of **many** comments from the platform; in fact there has been a **systematic campaign from the podium and**

**in print** for over 3 years. Certainly the cumulative effects of that crusade cannot be reversed with a “few comments... from the platform”! We suggest that the source of both the “protests” and the “problems” is described in the statement<sup>12</sup> made by one of the “blended co-workers”— “If we ... insist on anything other than the common faith, the oneness will surely be damaged, and divisions will occur.” This word, echoes Brother Lee’s own warning<sup>13</sup>: “We all have to learn that to keep the oneness of the Body we must practice this generality. **If we are special, if we are definite and specific in anything other than our faith, surely the oneness will be damaged.** The oneness will be hurt and **then we will be divided.**” Today are these warning words being fulfilled among us? - Nigel Tomes

*(References may be found on pages 47-48. Correspondence from a saint in South America follows. - Ed.)*

## From a Saint in South America

*(The following was sent to Nigel Tomes after the writer found an article of Nigel's on the internet. A piece of correspondence from a saint from another country in this region may be found on pp. 47-48. Both writers gave permission for use.)*

Dear Saints,

I and my wife are small saints living the church life in the city of \*\*\*, Brazil. After reading and being consoled by the text written by this brother called Nigel Tomes, concerning the question of "one publication", I decided to write you some very simple words (please forgive the misspellings, the wrong use of prepositions and the many other linguistic mistakes).

Yesterday I heard about a brother from my region, who is studying in \*\*\*\*. It seems that the elder saints in that locality have forbidden him to meet with the other saints, since he is not according with this question of "one publication". Well, I don't know details of this situation, but it's not so difficult, to me, to believe in it. In South America, we've been following the Lord and living absolutely for His eternal plan and Recovery for the last decades, but since brother Lee went to be with the Lord, this question of "one publication" has been used by some saints to "cut us off" from the Body. Yes, when I access [web-] pages like [www.localchurches.org](http://www.localchurches.org) I feel like that. We are more than a thousand churches in my country, but there is none in the map provided in that site. Is this happening just because we don't follow the "one publication"? I sincerely can't see any other reason for that, and I sincerely don't think that this is enough to cut the Body of Christ. This has been a great mistake, as brother Nigel Tomes said in his article. He also said that the "one publication" may become a factor of division both within local churches and among them. I would say: it may not, it has been.

If you don't know, in my continent, in some countries (but not in Brazil), there were places where some saints suffered expulsion and the remained ones proclaimed themselves as the real church, the church under the real ministry, and very quickly promoted the first international conference under the real ministry in South America.

This occurred after the publication of the LSM booklet. In other situations, books not "authorized" by LSM were publicly destroyed. This is the fruit of this new policy, a fruit of division in the Lord's body and Recovery.

Oh! Saints, almost every day I think in this situation. Today I made a search on Google and I found brother Nigel's article. I became happy with it. Please forgive me for writing you such email, but I just had to share something with you. All this situation has been imparting much suffering to the saints in our continent.

Particularly, I become very sad when I hear of all this things happening. Sometimes I access the page of LSM and enjoy the radio programs, other times I access the FTTA's page and enjoy very much to see those beloved saints enjoying the Lord, but I feel sad that they do not consider us to be "like them".

The more I think this situation, the more it sounds absurd for me. I stay for hours considering how could matured saints in the Lord's Recovery be so blind to the point that even a small saint like me (this is not an language figure) could so easily see their childish[ness] in this question. For those saints, I would say: "This booklet you've published is the most clear *uncertain* sound[ing] of [the] trumpet in the Lord's Recovery, putting the saints all over the world confused and discouraged for the battle".

But don't think, saints, we are being weakened by this situation. On contrary, we've been increasingly strengthened by it. We know in Whom we are (and so do you). We know that there must be much persecution even from within the church, and we know that the Lord is with us in this question. We are propagating the Lord's Recovery in our continent (and in others, like Africa and Europe) very fast, and we feel like Joseph in Gen 49: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob".

We will continue to love and to be one with the saints, even the LSM saints. We will continue to love them until they decide to definitely expel us. If this doesn't happen, we will still be one with them even if they are not one with us. This is the feeling the Lord gave us. But we won't stop being faithful to the vision the Lord has given us (to spread the gospel of the kingdom all over the Earth). We need to be obedient to God, not to men in this situation.

(signed: \*\*\*\*\*)

Obs: please, consider this a particular testimony of a small saint, ok? This should not be taken as the position or opinion of the saints from my city or country.

# THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

## MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE: APPROVEDNESS (3)

"BUT YOU KNOW HIS [TIMOTHY'S] APPROVEDNESS, THAT AS A CHILD WITH A FATHER HE HAS SERVED WITH ME UNTO THE GOSPEL. HIM THEREFORE I HOPE TO SEND IMMEDIATELY, AS SOON AS I SEE HOW THINGS GO WITH ME. BUT I TRUST IN THE LORD THAT I MYSELF ALSO SHALL COME SHORTLY. BUT I CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY TO SEND TO YOU EPAPHRODITUS, MY BROTHER AND FELLOW WORKER AND FELLOW SOLDIER, AND YOUR APOSTLE AND MINISTER TO MY NEED, SINCE HE LONGED AFTER YOU ALL AND WAS GREATLY DISTRESSED BECAUSE YOU HEARD THAT HE HAD BECOME SICK; FOR INDEED HE HAD BECOME SICK, NEAR TO DEATH, BUT GOD HAD MERCY ON HIM, AND NOT ON HIM ONLY BUT ALSO ON ME THAT I MIGHT NOT HAVE SORROW UPON SORROW. I HAVE SENT HIM THEREFORE THE MORE EAGERLY, SO THAT WHEN YOU SEE HIM AGAIN, YOU MAY REJOICE AND I MAY BE LESS SORROWFUL. RECEIVE HIM THEREFORE IN THE LORD WITH ALL JOY, AND HOLD SUCH IN HONOR, BECAUSE FOR THE WORK OF CHRIST HE DREW NEAR UNTO DEATH, RISKING HIS LIFE, THAT HE MIGHT FILL UP YOUR LACK OF SERVICE TOWARD ME."

-PHILIPPIANS 2:22-30

### **EPAPHRODITUS: AN OUTSTANDING, COMMON BROTHER**

Besides himself and Timothy, Paul referred to a third servant of the Lord in Philippians chapter two whom he wished to send to the Philippians. In verse 25, Paul writes, "But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your apostle and minister to my need." I do not believe in the entire Bible there is another person referred to in such an impressive manner!

Paul's appraisal of Epaphroditus had nothing to do with his talent, his

operating ability, or how energetic and life-giving he was. In spite of this, Paul held Epaphroditus in high regard.

Because Paul held him in such high regard, he considered it necessary to send him back to the Philippians. Epaphroditus was originally sent by the church in Philippi to care for Paul's needs. Why did Paul think so highly of this brother and why was he so crucial? Paul referred to Epaphroditus as his brother, his fellow worker, and his fellow soldier. Furthermore, he had been chosen by the saints in Philippi to be their apostle and minister to Paul's needs.

Perhaps none among us will ever become another apostle Paul or Watchman Nee or Witness Lee, yet any among us can become an Epaphroditus, an “outstandingly common” brother. Even though he was not talented or grand in operation, he, along with Paul and Timothy, possessed approvedness. In this message we will examine eight indicators or reasons for his approvedness.

### 1) EPAPHRODITUS WAS DISTRESSED OVER THE CHURCH’S CONCERN FOR HIM

Paul told the Philippians in this verse “...he [Epaphroditus] longed after you all.” This means that after arriving in Rome, he really missed the saints in Philippi. Furthermore, Paul writes he “was greatly distressed because you heard that he had become sick.” At first glance, this does not seem to make much sense. If Epaphroditus were sick, shouldn’t *others* be distressed about *him*? And could not Paul have rebuked the church in Philippi, saying, “You brothers sent a sick person to minister to me! Rather than helping me, he has become a burden. Don’t you brothers know what you are doing?”

This case seems unique. The church sent a brother, and when the brother arrived he became sick. He must have overextended himself. Maybe he took on a number of jobs to support Paul’s material needs, and eventually became so tired and worn out that he fell ill. He was not just “under the weather” for a few days, but actually drew near to death. Both Paul and the church must have been anxious over him. But the one

who became most sorrowful was the one who became sick! Epaphroditus became extremely distressed when the church became worried about him. Perhaps Epaphroditus even complained, “Why did you let the church know I have become sick? Now they are worried about me!” Brothers, rarely have I seen such a sweet relationship between a laboring one and a church, yet such mutual concern should be our experience in the church life.

Epaphroditus did not lie on his sick bed hoping that the saints would send him flowers or words of comfort. It would have been very easy for Epaphroditus to feel he deserved some sympathy, yet Epaphroditus would rather have hidden it from the saints. “Greatly distressed” in this verse could also be translated as “anguished”. His thought was, “Since they are worried about me, I must do something to relieve them, to comfort them, and to strengthen them.” What a manner of life this is!

We can easily appreciate verses such as Ephesians 2:6, which says, “...And raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,” because they contain high revelation. We should, however, also appreciate verses such as Philippians 2:25-26, which say, “But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your apostle and minister to my need, since he longed after you all and was greatly distressed because you heard that he had become sick.” Such verses should affect our care for one another in the churches.



2) PAUL HAD SORROW UPON SORROW  
DUE TO HIS CONCERN FOR EPAPHRODITUS

Paul greatly appreciated Epaphroditus' service. In Philippians 2:27 he wrote, "For indeed he had become sick, near to death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow." Why would Paul have sorrow upon sorrow? In chapter one of Philippians he was so buoyant, joyful, and heavenly. He knew Christ and knew how to stand in oneness with Christ and His economy. Why would he be brought down because of one sick brother? Even though Epaphroditus may have been a typical brother, Paul referred to him as his brother, his fellow worker, his fellow soldier, the Philippians' apostle, and a minister to Paul's needs. Let me ask you, should there not have been many co-workers with Paul? Should not Paul have had many fellow soldiers? Should not Paul have had many brothers who really cared for his need? We may answer yes, but this brother is one of the few who truly cared for Paul in his situation.

THE EXERCISE OF THE HUMANITY OF JESUS  
IS MORE NECESSARY THAN  
THE OPERATION OF THE POWER OF GOD

I do not know if Paul knew whether or not Epaphroditus would die. There was nothing to indicate that Paul was confident God would heal him, nor did Paul himself try to affect such a healing. Perhaps if we were present we would have said, "Paul, just stretch out your hand and say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up

and walk!'" Yet in Paul's conduct towards Epaphroditus can be seen the secret of the church life. In the church life, we must exercise the humanity of Jesus more than simply the power of God. The secret of the church life is to live out the humanity of Jesus.

The Bible records that Paul had healed people and even resurrected someone from the dead. But at that moment, in that particular place, there was no leading from the Lord to heal this brother nor was there the assurance within Paul at the time that this brother would get better. Therefore he became very sorrowful. Maybe he did have a feeling within that in the end Epaphroditus would survive. But even if he knew he would survive, as he saw his brother suffering, he also suffered. He was a great apostle, but the humanity of Jesus witnessed here in Paul is more precious than any mere outward exercise of power. His word was, "God had mercy upon me." When Epaphroditus was sick, his concern was heavy.

Is not the Lord's work more crucial than any sick individual? Should not Paul have written to Philippi, "Brothers, do you not know who I am in the Lord's work? The brother you sent to me is not fitting the magnitude of the task. Send me a replacement soon." No, brothers! This very way of thinking damages the Lord's recovery. In the so-called Lord's recovery, many seem to have lost this element of the humanity of Jesus. It seems how the individual saints are doing is no longer important when compared to the overall situation of the Lord's work.

But Paul was with the saints as he strove for the furtherance of the

gospel. The secret to how they fought for the gospel is found in the way Paul treated Epaphroditus. This secret is the exercise of the humanity of Jesus in our living. When Epaphroditus was sick, Paul was beside his bed. He did not know what to do, except to pray, "Lord, have mercy upon me. I am so sorrowful about this situation. Lord, do not add sorrow upon sorrow. If he dies, Lord Jesus, I would not know how to handle it." Let us learn to relate to one another in this manner. Particularly while you are young, you should practice caring for others in this way.

Paul could say, "I want to be with you for your advancement, but your advancement is something far more than how I can make use of you or how you might become so powerful in the church life. You yourself are the key. The well-being of your person is the most important element in the church life." This is why Paul wrote, "God had mercy not only upon Epaphroditus, but also upon me that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow." This is why this simple verse that is very difficult for us to grasp is so important.

### 3) PAUL BECAME ONLY "LESS SORROWFUL"

#### WHEN EPAPHRODITUS COULD RETURN

Paul wanted to send Timothy as soon as possible to the Philippians. Even more, however, he wanted to send Epaphroditus to them so that when they saw him, they could rejoice (while he himself would only be less sorrowful). For this reason verse 27 continues, "I have sent him therefore the more eagerly..."

Today one phone call would settle the matter, but things were different then. Epaphroditus had to travel the entire distance to Philippi and show up in the meeting to present himself to the church. Seeing him, the church would be able to rejoice. This is why Paul says, "So that when you see him you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful".

It is easy to understand why the Philippian saints would rejoice at Epaphroditus' return to them in good health. It is more difficult to understand why Paul would only be made less sorrowful. Why would he not rejoice as well? My feeling is that this episode with Epaphroditus gave him such sorrow that he was not able to fully recover.

When Epaphroditus was so sick, sorrow possessed Paul's whole being. Some may want to ask, "Paul, you told them to rejoice in the Lord always. Why then do you testify that you are sorrowful? And why do you have to testify that if God had not been merciful, you would have had sorrow upon sorrow?" Paul could have responded, "Brothers, do you know what that was? I watched Epaphroditus go through that process of being near to death. I saw that process consume him. Now he is healed, and I have sent him back to you so you may rejoice. However, I still experience the effects of this." Paul loved Epaphroditus and was organically related to him. That experience of grief scarred Paul's heart, and he would not easily recover from it.

Many times the responsible brothers among the churches regret how they have handled situations with brothers and sisters. Epaphroditus

came to Rome with money for Paul from the saints in Philippi, and it is very possible that when the money was used up, Epaphroditus had to get a job, and possibly even more than one job, to support Paul. During this time he himself probably lived on very little, sacrificing his own needs for Paul's sake. When Epaphroditus drew near to death, Paul may have felt, "Why, didn't I take better care of him? Why didn't I tell him not to work so hard? Why didn't I tell him to rest more? Why didn't I tell him to eat more for his own health?" I do not know if Paul thought this, but I am sure that Paul must have gone through a psychological ordeal. He was so bothered that the poor brother was sick and near to death. Perhaps Paul often prayed, "Lord, You must forgive me and have mercy in this situation. Lord, take care of him." Praise the Lord, Epaphroditus did recover. But though he recovered, the sensation of grief remained with Paul deep in his person.

#### A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I am a "quick" person. Once I became desperate for a young brother to grow. Because of this I tried to push him along. In the process, however, he became offended and then became cold and eventually discouraged. Sorrow rose up in my heart concerning that brother. During that time whenever someone mentioned his name, there was a little sorrow within my spirit. Finally, by the Lord's mercy, the brother was restored to the church life and even began to develop again. But for some reason that sense of sorrow over that situation has not totally disappeared.

#### THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH IS MANIFESTED THROUGH HUMAN INTERACTIONS

This is the church life. There is no need to talk so much about doctrine, although surely we need to know the truth. Yet the reality of the church life is manifested through these human interactions with the saints. It is precious when others become sealed in your heart, when their growth fully occupies you, and their well-being becomes the meaning of your existence. This was the case between Epaphroditus and Paul.

Epaphroditus was not a great apostle; he was just a "regular" brother, yet Paul loved this brother. When he was sick Paul was sorrowful. When he was near to death, Paul cried out, "Lord I can't take more sorrow! Please take care of him!" When the Lord healed him, Paul sent him back to Philippi so the brothers there might rejoice, while he himself would be less sorrowful. This experience become part of Paul's being. His sorrow diminished, but it did not disappear. As brothers in the church life, we should not simply say to someone who is in suffering, "Trust in the Lord. He will take care of you... Good-bye." We cannot practice the church life like this. We should inwardly be occupied with others' well-being.

#### 4) PAUL HELD EPAPHRODITUS IN HONOR

Regarding Epaphroditus, Paul charged the Philippians to "receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor." These are significant words. The word for "honor" here contains the preposition "in" and the word "valuable." Therefore, this

phrase has the connotation of recognizing preciousness. This person has been constituted because he has gone through something with the Lord that was not at all easy. Therefore, the Philippians should treat Epaphroditus as someone possessing great value.

Epaphroditus had carried the church's offering and had delivered it to Paul and likely even found work for Paul's sake. When he was sick he did not complain or murmur. He did not beg Paul to heal him. Neither did he complain by saying, "Paul, the reason I'm sick is all because of you. If I were in Philippi, I'd be enjoying a normal life." This was not Epaphroditus. I believe he went through the whole experience in a sober, godly, and Christ-like manner, just as the Lord passed through His own suffering. This is why Paul used the word "honor." He used this word because he regarded him highly and appreciated his personal qualities. He did not honor Epaphroditus because of some status or position, but because his person had achieved a certain stature.

#### HONORING SOMEONE NOT FOR HIS POSITION, BUT HIS PERSONAL QUALITY

A famous political leader had a son, and the people of that country held that son in honor. First, they honored him because of his position as the son, but eventually they honored him because of his own integrity and stature. This son became a great man. He himself then had several sons, one of whom enlisted in the military. This son told everyone, even his superior officers, "My grandfather is the Commander-

in-Chief." None of the officers knew how to handle him. He possessed a high status, but his person was of low quality. Eventually, his father found out about his son's conduct, and drove directly to the base to reprimand his son for his behavior. The father realized that people should not honor you because of your status, but rather because of who you are.

Paul told the Philippians, "Respect Epaphroditus because he is someone



of unusual quality. He is a brother with a stature that should be held in honor. For the work of Christ he drew near unto death." It does not appear that Epaphroditus was preaching the gospel. He was only ministering to Paul's need. But Paul considered this the work of Christ.

Epaphroditus risked his life, his soul-life, to fill up the Philippians' lack of service toward Paul. In Colossians 1:24, Paul said that he filled up in his flesh that which is lacking in the sufferings

of Christ for His Body's sake. Here Epaphroditus did the same thing, except he labored to fill up the Philippians' lack of care toward Paul. Paul raised up that church, and certainly the brothers in Philippi desired to care for Paul, but for some reason there was a lack in their care. This could have been due to the distance between Philippi and Rome, or perhaps they did not consider too much what his needs might have been. They were concerned enough, however, to send Epaphroditus. Upon his arrival, Epaphroditus saw the need and set about working to fill up the Philippians' lack of service toward him. What a brother! What an organic relatedness he had both to the church and to Paul! I really like this portion of the Bible. Without it you do not have the reality and practicality of the church life. We are not for the work. We are for the organic Body of Christ. In this organic Body, our relationship should be like the relationship seen between the apostle Paul, the church in Philippi, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. Praise the Lord for this wonderful organic Body!

#### 5) A MINISTER TO THE APOSTLE'S NEED

Although Epaphroditus was a common brother just like you and me, the apostle Paul regarded him very highly. Paul referred to him as his brother, his fellow worker, his fellow soldier, and the saints' apostle. Then he called him their minister to his need. This simple brother became a minister to the needs of a great apostle. The word "minister" has great significance in the New Testament. In Hebrews 8:2, the Lord Jesus is called "a Minister of the heavenly places,

even of the true tabernacle." We should not consider Epaphroditus' ministry to be merely related to practical service. The phrase "minister to my need" might give some the feeling that he merely worked to generate money to meet Paul's needs. But the word Paul used here, "minister," is a very high word. This is the highest matter a brother can carry out. The highest attainment of the Lord Jesus in His resurrection and ascension was His becoming the Minister of the heavenly places and the true tabernacle. The Lord Jesus became such a high Minister, and here Epaphroditus, a common brother, became a minister. Eventually his attainment is the same as that of the Lord Jesus Christ!

#### A LONG ROAD TO TRAVEL TO BECOME A MINISTER

There is a long road down which you must travel before you can become such a minister. As soon as many brothers are saved, they want to become a ministers like Jesus, able to give life, and be recognized as a profit to the church and bring others to Christ. Because of this, Paul holds up Epaphroditus. Who was Epaphroditus? He was a brother first, before he could become a co-worker. Then, as a co-worker he became a fellow soldier. It was as a fellow soldier that he became the apostle of a local church. It was only because he was such a brother/co-worker/fellow soldier/apostle, that he was able to become such a minister. The apostle Paul was a logical person. He did not come up with his word order by chance. When he wrote these five items, within him there was

a way, a route. This route is the way for those who are not necessarily that gifted, not necessarily that manifested, and not necessarily that useful to eventually become great servants of the Lord. Why do I say Epaphroditus was a great servant? Paul made the same comment about him as he did about the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is Minister of the true tabernacle, and Epaphroditus was also a minister to the apostle's need.

THE APOSTLE'S NEED IS GOD'S NEED  
IN HIS ECONOMY

Do you realize that the apostle's need was actually the need that God has in His economy? God's operation and speaking and the churches' development come through the apostles. If the apostle's need is met, then God is able to move and speak freely on the earth. Meeting the apostle's need is not merely something financial. Yes, Epaphroditus' ministry was practical, but he carried this practical matter spiritually. The Lord Jesus being the Minister of the true tabernacle means that in the universal Body of Christ, the Lord Jesus is the One in the heavenlies dispensing everything. It is only as we partake in this divine operation that we also may become ministers.

6) A MINISTER CARRYING PRACTICAL  
MATTERS SPIRITUALLY

The word for "service" in verse 30 ("...that he might fill up your lack of service toward me...") is essentially the same Greek word as "minister" found in verse 25. In verse 25 it refers to the person of the minister. In verse 30, however, it refers to the work of ministry. It is possible to read verse 30 and take the apostle Paul as the center of Epaphroditus' ministry. In this case the verse would mean that Epaphroditus, a minister, drew near to death to fill up the lack of ministry toward Paul. Why did he get a job? To meet Paul's need. Paul himself, however, was not the center. This ministry was a practical matter, but it was carried spiritually. Epaphroditus' calling was not merely to care for Paul, but to care for God's economy. Paul's well-being was not the center; God's economy was the center. To care for Paul's well-being was a simple thing, but it was not so easy to care for Paul spiritually.

Sometimes capable pastors are able to raise up very large congregations. Some might be impressed by this and seek to copy such successes. This is fine if your goal is simply a large congregation. Our calling, however, is God's economy. If our center is



God's economy, then we cannot use just any means to raise up something. We must carry our burden spiritually.

Paul was a prisoner. He was living in a rented house while he awaited his appearance before Caesar, so he had to pay rent. He also had to pay the expense of the guards constantly watching him. Although he had such expenses, he could not get a job, because he was a prisoner. What happened to all the money he brought to Jerusalem for those in need (Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 9:1-5)? The Bible does not tell us what happened to it, but we can be fairly sure that the church in Jerusalem did not care for him while he was imprisoned in Rome. When Paul arrived in Rome, the Jews in Rome said they had not heard anything or received any letters about him from Jerusalem (Acts 28:21).

Paul was in a very difficult situation. There was probably a lot of gossip about him. Probably many were saying, "He's doing his own work. He's operating according to himself. He does not keep the law as even the Lord Jesus kept it. He does not keep the Sabbath or administer circumcision." Paul was strongly disliked, and even hated. I think all the churches were wondering what they should do, especially those in Asia Minor, which were geographically very close to Jerusalem. Paul did not receive any care from the churches in Asia Minor, nor from Greece. Corinth was too busy arguing about who was following whom. The only major church left that really stood with the apostle Paul was Philippi. Paul was in real financial need. So they sent Epaphroditus,

whom Paul referred to as "my brother." As Paul's brother, Epaphroditus ministered to Paul's need not only practically, but also spiritually.

CARRYING PRACTICAL THINGS SPIRITUALLY IS  
VERY PRECIOUS IN GOD'S ECONOMY

To be able to carry practical things spiritually is very precious in God's economy. Let me give you an example. You may come together with other brothers and begin to coordinate for a gospel meeting. Together you may consider practical matters such as who should be invited, who should speak, which songs should be used, how the chairs should be arranged, and so on. However, none of these things are spiritual. Each is a practical matter. You must, however, carry these practical matters spiritually.

So the first thing to do in coordinating this gospel meeting is to pray, "Oh Lord, have mercy upon the church. Have mercy upon the saints. Have mercy upon the saints' gospel friends. Have mercy upon this whole event." You need a lot of prayer, a lot of fasting, and a lot of fellowship in order to carry the whole thing spiritually. You should have a number of helpers who are able to talk with the new ones who are invited to the meeting. You should train others concerning how to pray or how to give testimonies. You should pray-read and enjoy the gospel verses with all the saints. Everyone may evaluate its success based upon the meeting itself, but the highest value of your labor is that after the gospel is preached the entire church becomes revitalized. Afterwards, it should become a church that bears more spiritual weight.

Identical gospel events can produce different results. You may have a good meeting, but if the center is the gospel preaching itself, no matter how many people are saved, you may only produce a work. If, however, your center is God's economy, the result will be the increase of Christ among the new ones and saints in the church life. Which result has reality? You have to say that the second result has reality. If you take the first way, where the saints are waiting for a big event, many may be saved, but many will be lost, for eventually the saints will become tired of these events. For this reason, practical things must be carried spiritually.

WE CAN ALL BE MINISTERS  
CARRYING OUT  
PRACTICAL THINGS SPIRITUALLY

Epaphroditus carried out practical things, but he carried them out spiritually. This is why he was able to be a minister. Every brother should attain to this. It does not matter whether you are talented or not. You may be a one-talented brother and not very "high profile," but eventually you should become a minister. Perhaps you will not be a minister to meet some apostle's need, but you should be able to meet the church's need. If you are an usher, you can become a minister to meet the church's need by caring for the saints. If you are a brother in charge of telling the saints where to park their cars in the parking lot, carry it out spiritually.

I like Epaphroditus. He was just a regular brother. This is the only place he is mentioned in the Bible. (There is an Epaphras mentioned in Colossians and Philemon, but I doubt that these two are the same person. Colossae was in Asia Minor, while Philippi was in Macedonia.) My point is that although Epaphroditus might not have impressed any by giving messages or being powerful, he still grew from being a brother to being a minister. As a minister, he became much more than Paul's ATM machine! He did not just meet Paul's financial need; he ministered to Paul's spiritual need. I want to repeat that this word for minister is the same word used to describe the attainment of Christ in Hebrews 8:2. The Lord and the apostle Paul appreciated this brother, even though he was not noticeably talented or gifted. Yet his status was just the same as the Lord's, for he was a member of the Body of Christ. What an experience of growth!

I hope you would be able to proclaim, "I may not have much. Like Epaphroditus, I have only a little. But my aim is to become a minister of the Lord, a minister with the Lord, and a minister standing in one accord with the Lord."

How was Epaphroditus' ministry manifested? His ministry was manifested in meeting the apostle Paul's need. How will your ministry be manifested? Perhaps it will be by taking charge of the cleaning of the meeting hall, for when you clean the hall and coordinate the cleaning service, you handle these practical things in a very spiritual way. To attain a ministry like this, however, you must pass through a process of growth.

THE CENTRAL THOUGHT:

EPAPHRODITUS WAS A SERVANT OF THE LORD

The central thought in these verses in Philippians is not how Epaphroditus was upholding the apostle Paul. The point is not that he risked his soul-life for the apostle Paul. The central thought is that he was a servant of the Lord. This brother grew in his capacity from that of being a brother to that of being a co-worker; and from being a co-worker to being a fellow soldier; from being a fellow soldier to becoming an apostle of a local church; and eventually a minister. He met practical needs in a spiritual way. (In this sequence, even being an apostle is not as high as that of being a minister!)

Can you take care of the ushering service in your local church? Nothing is more practical than this. But can you handle it spiritually? If you are able to handle it spiritually, then the five ushers with whom you coordinate will touch something spiritual.

Today we separate these two aspects. We think that one type of service is practical, and the other is spiritual; one is Levitical and the other is priestly. This, however, is the New Testament age. Today everyone is a priest (1 Pet. 2:9). No New Testament believer is merely a Levite. Even if you are handling what seems to be a Levitical work, you must carry it in a priestly way. You must

carry practical things spiritually.

WHATEVER YOU HAVE AND WHATEVER YOU CAN DO, YOU CAN DO IT SPIRITUALLY

Whatever we do in the church life can be done spiritually. This is why Epaphroditus grew so well. He was not a five-talented apostle such as Paul. He was not even a two-talented apostle such as Timothy. He was a one-talented, common brother who became the apostle of the church in Philippi. Isn't that impressive? If I tell a brother who drives a semi-truck for



a living that he should give a three-day conference, he may feel scared to death. You do not have to be able to give such a conference, but whatever you do, you should carry it spiritually.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate this! Although Paul became the object of Epaphroditus' service, his service was not for Paul; his service was for God's economy. He carried practical things spiritually. Therefore, a maturity was manifested in Epaphroditus. This is why Paul exhorted the Philippian saints to honor him and hold him in honor, because he was truly a spiritual man who carried out practical things spiritually. Whether or not we can give wonderful messages, we can carry the one ministry as the New Testament ministers. Will you serve in this way? The value of your service

will be in how spiritual you become in the process of your learning to serve; how much Christ you gain in the process; and how much your spiritual exercise becomes a help to all the saints.

**7) A CO-WORKER HAVING THE SAME  
COMMITMENT AND FIGHTING FOR THE SAME  
GOAL: GOD'S TESTIMONY**

Paul said, "But I considered it is necessary to send to you Epaphroditus." Why did Paul have to send him back? Epaphroditus was sick and nearly died. Perhaps he was married, and did think about his family and missed them. But it seems all he cared about was serving Paul practically in a spiritual way and spiritually in a practical way. So Paul had to tell him, "You must go back." When Paul sent him back, he commended him to the Philippians as a highly valued and valuable brother, saying, "He is my brother and my fellow worker." I can see why Paul would call Timothy and Titus his co-workers, because these men had some status and standing. For him to call a common brother his co-worker could make his work appear less significant. But Paul was genuine; he was not ashamed to call Epaphroditus his fellow worker. The Lord Jesus is the same; He is not ashamed to call us His brothers (Heb. 2:11). Paul spoke of him with commendation, saying "He is my brother." They shared the same divine life. Paul's commendation then went even further: "He is my fellow worker," meaning that they saw the same vision and shared the same commitment.

Epaphroditus was not considered a co-worker because he could get many people saved or because he

was so capable. No, he was Paul's co-worker because he saw the same vision and possessed the same commitment. This vision and commitment caused him to have the same struggle. As one who struggled together with Paul, he was also a fellow soldier with Paul.

Being a fellow-worker is related to commitment. It is also something related to struggling and fighting for the kingdom of the Lord. How did Epaphroditus fight? He did not have the appearance of a soldier. When he joined Paul in Rome, he may have taken a number of jobs before becoming sick. How could Paul consider this man to be his fellow soldier? But being a fellow soldier is not related to one's operation. Even a young sister can be a soldier. She does not have to be one of David's mighty men. She does not have to get thirty people saved with one message. She does not have to heal a dying man. No, she just has to be faithful to practically carry out the spiritual commitment the Lord has given to her. She will then not only have the same commitment with the leading co-worker, but she will be struggling and fighting for the same goal, which is the Lord's testimony.

As brothers sharing the divine life, we should grow to become co-workers. There is nothing more blessed than being considered a co-worker in the work for the Lord's testimony. But you may say, "Shall all of us quit our jobs?" A co-worker does not have to quit his job. Epaphroditus is proof of this. He was a co-worker who did not quit his job. Instead, he possibly even took on additional jobs. If the Lord tells you to quit your job, that is up to



the Lord and it is between you and Him. Even if you hold a job, however, you can declare, "I am a co-worker. I work with a commitment. I do practical things spiritually and I carry my spiritual burden practically." There are many brothers who, like Epaphroditus, are not necessarily that spiritually talented, manifested, or gifted, yet Paul said of Epaphroditus, "This is my co-worker and my fellow soldier. Together we share the same commitment and the same struggle for the Lord's testimony."

#### **8) BEING AN APOSTLE OF A LOCAL CHURCH**

If you want to arrive at the level of maturity that Epaphroditus achieved, there is yet one more major matter you must attain to: you must become someone who can be the apostle of your local church.

An apostle is one sent out with a commitment. What is that commitment? In Epaphroditus' case, that commitment was to bring money from Philippi to the apostle Paul in Rome. That made him an apostle, and as long as he was faithful not to keep the money for himself, the Lord was happy.

When we talk about apostles, our feeling is that they are great and spiritual men. An apostle is someone who has raised up many churches. True, many apostles do raise up churches, but your local church can also have apostles. Your local church is the place where the reality of your growth in life, the reality of your commitment, and the reality of your operation can be tested. Everything is tested in the local church.

Paul said, "I considered it necessary for me to send Epaphroditus to you. He's my brother, my fellow worker, and my fellow soldier." Paul did not normally commend people as he did Epaphroditus. Typically he commended a brother with one positive detail or regarding one particular item.

But when he spoke of Epaphroditus, the apostle Paul spoke richly. "He is my brother, my fellow worker, and my fellow soldier." If we were Epaphroditus we might have replied, "Paul, I'd rather stay here under your wing." But Paul knew the real learning takes place in a local church and the real lessons are learned in a local church.

Can your local church send you out with a commitment? If you are not trustworthy, you will not be sent out. Some local churches will not send anyone because the elders are too worried about keeping every brother and sister in their locality. They do not feel they can afford to send anyone. We must remember, however, that we are for the Lord's testimony. We are not just for our own local church. This is probably the reason we do not see many apostles raised up by local churches, because most churches are careful to hold on to their most useful saints.

I am happy that the church in Philippi was different! This church was quite unique. The churches in Asia seemed to have had little concern about Paul. The Corinthians seemed preoccupied by their soul-life and their flesh. But there was one church that said that they wanted to stand

with the apostle and his commitment. Therefore they sent their apostle to care for the apostle Paul. Oh, that is a great thing!

Unless you can be an apostle of your own local church, you can never be a real minister of Christ. The growth of most saints cannot reach to this point. After most saints grow so well, they make their local church into a "nest". A healthy local church should send out some of their saints as apostles to meet the need of the Lord's testimony.

Are you ready? We must be ready to be sent out. At the same time, the Lord may keep you where you are for another number of years. But every local church and every saint must be ready to be sent out for the interest of the Lord's testimony. The saints should not build nests in their own localities, and the local churches should not hold on to all their brothers and sisters. If we are brothers, co-workers, and fellow soldiers, we can be apostles sent out by our local church to meet the need for the Lord's testimony! In this way, we can become ministers who are able to operate in practical things spiritually and carry spiritual things practically, just as Epaphroditus, who is a pattern to us all. - *Titus Chu*



NOTES

1. This article contains some quotes from unpublished documents. Perhaps a precedent for this practice is found in the document, **Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**, which quotes from unpublished documents: "*Brother Lee said, "...I am the continuation of Brother Nee; I would like to have a continuation of me, and this needs a corporation...The Living Stream corporation will continue this ministry."* (from unpublished notes ...)" "Blended Co-workers," **Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**, LSM, 30 June, 2005, p. 5
2. "Blended Co-workers," **Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**, LSM, 30 June, 2005, pp. 5-6
3. see **The Ministry**, vol. 7, no. 2, March 2003, p. 101.
4. **The Ministry**, v.8, no.7, p. 183, *emphasis added*.
5. The need for a "discerning check" was strongly emphasized by the "blended co-workers" in **Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery** (LSM, June 30, 2005)
6. **The Ministry**, vol. 9, No. 1, Jan. 2005, p. 186
7. These words appeared in the first issue of Watchman Nee's publication: **The Christian** (1925)
8. **The Ministry**, vol. 9, No. 1, Jan. 2005, p. 186
9. The so-called "**Phoenix Accord**," an informal document bearing the names of 14 "senior brothers," produced at the Feb. 2003 gathering, includes the following declarations: "*In all of our speaking -privately, publicly, and globally-we should refrain from indictments and innuendos.*" ("Applications" #2) "*Direct communication is imperative in all our relationships.*"(#5) "*We should look for resolution of problems through constant, personal, face-to-face fellowship.*" (#6)
10. **The Ministry**, v. 9, no. 6, June 2005, p. 152
11. **The Ministry**, v. 9, no. 6, June 2005, p. 152
12. *Preface to, Speciality, Generality & Practicality of the Church-life* by Witness Lee, LSM

**The following has particular relevance to the contents of this article, and was written to the author, who was given permission to use it. Names have been omitted. (The Spanish original may be found at [www.concernedbrothers.com](http://www.concernedbrothers.com).)**

*"Allow me to have a sincere communion about the problems that we are experiencing among the churches in \*\*\*. My intention is only to be consoled amid many storms and tests. God is witness that we have always been helped positively through the brothers who are at the forefront of Lord's work in South America to love the Lord and His Body. All the churches were in one accord until when some brothers began to question many things due to their dissatisfaction. They began this way to spread the words that contained doubts with regard to the Lord's work in South America. This has caused a lot of confusions in many brothers and churches. In one church, the responsible brothers said: "We are thankful that Brother X has visited us every year, but now we have made the*

*decision to follow directly the Ministry of the Age and we are [approved?...Span. "auspiciados"] by LSM", insinuating that the others, including Brother X, are not in the one ministry. Almost all the brothers were affected in that church. The same thing happened in other two cities. Many slanders claimed that the Lord will show mercy to those who are in the Ministry in His judgment.*

*Another matter is that these brothers teach that they should only read the books of LSM and not of the [publisher in South America established by Brother X, which we will call MMM here]. This had brought in a lot of confusion. During the 16 years history of the Lord's recovery the churches in \*\*\* we never had problems of this type. We have always enjoyed all the books of LSM and of MMM without analyzing, classifying, criticizing, or comparing. But now they minimize the books of MMM by saying that they don't serve the Lord and are not part of the one publication work. This is so wicked that whenever somebody receives these words they touch the death, stay totally in the mind, and lose enjoyment. In the past, we have not only enjoyed all the books that we received, but also promoted them among the churches and among many sons of God who don't meet with us so that they come to participate in the building of Christ's Body.*

*We have really appreciated the care of the Lord through the messages of the cooperative brothers in South America and their visit. This has affirmed many brothers who have been affected by the one publication policy. Now we want to advance positively, only looking to the Lord, to complete his economy on this earth.*

*Our testimony is that we have great appreciation and love for all the saints in the Lord's recovery, and we pray that He will grant us sufficient grace to continue to be in the building of the only universal body of Christ to accelerate His glorious manifestation.*

*Your brother,...."*

### **"The Inner Sense"**

The Lord has given us an anointing (1 Jn 2:20) and we also have our conscience as an inner witness (Rom 9:1). The authentic sense of life, however, will never go against what God has revealed or ordained in His Word! Mormons, when visiting a home, often ask those they visit to read the *Book of Mormon* so that the Lord may inwardly reveal to them that it is of Him! Mormons claim to have experienced such a "witness," which they attribute to the Holy Spirit. We thank the Lord for the **genuine** sense of life, but we must also realize that the conscience can be affected by the words of those viewed to be God's earthly authorities. The most trusting and childlike are those who possess the most suggestible hearts (which is as it should be)! Thus, may truth reign. We do believe that God, who is greater than our hearts, will make all things known to us as the indwelling One and transform our hearts by means of the law of the Spirit of life. Some day, by the growth in life, we will all arrive at the oneness of the faith. Until then, believers will be swayed by teachings of men as they speak in God's name. May our conscience be kept pure in that we may be able to testify that our lives are for the Lord and His interest above all else! This, along with our common faith, remains common ground for fellowship even should common understanding be absent or lost. -John Berglund

