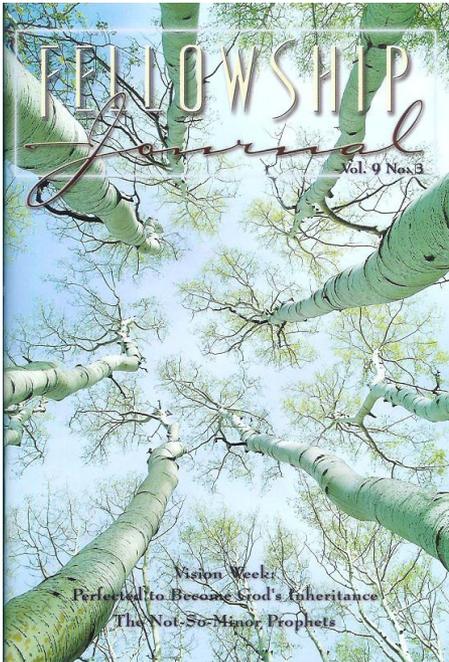


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Perfected Unto
Stewardship for the
Sake of His
Inheritance in
Ephesians

The Motley Minor
Prophets

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Hearing It There versus Reading It Here

What is the difference between reading an edited version of a message in the Fellowship Journal and hearing it for yourself?

Many of the messages found in these pages are edited from messages given by someone to an audience. (For instance, all of Titus Chu's messages are edited from what is spoken, whereas, Rex Beck's article in this issue was written by him.) What is the difference between reading an article produced from a spoken message, and hearing it?

First of all, I, as editor, work to preserve the speaker's burden, or underlying thought. We could simply provide "cleaned up" transcripts but, quite frankly, most readers would become lost in the asides and examples given using people who were present or given on the chalkboard, etc., in ways that simply would not be decipherable to the reader. When such examples are preserved, they have to be altered in some way for the reader's benefit.

My mission is to preserve and make clear the reason why the speaker has chosen to speak. The reason for this is so that the speaker's burden can be conveyed to those who were not present, and viewed with more clarity by those who were. Those who were present will notice, of course, that a great many alterations have been made for the sake of highlighting the speaker's main thought. This is possible because what was spoken has been recorded. When reviewed, the underlying thought often becomes more clear as the purpose of examples, etc., emerges. I myself am often not as clear as others may be when I first hear a message, but I have the benefit of reviewing the audio of the message and its transcript. The process I go through is one of cutting away what is less necessary and preserving and phrasing into more acceptable or conventional written form what is (according to my ability). Hopefully the result is that the burden underlying the message is brought into higher relief, even as much of the accompanying "color" is removed. Another editor might preserve more of that color, but my own burden is to present the burden itself as best I can. If I was not constrained by deadline, etc., I would remove more of what is repeated, and if more space was available on these pages, or if I thought the typical reader was more tolerant, I might have tried to make the message truer to the circumstances surrounding its delivery. My main concern, however, is that the burden finds its impact.

The benefit of actually having heard what was spoken is that the listener shared in the experience of all the speaker grappled with as he endeavored to reach those who were present, even as the Lord was working in him. The privilege of hearing a God-inspired message is that you share in the process of its delivery. The examples used, the pacing, and all the things that tailor the burden to the listeners individually and as a group...the reader cannot appreciate these things. That is the reason we should not rely upon reading alone when the speaker can be heard directly. To be profited by the Spirit who is operating in the minister, we should do our best to be there where the Spirit is speaking!

But for the benefit of those who were not there, and the benefit of those who were, messages are presented in these pages. May the Spirit enlighten and enliven whether through the hearing or the reading.

- John Berglund

The Motley Minors

God's Message through a Motley Crew of Prophets

Have you ever wondered how God speaks to mankind? God could do anything to give words to man. He could engrave all His words in stone tablets. He could write them in mountains or ocean shorelines. He could even cause any animal to speak if it were His will. However, many times, the way He chooses to speak to mankind is through other men. These men are not perfect men, nor are they merely like robots programmed by God. Rather, they are real men, with real personalities, real jobs, real backgrounds, and real life situations.

One of the best illustrations of how God speaks to man is found in the waning years of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The situation was pretty simple on the outside. God's people, Israel and Judah, had forsaken God and turned to idols and to their own ways. They became morally and spiritually corrupt. God used the surrounding nations to chastise His people through war and oppression so that they would turn back in their distress to a right relationship and course with God.

As this situation unfolded, God sent prophets to His people to speak God's message. Each of these nine prophets conveyed a distinct message from God during the demise of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. However, the prophets didn't just speak about Israel's and Judah's current situation. They revealed more about the coming Messiah, the inevitable judgment of the earth, and the future restoration of all the earth into the kingdom of God. In short one could say that all nine of these prophets have a similar theme: God is calling His people to forsake their independent ways and draw near to Him. If they do not then God will punish them. In the end the Messiah will come forth who will gather up the remnant of His people. God's Messiah will establish a

good relationship with them, will bless them greatly, and together they will bring salvation and righteousness to the entire earth.

In one sense this message is almost too simple—so simple that the listeners don't get it. And this is where the wonder and marvel of how God speaks is shown in this section of the Bible. All or part of this same message is conveyed through a wide spectrum of humanity found in nine prophets. It's as if God used different men with different personalities to fulfill a simple public speaking maxim: first, tell them what you will tell them; second, tell them; third, tell them what you told them. God does this but with a surprisingly human touch, enabling each voice to strike a different chord in the human heart to convey God's same message. When it comes to hearing God, we all have to admit that our ears are dull. What do we need? We need to hear this motley group of prophets who each picked up all or part of God's message and spoke it to us in many different ways. If you put it all together, you will realize how full and broad God is in His speaking.

A person may wonder if God's word that comes through a man and picks up the prophet's own personality is still God's word. I would answer an unequivocal, "Yes! Definitely!" If God's message picks up a human element from the speaker, it doesn't mean that it's not God's word. It still is, but it has a wonderful, approachable, relatable, sensible human element. If you put all the human elements together with their message then you get a full picture of God's message clothed in man and adorned with many of man's personality traits. God could have spoken entirely in tablets of stone. However, if He had chosen that way, He might have lost this human element of His speaking. Men give God the most fitting way for Him to talk with you. Such a wide variety of mankind is exactly what we see in the Motley Minor Prophets.

A motley crew of prophets can appeal to more than one personality type, more than one class, more than one race, more than one social economic background. God's desire is for all to hear His message, respond, and receive His salvation in love. So in the Motley minors we see some appealing to people's romantic side, others appealing to people's administrative side, others appealing to people's artistic side, some appealing to those in the despair of distress, some appealing to the intellectual side of poetic beauty and still others appealing to the downright grouchy aspects that most people like to hide. Put it all together

and you have God's message clothed in a wardrobe of humanity reaching out to people in a broad array of conditions. What a wonderful God we have! What great effect a human being's cooperation with God can yield on the transmission of His message to all of mankind!

Joel—the Unyielding Preacher

Let's begin with Joel, the unyielding preacher. Almost every other minor prophet addresses the condition of the people. Joel, however, speaks almost nothing about their condition except that they need to repent. He is concerned about the supplies for the temple sacrifices and the continuation of worship and how to bring in the coming blessing through the Spirit. He stresses God's coming Day of Judgment and the glories which will come when the Spirit is poured out. In short he is an unyielding preacher.

Sometimes we need an unyielding preacher to push God's message upon us. This preacher will not be entangled in our feelings, or in our messy situation, or even in what we did wrong. Instead he just speaks to us God's judgment, the power and effect of His spirit, and our need to get in line with God. This is Joel. He cuts through all the touchy feely stuff and just tells us what is going on. He's concerned for the temple service because God is concerned for that. He's concerned for the future judgment of nations and the establishment of the coming kingdom because these are God's interests. Sometimes when somebody else gets entangled in our feelings or situations it is not a help to us. What we need is a clear voice not centered on us who can kick us in the pants to bring us back to God's purpose and concerns. Our problems will fall into line after we get into line with God. This is the person and personality of Joel.

Amos—the Humble Shepherd Tree-Trimmer Pastor

Amos, the humble shepherd tree trimmer pastor, is a kind shepherd of God's people. At Amos' time, the destruction of Israel by the Assyrian army was assured. Israel had gone too far and did not have any opportunity of changing the coming judgments. However, they still had opportunity to be faithful to God and to take part in His mending, restoration and inclusion of the Gentiles in God's promises. You could

say that they were going through a trial, which was in large part of their own making but would eventually be mended in a new way by the Lord. In this setting people need an understanding, unassuming shepherd. Amos is from a small town in the southern nation of Judah where he shepherded sheep and trimmed trees. He's not a "professional prophet," but is simply a lover of God's people. He's a foreigner to Israel and is a humble proclaimer of the process that God will put these people through.

Sometimes we need some person to appear to us from a distant nation and in a very humble way to help us through what God is laying down on our path. Amos is not an unyielding preacher who sets himself above the rest. Rather he sits down and says, "I know what it will be like. I know you are lying in a bed of your own making. Take courage as you pass through the deep waters and God will mend and restore you in the end. Through your godly trial, God will bring refuge to a great many more people around you."

Jonah—the Obstinate Curmudgeon

If you would receive the preaching of Jonah you would realize that he doesn't like you and would rather see you judged by God and blown into oblivion. In addition to not liking people, Jonah doesn't like to obey God. Occasionally he only follows God under the greatest of compulsions, some of which involve the inner organs of a large fish. He's an obstinate curmudgeon, who in spite of himself displays God's love and care for all those who give God His rightful honor and respect.

You need to realize that God's care for you is beyond dependence on the ability or will of His servants. Their obedience is worked out between their Master, the Lord, and them. But God's message doesn't suffer in that struggle. His direction is salvation and restoration for you. Hearing this from someone who doesn't like you but is somehow faithful to God is a real reassurance of your place with God. Jonah screams that God's thoughts towards you are not dependent on the people conveying His message. They are rooted in God Himself. It takes human will out of the picture and brings into light the One who started the whole thing—God—and the execution of His plan for you and Him.

Hosea—the Hopeless Romantic

Hosea pulls your heart strings and tells you how God wants to be your husband and how you have forsaken the marriage relationship. He wants to restore you back to your marriage relationship with God. He declares a time when God will say, “you will call me ‘my husband’ and will no longer call me ‘my master.’” Hosea is a hopeless romantic. God told this prophet to marry a prostitute. He faithfully obeyed, had a few children, and then witnessed his wife returning to her former occupation. He loves his wife, buys her back to himself, and begs her to faithfully stay with him. This hopeless romantic has little hope in his own romantic landscape. All this sets a striking picture of God’s romantic struggle with His people as His bride.

Your relationship with God goes beyond theological understanding and behavioral modifications. It’s the pull of your heartstrings that brings you to God. Hosea strikes this chord. He pokes and prods that your love relationship with God would be brought back to where it should be. He likens Israel to an “unturned cake,” like a pancake that is fried only on one side and never turned over. God’s judgment came in to “cook” them on one side, but they didn’t bother to turn to the other to use the judgment to become cooked to perfection. What a picture of strained marriage, when one spouse doesn’t turn. This is how we are with God. We need a marriage counselor to stoke our love for God into a bright flame. This is Hosea.

Micah—the Playful yet Profound Poet Prophet

Micah is the playful yet profound poet prophet. He beautifully writes about God’s judgment and the future gathering and restoration of God’s people with God Himself as their shepherd. In the midst of his writing he plays with words. He plays on the names of cities to denote the coming judgment (“the inhabitant of Zaanan [which means ‘going out’] does not escape” he writes), he plays on the bites of snakes to describe the current degraded priesthood, and he beautifully describes God’s people spreading over the earth in words about floods of waters. It’s as if wordplay were a way to lighten things up so that the real point could be brought home. He is a thoughtful AND engaging purveyor of God’s message for his day.

We need clear communicators who are precise, yet palatable, presenters of God's thought. Micah is someone who commands respect from the loftiest heights. He uses beautiful words and gives us real thoughts to engage our minds and whet our intellectual palates. When the feeling is gone, truth remains. Few match his revelation and description of the gathering together of the remnant of God's people, their breaking free from their fold under the ruler, Christ, who has come forth from eternity, and their eventual establishment of God's kingdom on the entire earth under the righteousness and loving shepherding of the Messiah. This is what Micah presents through beautiful poetry.

Nahum—the Comforter

Nahum injects a little comfort into the distressed Judeans' affliction. He declares "distress will not rise up twice," and that the Lord "knows those that take refuge in Him." Nahum probably hails from a small town in Galilee, moved to Judah, and as a foreigner from a small town is offering humble words of comfort to Judah and assurances of a final judgment on Nineveh, which was the source of Judah's most recent distress. He is a comforter in the midst of distress who points people to endurance and tells them that their judgment and oppression will not last forever and that restoration is coming.

People suffering distress question how long their heaviness will last. Will it end or will it be too much that we will be completely overcome by it? Nahum's is the reassuring voice of the God of comfort. He understands and encourages the oppressed that it won't last forever. He points them to God's promises and causes them to hope in God's restoration.

Obadiah—A Voice of Reason

Obadiah is a voice of reason in the midst of unreasonable sufferings. Jerusalem was sacked by the Philistines and Arabians during the time of Jehoram. Edom added insult to injury by gloating over Judah's calamity, looting their wealth and cutting down their fugitives. Edom was like the twist of a knife that had already pierced the muscle. God sought to chastise His people a little, but Edom went way too far and gave them an unreasonable smack. Obadiah is a voice that righteous-

ness will prevail even though God's people pass through sufferings beyond what was intended. Furthermore, God's people will one day be holy and will possess an inheritance from God. "On Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess their possessions."

Some lovers of God press through unexplained and even unreasonable suffering in their lives. It was as true thousands of years ago as it is today. These people need an Obadiah to come with comfort. They need a comfort that reminds them that righteousness will prevail upon the earth and that their inheritance will come in God.

Habakkuk—the Righteous Crooner

Habakkuk might be the equivalent of the modern day Bono doing an Aids relief concert for Africa. He's a singer with a message. As an artist type, he is extremely concerned about righteousness. Speaking to Jehovah He says, "the wicked surround the righteous," and "Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?" I could picture Habakkuk singing in falsetto to Jehovah, "Jehovah, what about the righteous?" and then strumming his ten string lyre with deep feelings of longing, despair, anguish, grief, and hope. He engages in conversation with God about righteousness and righteous people. After the conversation this righteous crooner ends in song of praise and awe.

The artist in all of us seeks righteousness for the world. It stretches for the ideal that is longed for in the many paintings, sculptures, scores, and other artistic creations throughout the millennia. Habakkuk takes up the plea of the artist before God—the Great Poet, Master Creator, and Masterpiece Architect. Habakkuk reveals that God's current judgment and future restoration has an answer for this artist's longing. As God revealed to Habakkuk, He would in fact establish righteousness and real life by faith.

Zephaniah—the Visionary Ruler

Zephaniah is the great great grandson of Hezekiah, king of Judah. He's from a ruling class and as such looks at things from a

visionary ruler's perspective. He sees things deeply, far below the surface of advancing armies and the adjusting landscape of individual nations. Other prophets see Judah or Israel conquered by foes; Zephaniah sees the whole earth under judgment and in a future restoration. "I will completely remove all things from the face of the earth," writes Zephaniah. He sees that in God's plan the unified nation of Israel is the lead nation of the entire earth. He sees that when it is judged the entire earth is judged and when it is restored the entire earth benefits from the restoration. Zephaniah is a visionary and a ruler. He's like a CEO who sees events in light of the multinational company interests, not merely of personal benefits.

God's plan and work appeal to the administrative part of a human being. Part of us looks beyond the next weekend events, beyond the next decade, beyond our small sphere of influence, and into the realm of global implications and effects. This is Zephaniah. He could appeal to the global political mover, observer, or thinker. He's broad, royal, administrative and visionary and makes God's work clear in its effect on a world wide scale.

God has marvelously and wonderfully created us. He would like to speak to His awesome vast masses of people so that a wide variety of human kind can respond to Him. This is exactly what He does through this motley group of minors. It's a sign of God's depth and fullness that His speaking can come from so many sources, convey the same message, and relate to a vast group of people. It's a picture of men, the prophets, cooperating with God and together making God's word approachable, sensible, real, and personable. This kind of message appeals to the ruling visionary, the artist, the philosopher, the lover of God, the grouch, the distressed, the fearers of future distress, and the unyielding God worshipper. Put it all together and get a full picture of God's thought robed in a human touch that God has chosen to incorporate into His speaking. We thank the Lord that He speaks in this way and that He is still speaking through a variety of human beings today.

-Rex Beck

Vision Week

SUMMARY OF MESSAGES ONE & TWO

During the first two messages, Titus shared a perspective that helped trainees to realize the importance of having a vision of what God is after. What follows is a summary of these first two messages.

During the first two sessions trainees were impressed with our need for **a vision that matches God's view**. Many of the attendants, being young, were unaware of the urgency of the situation. (Young people, after all, tend to be fixated on fun and living in the moment rather than with a view to what every moment is really for. Thinking they still have plenty of time, they tend not to be as serious about what God is after as older saints, who are more aware of the situation.) Without a vision, we waste what God has given us as our provision for eternity...which is time! When we are unaware of God's purpose, we waste the time given to us on **other things** that are of **no value** as far as eternity is concerned. In fact, whatever we give ourselves to besides what is in the eternal God's heart will bring about lasting **regret**. Thus there has to be a bridge between the God of eternity and we human beings in time, and this bridge is granted by a **vision, which we are able to receive by means of the human spirit God has created in us**. Only when we see what God is after can we give ourselves to **time's** purpose, which is the fulfillment of **God's** purpose. Once we see what God is after and give ourselves to that, though we may still experience failure, our lives will obtain their ultimate meaning. Regardless what else happens, what is important is that we keep our **aim**. If we do not want to live with eternal regret for time wasted, we must live lives that match the purpose of the God who has given time for eternity.

The problem is that we by default are caught up by things, even good things, that have no bearing on eternity. We are born soulish and fleshly, dead to God. But (Hallelujah!) our spirit was enlivened when we received Christ as our Savior. Still God's own eternal children can remain ignorant of their eternal Father's purpose. (Many, if not most, do!) Some things we pursue, such as education, do have an impact on shaping who we become, but they are not the goal for which we have been granted time. God in eternity planned time so that His economy might be carried out for the fulfillment of His purpose **by us**. *Time is really for eternity*. In light of this, we should not hold back paying **ANY PRICE**, for our eternity is at stake; the life we live in time will determine what our eternity shall be. Will our existence match God's desire?

Yet how is it that we limited, finite, soulish, time-bound human beings might enter the sphere of the eternal God who is Spirit? The first verse in Ephesians reveals that God has a practical provision to hedge us in to what is best for us in time as far as eternity is concerned. It is signified by the apostle's writing to the saints **in Ephesus**. The saints are identified with their locality. Just as He has governmentally arranged where we have each grown up, God has governmentally arranged where we should be in the practical sphere of His economy, which is our church life. Under God's government, our being has taken on a certain shape and is still being shaped. It is in the church life that we have our existence in God's plan. Unless the Lord LEADS us elsewhere, we should remain in and appreciate the local church life in the city where God has placed us.

Furthermore, we must live where God has placed us as those who are **in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:1b)**. Wherever we have been placed by God, we must exercise to follow Christ in all things. Our life is unto Him. This is our *exercise*. Thus our living in time can gain its highest possible meaning and value as we work out God's eternal desire in the church life.

-Summary of speaking on July 5, 2010, at Ashland Woods by Titus Chu

Those present may want to recall how these examples were used in these first two messages:

How the brother sharing regretted he didn't do certain things for his father in his latter years.

Why young ones often don't listen to the concerns of older ones as far as God's economy is concerned.

The lack of obesity, etc., during a time in China's history.

Two types of regret: one of a young person pining over someone, and one due to something of lasting consequence.

Cleveland going from the sixth largest city to sixtieth while Titus has lived there.

The brother who came into a meeting of the church and said, "God told me He would lead me to a flock I can shepherd."

*The person in midlife who asks, "Is my life for THIS?" and how this was applied to a **young** brother who is a musician, with the saints as his professional "clappers".*

Vision Week

MESSAGE THREE

NOT MISAIMING, BUT KEEPING TO THE PATH OF GOD'S ECONOMY

MAN'S PROBLEM: SEPARATION FROM GOD

Our existence (as determined by birth and environment) and our living (which is a matter of our exercise) determine the kind of being we become. There are two possibilities: we either become merely human, or we become heavenly humans. Many people who are merely human may be admired and emulated, but that is something only in the human realm. God's desire, however, is to see us succeed in the divine realm. But we have two major problems: we are sinful, and we are totally different in our being from God, for God is Spirit. Although God created us in His image and according to His likeness (Gen. 1:26), we became separated from God through the fall, and this distance increased to the point that God even regretted He had made man (Gen. 6:5-6)!

GOD'S PROVISION: OUR HUMAN SPIRIT AND THE TRIUNE GOD'S PROCESS

So how could our vision ever match God's? The eternal, heavenly God is very remote from us fallen human beings of the earth. We are sinful and spiritually dead due to sin, and God is Spirit (John 4:24)! How could we ever be with Him? Therefore, God had to do something. God the Father created us with a spirit and foreordained our salvation to become His sons, holy and without blemish (Eph. 1:3-6). God the Son came to die for us so that the distance caused by sin might be done away with (Eph. 1:7). Finally, God the Spirit came to be received into that organ God the Father created and God the Son cleared the way to. All of this is addressed in the first chapter of Ephesians in verses 3 through 14 (God the Father's work is seen in vv. 3-6; God the Son's in vv. 7-12; and God the Spirit's in vv. 13-14.)

GOD'S ETERNAL INTENTION

Ephesians first tells us that God chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love, having

predestinated us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself (1:3-5). God chose us to become so intimately related to Him! Then Ephesians declares to us that through Jesus' redemptive work on the cross, God has forgiven us of our offenses (1:7). Through the Son we also are given to know the mystery of God's will, which He purposed in Himself unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times to head up all things in Christ (1:9-10). God's will is totally focused upon Christ, and it is in Christ that we were designated as God's inheritance (1:11). It is in Christ that we become the praise of His glory. (In verse 6 it says we are to the praise of the Father's glory, in verse 12 it says we are to the praise of the Son's glory, and in verse 14 it says we shall be to the praise of the Spirit's glory.) In verse 13, Ephesians states that we have been sealed with the Spirit as the pledge of who God is to us, and all that He shall be to us. So the Triune God chose and predestinated us, redeemed us, and has become the "pledge of our inheritance (God) unto the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory" (1:14). The Spirit is our guarantee that we will inherit what God in Himself has in store for us!

FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND OFFENSES: MIS-AIMING VS. SLIPPING UP

God has done everything for us, and now He wants to head up all things in Christ (1:10). We, however, are dead in offenses (*paraptoma*) and sins (*amartia*) (2:1). According to 1:7, through Christ's redemption we have redemption of offenses (*paraptoma*). The Greek word translated "offense" literally means to slip-up, whereas the word for sin has the thought of misaiming or missing the mark. (The King James translate this word as "sin" in 1:7, but the word is the word for "slipping up," not "misaiming"). We may often fail or "slip up," but as long as our aim remains true, we can recover! But should we lose our aim (sin) and fail to live according to the goal, it does not matter what else we may do. We have a lot of feeling about our "slip ups," but we may have no feeling at all about our living "off-line" as far as God's economy is concerned. For instance, to play cards during the training is an offense, but if things advanced to the point that playing cards became accepted as part of the church life in general, we would really be in trouble, for that is to sin, or be misaimed! We may cover many things in love that are offenses, but we cannot take sin, for that is to miss the aim of God's economy. Sin means we basically have our own way rather than God's. Offenses are mistakes or failures or deeds that take place as momentary lapses that can happen even while we are on the pathway, but sin means our feet are somewhere else altogether.

Too many believers miss the mark of what God desires for them and yet feel they are doing well because they live lives relatively free of offenses.

I may offend others as I am serving the Lord in His economy, yet as long as we all are clear that we are fighting for the same goal, we can easily forgive one another, and cover one another. If we are not clear about the goal, however, we hold onto the memory of offenses. The Lord Himself forgets our offenses (Heb. 8:12, etc.). As we come to Him to confess, He may reveal to us that they have already been forgiven whether we confess them or not, according to Ephesians 1:7. Through the redemption of Christ, our offenses have all been forgiven. How shall the Lord recover us, however, when we sin in refusing to follow Him and end up far from what He desires? We may find ourselves in a city or in a college or a career that God did not lead us into. Such things are a more serious matter to God than our offenses, for such “sin” takes us away from God’s pathway, causing us untold loss. Not being on the pathway of God’s economy becomes a great frustration to God and, ultimately, to us. Thus, it is a much more serious matter than offenses.

The whole world is in sin (Eph. 2:2; Gal. 3:22; John 1:29, 16:9, etc.). It is pointed in the wrong direction, away from God and His pathway. Jesus Christ came to deal with our sin as well as our offenses (John 1:29, 3:16). I can be offensive and others can offend me. This happens continually, and yet it is forgiven. How much the blood of Christ avails! What is more crucial, however, is you! You may make many mistakes, but where are you? If you get off the pathway, that is serious, for you are then taken away. And if you are a worker it really becomes serious, for those whom you are taking care of may feel they should follow you. How we thank the Lord for opening our eyes to see the mark, the goal and the blueprint of God’s economy!

I hope that when you all become old you would not just be those who reminisce about how glorious or wonderful things once were. I hope instead of simply thinking back to times such as this, that you, by the Lord’s mercy, shall be blessed knowing that, in spite of many failures, with your lives *you have not missed the mark!*

JESUS IS HERE TO BRING US ON

Jesus came to bring us along the pathway that has the accomplishment of God’s economy as its goal. He is our Joshua, our pioneer, bringing us on (Jesus and Joshua of the Old Testament share the same name, and Hebrews portrays Jesus as our Joshua, fighting for us on this pathway.) As such a one He is delivering us from sin (Heb. 4:8, 15). The Lord has come to direct our feet into the way of God’s eternal purpose. We should tell the Lord, “Even though I may often fail, I pray that my existence would be so healthy and proper towards You.”

- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan Ohio, July 6, 2010 AM*

Vision Week

MESSAGE FOUR

GOD'S MYSTERY: TO GAIN AN INHERITANCE THAT IS HIS ENLARGEMENT

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S ETERNAL GOAL AS HIS ENLARGEMENT

God has something in view, and that thing is His eternal purpose. What is His eternal purpose? It is the Church, through which Christ expresses Himself and heads up all things in Himself (1:10, 22). God's intention, or view, was to have the Church as such an enlargement of Himself to be His counterpart (Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 2:19).

Logically, it seems God cannot "enlarge" Himself (Col. 2:19). He dwells in eternity, and is already all-extensive. Yet a brother who is a mathematician told me that it is possible in eternity for something to continually be increasing, using the word "compactification" for this matter.

OUR GREAT GOD IS LONELY
AND DESIRES SOMETHING THAT WOULD MATCH HIM

From a certain angle, God is someone whom we might sympathize with. He is omnipotent, the Creator, the self-existing, ever-existing One. In the universe, there is none like Him; He is holy. As such a being, however, He is very lonely, even though He is surrounded by other beings who worship Him. The Chinese have a saying, "It is a fearful thing when a man becomes too high." When such a person receives others' admiration and praise, it may even make that person more miserable! Any person who is beyond others is a lonely person. And who is like God? He created the immeasurable universe, and all that exists! How rich, wise, and powerful He is! How holy and unlike any other being! Yet this God longs for an enlargement of Himself to be His companion. THIS IS HIS PURPOSE.

Our children are our reproduction; this is why they are so satisfying to us and bring us such joy (cf. Eph. 1:3; 1 John 3:2; Rom. 8, etc.). The great God, who is almighty and everlasting and infinitely wise asks, “Why is it that no one is able to reach Me?” Man, who was made in His image, fell. Everything changed at that point. For all we know, even the fundamental properties of the universe changed. What hasn’t changed, however, is God’s need for His satisfaction. May the Lord cover me to speak for Him, but we may consider Him as asking, “What is the meaning of My existence? I am eternal and I am alone. I am God, but I am a lonely God. What I need is a reproduction of Myself that possesses My life and My nature... something that requires My enlargement.” What is this enlargement? This enlargement, which is His purpose, is the Church. The Church is what God is after.

The Church as Christ’s enlargement is composed of many little “Christs,” or Christians. (Watchman Nee early on preferred the term “Christ-men” but eventually he settled on the use of “Christian,” which can be taken as “Christ,” small “i” and n[othing else].) Taken together, all the Christians, or little Christs, make up His Church. Christ is the Church’s source and center. The place Christ can be seen on the earth is the Church and the more we as believers grow in Christ, the more the Church grows. Anything that is not of Christ is not the Church, for the Church must be of Christ to be His enlargement for His satisfaction. Thus the Church is also the testimony of Christ.

God’s view is simply Christ and the Church, and He cares that the Church would continue to increase with Christ in both the number of its members and as their content. Therefore our existence must be according to Christ and the Church. This is God’s view, and this must become our vision. This is why we are Christians; to be persons of Christ (and the Christ we are for is for the Church). We may feel we should do something in the church life out of our own ability to build up the Church, but the Church Christ is building comes out of Christ Himself, and therefore must come out of what is of Christ Himself within us. Anything we can do, no matter how capable we may be, is irrelevant as far as God’s eternal plan is concerned.

GOD’S MYSTERY HAS BEEN MADE KNOWN

In verses 3 and 9 of Ephesians 3, we read that this mystery of God’s will has been made known! If it had not been made known, it would still be a hidden mystery. Through the apostles such as Paul, however, the

mystery of God's purpose has been made known. Therefore, every believer should be living according to God's view, since what was hidden in God's heart has now been made known.

This, however, is often not the case! Out of ten Christians, nine have no concept of what the mystery of God's will is. Why? Because most believers get saved for selfish reasons. The gospel most people hear is that Jesus will give them joy and save them from hell. They are told He will help them with their troubles. The Bible makes it clear, however, that God's will is "unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him..." (Eph. 1:10). Today all creation is in competition, but as it is headed up in Christ through the Church, it is brought into oneness as it becomes a part of God's kingdom.

Thus the whole universe will eventually be headed up under Christ. The Church is clearly, of course, not a physical building or even merely a congregation. The Church is God's desire. God desires to gain the Church as His expression. Therefore He calls the Church His Body (1:23).

FAITH AND LOVE

In 1:15 Paul writes, "having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love to all the saints." Faith and love go together. When we argue with one another, it indicates that we do not have much faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and sometimes when people say, "We are standing for the truth," they are lacking in the exercise of faith and love. That is what happens when people are caught by doctrine. Genuine faith is always accompanied by love. Therefore trust the Lord, and love the brothers!

THE NEED FOR A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION

Paul went on to say that he did not cease giving thanks for the saints, making mention of them in his prayers (1:15-16). What did he pray for? That the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ might give to them (and us) a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him! Christ is here, and Christ is wonderful! What we need, however, is a spirit of wisdom and revelation with which to see Him.

There may be many wonderful people in this world, but none of them require a spirit of wisdom and revelation for us to know them. If

we are really to understand Jesus, however, we must use the special instrument we were created with. Otherwise, we should not say that we truly have appreciated His beauty or His wonders! We must have a spirit, this spirit must become a spirit of wisdom and revelation, and we must have the ability to understand the revelations we receive. (Otherwise, it is like asking a dog to understand a man. Before he can do that, the dog must enter the sphere of the man and receive something of man to understand that man.) Who and what God is, is remote to us. He is Spirit. He is in another sphere from us entirely. So how shall we understand who He is and what He is trying to do? No matter how bright we are, we should not expect that through our smart minds we can gain full knowledge of Him.

God created man in His image, which has to do with man having a spirit as well as a soul. (When in Genesis 2:7 God breathed into man's body, the entrance of God's breath, or Spirit, formed man's spirit and caused man to become a "living soul".) When we become old we may admire those who are young or lament the condition of our body as it deteriorates... or we may admire someone's mental ability... but what is really precious about a human being is the human spirit. What the Lord appreciates and what man appreciates are very different! What human beings typically seek after with their fine minds typically brings them to nothing of real meaning. What the Lord seeks for us is that we would bridge the gap between Him and us so that we might enter into that which has eternal meaning. The means for this is our human spirit! This is why Paul tells us that he prays that we might have a spirit of wisdom and revelation. (Actually, "spirit" in this verse refers to the totality of the operation of the Holy Spirit with our spirit. There is no article, but it is a mingling of both the divine Spirit and human spirit. In such a spirit we experience wisdom and revelation, even all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ (1:3).)

How can we see the mystery of God's will? How can we be brought into the vision that matches God's view? The secret is our spirit. Within every saved person is a regenerated, mingled spirit. This spirit, when it is strong and operative, provides wisdom and revelations. When people hear about spiritual things, they are not able to really comprehend them unless the spiritual understanding actually *comes* to them. Spiritual things are related to our spirit. When our spirit is dormant or "dead," spiritual things seem foreign and are of no interest to us. Yet when we exercise to touch the spirit by calling on

the Lord, something becomes very clear within, because we have made the heavenly connection! When you have such a spirit, you have wisdom, and having that wisdom, you see revelations.

Wisdom comes from godliness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7, etc.). Godliness is God expressed. When a person has touched God's riches, he or she becomes more godly, and obtains wisdom. When you touch God and His riches you become wise, and you see. Wisdom is what gives you the ability to interpret what you see.

Most people live their lives completely in the physical realm of their bodies and psychological realm of their souls. This was our story too, but one day another realm, the realm of the Spirit, touched us and we were saved! At that instant we wanted Jesus! That was the work of the Spirit.

TESTIMONY

For me, when the preacher asked whoever wanted to be saved to stand up in that gospel meeting, for some reason I stood up! And even though no one came to me to help me pray, I remained, a young boy standing very straight, waiting for the Savior to come. Eventually a brother did come and helped me to pray. I was instructed to go home to confess my sins thoroughly, which I was happy to do, since I did not consider myself much of a sinner. I prayed as instructed by the brother to receive Jesus as my Savior, and checked off the list of things such as whether I now believed that Jesus was the Son of God, and so on. I didn't really know what any of that meant, but I checked off the boxes, including "no" to the question about whether I would ever sin again! I continued to go the next two days to the gospel meetings (it was a three-day campaign) but I didn't get much. When I went to the baptism gathering, I couldn't answer the questions I was asked, but the brother was very kind and read to me a number of verses about Christ's work of salvation and asked whether they applied to me. I replied that they did, and I was baptized that night. Afterward, I still had little idea of what I had entered into. I knew I was saved and that Jesus Christ was my Savior, but that was about it.

One year later, I touched the Lord again. That was the time I really began to know spiritual things. I prayed a lot and sang hymns. I wept

often before the Lord. I would fast once a week. I got into tongue-speaking and was coming under the influence of that until one day a voice clearly told me, "If you speak in tongues like this, I will never be able to use you!" Therefore I prayed, "Lord, if this is of You, please take the desire of speaking in tongues away from me." That was not a small thing for me, for tongue-speaking is very intoxicating. The Lord rescued me; afterward I had no desire to speak in tongues anymore. For that I am thankful. (I don't mean that a Christian should not speak in tongues. If a Christian is at a certain stage, it may even be helpful to speak in tongues just to have a breakthrough. But at that moment in my life, I needed to give up speaking in tongues, because God wanted to bring me into something much higher.)

CHRIST MUST BECOME OUR CENTER

The Lord Himself must become our center, but we easily get caught by things that have something to do with Him, and yet miss Him! The Church comes out of Christ Himself. How frustrating it must be to Him when we get caught by things other than Himself! He asks us to exercise a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him. Yet how easily we are caught by things the Lord may have given us and yet ignore the Giver! The Lord tells us, "Give it all back to Me; I want you to have nothing other than Myself." Only then can we boast in Him and say to others, "I have nothing of myself to boast in, but may I present to you the marvelous, wonderful, sweet Christ I know?" When we introduce Christ to others like this, others see Christ who is being increased through us, and He is able to thus reach them also. This is the experience of the Body of Christ as His enlargement and expression.

- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, July 6, 2010 PM*

Vision Week

MESSAGE FIVE

THE NEED TO HAVE A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION AND THE EYES OF OUR HEART ENLIGHTENED TO KNOW OUR HOPE, GOD'S INHERITANCE, AND HIS POWER

WE NEED TO BE BROUGHT TO THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

God is eternal and omnipresent and omnipotent and omniscient, but He still would like to become richer, so He desires His “compactification”. Therefore in His prudence (Eph. 1:8), God created us with a spirit by which we are able to receive wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17). In fact, according to Zechariah 12:1, the center of all of God’s creation is man’s spirit! In His prudence God has done everything for man by preparing all things, including man’s spirit; that man may gain God (who is Spirit), and thus might become one with God for His increase. When the Lord’s Spirit is joined with ours, we experience being joined to the Lord as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). The more revelation we receive of God’s prudent work in His wisdom, the more we will appreciate how marvelous the Lord is and the more we will have His wisdom, for the very wisdom we receive with our spirit is the wisdom by which God Himself does all things. As God is prudent, we shall become prudent, and as God is wise, we shall become wise. This is something far beyond human wisdom! Those who receive the highest academic degrees in their field may feel like they have accomplished something, but that accomplishment cannot match divine wisdom and understanding. Those who experience having a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Christ receive something of God’s own wisdom and understanding!

People do their best to pursue knowledge in the field of human understanding, yet few seek the divine wisdom that leads us to know Christ. (Whoever gets a Ph.D should work for a few years to know human life. The problem is that once somebody gets a job, they end up staying on for

twenty years instead of two, and find themselves pursuing such things as having the office with its own restroom, etc.) When you are young, you do need to take advantage of developing yourself by means of education and employment, but what the Spirit within you is trying to do is to bring you to the full knowledge of Christ!

What is full knowledge? We may liken it to marriage. The boy or girl may think they know the person they are engaged to, but they don't really know that person until they enter into marriage life. (We marry for the "rose" we see, but we do not see all the thorns until we are married. The good thing is that the more we know the entire rosebush, the more we know how to handle the thorns and how to nurture the flower to grow.)

The more we have the full knowledge of Christ, the more we are possessed by Him. If we know Him little, we live our lives in relative ignorance of Him. The more we know Him, however, the more we live our lives unto Him and the more we realize what He is after, which is to gain the Church as His enlargement. How does this happen? By the eyes of our heart being enlightened.

THE EYES OF OUR HEART BEING ENLIGHTENED TO KNOW
THE HOPE OF GOD'S CALLING

Paul specifically tells us that once the eyes of our heart become enlightened, we shall be able to know the hope of God's calling (1:18). When we experience God's calling, our life becomes so full of hope!

THE EYES OF OUR HEART BEING ENLIGHTENED TO KNOW
THE RICHES OF GOD'S INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS

Paul also tells us that once the eyes of our heart are enlightened we are able to know the riches of His inheritance in the saints. God's calling produces an inheritance. The Lord calls us to Himself and says, "Follow Me and be where I am!"... and what is produced is His inheritance, the Church. The more our heart's eyes are enlightened, the more we know and appreciate the riches in the saints that become His inheritance.

Children are the inheritance of their parents. This is not because parents pay for things for their children or bring them into some business, etc. It is simply because children, as they grow and as they remain under their parents' care, become the riches of their parents because they express their parents in love in what becomes the family. Therefore we

should not think that God primarily calls us to be missionaries or to do some sort of work for Him. God calls us as His inheritance, and the more we grow by partaking of His rich supply, the richer His inheritance becomes.

THE EYES OF OUR HEART BEING ENLIGHTENED TO KNOW
THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER TOWARDS US

Finally, Paul tells us that as the eyes of our heart are enlightened, we shall come to know the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength (v. 19). In this one brief portion we read of power, surpassing greatness, might and strength. What an operation!

There are many things that can hinder us from becoming God's inheritance. We are fallen as well as contaminated and preoccupied by the world. In most ways our thoughts do not match God's thoughts, and therefore we follow after things that lead us off from the pathway of God's economy. Yet to all this, God says, "There is POWER." The Greek word used for "power" is *dunamis*, from which we get the English words dynamo and dynamite. The word for "operation" is *energeia* and "might" is *kratos*. This power or dynamo towards us is according to the energizing of the might of His strength (*ischus*). How great is the arm holding us as His family so that we might grow into a rich inheritance!

We must remember that verse 19 is written in the context of the Lord gaining us as His Church, or enlargement. The purpose of the calling of God is to produce the Church, which in Greek is the *ekklesia*, or "called-out". God's inheritance in verse 18 is the Church. How can the Church come into being as the reproduction of God in the universe? It is by means of the same power that God used to raise Christ from among the dead. We may feel like we are just earthly and that everything we contain is contrary to what God is after. Whenever God tries to work on us, it seems we are cement, and everything in us that God needs to change or get rid of is encased in a concrete bunker! In some things it seems we are held under Satan's power no matter how hard we try to break free. In other matters we harbor things we love and cannot seem to give them up. In things we *should* do for God, it seems we are frozen. All of this seems impossible to us, but we do not realize the power of God! No matter how hard something is or no matter how cold our heart may be, or even no matter how deeply into sin we may fall, God has the ability to resurrect us back onto the pathway so that we might continue to go on with Him.

We may feel like telling the Lord we wish to give up, or that we are not qualified to be His. We say, "I am so hopeless! Just let me go, Lord!" Yet for some reason, we are still here, struggling onward. This has been my experience. After more than fifty years, I am still here. Why? God's sweet dynamite. He does not blow us up altogether; instead He knows how to surgically apply Himself as the dynamite according to our situation.

Can anyone here say they are holy in all things? No one can say this. In many things, in fact, we are just terrible. But little by little God keeps "blowing up" things that hinder us. Whatever we are caught by, God has a way to deal with. Whenever we hit something that seems impossible, God says, "It is not impossible for Me, for I am such a dynamo!"

We sometimes ask the Lord for strength for the day, but what God operates for in His strength is that we might apprehend Him! When everyone first arrived here, I don't think many anticipated what the Lord would bring them into. But the more we hear His word and open our hearts to Him, the more He operates to energize us to follow Him. We may be fearful by nature, but when God operates, we find we have the ability to follow. God to us is no longer remote; He has become near! In fact, He is so near that we find His energy takes over and controls us. We may think we have our life and desires, but God has His desire, and He operates in His strength to bring us on according to what is in *His* heart. Even though we may be very stubborn, God's power compels us. Even though we may feel there is something we cannot do, we find present with us a power that goes far beyond what we are able to do ourselves. There is something that abides in us that operates at great energy according to God's plan. Its quality is unlimited. It never goes beyond what we are able to accommodate, but neither does it stop short of what it knows can be accomplished.

This is the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the heavenlies. What is the hope of His calling? It is to join Him in the heavenlies, far above all. This power God operated in Christ is also for all of us as His members here on the earth. Praise Him!

- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, July 7, 2010 AM*

Vision Week

MESSAGE SIX

CALLED TO BE HIS BODY AND NEEDING TO KNOW HIS POWER

The more the Lord grants us a spirit of wisdom and revelation, the more we know Him and the more we experience His calling. We are of the earth, yet by means of our spirit becoming a spirit of wisdom and revelation we begin to see what a heavenly Christ we have! This is a transmitting process. When we see Christ, Christ calls to us. In the beginning we do not quite realize what the call is for until we see the Church. Until then, we know we are called, but not quite for what. Therefore many Christians say, "I have been called to be a minister," or, "I have been called to be an apostle," or, if they are talented at playing a certain instrument, "I've been called to play my instrument for Jesus". Talent in a certain thing does not make us God's oracle, however. God's calling is not according to what you are talented in; God's calling is to produce us as His inheritance. It is when we become His inheritance that God Himself becomes so happy, just as our children are our joy as they grow.

WE SHOULD REACT TO GOD'S CALLING BY COMING TO HIM
RATHER THAN GOING AND DOING SOMETHING "FOR" HIM

Our children are our inheritance, and God's children are His, for they are His reproduction. The Lord has called us to be such an inheritance. They may as individuals express some aspect of God more than another, just as our own children do. One child may have inherited one of the parents' brightness, and another may have inherited the parents' sweetness. But rather than coming to the Lord as He calls us, so many believers decide the Lord's calling means they should go off and do something for Him!

Because they interpret God's calling in this way, many who seek to serve God end up "retarded" in their growth. Why? Because they have not adequately received of the Lord through His calling, for they have decided the proper response is to go and do something with their talent instead of caring for the Lord Himself. Some of those who do this become very peculiar. One might even say, "I feel the Lord has called me to go to Alaska to use my gift to fish for whales so that I might support the Lord's work." If you are someone who cares for what the Lord desires, you simply enjoy Him and partake of Him. In this way you become a partaker of the divine nature and enjoy His divine attributes. Then you become someone who is able to live out a proper humanity. When the Lord possesses children like this, there is a kind of honor and glory to Him. Think of how it would be if God were surrounded by all His children, each one of them full-grown in His life and expressing Him. Wouldn't that be His glory? This is the inheritance He is seeking, and this is why He has called us.

How sad it is for a father when one of his children says, "I am going away to pursue my career, since I have inherited from you such a smart mind." The father would say, "Son, I would rather you would stay! Don't go!" But as I have said many times, Christians are funny animals. Very few realize that the Lord has saved them and called them to be His inheritance, rather than to do things for Him! He is after the Church, not our activity. We get caught up in the things we can do, but God only wants to enjoy us as an inheritance. We surely can serve the Lord, but such service must have God's desire in view. Only then can our service become something satisfying to God.

KNOWING GOD'S POWER IN OUR WEAKNESS

Besides the matter of God's calling and our becoming His inheritance in this section of Ephesians (1:17-19), there is the matter of God's power. For a physical son to go to a physical father is nothing remarkable, but how about when a physical son goes to a heavenly Father? Whenever we want to live for the Lord we find we are weak. Our mind is weak, our will is weak, and our moods are weak. Even though we may try our best, we fail. In order to overcome the frustrations that hinder us from becoming God's inheritance, there must be power. He is so high, and we are so weak. This is why He gives us power. This very power as the dynamo in our life becomes the energizing element and provides us with might. This

might, this ruling power, this energizing rules us, for this power is the power that lifted Christ up far above every other authority in this universe. Both as individuals and as the Church we must continually experience this power.

This power, however, is not an overwhelming power, for it is exercised with His virtue. Therefore we are able to appreciate how good He is to us as He operates everything for our going on. It is because of this I can still say after so many years, "I still love You, Lord! You are so sweet and good to me!" No matter how low or how defeated or how weary we may be, or how hopelessly bogged down in our "cement bunker" we may feel, there is an energy, a dynamite, a dynamo, which becomes our unlimited supply, and in this unlimited supply we enjoy the sweetness of God Himself.

THE POWER TOWARDS US RAISED CHRIST FROM THE DEAD,
MADE HIM HEAD OVER ALL THINGS
AND SEATS US IN THE HEAVENLIES AS WELL

According to Ephesians 1:20 it was according to this very power that God raised Christ Jesus from among the dead. So Jesus experienced this power, and by means of this power He overcame death and ascended to the third heavens! Who has overcome death? Only Jesus. Everyone else who was raised from the dead died again, but not Him. As a man, He has truly overcome death! And as a man He was enthroned upon the highest point in the universe. What is He doing there? Operating all things so that He might obtain His inheritance! Thus He is operating to dispense this power to all those who believe in Him. He is far above all rule and authority and power and lordship so that He might do all that is necessary to accomplish His desire. Satan, the lord of the power of the air, cannot hinder Him, for Christ in His government is far above Satan in his power. In fact, Christ has made Satan to be under OUR feet as well, for we are His Body, and He has been given to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, of which we are part (1:22-23).

We can rebuke Satan as someone who is under our feet! We can even tell him, "Satan, you are so stupid. Without your work, we would not know what it is to be empowered into the heavenlies with Christ." The power in the air thought it had everything covered. But then Christ broke through, and was made Head over all things... to the Church! Who is governing us now? Satan? No! Christ!

Christ has been given to be head over all things to the Church...which means head over all creation and all power and principality. But because people had a mental picture of the “ekklesia” as being a called-together assembly of a town’s citizens, Paul quickly followed by explaining, “which is His BODY...” The Church is not merely an assembly (although there is this aspect); the Church is more importantly the Body of Christ! The Church as His universal Body is the inheritance He desires.

THE MEANING OF “EKKLESIA”

The term *ekklesia* (which we translate “church”) simply refers to the process of being “called out” (*ek*, which means out, and *kle*, from *kaleo*, to call). The word just means to loudly call out! The word itself does not point to an assembly. It just means a loud voice has called us out, and the suffix *-sia* indicates a process of essence is involved. If you call out to your dog, your dog comes, but if you call out to your son, that is so much more meaningful, for when he arrives, he is of your own essence. For us to grow to our full stature as God’s sons, we need such a calling!

This calling by which we become God’s inheritance is such a high calling! Nothing else that calls to us, no other calling, can compare to God’s calling. I eventually made it into Taiwan’s best university, but although I was thankful, I was not awed by that. I had to “walk through” that experience for my human living, but my feeling was, “Do you know who I am? You don’t deserve me.” We may appreciate many things on this earth, but they do not compare to our heavenly calling. The heavenly calling is something that should capture our entire person. The Lord, who is heavenly, calls to us and says, “Come! I am divine! Enjoy My divine life! I am so rich, and what I have is yours if you will take of it!” In this experience you discover you are no longer struggling on the earth, for you have been called! The Divine Being is calling to you! And the feeling you have towards God and the feeling God has towards you is as a family under the nurturing and cherishing of a Father.

How different this call is from what many people seem to think! This heavenly call is not a call to perform some duty. This calling is to become a partaker of who God is! It is a calling that brings us to God in the heavens. He is on the throne, and we sit with Him in the heavenlies (2:6). He is divine, and we partake of His nature (2 Pet. 1:4). What He is becomes our enjoyment! This is the nature of God’s calling, and this is the Church, His inheritance.

Seeing all this, we can realize that the idea of the Church being merely an assembly comes up short. Practically, on the earth, the Church does assemble together in the cities wherever the members of Christ's Body dwell. This is an important aspect of the Church, but it is just one aspect. The Church is also heavenly, called out from everything earthly and everything of the world. As the Church we do not belong to the world; it is something we have been called out of. We do not even belong to the human realm any more. We are human, but we have become partakers of what is divine and heavenly. We are now a part of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15; 12:12). Paul declares that the Church is "His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all."

THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST IS HIS FULLNESS

What does it mean to say that the Church is the Body of Christ and His fullness? A person's body is his expression and fullness. When we say that person's name, it is hard to say whether we are referring to the person or the body that holds the person! When that person gets excited, that person's excitement is expressed through his or her body. If the person is clear-minded, that will be expressed in that person's body. If a person is emotional, that will likewise be expressed through that person's body. Even ambition is expressed through the body. All the riches that a person possesses in his personality are expressed through that person's body. Thus the body of a person is that person's fullness (although in my case as with others who are older, the body has lost some of its ability to be a full expression!)

The Lord's Body can never "decay" as our human bodies do with age. The Church as His unique Body must match Him. Consider how much is in Him! All His wisdom, His power, His beauty... all that must be expressed in the Church if it is to be His fullness. It requires much more than an assembly of people as in a town square... this assembly is the organic body of Christ! Being the *ekklesia* refers to a process that brings us out of everything else. What is it we are called out to do? We are not merely called out to do something; we are called out to partake of all He is so that we might become His fullness! Then we truly can say the Church as His Body is so satisfying to Him. At that time, He will have His inheritance in full.

- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, July 7, 2010 PM*

Vision Week

MESSAGE SEVEN

EIGHT ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESIANS 1 & 2

The Triune God has an eternal economy through Christ, who Himself encompasses the complete Triune God and all the process the Triune God has gone through. When the Father gave His Son to us, the Father came with the Son (Isa. 9:6; John 10:30, etc.), and when the Son resurrected, the Son came with the Spirit (John 20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45, etc.). The total process we can call Christ. Jesus is Christ and Jesus denotes God the Son, but when we go deeper, when we speak of Christ, the entire Triune God is involved (2 Cor. 1:21, 3:18; John 8:58, 14:9, etc.)

THREE ANGLES OF SEEING THE EIGHT ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

There are eight definitions of the Church from three angles. First, from the standpoint of God's eternal purpose, from eternity God desired the called-out ones, the Body of Christ (1:22-23). Second, from the standpoint of God's operation, or work, God desires to accomplish His masterpiece (2:10). Third, from the standpoint of God's economy, God desires to gain the new man (2:15-19). In the gaining of this new man, referral is made to four other elements: the citizenship with the saints, being members in God's household, the temple of God and the dwelling place of God in spirit. As he concludes this section Paul writes one of the most crucial verses relating to God's economy, stating God's dwelling place is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ being the cornerstone (2:20).

As the fellow-citizens in God's kingdom, we grow into His temple, and as His household, or family, we grow into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

THE EKKLESIA MEANS MUCH MORE THAN AN ASSEMBLY

The first angle is that of God from eternity, seeking the called-out ones (*ekklesia*). The Church is composed of those called by God. The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, would have been easy to misunderstand, therefore Paul further explained “which is His Body”. Otherwise readers might have had the view that Christ was given to be Head over some decision-making assembly gathered in a city square. *Ekklesia* is not primarily referring to the idea of an assembly, however, but to Christ’s Body, which is the fullness of the One who fills all in all (1:23). We, the called-out, are His fullness, and He is the One who fills all in all. To see this, we must have a revelation.

Most Christians connect the word “church” to a physical building. More advanced Christians see the Church, or *ekklesia*, as the congregation or assembly of believers (which is how John Nelson Darby translated it in his translation: “*gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body...*”). The word *ekklesia* needs to be understood from two sides. On one hand, as the called-out, we do assemble together. But this is not the stress here. Being “called out” refers to the matter of His Body, His household, and His kingdom, in which we are the fellow-citizens. God gave Christ to be Head over all things to the “out-called”! For what reason did God feel compelled to open His mouth and call to the universe? If we do not see this, we do not know the Church. He did not open His mouth so there might be a bunch of little buildings. Neither did He open His mouth to reach us so there might be some gatherings, or activities that people may feel are “cool” or interesting or need-fulfilling. The Lord’s call is simple: “COME OUT from everything else to ME”. This is what the word “church” means. We have been “called” to be His Body, just as our body exists to express us (and no one else), and to do our (and no one else’s) bidding.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST’S BODY IS HIS FULLNESS

A person’s body truly “suits” that person only when all the members are healthy, fully developed and completely responsive. My body is getting old because many parts such as my feet and hair “refuse” to receive their blood supply. Therefore it becomes harder for me to walk, and my hair is becoming more and more gray. When such members refuse to be proper, my body can no longer be so excellent as it was when I was in my

prime. Christ's body is excellent because each member receives the heavenly supply from Christ, who is also responsible for the circulation in His Body. We, the members, are responsible to exercise healthily. The Church as Christ's Body has been here now for two thousand years. In this Body are all the saints, such as Paul, Peter, John, Martin Luther, Watchman Nee, and you. God is very wise. The picture of how this works can be seen in our own bodies, in which all the cells are replaced over time whenever some are lost, allowing our body to continue on as before. The person we saw seven years ago is the same person, but now in a "new" body (although due to human aging, it will appear somewhat changed). It is not the same body, for all the cells in it have been replaced. Every part of the hand I had fifteen years ago has disappeared; today my hand is new!

The Church as the universal Body is two thousand years old. It existed before creation, but it was realized in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (John 20:22). All the "cells" from the time of the book of Acts have passed on, just as there are no members today who were present even 100 years ago. We are all the "new" cells. (Especially the young, fresh ones!) The older ones may pass on, but the Body of Christ continues. God's call "COME OUT" is manifested in the Body. The Body is healthy because all its members can be fresh and strong. And if not yet, the prevailing members are able to cover the weaker ones (1 Cor. 12:24). The Bible calls this "blending" or "tempering". Since the Body is something organic, there is an organic covering that takes place which the stronger members perform unconsciously. Among the members who make up the "knee," for instance, the stronger and healthier members cover those who are weaker.

Christ in the Body is the one who fills all in all (1:23). In eternity we who are regenerated shall express Christ as His Body. Because we are so one with Christ, everything else shall be headed up within the universe as well (1:10; Rom. 8:20-21). In eternity we are the enlargement of Christ, and in eternity the whole universe will be in subjection to us. Christ shall be all in all. In other words, Christ shall be fully expressed in us, and because of this the entire universe shall be headed up. The wisdom and power of God will be fully manifested. Today, there is no harmony in the universe. Everything is in competition and is out for itself. In eternity, however, when we become Christ's enlargement, nothing will any longer be out for itself (Isa. 11:6-8). We shall manifest Christ, and Christ through us shall manifest the wisdom, the power and the creating ability of the Triune God.

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S MASTERPIECE

Related to God's work, we are His masterpiece (*poiema*, 2:10), His work of culmination. (The suffix indicates a completed work.) Individually, each one of us is His masterpiece, and together as the Church we are His masterpiece.

The term "masterpiece" can apply to a piece of writing, a piece of art, or a piece of music. Each one of us is a masterpiece of the Lord's writing. In ancient times, poems were not the simple things they are today. God's masterpiece is the most profound and moving poem, therefore our life is poetic. In my own life, nothing has been straightforward or simple. I never could say, "My life goes from the morning alarm to Starbucks to work and then home for dinner and TV just like so many others." There is no poetry in such a life. The life of serving the Lord, however, is so exciting! When I experience extreme limitation, Christ comes to be my strength. When I am confined, Christ comes as my enlargement. When I am going on, Christ becomes my joy! What a marvelous poem has been written, and still is! Too many believers' poems are very brief, perhaps no more than "He was born, he believed in Jesus, he lived some more, and he died." The Lord desires to save us from a drab and meaningless existence, and to write for us such a full and colorful life! (This includes being misunderstood and sometimes going through difficulty, as seen in the Lord's own life. His being misunderstood and unappreciated were part of His experience. And how beautiful were all the circumstances in His life in which God was confined in man, from the manger to the cross, where He could say with so much meaning, "It is finished!") Sometimes I am amazed that people want to get a job, when they could have the kind of life that accompanies following and serving the Lord!

How many stanzas has the Lord written in your life? You may have started well, but when you say, "I will go to all the meetings" or "I am settled into that Christian group" God's real work of writing may disappear. We should be able to see the story written in our lives of how, when we honored God, He saturated our being, and how many times we wept before Him as He led us. Many such things are written in the stanzas of my life. How rich are the sentences the Lord is able to write if we would just allow Him to have His way! We should give Him the full right to make all the decisions for us so that He might complete every line He has planned to His full satisfaction! How wonderful such a life becomes!

This Greek word *poeima* also refers to a master's most excellent work of art, such as a piece of sculpture. The Lord comes with His tools to chip away what does not fit in with His plan. Sometimes He uses a large mallet, and sometimes he uses a very fine chisel. It may not seem pleasant at the time, but His work produces something extremely precious. Christ loves us and will not be satisfied until we are conformed to His image (Rom. 8:28-29) and become His masterpiece! As He writes, He is cutting. We all should cry out, "O Lord, *You* write my life. I don't want to write it myself. I want You to do *all* the writing. Work on me until You are totally satisfied."

A masterpiece can also be a painting, of course. In the process it may be messy, particularly if we try to hold onto our own plans. But even if you have fully given yourself to the Lord, there will be periods of time when you will not be able to see what the Lord is doing. You may feel sometimes you are even dying. But eventually it comes together and the wisdom of it can be seen. The completed image shall emerge. Tell the Lord, "I want You to be totally satisfied when your work appears. Therefore write on us. We give You the complete right. Cut us. Conform us to Your image. We would pay any price just so everyone can witness what You can do when given the opportunity. Make us Your masterpiece." If we allow the Lord to work upon us as He desires, others will be able to worship Him as they see His handiwork in us. They will be able to testify that what He was able to produce in us is the most beautiful of all things.
- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, on July 8, 2010 AM*

Vision Week

MESSAGE EIGHT

THE NEW MAN, FELLOW-CITIZENS, MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD, THE TEMPLE AND DWELLING PLACE OF GOD IN SPIRIT

In eternity there is no beginning or end, therefore there is really no “eternity past” or “eternity future,” nor is there something called “time” in between. We can say in eternity God made a decision for eternity. In eternity, for eternity, God was focused on Christ. The Son in eternity cannot be apart from the Father just as the Son cannot be apart from the Spirit. The totality of the Triune God and all His operation is found in Christ, and the operation of Christ is totally centered upon the Church.

We can look at this in three aspects. First, the eternal God called us out, bringing us out of time into eternity, out from the earthly to the heavenly, and out from the physical realm to the spiritual realm. In this call, who God is becomes our being and we become His constituents. This is the meaning of *ekklesia*, or *out-call*, with the *-sia* indicating a process involving God’s own nature. This call has nothing to do with man’s desire or ability; it is totally of a divine and eternal origin. This call is the basis for everything as far as the Church is concerned. If anyone thinks *ekklesia* refers primarily to a gathering of townspeople, he does not see the Church! The Church of God has nothing to do with the world, human ability, or man’s desire. Paul’s use of this word indicates that we have been called out from all such things not merely to be a town assembly for Him, but to be His Body, which is the fullness of the One who fills all in all!

Being His Body indicates that our relationship with God as the *ekklesia* is something organic by means of our participating in God’s own divine essence, being, and nature. As those who respond to the Lord’s call, we

partake of God and thus become His Body. And, unlike the human body that decays, Christ's Body is always in newness. The Church as the Body of Christ has been here for two thousand years, and it is still healthy and expressing who God is!

From man's angle, the Church is God's masterpiece (Eph. 2:10) or *poiema*, created by Christ Jesus for good works. Something that is created is something that is brought into being when nothing was there before. (The word "made" indicates something developed out of something already existing.) God made man's body out of the dust to be in His likeness (Gen. 1:26; 2:7). Thus we are all "dusty". The breath of life God breathed into man caused Him to have something that is able to receive the divine life. In this way man was created to be a vessel. Thus, even though he was made from dust, God was happy with man. The Church being God's masterpiece, however, is something new within humanity that comes out of God Himself. Purely human ability, talent or method should not find any place in the Church, for all such things have their source from what is dust. We do, however, possess a part created in us by God that is able to receive from God and be enlivened by God. It was by means of this part that man was created in God's image, and it is through this part, the human spirit, that God is able to create the Church as His masterpiece. Every part of God's masterpiece comes from this created part. If it were something out of us or something we contributed of ourselves, we would get some of the credit for God's masterpiece, and God would not be fully glorified in it.

Therefore, to touch the Church is a serious matter. We should be very careful about the source of everything in the church life. The Lord is trying to write something as His masterpiece, yet if we disregard the Lord in the church life, we may try to write something also. It is a good thing the Lord is a very good Eraser! Only what He writes will last; all the rest will disappear. When we speak in the Lord's name, we may speak one sentence from the Lord, one sentence someone else suggested, and one sentence we came up with by means of our carnal intelligence. Therefore the Lord has to erase two sentences so that only the one that is from Him remains. We have been called out to be HIS masterpiece. Once we realize that the Church is the Lord's masterpiece and totally a matter of spirit, we will be fearful to put our hand to it in order to embellish it in any way. Everything about it must be created through the hand, wisdom and breath of the Lord, and it must be manifested through the operation of the Lord.

The creation of the new man is related to the Lord abolishing the enmity in His flesh through the cross (Eph. 2:14-16). Enmity can be what young ones experience towards “old” people, or what those from different races, cultures or traditions experience towards those of other backgrounds. In this verse it particularly refers to those who have God’s law experiencing enmity towards those who do not (v. 15). Enmity is something that creeps in between people to drive them apart. The Lord, however, died on the cross to create in Himself one out of the two, making peace.

From God’s eternal perspective, we are the called ones. From man’s perspective we have become His Body. From the perspective of God’s economy, we are this created new man. The newness of the new man is a matter of nature, not time. Its quality is newness, freshness. When we know how to be in our spirit and enjoy Christ as life, we find out for ourselves how new everything becomes. If we didn’t expect the Lord to be able to do something new all the time, we might tell you when the meetings end as well as when they begin! But because we know the Lord is always doing something beyond what we can realize, we cannot predict anything in the church life.

THE NEW MAN IS NEW IN NATURE

The reason you young people indicate that you have not felt the meetings are too long is because there is something new in nature that is flowing out. After Barnabas found Paul in Tarsus and brought him to Antioch, they held a “conference” for an entire year (Acts 11:26). How could that have been possible? And why would someone come here from France for a few weeks, or why would an English-speaker sit in to listen to me minister in Chinese? If you can give life, there is nothing called “too much”. Instead, everything is always in newness, regardless of the time factor.

We all come from backgrounds that would have produced enmity among us. Why are we here with the kinds of people we didn’t used to like? Jesus has put us together in this new man of His. He created it not through our efforts, but through bringing us all into the sphere where we all appreciate and enjoy Christ together. Those who are enjoying Christ as the One who is always new will present others with a church life that their own spirits respond to. Deep calls to deep (Psalm 42:7), and to the Lord’s

work there is always an AMEN! The nature of the response others have when they visit indicates the nature of what is going on in our church life. Is it of the Spirit, or is it of some other source? Our zeal or human methods will not produce the new man God is after. Only what is of Christ in us can be the new man.

IN THE NEW MAN WE ARE FELLOW CITIZENS IN GOD'S KINGDOM

In this new man, we are fellow-citizens (Eph. 2:19). Whether we are old or young or from Korea or Europe or any other place, in the Church we are all fellow-citizens. It seems impossible that we could have anything in common, yet we are fellow-citizens! We may appear to be different from each other, but spiritually we all are of the same nationality, or kingdom. We bear the same burden and have the same interests in view. As fellow-citizens, we are growing into a holy temple in the Lord (2:21).

IN THE NEW MAN WE ARE THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD, HIS FAMILY

Those in the Church also experience a sweetness in being together, for we are all of the same family, or household (2:19b). We may not know each other personally, but when we meet we feel so close. We are of God's household to bear His testimony. As His household, we are growing into a dwelling place of God in spirit (2:22).

AS THE FELLOW-CITIZENS IN GOD'S KINGDOM
WE ARE GROWING INTO HIS TEMPLE &
AS HIS HOUSEHOLD WE ARE GROWING INTO HIS DWELLING PLACE

As His Body, we are the fullness of the One who fills all in all (1:23). As His masterpiece (2:10), we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works (referring to His testimony). As the new man (2:15) we are fellow-citizens and members of the household of God. As fellow-citizens we need to grow into a holy temple and as members of the household we need to grow into a dwelling place of God in spirit. When it comes to God's economy, as His new man, we all are fellow-citizens in the kingdom of Christ, and we are all members of the household of God. This is God's house. In this house nobody reigns but God and we all are members in this household. How sweet!

In the new man we are fellow-citizens first, growing into a temple. The high peak of the Old Testament was when the temple was completed by Solomon (1 Kings 8). At that time God had finally gained a

testimony on the earth, and with that God also founded his rule through David (Psalm 132). The temple shows God is able to reign. We must grow from shaking hands as fellow-citizens unto a testimony that bears the Lord's name! We also must grow from simply recognizing ourselves as brothers and sisters in God's family to acknowledging Him as the One who rules over us so that He might have the Church as the place where He is satisfied and restful.

PASSING THROUGH THE PROCESS OF GROWTH
DEPICTED IN THE TABERNACLE

To become God's temple and dwelling place we have to pass through a process, as depicted in the arrangement of the tabernacle (Exo. 25-27, 30). In the outer courtyard of the tabernacle you first came to the burnt-offering altar and the laver, and then within the tent itself was the "holy place" with the lampstand and showbread table and the altar of incense. Beyond that was the "holy of holies," where God dwelt upon the ark of testimony. The advancement from the outer court to the holy place to the holy of holies represents the process of spiritual growth. When first saved we entered the outer court, where things can be pretty messy. (Like the messiness Jesus condemned when He drove out the moneychangers in Matthew 21.) In the outer court many might ask God for a car, a boyfriend, a good grade in a class, etc. One day, however, you begin to touch the altar of burnt offering and consecrate yourself to God. You tell Him, "Come down, Lord, and consume me. I exist for Your satisfaction." Before that moment, even though you may be a church-goer, your life has very little that can stand before God.

Then we go on to have the experience of the laver, where we are cleansed and the Word begins to operate within us. We are eventually ushered into the holy place where we enjoy Christ first as the twelve loaves of bread upon the showbread table and afterward we go on to know the Lord as our light and experience being handled by the Lord (for the lampstand is all a piece of beaten work). We also become someone who prays and eventually we thus are able to enter into the holy of holies where we begin to enjoy the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the commandments within the golden ark. The tablets of commandments represent who God really is. Eventually, through this process of growth, we become so one with God and truly dwell in the Lord's presence. This process is what brings us into the experience of becoming God's temple and God's dwelling place.

- Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, July 8, 2010 PM

Vision Week

MESSAGE NINE

THE CHURCH'S FOUNDATION AND THE FOUR THINGS EVERY CHURCH MUST HAVE

The word “Church” refers to the result of the eternal God’s calling. This is its most immediate meaning. As the out-called, the Church is Christ’s Body, God’s masterpiece, the new man, His kingdom’s citizens, God’s household, the temple of God, and the dwelling place of God in spirit. According to God’s eternal purpose, the Church is called out to be Christ’s Body to contain and express Him. According to its production in time the Church is the Lord’s workmanship or masterpiece (*poiema*). Any Christian who lives a boring life must be doing something wrong because whoever follows the Lord will live a very colorful life. When all of us as His “pieces of work” are combined together we form a very great masterpiece. Then, regarding God’s economy, the entire piece as the new man is created in Christ Jesus. (The Church is not something of man or by man). In the Church as the new man we are fellow-citizens bearing the testimony of God for His ruling and we are His household, or family, for His rest. Therefore we need to grow in the divine life and exercise an ever-higher divine ability to bear an ever-greater testimony of Christ and provide Him an ever-greater rest! In this regard we are fellow-citizens bearing the testimony of what kind of nation we are in riches and power as His temple, and within that testimony everything is sweet and enjoyable, for we as the members of the household of God form His dwelling place. These are all aspects of the Church.

The kingdom’s fellow-citizens bear God’s testimony. After the temple was finally finished in Jerusalem, the glory of God filled it. That scene was the peak of the Old Testament. The Lord exercised His lordship over the earth via that testimony of God’s temple among His people. It became something established upon the earth. We bear that testimony as His temple, and as the family or household we are for that testimony.

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S INHERITANCE AS HIS FAMILY

If our being together is not as a family, we might exhort each another, but it would not produce anything of profit, for the elements of love and genuine concern are missing. In a family we love one another and are very practical in our concern for one another because we have one another in our hearts. Among the churches there should be a rich family feeling, and the commitment to each other caused by love. We are not living in a place of demands but in a place where love reigns.

Of course, each family manifests its love differently, and each family needs to continue to grow in love. As the Church, the same group of people who are citizens are also a sweet family. We as citizens are a temple, but in this place of testimony there is a Holy of Holies where God dwells. The more we grow into the Holy of Holies in our experience, the more the Lord is able to have His abode with His family. This means that the more we advance in our spiritual walk with the Lord, the more He is able to dwell with us. Overall, God is testified through us as we grow. We grow in life and thus we are brought into oneness with God.

As His members we organically make up His Body, which is His expression. We become His masterpiece as He works on us as the new man. As the divine life grows within us we, the fellow-citizens and members of His household, grow into His temple and the place where He dwells. Every local church should be such a temple, just as the Church is overall. It is not a matter of how many members of His Body are meeting together, but a matter of how much reality those gathering together possess. Once we see this, we will honor the churches to the uttermost!

GOD'S TESTIMONY DEPENDS UPON THE DIVINE REALITY WE POSSESS

God's testimony depends upon the divine reality we possess, so the Lord will test us in the church life just as He tested the Israelites in the Old Testament. Eventually they were all kidnapped and carried off, but for some reason a remnant returned to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1, Neh. 1). A proper New Testament church will be tested and tested until those who are spiritually clear become manifested (Rom. 5:3-4).

THE CHURCH'S FOUNDATION BEING THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS,
WITH CHRIST AS THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

Now we come to the foundation of the Church. Ephesians 2:20-22 states that we are fellow-citizens and members of the household of God "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, being fit together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit." Paul says something here that may not fit the cherished view of many believers. What is that? It is that the Church as the kingdom and the household is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, rather than directly upon Christ!

While the work (that is, the apostles) should not control the churches, no one can deny that the work raises them up. For a church to deny the workers is to deny a particular source of the supply of Christ. Thus there has to be a proper exercise of the workers for the sake of the churches for their building up. (This is my response to anyone who says, "The work shouldn't control the churches"... plus the fact that such a person has obviously never raised up a church himself. Anyone who has raised up a church loves that church just as a father loves a child he has given birth to. A genuine parent will do anything for the good of his or her child.) It is true that the work should not control any church, for every local church is independent before the Lord, but even so it cannot be denied that the Lord has made us fellow-citizens and members together of His household...and the way God provides for our growth is by means of the foundational work of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone.

Many saints may feel bothered saying anything other than Christ Himself is the foundation of the Church, but even in the New Jerusalem it is not Christ directly, but the 12 apostles that form the foundation (Rev. 21:14)! The safeguard is Christ Himself as the cornerstone, for the cornerstone can only be present to cover the foundation if the work of the foundation matches it. Whatever the apostles produce for the Church must be of Christ and match Him. Otherwise, how could He become the cornerstone for the entire building?

Saints who might be concerned with what this verse portrays should be comforted by the article "the" and the nouns being plural. It is not "the apostle" or "the prophet," but "the apostles and prophets". No

servant of the Lord can isolate himself. And the saints must respect and appreciate all the apostles and prophets without exercising preference, for all the apostles and prophets do the same work. We cannot say of one brother, “he is about one-quarter of an apostle when compared to this other brother.” The Lord likes to see the Church shining, not particular members outshining others, and it is the same with His workers. He does not lift up some against others. (If a brother is little appreciated he should be happy, for being seen as being the “top” is not a good thing as far as the Lord is concerned.) The apostles and prophets labor as on the same team as far as the churches are concerned. The foundation they lay becomes something Christ can happily come in upon as the cornerstone. Wherever the genuine apostles and prophets labor, the Lord says, “This is where I will build My Church”. Why? Because they labor as His servants, and what they produce matches Him. If anything else is laid as the foundation, He will not consent to be present as the cornerstone.

THE GREAT NEED TODAY IS FOR THOSE
WHO CAN DO THE WORK OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

We think apostles or prophets are “great men”. A worker may desire to be like the apostle Paul, but finds himself instead the apostle Luap (“Paul” backwards). He should be happy that he is NOT the apostle Paul, for such would be beyond his ability to bear. But when all the “Luaps” work with a bunch of other “Luaps” something of Christ is produced that the churches need. Paul the apostle was a very unique and particularly selected apostle, but the churches are built upon a GROUP of apostles and prophets who are more than common. Today there are forty churches in this area, and in other countries quite a few hundred more. In so many places the saints are crying out, “Help us to grow into the kingdom so we might become a dwelling place of God in spirit!”

FOUR THINGS NEEDED FOR EVERY CHURCH:
THE APOSTLES & PROPHETS, BEING STRENGTHENED IN SPIRIT,
STRIVING TO KEEP THE ONENESS, AND PERFECTING

For the churches to be healthy, the Lord tells us in this portion of Ephesians that four things are needed. First, since they are of the Lord’s Body, the churches need the apostles and prophets (2:20). Second, for the sake of the Lord’s testimony locally, the saints in every church need to be strengthened into their inner man (3:16). Third, every local church needs to exercise the seven ones stated in Ephesians 4 as a church among

the other churches (4:4-6). Fourth, the saints in the local churches need to be perfected (4:12). These are the four pillars of the church life. If any local church comes up short in any of these four things, that church is in trouble! The first has to do with being a part of the Body, the second has to do with the testimony in each particular locality, the third has to do with being a church among other churches, and the fourth has to do with each of the saints in the church life.

EVERY CHURCH NEEDS THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

The first pillar refers back to the apostles and prophets. No church can say, "We are bothered by the work". If the local elders do not see the Body, they do not see the local church! No local church can therefore disregard the matter of the Lord's workers, for it is their purpose to produce a good foundation for the churches to go on in the Body.

EVERY CHURCH NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED INTO THE SPIRIT

Secondly, the entire matter of the Church has to do with Christ in our spirit! This is why Paul prayed that the saints would be strengthened with power into their inner man. Whenever the saints are in their spirit, the church life is joyful and prevailing. As long as a certain number of saints are experiencing this, it seems they are able to cover the shortcoming of the weaker ones, and everyone gets the blessing! But when there is no experience of the Spirit in the church life in a city, the experience of the saints there will be no different than if they were in a denomination.

EVERY CHURCH NEEDS TO STRIVE TO KEEP THE ONENESS ACCORDING TO THE "SEVEN ONES"

Thirdly, every church must realize it does not exist by itself. Therefore, every local church must endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. If there is a church nearby, they should visit that church. If a church is experiencing blessing, that blessing should become the blessing of other churches also. No church can say it does not affect other churches; so each locality must take the other localities into account when making decisions; but neither should any locality feel it is judged by the other localities, or that it is accountable to them for its decisions. Even so, a locality should make its decision with every other locality in view, endeavoring to keep the oneness. Every church must be very conscious of the seven "ones" in Ephesians 4:4-6 (one Body, one

Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all) and every church, as much as is possible, should take care of the feeling of those in other localities.

Anything that is additional to these seven “ones” as a matter for our practical oneness is to be condemned. Any reason for association outside of the seven “ones” is a source of evil, for it produces division in the Body.

EVERY CHURCH NEEDS ITS SAINTS TO BE PERFECTED

Finally, we need many among us who can perfect others. If you can help your child into the best university, don’t hold them back from taking the opportunity to be perfected by the apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd and teachers!

No apostle or prophet is produced through talent alone. Every genuine apostle and prophet must know how to preach the gospel, how to shepherd, and how to teach. As you are teaching, preaching, and shepherding, you are being equipped to be an apostle and prophet (and an elder). The more you are able to do these things, the more your traveling to other places will be profitable.

We are members of the Body of Christ, living in the local church life, in the midst of many other local churches, and as saints developing in the church life. For the Body we need apostles and prophets, in the local churches we need to be strengthened into the inner man, among the churches we need to endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit by holding to the seven “ones,” and as saints, we all need to be perfected. No one has grown up among us without being perfected by others in the church life. They did not come about by reading the Bible by themselves somewhere, nor are they produced by a theological school; they are produced through their labor of preaching the gospel, teaching the saints and shepherding the saints. Each one of us has something, but the work of perfecting is required if it is to be fully realized. Therefore, there is a great need for apostles and prophets in these days.

- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, July 9, 2010 AM*

Vision Week

MESSAGE TEN

FOUR THINGS THE CHURCHES NEED AND THE NEED OF PERFECTING IN PARTICULAR

A church must have four pillars to be healthy and strong. These four pillars are the help of the apostles and prophets, the strengthening of the Spirit into the inner man, our endeavoring to keep the oneness by holding only to the seven “ones” of Ephesians 4:4-6, and the continuous perfecting of the saints. If a church is not experiencing the care of any apostles or prophets, if spiritual exercise is lacking, if it has no fellowship with other churches, or if the saints are not undergoing any perfecting, then something is seriously wrong with the church in that locality. For a local church to be healthy, all four of these matters must be present.

What is the Church? It is God’s called, Christ’s Body, His masterpiece, the new man, the fellow-citizens, God’s temple and God’s household and dwelling place, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone. The Church is not a building where people go to worship nor is it anything produced by human ideas or preferences. For instance, the Church has nothing to do with such things as a particular kind of music, a certain practice, someone speaking from a pulpit, or potluck dinners. Instead, the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, by being strengthened into the inner man, by striving to keep the oneness of the Spirit, and by means of the perfecting of the saints.

Many saints become obsessed with what they think is important in the church life, even though what they are focused on has nothing to do with the essence of what the Church is. The church life must have the four matters mentioned above. Otherwise, when the wind blows the church life will not be able to stand. Many times, however, the leading or serving ones become so zealous in the church life that they forget about God’s building work and pay attention only to the movement of the moment.

THE CHURCHES' PROGRESS DEPENDENT UPON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

People like to see things go fast. The Bible says, however, that for the church life to develop properly apostles and prophets are needed, and such persons do not develop overnight. They develop by means of preaching the gospel, teaching the truth, and shepherding the saints. These are the servants the churches need! You may not know how to do these things, but you can be faithful to learn. We can exercise ourselves to learn and do. The opportunities are everywhere. Perhaps a sister just spent a lot of money on her hair or make-up. That is an opportunity for some sister to say, "That's lovely...perhaps we might do something to make it even better!" As these two are together, the one who is burdened can infuse the one she is caring for with Christ. In this way you learn many things. You learn, for instance, that rebuking usually doesn't work. You learn to spend time in a way that is pleasant and brings the person to Christ. We are not Puritans. We can help one another in a way that shows you respect that person. If someone brings us something that is questionable, we should pray with that person to seek the Lord in the matter. Such is shepherding, and it should be one of the basic practices in our church life. If anyone practices to shepherd, he or she will accumulate the riches that grant them the capital to be with other saints in other places as well. Therefore, such a person becomes qualified to travel.

THE CHURCHES NEED TO BE EXERCISED SPIRITUALLY

Second, the more exercised the saints are before the Lord in the church life, the better! We continually need to be strengthened with might into our inner man so that Christ may make home in our hearts. When we see the saints, we should not merely be polite towards them, nor even warmly familiar, but joyful in spirit! Whenever we experience being strengthened into our inner man, we will become burdened to do many things such as preach the gospel, pray for the elders, visit others, or function in some of the many other ways before the Lord.

THE CHURCHES MUST EXERCISE TO KEEP
THE ONENESS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Third, we must endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace by limiting ourselves to the seven "ones" in Ephesians 4. Our problem is that as human beings, we try to find reasons to make

ourselves different and distinct from others. Therefore we look for whatever is different in others and criticize it. For instance, being slow like people in one region of the country becomes an issue to those who are quick, and vice versa. As long as any distinguishing matter is not being stood upon, however, the differences between saints in different localities should never become a frustration to fellowship. If anything becomes established outside of the seven “ones” in Ephesians 4, however, that becomes a great evil, as Watchman Nee said, for it introduces division into the Body of Christ. We might become provoked by how the Lord blesses another locality, but their blessing can become our blessing as well if we are willing to fellowship. We cannot demand that others be dead just because we are lacking the Spirit! That is not the oneness we are after. Instead, we must keep the oneness of the Spirit, which means we seek to learn how the Spirit is working in other localities even as we desire to share how the Spirit has been working with us.

THE CHURCHES NEED THE SAINTS TO BE PERFECTED

Fourth, every saint needs to gain his or her perfecting. In so many things, don't we need a little help? So many among us could become apostles if they were helped to learn how to shepherd the saints, preach the gospel and teach the truth. In this way the apostleship and “prophethood” in individuals are developed.

BEING PERFECTED REQUIRES CONSECRATION

It is true that the pathway of perfecting involves sacrifice. The Lord will not work with us unless we give Him the right to do so, so consecration is required. We will have to be willing to put everything else aside if we want the Lord to freely work with us... even things we may be very attached to. After a period of time, the Lord may give such a thing back to you, as he gave Watchman Nee back the sister he gave up who later became his wife. The Lord's reward to you for allowing Him to use you may surprise you. But He will first ask, “Will you let me have it? Will you offer it to Me?” That in itself is perfecting, and should the Lord give it back, the person you are when you receive it back will have become different.

PERFECTING IS A MATTER OF BEING ELEVATED IN LIFE, IN RICHES,
AND IN OPERATION

Perfecting is a matter of being elevated from one level to another. The Lord Jesus is the best perfecter, and He knows who to give to us for our perfecting. In my life I have been perfected by a number of different saints. You may have many good natural qualities, but you MUST be perfected before you become useful. There is something unlimited related to the divine life you have received, and it must grow in you according to its unlimitedness. How far it can grow in you will be determined by how willing you are to be consumed and pass through whatever is necessary. Based on my 56 years of being perfected by the Lord, my view and my life-standard have been repeatedly elevated. Every level you arrive at has its view. This is similar to the levels a human being passes through as he or she matures. Those in junior high are not yet clear about the direction their life will take, but in high school they are ready to make that decision. The college experience itself elevates you to become another kind of person (so higher education is helpful if you are able to do it). The Chinese have a saying, "On the day you marry, you become seven years older. And when you have your first child you advance another seven years." Our Christian view is based on the level of maturity we have reached. The higher our level, the greater our operation and the greater our ability to be a blessing to the Lord and His work. Therefore, consecration at a young age is very precious in the sight of the Lord!

Besides being perfected for the elevation or your view, you also need to be perfected for your spiritual richness. Are you rich in the Word? Are you rich in revelations? Are you rich in what the Lord desires? In the spiritual realm, are you a rich person? If not, how can you minister or serve the Lord on behalf of others? You need to be perfected with regard to your riches. When you read in Ephesians that Paul is an apostle by the will of God, what does that mean to you? It is very likely your Bible and my Bible are very different. I hope someone would help many of you so that the Bible becomes alive to you, rather than a sleeping pill! We must know and be energized by the riches in the Word. Why dare I not touch the Bible before I sleep? It becomes too rich in my hands!

You will experience many ups and downs in your spiritual life. I suggest you read certain biographies that might help inspire you. Read James Hudson Taylor's biography (by Mrs. Howard Taylor), Madame Guyon's autobiography, and James Mc'Kendrick's *Seen and Heard*. For basic revelation, read Watchman Nee's *Twelve Baskets Full* (especially the first three volumes). You should also read Mary McDonough's *God's Plan of Redemption. Normal Christian Church Life* by Watchman Nee provides the basic view of the church life according to the New Testament. Then I would introduce you to my *Sketch of Genesis*, which may be in English soon. If you read that book, you should be helped in your reading of the whole Bible. Read the *Breaking of the Outer Man/The Release of the Spirit* by Watchman Nee, as well as his *God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* and *The New Covenant*. In addition to all these, you must read *The Glorious Church*, also by Watchman Nee. If you spend one or two years to pursue the Lord with the help of these spiritual books, you should be helped. And, of course, read the BIBLE! I wish we might have an extended time to study the Bible together in a thorough way so that the Bible might speak to you more fully until you are possessed of its revelation and inspiration, but I trust the Lord is able to work with you as He wills.

The third matter we need to be perfected in, the matter of operation, will be reserved for the next and final message.

- Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, July 9, 2010 PM

Vision Week

MESSAGE ELEVEN

THE NEED FOR APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

When apostles exist just for themselves and not for the local churches, they become isolated “ministry centers,” and when the churches do not receive the apostles, they become poor. An apostle is a vessel the Lord fills so he may minister His riches for the churches’ profit. It is shameful whenever one of His servants attempts to control any church or group of churches, but it is a loss to the churches if they neglect the riches of an apostle’s ministry. All genuine ministry exists for the churches’ profit, and yet the apostles have to trust the churches to Christ. And those leading the churches should realize how much they need the help of the apostles and prophets and be open to whatever riches they possess. When this is the case, something healthy can develop.

Stewardship is God taking His economy and placing it in a man’s hands. He grants visions and power and Spirit to His servants not so those who bear these things should be exalted, but rather that God’s people might receive the benefit. All the gifts are for the perfecting of the saints and for the building up of the Body. It doesn’t matter if the saints are messy. The apostles should put themselves with them to perfect them, so that every man might be presented full grown in Christ, “unto the work of ministry”. If you are a brother or sister in a local church, someone has been given to labor with you and perfect you so that you might do the work of ministry. How grand! The work of the “gifted” members in the Body is to produce others who do what they do. (spoken by a trainee)

THE DEFINITION OF AN APOSTLE

A genuine apostle also defines the truth, raises up new churches, appoints elders and deacons, and produces the Body life among the churches

he serves. Still, even young saints may travel and serve churches if they are experienced in shepherding others, preaching the gospel, and teaching the truths. Those who learn how to shepherd, teach and evangelize may not really be apostles in the sense that they can define the truth, raise up churches or appoint elders, but they can still do something of the work of an apostle. Today we need many to travel from place to place to help the saints. The most famous such “little apostle” in the Bible is Epaphras, who labored with the church of Colosse and possibly other nearby towns. Even young saints can labor as apostles if they know how to be with the churches properly, and honor the elders.

THE PROCESS OF THE CHURCH BEING MADE READY FOR CHRIST’S RETURN
IS A PROCESS REQUIRING PERFECTING

This is all a matter of perfecting, which is a process that God in eternity planned for. This is why we were made in God’s image, and why Christ came to redeem us. Now the Lord shall return for us after we have made ourselves ready as His Bride through our growth in life (Eph. 5:25-27). The Lord’s coming, therefore, is a matter of the saints being perfected in life. Every step of this process is a matter of divine life. Many Christians eagerly look forward to the Lord’s coming, but most do not realize that His coming depends upon His Church as His Bride making herself ready. She has to prepare herself, and this preparation takes place according to a sequence of experiences that match the growth in life and are upheld by His riches.

**THE PROGRESS OF THE FIRST STAGE OF BEING PERFECTED:
BEING SAVED, LOVING THE LORD, LOVING THE CHURCH,
AND BEING A COMPANION**

After a person is saved, the next experience in this progression is that they begin to love the Lord, and after they love the Lord, it is normal that they should experience a love for His Church. Many Christians, however, do not progress at all after they are saved. They are satisfied with the thought of going to heaven, and seek nothing more. Even though there remains opportunity for much progress after salvation, the majority of Christians never advance into it! Most stop at salvation, and even those who seem to be very good Christians stop at simply enjoying a love for the Lord. They just do not realize that there is much more they need to grow into. With many among us, it seems common to stop at loving the Church, even though there is much more that God has prepared for us for our perfecting.

For the Lord to come back we need to advance into a heavenly, divine stage. This does not mean we shall become perfect, but we must advance from stage to stage in our Christian life. We should not stay in the stage of just loving the Lord without going on to love the Church, nor should we merely love the Church without advancing to become a blessing to the Church. The thing that determines how healthy you are in the church life is whether you have companions. This is the next matter we need to be perfected into. In the church life we need companions, or else our church life is just something in the air. Therefore the next step after we begin loving the church is to have someone beside us that we can journey on with, someone younger than us we can help, and someone more mature than us that we can really trust and confide in. Thus we all should be able to declare, “We are saved! We love the Lord! We love the church! And we are companions!” When we get people saved, we need to help them go on to love the Lord, the Church, and to become companions in the church life.

THREE KINDS OF COMPANIONS

We need companions we can pursue the Lord with. I had a companion when I was young believer whom I spent much time with simply fellowshiping about the Lord. As we walked together, we opened up to one another about our experiences of Christ. Everything we talked about had the Lord’s interest in view.

Of course, if we only cared about companionship without caring about the Church, our companionship easily could become something unhealthy within the Body. Christians can love the Lord and love each other in a way that is very impressive, but if they are not for the Body, their being together becomes an issue in the Body rather than its blessing. There are many very excellent and lovely congregations that are divisions in the Body of Christ. The Lord is very generous to be with all the believers no matter how they may gather together, but the fact that they have His presence doesn’t mean they are doing as He desires. (In fact, in a family it is often the naughty ones who get more attention by the parents.) I have met groups of believers who exhibit a knowledge of the truth and who love one another and who even have the Lord’s presence, but I had no peace to join them simply because their stand was divisive.

The matter of having companions, however, is still something of the beginning stage. We must go on! The majority of Christians may consider such a person already as an outstanding believer, but the Lord has prepared more. What is the next stage? It is the stage of being enriched.

THE PROCESS OF THE SECOND STAGE OF BEING PERFECTED: BEING ENRICHED

THE PREREQUISITE: CONSECRATION

In order to enter into the next stage of perfecting, we must lay down everything at the feet of Jesus. If we desire to become useful to the Lord, we cannot escape the matter of consecration. We must give Him the right to do what He wants in our lives. We cannot predict what this will be; it is up to Him. If we never give ourselves completely up to Him and His will, the most we will be able to learn are some skills. You might be able to minister, but your level of life will remain low. That will be where you will be stuck until you are able to enter into a deeper consecration to the Lord. Until we give Him the full right to take over everything in our lives, we will not be able to fully enter into the Lord's riches. The hymnist wrote, "Let the earth in solemn wonder see my body willingly offered as Thy slave obedient, energized alone by Thee." Consecration is a sober matter. Those who know what it entails do not view it lightly.

As a life-matter, consecration is not at all a burdensome matter. As another hymnist wrote, when we consecrate ourselves we are not sacrificing anything; instead we are exchanging "the fragment for the whole". But the joyfulness of life needs to be backed up by the substance of life, and the substance of life comes about from the process of enrichment. Two people may experience the same degree of buoyancy and joyfulness, but when it comes time to pray, the two may have very different capacities. Why is this? Both experience the signs of life. Both are joyful and love the Lord and the Church and even preach the gospel and so on. But both do not have the same content of Christ. When it comes time to pray, for instance, one brother may have a deep reserve of life to draw upon, while the other has comparatively little. What the Lord is after is not merely living-ness, but a constitution with substance. Therefore we need to enter the stage of enrichment by consecrating ourselves to Him.

Of course, when we first give ourselves to Christ, we have no idea what that means. We do not know what the Lord may require of us, or what the cost will be. He may take away something that we are really captured by. And, in principle, we should give to Him the things that we love when those things compete for our heart's love. In order to become rich in life, we must consecrate ourselves to the Lord so that He can do whatever He needs to do to take us on.

HONORING THE ACCUMULATION OF RICHES IN
THOSE WHO HAVE UNDERGONE PERFECTING

In the church life we need to learn to recognize and honor the substance of life accumulated in others. This is not a matter of recognizing seniority, nor should those who have been around longer expect to be honored for their history in the church life. We need to ask the Lord to bring us to a higher level of life! It is the level that makes the difference, and this is what perfecting is for: to bring us into a higher level in the riches of truth, in spiritual understanding, and in spiritual exercise. If we allow the Lord to perfect us, we should eventually become someone who is operative in the church life.

**THE THIRD STAGE:
EXERCISING STEWARDSHIP AS AN APOSTLE, PROPHET, EVANGELIST, TEACHER AND
SHEPHERD FOR THE PERFECTING OF OTHERS**

THE NEED TO KEEP GROWING IN SPITE OF THE INHERENT DANGERS

Every level is a blessing for us to grow into and every level becomes a danger if we do not grow beyond it. We may be rich in many ways, and yet if we are content with that, we will not be brought to the place where those riches become operative! You can even be rich in life, and with life there is never a problem, but during those seconds you are not in life and you try to hold onto something you think you have, there will be problems if you are taken over by a certain logic. You may think, "I know the Bible. I know how to do things in the church life." If you are someone who has been operative in the church life, you could really cause problems. But do not because of this shy away from perfecting! Go through the process. Fight to always elevate yourself and always ask the Lord to bring you to a higher level. To become an apostle or prophet, you must learn to shepherd, teach, and preach the gospel. There is no way to bypass these things if you want to become effective in your operation for the churches. No apostle does not shepherd, or teach, or preach the gospel. These are foundational for the church life. This is why Paul said that the Christ the apostles and prophets produced become the church's foundation. Nothing fake can become the foundation... only what is genuinely of Christ! Therefore to become apostles and prophets, you must go through the process of the Lord's perfecting.

PAY THE PRICE TO GAIN THE REAL THING

Many so-called servants of the Lord travel among so-called churches with “knock offs” of the genuine “brand” rather than the real thing because they have not been through the genuine process to gain the real thing. Don’t treasure the traveling around afforded you as a servant, treasure the hard process that brings you Christ! Otherwise the result of your traveling becomes a problem in the church life rather than a blessing.

What validates the true service of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers is Christ becoming the cornerstone! Christ is our foundation as believers, therefore He should be what we receive from the operation of the apostles and prophets. That Christ gained through the operation of the apostles and prophets ushers in Christ as the cornerstone for the building work in the church life. Due to their work, the saints should have the sense that Christ as the Church’s foundation has become more clear and solid!

THE SAFEGUARD OF APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

No one apostle or prophet can do this work. In fact, if only one could, that would open the door to whoever received that brother’s ministry to becoming the churches of that servant rather than the Lord’s. No apostle’s or prophet’s labor is “safe” or of value unless Christ is produced to be the Church’s cornerstone by means of the labor of apostles and prophets who work together for the churches.

THE NEED TODAY: THOSE WHO CAN PERFECT OTHERS

The Lord desires to see so many who, while they may not be “full-fledged” apostles or prophets, are doing the *work* of the apostles and prophets. May we ask the Lord to elevate us through the healthy process for the blessing and building up of the churches. And thus may we ask the Lord for apostles and prophets to perfect us, and be open to their perfecting work, so that we might likewise become His servants who can perfect others.

- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, July 10, 2010*
AM

From the Ministry of Watchman Nee

The danger with those who know little about life and reality is to emphasize mere outward correctness, but with those to whom life and reality are a matter of supreme importance, the temptation is to throw away the divine pattern of things, thinking it legal and technical. They feel that they have the greater and can therefore dispense with the lesser. But God has not only revealed the truths relating to the outward expression of that life. God prizes the inner reality but He does not ignore its outward expression. We might think it sufficient for God to instruct us through Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians as to our life in Christ, but He has thought it necessary to instruct us through Acts, Corinthians, and Timothy as to how to do His work and how to organize His Church. God has left nothing to human imagination or human will. It is not our place, therefore, to suggest how we think divine work should be done, but rather to ask in everything, "What is the will of the Lord?"

We must seek to follow the leading of God's Spirit, but at the same time we must seek to pay attention to the examples shown us in His Word. The leading of the Spirit is precious, but if there is no example in the Word then it is easy to substitute our fallible thoughts and unfounded feelings for the Spirit's leading, drifting into error without realizing it. If one is not willing to obey God's will in every direction, it is easy to do things contrary to His word and still fancy one is being led of His Spirit. We emphasize the necessity of following both the leading of the Spirit and the examples of the Word, because by comparing our ways with the written Word we can discover the source of our leading. The Spirit's guidance will always harmonize with the Scriptures. God cannot lead a man one way in the beginning and another way today. In externalities the leading may vary but in principle it is always the same, for God's will is eternal and therefore changeless. God is the Eternal God. He takes no cognizance of time, and His will and ways all bear the stamp of eternity. This being so, God could never act one way at one time and another way later on. Circumstances may differ and cases may differ, but in principle the will and ways of God are just the same today as they were in the days of the Acts. (From Introduction to *The Normal Christian Church Life* by Watchman Nee)

LOVE FOUND A WAY

They set Him down in the public square
Before all men, went and stripped Him bare
Beat Him bloody raw with a whip of cords
Spit in His face
Laced Him with thorns...

See Him now... bear that sign of shame
Which He chose to bear, though He bore no blame
Silent down the road, and then up the hill
Where the cross beam would fall
And the world would Him kill.

As He died that night, all of heav'n stood still...
Angels drew their breath while He took in full
All the Father's wrath...
All our sin and shame...
Bore it all up...bore it away.

Now who are we, but the pardoned ones?
Just all the "cons" that He's made God's sons.
We owe it all to what He did that day
Which nothing can change
for Love found a way...