

outward things. On the contrary, a natural person serves more fervently if he is commended, because compliments touch him; however, he withdraws when others are cold toward him, because he is touched by the coldness. Some people will not pray a second time if no one says Amen to their first prayer, yet if many people say Amen to their prayer, they will pray even louder. The Amen is their reward, but this indicates that they are living in the natural man. A person who has passed through death and resurrection cannot be touched by people's appreciation or indifference. Furthermore, whatever is of resurrection is hidden. Even if it is done in public, it is still hidden. No one living in resurrection likes to show off. Only fleshly ones like to show off. In the church there cannot be any who are natural; rather, everyone must experience death and resurrection. In our service we should not see only ability but also cypress and cedar, that is, death and resurrection. Today the situation of many Christians is pitiful. In the matter of material offering, there are donation records, showing who has donated the most. This kind of donation is for self-boasting. This is not cypress and cedar. It is altogether natural and has not passed through death and resurrection.

"The fact that the temple was only cypress and cedar timber indicates that the materials for building the church must pass through death and resurrection. In the elders' room, the deacons' office, and the bookroom, there should be only cypress and cedar. Anything natural should not be brought into the church. The church is not strong, because there is a mixture of many kinds of wood instead of only cypress and cedar. The type of the building of the temple shows that there should be only cypress and cedar in the church, not any other kind of wood. The material of the church is composed only of what has passed through death and resurrection."

(ibid., pp. 206-208)

Note: **Bold type** and/or underlining have been added for emphasis in the above verses and quotations.

Suggested Supplementary Reading

The Holy Word for Morning Revival— Philippians: Week 3, Day 6

The Life-study of Philippians, Messages 15-16

Our Experience in the Church Life

Prayer Burdens

1. Pray for the 70 gospel contacts from the Chinese-speaking gospel meeting on Dec. 30th. Let us beseech the Lord of the harvest to thrust out workers to visit them and bring them into His household.
2. Pray for the Chinese-speaking Disciples' Camp Level 1 on Jan. 18th to 21st. May the Lord perfect the saints in the basic spiritual exercises for a healthy church life in Toronto.
3. During Ignite 2007, several young people received the Lord. Let us continue to pray for the young people and especially their new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Announcements:

General

1. New web site

A new web site, www.thechurchintoronto.ca, is available that contains the morning revival material, current announcements, church prayer burdens and fellowship concerning the church from the elders.

The church in Toronto

Philippians Week 12

Jan 8 - Jan 20, 2007

Taking Christ as the Pattern and Holding Him Forth (5) — The Apostle's Concern for the Believers

Weekly Bible Reading:

Philippians 2:19-30

Hymns:

902; 484; 907

Monday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 2:19-21

- 19** But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged by knowing the things concerning you.
- 20** For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;
- 21** For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

Experiencing Christ and Caring for the Saints

"In 2:20 and 21 Paul says, 'For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you; for all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.' In these verses we find a strong hint that even Paul's concern for the believers was the concern for the things of Christ and for the genuine experience of Christ. Besides Timothy, Paul did not have another who was like-souled with him. Paul's soul was concerned with the things of Christ. What are the things of Christ? The things of Christ are the churches with all the saints.

"Here we see the important point that if our seeking after Christ does not result in a concern for the church, our seeking is at least somewhat abnormal or biased. Many Christians today are seeking spirituality, but they have no concern for the churches with the saints. Such a spiritual seeking is not normal. Where today can you find believers who are truly seeking after Christ with a concern for the churches and the saints? We must check our seeking after Christ in relation to the concern for the churches with the saints. Many desire to be 'spiritual,' 'holy,' or 'victorious.' Those who pursue spirituality without a concern for the churches are misled in their seeking. The normal seeking after Christ includes a concern for the churches and the saints.

"In this Epistle, Paul does not cover the experience of Christ in a doctrinal way. Rather, little by little, he unveils the genuine experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ by dealing with practical matters and actual situations. In 2:19-30 he indicates that the experience of Christ must include a concern for the churches and the saints. We may have the concept that the experience of Christ is one thing, but the concern for the church is another. Not many of us may realize that to experience Christ and to enjoy Christ is actually to care for the church, and to care for the church is to experience Christ and enjoy Him. Our natural tendency is to separate these things. We may think

that because we are enjoying Christ, we do not have time to care for the church. Or, on the other side, we may think that because we are so busy in caring for the church, we have no time to enjoy Christ. It is important for us to see in 2:19-30 that these two things must be one. If we truly experience Christ and enjoy Him, this should result in a concern for the church and the saints. There is a principle in the Word that if our seeking after Christ and our experience of Christ do not result in a concern for the churches and the saints, our seeking and our experience are abnormal. The experience of Christ must be for His Body.”

(Witness Lee, Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 15, pp. 123-124)

Tuesday

Verses for Morning Revival

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

Romans 12:5

5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Church Being One in the Holy Spirit

“The church comes out of Christ. This speaks of its origin. Every Christian possesses a new life. The one life of Christ has become millions of Christians. John 12 speaks of a grain of wheat which falls into the ground and dies and bears much fruit. All the grains which are produced from the one grain have the same essence as the original grain. One grain has become many grains, and the many grains come out of that one grain. How then can the many Christians who possess the same life become the one Body of Christ? This is where the work of the Holy Spirit comes in. The one Christ has become millions of Christians. Now the Holy Spirit baptizes these millions of Christians into one Body. This is the fundamental teaching recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13. The Body is one, yet it is composed of many members. How can the many members become one Body? ‘In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.’ In other words, this Body comes into being through baptism. Through baptism in the Spirit, the many Christians are immersed into one Body. Every Christian is like a piece of stone hewn out of a big rock. The Holy Spirit is like the cement which cements the stones back together to become one rock.”

Two Basic Principles of the Body of Christ

“The Body of Christ has two basic principles: First, apart from that which comes out of Christ, there is no Body of Christ; second, apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit, there is no Body of Christ. There must first be the baptism of the Spirit and the infilling of the Spirit; God's children must all be baptized by the Spirit in order to become the Body. This was what happened at Pentecost in Acts 2. Many had received the Lord's life and had become His many members. Then the Lord baptized these many members through the Holy Spirit into one Body. Those who know the Lord and the Holy Spirit also will know this one Body. There are many members in the human body, but the head rules over them all through the nerves. Likewise, the Head of the church

22 ...Jesus the Nazarene...

24 ...God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

John 2:19

19 Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Experience of Serving God in the Church, cont'd.

3. Not Serving with Our Natural Abilities, nor in the Natural Man

“Those who have passed through death and resurrection are not proud and do not have a consciousness of success. Although they may have done many things well, they do not consider that they have done something special. In Matthew 25 the Lord commended the sheep, saying, ‘I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me a drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me’ (vv. 35-36). In response, the sheep asked, ‘Lord, when have we seen You hungry and have fed You, or thirsty and have given You a drink? And when have we seen You a stranger and have taken You in, or naked and have clothed You?’ (vv. 37-38). Their response indicates that they were not conscious of doing those things. This is similar to a healthy person who is not conscious of breathing even though he is breathing constantly. A person in resurrection may do many things, but he is not conscious of doing those things. “If a person is immediately conscious of what he has doing and desires others’ appreciation, he is not right. If a brother is full of feeling when he offers material things for the Lord's work, his offering certainly contains a natural element. If his giving is in resurrection, he will not have any feeling, even if he gives half of his possessions. In matters such as helping the brothers and sisters or giving hospitality, we will be very conscious of our actions if we are in our natural man, but if we are in resurrection, we will not have any consciousness. Whatever passes through death and resurrection comes out of life, and what comes out of life is spontaneous, without any special feeling. For instance, when our body is healthy and normal, we are not conscious of our blood's circulation and our stomach's digestion. Thus, if we inwardly have a sense of accomplishment after doing a certain thing or fulfilling a task, we are still in our natural man.

“Everything that comes out of resurrection is able to endure and to withstand any blow. The Lord said in John 2:19. ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ This is resurrection. Resurrection is the ability to rise up in the midst of any setback. When Peter was preaching concerning the Lord in Acts 2:24, he said that it was not possible for Him to be held by death. The Lord resurrected because He could not be held by death. Resurrection cannot be constrained, bound, or oppressed. Instead, the more the oppression and death it experiences, the more it grows. The more the opposition, the stronger it becomes; the more there is criticism, the more living it becomes; and the more it is despised, the more it multiplies.

“Whatever issues from resurrection does not need a reward and what comes out of life is not affected by criticism. A person such as this, in both the work and service of the church, has passed through death and resurrection. Such a person never thinks of other people's assessment of him and does not expect any appreciation or reward from man. He labors according to an inward sense of peace and joy, not caring for

“How can we differentiate natural ability from ability that has passed through death and resurrection?” There is a gnat difference between the two. In this regard, we do not need to speak doctrinally; instead, we must know this matter according to experience. **First**, all natural ability contains pride; everything that we can do naturally causes us to be proud. Hence, anything that we do in the church which causes us to be proud is natural. If a brother cleans the windows in the meeting hall nicely and thinks that he has done the best job, he has a problem. His thought proves that he is still natural. “Paul boasted in the book of 1 Corinthians, but there was no pride in his boast. He was forced by the Corinthians to boast, but it was not expedient for him to do so. His boast was in resurrection, in spirit (cf. ch. 9). When we read 1 Corinthians, we sense that Paul was a person whose speech was straight forward, whose spirit was clean, and whose flesh had been crucified. In other words, in 1 Corinthians Paul was pure. If our boasting gives people a feeling that we are impure and fleshly, we are still natural. **“Second**, natural ability causes self-reliance. To rely on ourselves means to have confidence in ourselves. If we sense that we are secure and trustworthy in the matter of serving God and if we are full of confidence that everything put into our hand will be successful, we still have the natural element. Everything that comes out of the natural man, just as everything that issues from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, causes us to have much confidence in ourselves and not to depend on God. Everything that passes through death and resurrection, just as everything that issues from the tree of life, causes us not to depend on ourselves and not to have confidence in ourselves but rather to depend on God.

“Third, natural ability is temporary and unable to with stand tests, setbacks, or opposition. If we serve in the church by our natural ability, we will stop as soon as the saints criticize us and be discouraged after the elders have dealt with us. If something can cause us not to complete our service or can discourage us, our service is quite natural. Everything that passes through death and resurrection is able to endure and withstand opposition, criticism, and setbacks. It is able to stand firm in the midst of a test.

“Fourth, those who serve according to natural ability desire rewards or, at least, appreciation from others. Some brothers and sisters require people’s gratitude, exaltation, and appreciation for their service in the church; this is to seek a reward. After doing a certain thing, they hope the responsible brothers will appreciate and praise them. They seek to receive a reward. If the responsible brothers ignore their service, they become cold and backslide. If they receive a compliment, however, they are excited and seek to do even better. This proves that they are still serving God in the natural man.

“Fifth, natural ability likes to manifest itself, to be known by man, and to be carried out in front of man. The five preceding points are a gauge and a check as to whether a saint is still living in the natural man or has passed through death and resurrection.”

(Witness Lee, The Meaning of the Church, Chpt. 15, pp. 204-206)

Saturday

Verses for Morning Revival

Acts 2:22a, 24

joins the many members into one Body through the Holy Spirit.

“The church is out of Christ, and it is formed into one Body in the Holy Spirit. Christian fellowship and communion should be based on one’s standing in the Body of Christ. We have no relationship other than this relationship. We are not bound together because we are Jews or Greeks. We commune with one another because we are all members of the Body of Christ. Our communion with one another is based on the Body.”

The One Basis for Our Fellowship in the Church

“There is only one basis for our fellowship in the church—our being fellow members with one another in the Body. We cannot have any fellowship that is based on any other foundation. Any fellowship outside the Body of Christ is a division. Any fellowship that is not as large as the Body, that is in fact smaller than the Body, is not the fellowship of the Body. Any boundary that is different from the boundary of the Body, though it may not contradict the boundary of the Body, is a hindrance to the Body boundary. Such a variation in boundary will always hinder the fellowship of the Body. We cannot accept any fellowship that is different from the Body. We are here to maintain the fellowship of Christians, the fellowship of the Body, not any fellowship that is smaller than the Body.”

(Watchman Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 3, Vol. 50: Messages for Building Up New Believers (3), Chpt. 50, The Body of Christ. pp. 874-875)

Wednesday

Verses for Morning Revival

John 10:11

11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Philippians 2:25, 30a

25 But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your apostle and minister to my need,

30 ...for the work of Christ he drew near unto death, risking his life...

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Example of Epaphroditus: Risking His Soul

“In 2:25 Paul speaks of Epaphroditus, referring to him as ‘my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier.’ Paul also tells the Philippian believers that Epaphroditus was their apostle, one sent with a commission, and a priestly minister to his need. A priestly minister is one whose ministry is like that of a priest. All New Testament believers are priests to God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). Hence, our ministry to the Lord, in whatever aspect, is a priestly ministry, a priestly service (Phil. 2:17, 30).

“In 2:30 Paul points out a striking feature of Epaphroditus. Here Paul tells us that for the work of Christ Epaphroditus ‘drew near even unto death, risking his life, that he might fill up your lack of service toward me.’ The Greek word rendered ‘risking’ means venturing, recklessly exposing one’s life, like a gambler throwing down a stake. The Greek word for life in verse 30 is *psuche*, the word for soul. Hence, to say that Epaphroditus risked his life means that he risked his soul. Epaphroditus was one who was willing to sacrifice his soul for the churches and the saints. This sacrifice of soul is revealed clearly by the Lord Jesus in John 10:11, where He says concerning Himself that, as the good Shepherd, He was ready to lay down His soul-life so that we could receive His divine life.

"In Philippians 2:19-30 we see two crucial points concerning the soul. First, we need to be one in soul; second, we need to be willing to sacrifice or risk our soul. Both are necessary if we are to have a genuine concern for the churches with all the saints. Timothy was a like-souled person, and Epaphroditus was a soul-risking person. We also should be those who are one in soul and who are willing to risk our soul. We should be ready to sacrifice our mind, will, and emotion to be one with our dear coworkers.

"It is especially important for the elders and leading ones to be like-souled and to risk their soul. Instead of loving your soul, learn to risk it, to sacrifice it, and to pay the price for the church life. If the elders do not have this kind of soul, they are not adequate to take the lead in their locality. If we love the Lord and the church, we should first experience the Lord in our spirit and then be like-souled in the experience of Christ for the concern of the church and also ready and willing to sacrifice our soul for the sake of the saints. In the Lord's recovery today we need saints who seek the Lord and enjoy Him in their spirit and who also are willing to have a genuine concern for the churches by being like-souled and by risking their soul life. If we are one in soul as well as in spirit, our experience of Christ will reach the peak."

(Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 15, pp. 129-130)

Thursday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 2:27a, 29

27 For indeed he [Epaphroditus] had become sick, near to death...

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor,

Colossians 1:24

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church;

John 12:25-26

25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.

26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Experience of Serving God in the Church

1. Daily Risking Our Soul — Becoming Martyrs for the Church Life

"Years ago, I read an article which said that before a believer can become a martyr, he must first have the attitude of a martyr. According to that article, every martyr has already been equipped with a certain attitude. Then when the time comes to be martyred, such a person can actually become a martyr by laying down his physical life. This principle applies to risking our soul in the church life. If we do not have the heart to sacrifice our mind, emotion, and will for the sake of the Body of Christ, we shall not be able to sacrifice our physical life in martyrdom. In order for Epaphroditus to risk his physical life, he first had to be willing to risk his soul.

"In a very real sense, we in the church life need to be martyrs for the Body of Christ and for all the saints. If we desire to be one with the Lord for His recovery, we must be willing to sacrifice our mind, feeling, and intention. This is to risk our soul. In order to

experience Christ to the uttermost, we need to be not only like-souled, but also to risk our soul by risking our mind, emotion, and will.

"In 2:30 Paul said to the Philippians that Epaphroditus risked his life that 'he might fill up your lack of service toward me.' Epaphroditus risked his soul in order to fill up what was lacking on the part of the Philippian believers toward Paul. This indicates that if we do not risk our soul, we shall not be able to fill up any lack there may be in the Body of Christ. Filling a lack in the Body affords us a splendid opportunity to experience Christ. We need to experience Christ to such an extent that we are able to fill up what is lacking in the Body. If we would experience Christ to this degree, we must risk our soul life by sacrificing our emotion with its desires, our will with its intentions, and our mind with its opinions. Whenever we sacrifice our soul for the sake of the Body, we have an opportunity to experience Christ in the Body. This is to experience Christ to the full extent.

"If we daily risk our soul in the church life, we shall be ready for martyrdom should this ever be required of us. Those who risk their soul for the Body of Christ are able to lay down their physical life for the Lord. Furthermore, if we risk our soul, we shall find it easy to be like-souled with other believers."

(ibid., Msg. 16, pp. 135-136)

Friday

Verses for Morning Revival

Romans 15:1-3

1 But we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak and not to please ourselves.

2 Let each of us please his neighbor with a view to what is good for building up.

3 For Christ also did not please Himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell upon Me."

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Experience of Serving God in the Church, cont'd.

2. Serving in the Lord's Death and Resurrection

"When I began to serve the Lord, I did not know what it meant to experience death and resurrection in the matter of serving God, nor did I know the experience of death and resurrection in the church. Although I was clear about these matters doctrinally, I did not have any subjective experience. I believe that many people are in this situation. After years of experience, however, I have gained a deep understanding concerning this matter. For example, some saints are truly talented. When we contact them, it is easy to think that they could be very useful in the church. Saints will also frequently suggest that a certain person could be very useful in the church because he has run a business, operated a factory, participated in education, or accomplished some great matter. This kind of speaking may seem correct, but if we have experience and light, we will realize that this concept is natural and questionable.

"Although the basic building material for the church is humanity, it must not be natural humanity. In the temple there was no timber besides cedar and cypress. Man's natural ability can never be brought into the church or become building material for the church. In the church there is nothing natural. Whenever people try to bring their natural ability into the church, the reality of the church is lost. Only that which passes through death and resurrection can be brought into the church.