

# **ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS**

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

## **Message Five**

### **Keeping Ourselves in the One Flow of the Lord's Work for the Spreading of the Church and Receiving the Lord's Mercy to Be Saved from Satan's Schemes**

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

- I. The book of Acts reveals that in the move of the Lord there is only one divine stream of the Lord's work and that we need to keep ourselves in this stream:**
- A. The divine stream, which has been flowing throughout the generations, is uniquely one; since there is only one divine stream and since the flow is uniquely one, we need to keep ourselves in this one flow—1 John 1:3; Rev. 22:1.
  - B. Where the divine stream flows, we have the life of God, the fellowship of the Body, the testimony of Jesus, and the work of God—Gen. 2:10-14; Psalms 36:8-9; 46:4a; John 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1.
  - C. When we give the Lord the preeminence in our entire being, taking Him as our first love, He becomes the divine stream to us, flowing within us and out of us as the first works; the first works are works that are motivated by, issue from, and express the Lord as our first love; only works that are motivated by the first love are gold, silver, and precious stones—v. 1; 2:4-5; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:9; 3:12.
  - D. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this day, is just one stream for God's goal to build up the church for His corporate expression—Matt. 16:18; cf. Ezek. 47:1-12.
- II. The basic principle of the church is that it is eternal and universal, so the church must constantly spread on the earth; the growth of the church and the building up of the church are based on spreading—Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:31:**
- A. The spreading of the church is brought about by the growth in the Lord's life and the flowing out of the Lord's life, the overflow of life—Eph. 4:16; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:42, 46-47; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20.
  - B. When the church begins to spread, erroneous concepts are shattered, regardless of whether the concepts are regional, racial, or mutually discriminatory; it is through spreading that all our close-mindedness is eliminated—cf. 1 Cor. 12:24; Col. 3:10-11.
  - C. Acts 8 shows that the first step in the church's spread was to Samaria (vv. 1-25), and the second step was to Ethiopia, to Africa (vv. 26-39); this shows that we must preach the gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation because the church is universal and needs to spread (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9).
  - D. Acts 9 shows God's choosing of Saul (later Paul), which is against the human concept; our narrow, erroneous human concept needs to be broken and shattered through the spreading of the church; we must believe that a person can be persecuting the church one hour and preaching the gospel the next hour—vv. 10-22.
  - E. Acts 10 indicates that the Lord's evangelistic move on earth is under His administration on the throne in heaven and that the gospel needs to be spread to the four corners of the inhabited earth to collect all kinds of unclean (sinful) people, cleansing them with the

redeeming blood of Christ and washing them with the renewing Holy Spirit—vv. 11-12, 15, 28; cf. Heb. 8:1; Acts 7:56.

- F. Acts 13 reveals that in the church in Antioch, the five prophets and teachers who were ministering to the Lord were composed of Jews and Gentiles, each having a different background, education, and status; this indicates that the church is composed of all races and classes of people regardless of their background, and that the spiritual gifts and functions given to the members of the Body of Christ are not based on their natural status—v. 1; 4:36; Rom. 16:21; Luke 9:7-9; Acts 22:3:
  - 1. Through these five faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ, the Lord took a great step to set apart Barnabas and Saul for His work and move to spread the gospel of His kingdom to the Gentile world.
  - 2. It was absolutely a move by the Spirit, in the Spirit, and with the Spirit through the coordination of the faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ on the earth with the Head in the heavens—13:1-4a.
- G. On the apostle Paul's first trip to spread the gospel, he went to Cyprus and then to Asia Minor to establish many local churches—v. 4b—14:28; Rev. 1:4.
- H. After Paul separated from Barnabas, he went out on his second ministry journey to Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and returning through Ephesus back to Antioch)—Acts 15:35-40; 16:6—18:22.
- I. Paul's third journey was from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece to Jerusalem—v. 23—21:17.
- J. Paul's fourth journey was from Caesarea to Rome—27:1—28:31.

### **III. We must receive the Lord's mercy to be saved from Satan's schemes to frustrate the spreading and building up of the church, and we must keep ourselves in the flow of the age for the building up of His Body—cf. Heb. 4:16; Lam. 3:22-25:**

- A. We must be saved from outward and dead ordinances, human opinions, and the self with its old concepts; whoever receives mercy from the Lord will be saved in these matters; the degree to which we are saved is the degree to which the church can be built up—Rom. 5:10; Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:12-16; Acts 15:1-12; Gal. 2:21; 5:1; 2:4.
- B. We must learn from the lesson of Peter to be saved from the veils of our religious traditions and old background so that we may see and live under the vision of God's eternal economy to hold the truth of the gospel—Acts 10:9-16; Gal. 2:11-14.
- C. We must learn from the lesson of Barnabas to be saved from human opinions and natural relationships—disputes that arise among the co-workers because of personal relationships are terrible; remember this well!—Acts 13:13; 15:35-40; Col. 4:10.
- D. We must learn from the lesson of Apollos to be saved from a ministry that lacks a complete revelation of God's New Testament economy and from not being fully one with the ministry of the age—Acts 18:24—19:2; 1 Cor. 1:12; 16:10-12.
- E. We must learn from the lesson of Paul in Acts 16:6-12; these verses indicate the problem of workers coming to a place and tending to become set and settled down, not wanting to move; old relationships, old affections, old inclinations, and old concepts keep us from following the inner leading of the indwelling Spirit:
  - 1. The Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his co-workers, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; the Holy Spirit's forbidding separates us, sanctifies us, and the Spirit of Jesus either allows us or does not allow us—vv. 6-7.
  - 2. The Holy Spirit says no to sanctify us, and the Spirit of Jesus says go to send us out in the humanity of Jesus to accomplish the will of God under the cross.

- F. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to practice the Body life and to take the word of the Spirit through the members of the Body, obeying it as a word from the Head—20:23; 21:4, 7-8, 11-14.
- G. We must learn from the mistake of James and the devastating mixture of the church in Jerusalem—vv. 18-21; Matt. 22:7; 24:1-2:
  - 1. Jeremiah spoke of the law of life that could be written upon our hearts (Jer. 31:31-34), and Paul spoke of the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit (Rom. 8:2, 4, 6), but James treasured and uplifted the law of letters (Acts 21:20).
  - 2. Paul spoke of being crucified with Christ and being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of Christ's resurrection; it is this life that produces the Body life that consummates in the New Jerusalem; self-cultivation does not carry out God's economy, but self-denial does—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; Matt. 16:24.
  - 3. James boasted that there were myriads of believing Jews in the church in Jerusalem who were zealous for the law, but Paul was zealous to gain Christ, be found in Christ, know Christ, lay hold of Christ, pursue Christ, and uplift Christ for the fullest enjoyment of Christ—Acts 21:20; Phil. 3:6-14; Col. 1:18b.
- H. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to be saved from the mixing of Judaic practices with God's New Testament economy; this mixing is not only erroneous but also abominable in the eyes of God—Acts 21:18-27, 31, 36; Heb. 10:29.
- I. We must learn from the lesson of Paul's appealing to Caesar, utilizing his Roman citizenship to save himself from his persecutors so that he might fulfill the course of his ministry—Acts 22:25-29; 23:10-11; 25:8-12; 26:32:
  - 1. Paul was willing to sacrifice his life for the Lord, but he still endeavored to live longer so that he might carry out the Lord's ministry as much as possible—20:24.
  - 2. God in His sovereignty rescued Paul so that He might separate him from all the dangerous situations and entrapments and sent him to a quiet prison; this was to afford him a quiet environment and give him time, whether in Caesarea (24:27) or in Rome (28:16, 23, 30), that through his last Epistles he might release exhaustively to the church throughout the generations the revelation of the mystery of God's New Testament economy that he received from the Lord.
  - 3. The benefit and profit that the church throughout the generations has received from these Epistles will take eternity to measure (see 25:11, footnote 1).

#### **IV. All of us should follow the pattern of the apostle Paul to do the same one work universally for the unique Body—1 Cor. 3:12; 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:11-16:**

- A. The work in the Lord's recovery is for the building up of the local churches unto the building up of the universal Body of Christ—2:21-22; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- B. Today there are four kinds of workers:
  - 1. The first kind is the co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age; this is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord.
  - 2. The second kind is the younger co-workers; they are willing to receive direction and to come under the coordination of the older co-workers, and they are willing to follow and to learn in humility.
  - 3. The third kind is those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers and who do not belong to the denominations, but who are happy to remain in fellowship with us.
  - 4. The fourth kind is the preachers and free evangelists among the denominations.
- C. What we need today are the first and second kind of co-workers; concerning the third and

fourth kind of workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway; with some people God has not assigned them to take the same way as we do, and we dare not say anything to them.

- D. Whatever the situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us; we cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here tearing down others' work.

## **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

### **THE DIVINE STREAM**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:8-12; Psalms 36:8-9; John 4:10, 14; 7:38-39;  
1 Cor. 10:4; Rev. 21:6; 7:17; 22:1-2; 21:23; Ezek. 47:1, 5, 7-9, 12

The Scriptures reveal to us that man's need is met in God alone. To all of man's need God Himself is the supply, the only supply, and all the supply. God's intention is to be life to man, for it is as life to man and the life of man that God could be the supply to all of man's need. Thus, in order to be life to man, God must come to man and enter into him as the living supply. Only in such a way can man enjoy Him and live by Him.

### **THE STREAM OF LIFE**

In the beginning of Genesis we see that after man was created, he was placed in the garden of Eden beside a tree called the tree of life. Near it there was a river. By the help of further revelations of the Scriptures, we understand that this is a picture that shows how God comes to man. He comes as the flowing of a stream to be contacted and received by man. In Psalm 36:8-9 the psalmist praises God, saying, "You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures. / For with You is the fountain of life." This means that with God is the fountain of life, from which flows the river of God's pleasures. God is a fountain of life, and from this fountain of life flows the river of God's pleasures. Man may drink of this divine river and enjoy the pleasures of God and be satisfied. The pleasures of God and the fatness of God go along with the flowing of this divine river. If we drink of this river, we will enjoy the pleasures of God and be satisfied with the fatness of God.

God as life to man first flows out in His Son, our Lord Jesus. Thus, the Lord can give us the living water, and the water that He gives will become in us a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). God flows out in His Son and through His Son. God is the fountain of the divine water of life, and the Lord Jesus is the springing up of the fountain. He is the Rock smitten for us that out of Him may flow the living water of the divine life to be taken by us.

Second, God flows out as the living water in His Spirit and through His Spirit. The Lord tells us that he who believes into Him will have rivers of living water flowing from within him. He spoke this of the Spirit (7:37-39). By this we know that the Holy Spirit is the second channel by which God Himself flows out as the living water to us.

Hence, the Scriptures show us that God comes to us as life as the flowing of living water. The Scriptures tell us that whoever is thirsty may come to the Lord and drink the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17) and that in eternity the Lord will be our Shepherd and will guide us to springs of waters of life (7:17). The water of life is God Himself as our life. We drink of Him, we enjoy His pleasures, and we are satisfied with His fatness.

The book of Revelation tells us that this stream of living water flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1). This is another picture showing us the source of this living water. It means that the life of God flows out of God Himself in the redeeming Savior, the Lamb, with ruling authority to be life to us now.

Within this stream is the life of God. We read that in the river of living water is growing the tree of life, yielding its fruit each month (v. 2). This shows that the life that supplies all our need is something growing in the river of living water. Thus, it proves to us that the river of living water is the

supply of the divine life. In the book of Ezekiel we see that in this river of life there is the power to swallow up death, for where it flows, it heals the salty water and makes it fresh. It has healing power. We also see that it has the power to produce, for where it goes, vegetable life as well as animal life is produced. Where it flows, all kinds of trees grow, yielding various kinds of fruits. Moreover, the waters themselves are swarming with living creatures. This is a most meaningful picture (47:6-12). By meditating on it, we realize its significance. Here is a stream that flows out of God Himself to bring life to supply all our need. This is a stream that will both heal and produce, both swallow up death and supply us with life. This is the stream of life.

### **THE STREAM OF FELLOWSHIP**

From this picture of the stream in the Scriptures, we may realize that it is also a stream of fellowship. Consider the situation of the New Jerusalem. In the whole city there is only one street, and in the midst of that street is the stream of living water. By contemplating this scene, we realize that this stream is the stream of fellowship. It flows throughout the entire city, and the whole city can have fellowship only through or by this stream of living water. This reveals that the fellowship of the Body of Christ is the stream of divine life. Wherever the stream of the divine life flows, there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. What is the fellowship of the church? It is the flowing of the divine life. As the stream of the divine life flows within us, there is the fellowship of the Body among us. This fellowship started from the day of Pentecost, and from Jerusalem it flowed to Antioch, to Asia, to Europe, and then to America and throughout the world. The fellowship of the Body that we are enjoying is such a tremendous thing. We are in this stream of the fellowship of the Body, and this flowing is ever increasing and being enriched. The more it flows, the greater and the richer it becomes.

### **THE STREAM OF TESTIMONY**

Where this stream flows, there is also the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know that this is so? Consider again the situation of the New Jerusalem, and suppose that you are one who is coming into the city from the outside. When you enter the gate, you immediately come upon the one street of the city in which is flowing the stream of living water. If you follow the stream, it will bring you to the place where the Lord Jesus is. This means that the stream will bring you into contact with the Lord. In other words, this stream of living water will cause you to know something of Christ; it will testify to you something of Christ. Where could you find Christ? Where could you meet Christ? Here is the channel; here is the way; here is the means by which you can touch Christ, by which you can experience Christ. The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is with the very stream of divine life. Where the stream of the divine life flows, there is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we must ask, What does it testify? The answer is most significant. It testifies that there is a Lamb, that within the Lamb is God Himself, and that this Lamb is on the throne. This is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the redeeming One; He is the Lamb of God who was slain for our sins. He was crucified on the cross, shedding His blood for our redemption. After accomplishing redemption, He was resurrected and exalted to the heavens, to the throne. In the Lamb on the throne is God Himself. These three items are the summary of the testimony of the Lord Jesus—the *Lamb* on the *throne* with *God in Him*. The stream of the divine life brings this testimony to us. It is the testimony of the Lord Jesus.

### **THE STREAM OF THE WORK OF GOD**

This stream is also the stream of God's work. Where the stream flows, there is the work of God. This is clear in the book of Acts, a book that speaks to us of the work of God. What is that kind of work that is the work of God? It is a work in the stream of living water. Where the stream of living water flows, there is the work of God. God works along the flowing of the stream of the divine life. If you consider the whole record of the book of Acts, you will see the picture quite clearly. On the day of Pentecost this stream of divine life flowed out of God Himself in Christ with ruling power from the throne. It began to flow from Jerusalem. From there it flowed to Antioch, and then from Antioch it

turned to the west; it flowed to Asia, and through Asia it flowed to Macedonia, to Europe. Here is a picture of the flowing of the stream of divine life, and with the flowing of this stream is the work of God. By flowing God works; by flowing God preaches His gospel; by flowing God brings people to be saved. There is a stream that we could call the stream, or the current, of the work. Where it flows, there is the work of God.

Notice that there is no end, no conclusion, to the book of Acts. There are twenty-eight chapters, but in the book of Acts in heaven today there may be twenty-eight hundred chapters. The twenty-eight chapters in our Bible are the record of only sixty or seventy years of history. There is an opening, but no closing, no conclusion. This is because this stream of life is still flowing and never stops flowing. The history of the church shows that this stream has continued to flow from generation to generation right up to this very day, and it is flowing still. Where it flows, there is the life of God; where it flows, there is the fellowship of the Body; where it flows, there is the testimony of Jesus; and where it flows, there is also the work of God. It is the stream of life, the stream of fellowship, the stream of testimony, and the stream of the work of God.

Brothers and sisters, we must be in this stream. If we are not in this stream, we are out of life, we are out of the fellowship of the Body, we are out of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and we are out of the work of God. Oh, if we are simply in this stream, we will have everything. From where does it flow? It flows from the throne. What kind of a throne is this? It is the throne of the Lamb with God in Him. God is in the Lamb, and the Lamb is on the throne, and this stream flows out of this throne. If you have this stream, you have the throne, you have the Lamb, and you have God within the Lamb. If you have this stream, you have everything. If you are in this stream, then you are in God, you are in the Lamb with the throne, you are in the life, you are in the fellowship, you are in the testimony, and you are in the work of God. Are you in the stream? You need to know. If you are not in the stream, you will have to make a turn. We must be in the stream.

In the universe there is a divine stream that starts in the beginning of the Scriptures and flows throughout the whole book. We can trace this stream from the beginning of the Bible right to the end. In many places there is reference to this flowing stream. It is still flowing today. It is flowing, flowing all the time, and will be flowing to eternity. The Lord said that the water that He gives would be a fountain of water springing up unto eternal life. This stream shall flow to eternity; it can never and will never cease. Throughout the whole history of the church there has ever been and still is such a divine stream.

This stream has flowed back to the Western world as a supply to His Body. We look to the Lord that it will be increasing in this country and even to all parts of the world. May we remember this in our prayers, and may we be ready to go along with the Lord so that this stream may have a free way to flow without any hindrance in us. We must be faithful to the flowing of this stream of the divine life, of the fellowship of the Body, of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and of the work of God.

### **THE STREAM IN RELATION TO GOD'S PURPOSE**

The eternal purpose of God is to mingle Himself with humanity. He is working toward this one thing today. This oneness is not simply a joining or a uniting together; it is far more than this. It is a mingling together, a blending together, which is much deeper. It is a mingling of the divine nature with the human nature until they become one. The entire Scripture is concerned with this one basic and central matter, that of God mingling Himself with us.

We must now ask, How will God accomplish this? It is clearly revealed in the Word that in order for God to do this, He must come into us. When God becomes our life, He will automatically be mingled with us.

How can God come into us as our life? This is divine and quite mysterious. Not only with the divine life but also with human life, there is an element of mystery. If asked, What is life? one would find it difficult to define. In the Scriptures God uses a figure to describe how He could be life to us. This figure is a stream of water. He comes into us to be our life just as a stream of water flowing out

and flowing in, flowing out from heaven and flowing into us. I think it is easy to understand how this flowing stream can come into us. We simply drink of it. God Himself is the stream of the water of life. God flows out of heaven onto this earth, and flows into you and me.

Is there a stream of God flowing within you today? There is a stream within me that is always flowing. Sometimes when I wish to sleep, this stream stirs me. I say, "Lord, I would like to rest; I am tired"; but this stream flowing within does not agree. It gives me the impression, "You are tired, but I am not tired. I am still flowing, and My flowing will strengthen you." There is a stream continually flowing. Oh, brothers and sisters, do you have the flowing?

### **THE SOURCE AND NATURE OF THE STREAM**

We have seen that after man was created, he was put before a tree called the tree of life. By the side of the tree of life there was a river, and by the flowing of this river there were some precious materials: gold, pearl, and onyx stone. What is the meaning of these items? They are most significant. Remember that this is in the second chapter of the whole of Scripture. At the end of the Scriptures, we find the same things again in the last two chapters. There we see a city made of gold, pearls, and precious stones, the same kind of materials listed in Genesis 2. There we also see a river flowing, and in its midst grows the tree of life. Here you have the river and the tree of life once more.

How many times throughout the Scriptures God is spoken of as a flowing stream of water! "You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures. / For with You is the fountain of life" (Psa. 36:8-9). The Lord Jesus tells us that the water that He gives will become a fountain of living water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). He says again that whoever is thirsty may come to Him and drink, and whoever believes into Him will have rivers of living water flowing from within him (7:37-38). All these words relate to one thing—that God has flowed out and is still flowing on this earth into humanity as the life. We may ask, In what form has God flowed out? He has flowed out first in His Son, in Christ, and then He has flowed out as the Spirit. God is the fountain, the very source; Christ the Son is the spring of this divine water; and the Holy Spirit is the living stream, flowing all the time.

On the day of Pentecost the Lord poured Himself out in the Holy Spirit. Notice the word *poured* in Acts 2:33. He poured out the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit became the flowing stream of the divine water. For almost two thousand years since that time, the Holy Spirit has been flowing in this world. This flowing has never stopped and will flow to eternity. God the Father is the very source. Christ the Son is the reservoir, the Rock smitten that the divine water stored within may be released. What is this living water that flows from Him? It is the very Spirit of the life of God. The Holy Spirit is the flowing Spirit of the divine life. "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this" (vv. 32-33). He has poured out the Holy Spirit, flowing with the divine life. From that time there is a flowing of the divine life, and this flowing is the Holy Spirit Himself.

We must consider the source of this stream. On the highest peak of the universe there is a throne, one throne, and on this throne the Lamb is sitting. I would ask, Who is the Lamb? The Lamb is the crucified, buried, resurrected, and exalted Christ. Christ is the Lamb. And who is Christ? This Christ is Someone most wonderful. This Christ is the divine nature mingled with the human nature. He is God incarnated, who died on the cross, who was buried in the tomb, who went down to Hades, who was raised up from Hades and from death, and who was exalted to the heaven of heavens, to the right hand of God. He is the very God in human nature. He is the One who died to redeem us from our sins and who has been exalted to the highest place in the universe. Please notice that He is the Lamb, and yet He is on the throne. A lamb is a very humble thing, and a throne is full of authority. As the Lamb slain, the crucified Jesus has now been exalted to the throne to have the full authority of the universe. Do you realize this? How meaningful it is! Within the Lamb is God Himself. How can we know that God is within Him? We are told that God is the light, and the Lamb is the lamp. Just as the light is within the lamp, so God is within the Lamb on the throne. Oh, how I wish that this picture would impress you!

This is the highest point of the whole universe. Christ, the Lamb, with God within Him is sitting on the throne, and from this very throne flows out the river of divine life.

I would ask you to notice what is included in this stream of water. Since it flows out from such a place, then all that Christ has obtained and attained, all that He has and all that He is, must be included in it. How I wish I had here a cup of all-inclusive water as an illustration, a cup of water with everything included in it! Then, if we could make an opening in this cup so that its contents could flow out, I would ask you to tell me what would be included in such a flow. You would have to answer that everything would be included. Obviously, everything would be included. From the throne where Christ is sitting, there flows out a stream of water, the contents of which can never be exhausted. The all-inclusiveness of the Triune God is here; humanity is here; the element of the crucifixion and of the burial is here; the resurrection, the ascension, the authority, the Lordship, the Headship, and everything is included here in this stream. How rich! How all-inclusive! This is the stream that is flowing within you today.

The Scriptures tell us that within this stream grows the tree of life. What is the tree of life? It is simply Christ as the life. Think of the many times the Scriptures refer to a tree as a figure of Christ. The fact that this tree grows in the living water shows us that Christ as life is in the flowing of the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit flows, there Christ is found as the life. The Holy Spirit brings Christ to us as our life just as the stream of living water brings to the whole city the tree of life as the supply of life. Look once more at the picture. Here is a stream of living water, and within the stream, growing all the way, is the tree of life. Thus, the stream brings the supply of life to the entire city. The Holy Spirit brings Christ to us as food, as the life supply. Since this is such a vital matter, I wish to press it by asking, Do you have this stream flowing within you? Is it flowing within you at this very moment? Unbelievers do not have it, but alas, there are some believers who, although they have had this stream flowing into them, have not kept themselves within its flow. They have the life of the Triune God within them, but they are not keeping themselves in the flowing of this life. Many times you are conscious that you are out of the flowing of this stream. Then sometimes you know that you are in its flowing. What have you to do then? It is really quite simple. You simply have to keep yourself in the flowing of the stream. Whenever you feel that the flowing of the stream within you is cut off, you must turn to the Lord immediately to seek the reason. Why has the stream within you stopped flowing? You must discover the reason and deal with the Lord about it until the flowing is recovered. Wherever you are going and whatever you are about to do, if there is the sense that the flowing of the stream will be stopped by proceeding in that matter, then you must stop. Stop in order to maintain the flowing. To maintain the flowing you must refrain from all those activities which are not of the Lord, that is, which are not of the flowing of the stream within you.

### **THE ONE STREAM**

The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this very day, is only one stream. Wherever it goes, wherever it flows, it is not many streams; it is only one. Read the book of Acts, and you will see that there is one stream, one current. This stream started from Jerusalem and flowed to Antioch, and from Antioch it turned to Asia and was flowing there. Then one day the Lord wanted the stream to strike forth into Europe, to Macedonia, but the apostle who was working in the flowing of the stream was not clear about it. Eventually, however, he became clear that the flowing was striking forth from Asia to Europe, and he had to go along with it. It is a familiar story. From Macedonia the stream went in its path to Corinth, to Rome, to Spain, and to all parts of Europe. History tells us that from Europe it flowed to the west, to America, and from the west it flowed to the east and to the south. In reading the history of the church we find that this flowing stream has never been stopped, and we notice that everywhere that this stream flowed, it was just one. It was one in Jerusalem, one to Antioch, one to Asia, one to Europe, and one everywhere it has flowed. Please be clear that there have never been two streams. There is only one stream, and you have to keep yourself in this one stream.



If you read Acts and the Epistles written by the apostle Paul, you will see that quite a number of people at that time, who were preaching the gospel and working for the Lord, were not in the stream. According to the record of the Scriptures, they were not in the stream. For instance, in the first chapter of Philippians the apostle tells us that there were some who preached the gospel because of envy (v. 15). They were preaching the gospel, but they were not working together with the apostle. Although they preached the gospel, they were not in the one stream of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts you can find another example. Consider Barnabas. At the beginning Barnabas was working with the apostle Paul. Both were in the one stream. But after a certain time, Barnabas for some reason would not agree to go along with the apostle Paul. The two were divided. Do you find any record in Acts of Barnabas after that division? No! He was out of the stream. He was still working for the Lord, but he was out of the stream. Are you clear about this matter? If you study carefully the history of the church, you will find that throughout the generations there has been one stream of the Holy Spirit flowing all the time. Many have been working for the Lord, but not all have been in the flowing of that one stream. If you will accept the mercy and the grace of the Lord, you will be brought into that very stream that is flowing today.

At this point, I would like to offer a personal testimony on this matter. In 1933 I went from northern China to Shanghai for the first time in order to visit Brother Watchman Nee. I stayed with him there for several months. When I was about to leave to return to my home city in northern China, Brother Nee came to me and said, “Brother Lee, we feel it is the Lord’s mind that you move your family to Shanghai and stay with us for the Lord’s work. Would you bring this matter to the Lord?” When I went to the Lord with this matter, I received the light. The Lord showed me that in the book of Acts the current of the Lord’s work, the stream of the Holy Spirit, is one. He showed me that in the Acts there was only one line on the map, starting from Jerusalem and running to Antioch, from there to Asia, and from there to Europe. I saw that there never have been two streams but always one. I said to the Lord, “Lord, I thank You. There can never be two streams of Your work in China. If there is something done for You or by You or through You in northern China, it must first be that I go to Shanghai to be mingled together in the one stream, in order that out from there something will flow forth to northern China. Thus, there will be one stream.” On the very next day Brother Nee came to see me. I said to him, “Brother, I am clear about this matter. I must do what you suggest. From this day I am working with you in Shanghai.”

From that time, what a flowing there has been! I can never tell you how rich and how wonderful it is. It is all because I moved into the flowing of the stream at that very time. Oh, the light of the Scripture has flowed as a tide! The life, the power, the energy, and the authority have flowed into me. Wherever I have gone, I have not gone on my own. I have been just as a boat in the current; wherever the current has gone, I have been carried on. It has been so easy. It has not been my strength, my energy, or my endurance; it has been the flowing of the stream. From that time, the Lord has been gradually showing me the flowing of the life, the flowing of the work, the flowing of the testimony, and the flowing of the fellowship of the Body.

### **THE CIRCULATING OF THE STREAM**

The flowing of this stream of the Holy Spirit is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It is similar to the circulation of the blood in our physical bodies. The blood is flowing all the time from one part to another and then back again. In just such a way the stream of the Holy Spirit as the fellowship of the Body is flowing among the saints upon this earth.

It is quite clear to me that in these days the flowing of the divine stream is toward the Western world. This flowing to the West is something of the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It started from the throne of the exalted Lamb and has been flowing through all generations to this present time. It has been flowing through many regions and nations, and now it has turned to the Western world. This is the stream of the fellowship of the Body, the stream of the testimony of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, and the stream of the work of the Holy Spirit.

When I was young, Brother Nee came one day to have a talk with me. I was a young learner under his hand, and many times he gave me some basic lessons. He said, "Brother, do you know that we can never go to any place to start a work unless the current of the Holy Spirit is there already?" Oh, how I have remembered this word! Unless the current of the Holy Spirit is already in a place, you and I can never go there to work. Brother Nee continued to say, "Oh, brother, if you realize where the current of the Holy Spirit is, simply go along with it! To work there for the Lord will be a rest to you; it will be a bed upon which you can lie. The work in the flowing of the Holy Spirit is not a burden but a rest." I cannot tell you how much these words have helped me. From that time I have learned the lesson that I must go along with the flowing of the stream of the Holy Spirit. I cannot go to any place to work for the Lord or to start a work for the Lord without the flowing of the current of the Holy Spirit. I am unable to do that, I am not qualified to do that, and I am not ordered by the Lord to do that. What I must do is simply go along with the flowing.

Let me give you a further personal word. I had no intention of coming to the United States, but the flowing of the Holy Spirit carried me here. I could not help it. Furthermore, my intention was that I would soon return to the Far East. But the flowing is still westward, and I could not return. My direction was eastward, but the flowing of the Spirit was westward. All I can do is simply be carried along by this flow. How wonderful to be in this stream! Oh, here is the life, here is the fellowship, here is the testimony, and here is the work of God!

What we must do today is just go along with the stream, just subject ourselves to the current of the work of the Holy Spirit. In this matter I have no personal liberty. It is not according to my thoughts but according to His flowing. The words of a hymn say,

Not where we elect to go,  
But where Jesus leads the way,  
There the living waters flow,  
There our darkness turns to day.

(Hymns, #907)

### **THE STREAM IN RELATION TO THE BUILDING**

Out of the flowing of the stream come the gold, the pearls, and the precious stones. Look at the picture in Genesis 2. These precious substances are for the building of God's dwelling place. Wherever the flowing is, material will be produced for the building of the church. Look at the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God in the Old Testament. On the shoulder pieces and on the breastplate of the high priest were precious stones set in gold. The apostle Paul tells us that the church is built with gold, silver, and precious stones. These are the materials that come out of the flowing of the current of the Holy Spirit. In Revelation we are told that the entire city, the New Jerusalem, is built with gold, with pearls, and with precious stones. How did all these materials come into being? They came simply from the flowing of the current of the divine life. Where the stream of the divine life is, there some material, some precious material, for the building of the church will come into being. You and I can never produce material for the building of the church. Only the flowing of the divine life, the current of the Holy Spirit, can do this. It has been flowing through the generations and is flowing today, and wherever it goes, gold, pearls, and precious stones are produced for God's building.

May the Lord grant us to be impressed by this picture. May He always keep us in the flowing of the life, in the fellowship, in the testimony, in the work, and in the building of the house of God. May we also pray toward this end. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1963, vol. 1, "The Divine Stream,"* pp. 169-181)

### **FOUR KINDS OF WORKERS**

Today there are four kinds of workers. First, there are co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age. This is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord. Second, there are younger co-workers who are willing to receive

direction and come under the coordination of the older co-workers. They are willing to follow and to learn in humility. Third, there are those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers and who do not belong to the denominations, but who are happy to remain in fellowship with us. Fourth, there are preachers and free evangelists among the denominations. Today we need the first and second kind of co-workers.

When a co-worker is in a certain place, he has to cooperate with the local church there. The work and the church cannot be separated from each other. When a co-worker is working in a certain place, he is at the same time one of the local brothers. When the church assigns work to the saints, the co-workers should stand on the same ground as local brothers and accept assignments in the same way.

Concerning the third and the fourth kind of co-workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway. God has not assigned some people to take the same way that we have, and we dare not say anything to them. Whatever their situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us. We cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here to tear down others' work. (*Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry*, vol. 1, pp. 153-154)