



Articles and Sermons :: The Recovery of Body Life - Watchman Nee

The Recovery of Body Life - Watchman Nee - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2010/5/2 5:40

I have been praying for sometime now concerning the unity of the Body of Christ in our area. I am sure that many of you have asked the question: why is there not more unity especially among leaders in the Body of Christ? This morning the Lord led me to a book by Watchman Nee entitled "Revive Thy Work" that explains the great need for Christians to see the body of Christ, and how the cross must be applied to individualism so that there will be coordination among the various members of the body. Below is an excerpt from this book:

"We surely know by now that the Church is a body. And if that be true, then our work can no longer be independent but must be related to the body of Christ. People may be very good Christians individually, but as they gather together, their "self" will be exposed. Only those who know body life know how to deal with their own selves, thus enabling them to be rightly coordinated with other people. Someone may appear to have reached the summit of spirituality in an individual way. This, however, cannot be taken as true spirituality. As he walks together with other people, his genuine progress and true dealing with self is revealed. For where self reigns, one can see only himself and nobody else. But if self has been dealt with, then he sees others instead of seeing himself.

Let us always remember that our individual life is but a portion of the whole body of Christ. We must live in the body. In it there is strict discipline. The cross is the way of the body. He who does not know the cross knows not the body of Christ. When relatives live far apart, they can afford to be kind to each other. But in close proximity they soon can become enemies. When a person lives alone in a house, there are peace and joy. But when two brothers dwell together, they will need to learn the cross. The more people dwell together and the closer they live together, the more necessary will be the cross. Sometimes it may almost seem as though crosses hang all over the person. What man reckons as spiritual progress cannot be counted as such till it is tested in body life. Only that which passes the test of the whole body of Christ is true. No matter how great is the work, how rich is the gift, even how beautiful the life, all these are unacceptable at face value unless they have been placed in context with the life of the body. As you place yourself among the fellow workers or among the brethren, you begin to realize how sketchy is the cross you know and how little is your deliverance from self.

The first thing to know is the body of Christ. Once people see this, they will spontaneously see the need for coordination. The Lord places His authority in the body. Where is the authority? Where the ministry is, there is the authority. For ministry is authority. We need to accept our personal limitation. We all must realize that we all have one ministry before God; hence, we need to work together with other ministries for the full supply of the body. Let us seek for coordination. One member alone is unable to cope with all needs. It requires the coordination with the other members. With coordination, we shall receive the supply of the body in all things. Thus we need to experience the coordination of the members as well as to accept the limitation imposed upon each of us by the life of the body.

Authority represents the Head. In our physical body the eye sees things, yet it is not the eye but the head that sees. Hands and feet are moving; yet it is not they but the head that moves. All the movements of the human body are dependent on the head. What, then, is ministry in the body of Christ? Ministry is the activity of the Head, who is Christ. When there is controversy with the ministry, there is actually controversy with the Head. It is not that we are at odds with a certain member, we are really at odds with the Head who controls the ministry. In the bible the preponderance of authority that is mentioned is exercised by delegated authorities. When we say that we need to submit to authority therefore, we mean we need to submit to delegated authority. And hence, to obey that authority is to obey the Head. For this reason, God's children must learn to obey.

A ministry has two sides of manifestation: first, through the gift: and second, through authority. Gift is the power of ministry as well as the manifestation of authority (see 1 Cor. 12:4-11). We cannot accept gift without at the same time accepting authority. For example, in our physical body the eye has the ability of seeing. It must be accepted by the other members of the body. Whatever member would reject the seeing eye would deprive itself of the supply of its ability. The same holds true of the body of Christ. If you are a member of Christ's body, you need to accept the gifts of the other members; moreover, you do not need to duplicate these gifts. Today you are not suppose to duplicate the many ministries of other people; all you need is to accept their ministries.

Never forget that you are but one member, you are not the entire body of Christ. No one is an all around person. If a person is all around, then for all practical purposes he ceases to be a member. For example, auto parts are but parts of the

automobile, they are not the entire car. Just so, we as individual members do not constitute the entire body of Christ.

Being members, we individually can enjoy the riches of the whole body. My physical finger, for instance, will never complain of not hearing. My ear will never murmur about not walking. It will not say, "How pitiful that I cannot walk as do the feet!" Just so, there are many different gifts in the body of Christ, and all these gifts are for the perfecting of the saints. Because of this, there is never any division in the body, nor is there any different goal, aim, or cause. Though the hand cannot speak, it is well if the mouth speaks, it is as if the hand does so too. The life that we each have in Christ is a shared life, not a complete life. Only as we experience the riches of the other members is the body of Christ truly established. And if this be true, can any member of the body be poor or useless?

Many consider what is theirs is theirs and what is others is not theirs. This kind of individualistic thinking is the worst thing possible in the body of Christ. Individualism must be exterminated from it. The greatest test of the self life lies in the church meeting, among the brothers and sisters. On the one hand, we do indeed see ourselves as individual members. On the other hand, if we have seen the body life we shall avoid individualism and join with many other members to be the body of Christ. It is much easier to deal with strangers since as soon as they come in they know that they have come to the wrong address. But it is most difficult to deal with individualism. For the latter often enters the church unawares. In joining with other members, the self life receives its deepest dealing. Rightly living a coordinated life is the evidence of self being dealt with."