

WCCC 2015

God Himself will establish His own Church

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Let us first have a word of prayer.

Lord, we thank You that You have gathered us in Your presence. You have manifested unto us Your grace which is high and Your glory is beautiful. And You have clearly shown us in Your finished work that You have already taken us into Your majesty, Your beauty, and Your glory. Now allow us to live to prepare to see Your face. Not only to see Your face but to bring us completely into Your glory. We bow our heads and worship You. We have to give You all the glory. Lord, as You gather us into Your presence, we are willing to wait for You to hear Your word. It is Your own word that will lead us into Your glory. It is Your own life that sustains us and will lead us into Your glory. It is according to Your grace that we have come to know You and to completely gain You. But Lord, You know well how in lack we are and how we have come short. May the anointing of Your own word draw us near to You. Through the sustaining of Your life we would be delivered from all bondage and hindrance, and we will be able to freely and joyfully enter into Your light. Lord, that we would glorify Yourself on earth. So on that day all creation will bow before You to give praises and thanksgiving unto You. Lord, we thank You, because of this great thing You have done. With Your own hand You have made us from nothing into something great. O Lord, we look unto You, according to Your own will, work upon us until we manifest Yourself. May all glory be Yours. We pray in the Lord Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

We thank God, when we return back to the book of Philippians, with joy we are about to understand one matter. According to the condition of Paul as he wrote this book, even though physically he was in prison, but in spirit he was connected with the throne in heaven. Even though in the body he was with a heavy burden, yet in life he has borne the burden of all that was upon the church. I don't know how to put it, but perhaps in the suppression, trampling, and the dealings of the church, and even though Paul himself was under such conditions, he manifested unto a very precious thought of God the Father from the throne. Paul desires for the church to see what it is that God will accomplish today, that God Himself will establish His own church.

I believe brothers and sisters must know that the present time is a very crucial time in the eternal purpose of God to establish the church. The church itself is not the eternal purpose God, yet the establishment of the church is very crucial in the completion of the eternal purpose of God. I believe brothers and sisters will gradually understand what the Lord Himself had said, "upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Brothers and sisters, we know the focal point of God's work is to establish the body of Christ. We might wonder why God's focus is upon the building of His church. That is because God has placed the church in a

very precious position. God has placed the church in His eternal purpose as those who first hope in Christ. It is for us who are the first to hope in Christ. We are the foundation of that eternal purpose of God. As long as the church is not established, the kingdom would not come. If the kingdom does not come, it seems as if the new heaven and the new earth is very far away. But we thank God, the Lord clearly shows us whenever the church is complete, that is when the Lord will come. When the Lord returns, the kingdom will follow, and after the kingdom comes, it opens the door for the new heaven and new earth.

We praise and thank of God. Now we have used some time to look into this matter of how the church is being built. To use the words in Philippians, when we have been brought into one accord, when we have this mind in us that is also in Christ Jesus, that is when the church is established. The Lord lets us see how to walk on this path to the building of the church. But the question is how long do we have to walk on this path before we reach the end? This generation passes and the next generation comes. Just as the generation before us has gone this way, we follow along in the same way. And there have been many generations. And the Lord has yet to return. When will the Lord return? I remember many years ago when the theme of the conference was, "To Hasten the Lord's Return." But even until today the Lord has yet to return.

Is it that we are still in the building process? Yes, we are still being built. But the question should not be, "Are we being built?" The focus should be, "When will the building complete?" We thank the Lord, last time when we shared, we mentioned that in the process of the church being built, we have to learn to live under the fact that Christ is our head, at the same time all the members of His body must be coordinately knitted together to manifest His body. So then the question is, "When will that body be manifested? How do we know when that body has been manifested?" It seems as if the Lord did not give us any words concerning that. But we thank the Lord, even though the Lord did not plainly say, "This is the point when the church is complete then I will come at this point." Even though the Lord did not directly point it out, He did give us two facts for our assurance. Now when these two facts are completed, then the Lord returns.

What are these two matters? First, the number of those who are saved is filled. Second, the fullness of Christ becomes the fullness the church. We can come to understand the first point from Romans Chapter 11. When the number of those saved is filled, the Lord shall return. He will come to bring the people of Israel back into the position which they ought to stand. That is the first point concerning the kingdom. That is one aspect. But the number of those that are to be saved must be filled. Therefore, brothers and sisters, when we have the desire to serve the Lord in spreading the gospel, we have to pay attention to one matter. We do not know what that exact number should be. And that is not a number we need to be mindful of. We just need to continue to do the work. The Lord Himself has the number in mind. And when that point comes, the Lord will know that the time is up.

The other matter: When the fullness of Christ becomes the fullness of the church, the Lord will return. This may be something more difficult for us to grasp, because we don't know what that standard is. When the church reaches that standard, the church is completed. It seems as if it is as unfathomable as the issue of the number of those to be saved. But God Himself knows full well. Under the examination of God, when the church has come to a point when the fullness of Christ fills all, then the Lord says, "It is time." Now these two times ought to meet. I bring up this issue so when brothers and sisters pay attention to this matter of how the church is being built, you will know where our focus ought to be. Our focus should not be the quantity of those who are gathered together. The focus should not be the scope or the content of our service. What should we pay attention to? Our focus should be how we should serve so that the Lord Himself will be satisfied. Therefore, the Lord does not show us what the exact time He will return is. Yet He clearly shows us the path we should follow. Why did the Lord not declare to us clearly what the Father desires to be completed? Brothers and sisters, we can see a little bit of that answer in the Book of Philippians.

... having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.

I am not here to explain this passage, but I want brothers and sisters to see from this passage the general condition of the church. That is to say whether it is in work or in service, it does not make a difference. We all have this agenda that is for the Lord, but the reality is that it may not be for the Lord. Therefore, Paul said some preached out of envy and strife, and some preached out of sincerity. You may ask, "How can preaching the gospel be out of envy and strife? Would spreading the gospel be a complicated matter?" Brothers and sisters, we will not notice this condition if we do not take note of the general condition of Christianity. But if we focus our attention squarely on those children of God who have a desire for the work of God, even in them we might see some of this. If the church continues in this direction, can the church reach maturity? Can the body of Christ be established? Yes, the work continues to grow and expand, but has Christ increased? Has Christ grown? I said I am not explaining this passage. But it is through this passage that we understand and see Paul, even in his affliction, he is used to write this book of Philippians.

If we continue to look into chapter 2, we see other issues. Those issues seem to lightly point out the general conditions in the church. The Book seems to be very positive, yet the words are directed at some very negative behavior in the church. And the conclusion is, and I especially mentioned these words last time, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

Even though many of these things mentioned cannot show us the normal growth of the church. But the Lord must have the church return into this normal condition. What is this normal condition of the church? That is when we enter into the house of God, when we are among the children of God, what is it that we ought to come into contact with? We are very familiar with these words: Aside from the Lord Himself, we should not encounter anything else. If we encounter anything that does not have to do with the Lord Himself, the matters in Philippians will appear. Paul again and again said in Philippians, "Rejoice, and again I say rejoice." Why is it that they do not rejoice? We who are in the Lord ought to rejoice. Why is it that Paul continues to remind them to "rejoice and again I say rejoice?" Paul's words are very meaningful. Paul mentions in chapter 2, "When I heard of you I rejoice all the more." If we do not connect all these words together, we merely think Paul is saying a little bit here and a little bit there. It seems they are not connected at all, but when we are able to read into it and see how it is connected together, we would understand in the mind of God. God is very mindful of this one thing in the church which He is not fully satisfied with. Now after I mentioned all these words, do you realize what I am trying to get at? What is the very reason for the Holy Spirit to inspire Paul to write the book of Philippians? It is not because Paul knows someone is traveling from Rome to Philippi, so Paul says, "Let me write them a letter to converse with them." No, that is not the reason. In the heart of Paul, when he was used to write the book of Philippians, he had a heavy burden. What is that heavy burden? It is in order for the Philippians to see the reason they have lost your joy. We see the reason in chapter 4.

Philippians 4:1-3

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

We can see from these verses why the Philippians have lost their joy. They did not depart from the way of the Lord. They were still under much affliction, yet by the Lord they were still able to stand fast. Paul said they had done well regarding this aspect. But, pay attention to this matter. First he mentioned these two sisters by name. One is Euodia and the other Syntyche. There were problems between these two sisters in the church. We have to see clearly, it was a problem between these two sisters, not a problem with many. But the problem between these two sisters had expanded to a point that it became a problem for the church. We do not know

exactly what the problem was between these sisters, but in Paul's epistle we see there was problem between them. So he entreated these two sisters to deal with this problem accurately. Paul also entreated the brethren to help these two sisters to handle this problem. Then perhaps we may ask, "Is the problem between these sisters so great that caused the whole church to lose its joy?" Paul did not state what that problem was, but it is enough to show us that even the problem between two people could cause the church to lose its joy, and it is worthy for us to consider.

How could this develop to be a hardship for the church, that the church could not be joyful? It seemed that the feelings of the church were hurt. We do not know what the reason was. Paul did not tell us what that problem was, but Paul did point out the position that they held in service. These two sisters were Paul's co-workers. They were fellow laborers of Paul's. Since they were coworkers, of course they knew, understood, and cared about each another. They were Paul's co-laborers, what kind of problems could appear between them? There should not be any problems. I personally do not think it was any big problem. There were actually some problems there but they were just not the kind of problem we would usually imagine. Forgive me for saying this: these kinds of problems are not limited to these two sisters. All the children of God can also fall into this situation, whether we realize it or not. I kept thinking what kind of problem can it be? They stand beside Paul, they are in one mind with Paul, and they co-labor with Paul. How could they have any problem? I could not figure out the reason. Later, I had an understanding. This understanding is drawn from my own experience. What is it? It is not because of a bad thing. It is because of a good thing. But because it happens in man, the good has turned into bad. I concluded that the reason for that problem can only be one: conflicts in their gifts. It is hard for us to imagine. Gifts are good. How can gifts cause problems? I do not know what are the gifts of these sisters have. Perhaps they have the same gift, or maybe not. Regardless, I believe it may be an issue with their gifts.

Gifts are given by God for the body to be edified. It is not bad at all. It is very good. But when these gifts are given to us who are of Adam, sometimes it truly becomes a problem. How can it become a problem? For example, my brother and I have the same gift of evangelism. My brother and I both have a burden for the gospel so together we work for the Lord. At first, there is no difficulty. Now, after a short time, some problems arise. For example, my brother believed in the Lord after I did, and he came to serve after I did. Why is it that he has led so many to the Lord? I believed in the Lord longer than he has, and I have preached the gospel longer than he has. Why is the fruit of my labor not as evident as his? Then the problem comes. Now I am not very submissive to that brother. I cannot get over that. Regardless of what the situation is, a gap appears. The small gap, as time accumulates, becomes bigger and bigger. The issue then is not there is a gap between these individuals, but the issue is that those who come into contact with these two individuals are also impacted now. In Philippians, Paul did not mention the matters of divisions and factions as in the book of Corinthians. But even in Philippians we can see that

hiddenly. Those who came to know the Lord because of me, they will listen to me. And those who came to know the Lord because of my brother, they will tend to listen to him more. Whatever anyone else says is not right, but what he says is right. And the same goes for those who follow me. Brothers and sisters, is it not serious? If there is such a condition in the church, can joy abide there constantly? Toward the Lord, we are all joyful; but when we see man, there is no joy. Brothers and sisters, this is not only among man, often this phenomenon appears in our fellowship during service and in our serving in one accord.

I don't know if brothers and sisters may have seen this situation. Brother and sisters are gathered together for prayer. It is very good, but you discover one thing: When some brothers and sisters pray, a lot of people respond with amen. When another brother prays, also a lot of people respond with amen. But you discover a problem. Those who say amen to this brother is in this group, and there is another group that says amen to the other's prayer. This is not the only situation you might see this, you can see this in other areas. I don't need to give too many examples, but with this illustration I believe you understand what I am getting at, and why Paul had to write the letter of Philippians with such a heavy message. At first it seems to be an issue between only these two individuals. From two individuals, it develops into a problem between two groups. Brothers and sisters, when the church is under such a condition, can there be joy in the church? It is not that the church cannot have joy, but the joy that it has is not complete. When we are with certain brothers and sisters we are joyful; but when we are with brothers and sisters who don't agree with us, then we are not as joyful. This condition exists in the church in Philippi. Is this condition exclusive to the church in Philippi? No. If it was, the Holy Spirit would not have used Paul to write such a message to the Philippians. This clearly tells us that this is a very common issue in the church. What is the origin of this problem? If we truly know that we are the body of Christ and Christ is the head of the Church, and that all is to the Lord, all is through the Lord, and all is for the Lord, then we would not have this situation where we calculate what my merits are and compare with other brothers and sister to find out who is better. When I put it this way, we may think we are not quite as bad. But who would dare to say this? If we have experienced this, we would know none of us can be delivered from this. We may ask why? We must be clear on one thing, as we have mentioned, the building of the church is a very basic foundational work which the Lord must complete. Once the church is completed, the Lord will return, the kingdom will come, and then we can see the new heaven and new earth. When this is accomplished, it will be woe to the God's enemy. Therefore, God's enemy will not allow the church to have comfort. When we look at the Philippian church or at our own experience today, the external pressure is great. Sometimes, the external pressure is not as great. Sometimes, the external pressure may be very mild because Satan deals with the church using different methods. Sometimes he is as fierce as a roaring lion; at times it is mild and he disguises himself as the angel of light. Therefore, if we do not stop the gap at that time when it first appears, what starts out as a small issue between two individuals can lead to the forming of denomination.

When we come into God's presence to understand His heart, sometimes it might be quite difficult. If you say denominations are not right, it seems they have a few things right. But if you say they are correct, we cannot seem to find rest in their midst. What should we do? Brothers and sisters, God does not want us to follow Him according to how we feel, but God desires for us to follow Him according to His purpose, His direction, and His content. It is the Lord Himself. If we are toward the Lord, what we take account of is not anything outside of the Lord Himself. We merely follow the Lord. Therefore, it is so heavily emphasized in the book of Philippians that we must return to the mind of the Lord Himself. The Lord is the head of the church. We understand this point, but in reality do we hold Him as head? Are the words of the Lord most clear and evident? If we want to follow, let us follow the word of the Lord. We are not following the words of man. Perhaps the words of man seem correct, but man is not perfect. When what is good and perfect falls upon those who are not good and perfect, it will become imperfect. Brothers and sister, we see much of this throughout church history. When we encounter matters of denominations, it is confusing. If you say they are wrong, they have gotten some things right. But even if they have some things that are right, that does not mean they are all right. You cannot say because one thing is right, then we can accept everything else. Our problems lie here. But we thank the Lord. What does the Lord wants us to pay attention to? To have the same mind as Christ. What is God's desire? What does the word of God say?

Let me tell you a personal experience. When I was a student in school, there were many brothers and sisters. We all gathered together. At that time I did not know about the heart of the Lord. I just knew that I was a Christian. Among the students in school, there were some sisters who had their heads covered. At that time I was not pleased to see that they had their heads covered but I did not oppose them. I just felt uncomfortable within. I said to myself, "Why do you have to do such an unnecessary thing? What is so special about having a head covering on?" That was how I was at that time. But later on, gradually by the mercy of the Lord, as I drew closer and nearer to His heart, my thought was completely changed. When I hear some sisters comment, "Why do I have to have my head covered?" my reaction within is, "Why didn't you ask, 'Why *don't* I have to have my head covered?'" If we turn the question around, we will find the answer. Therefore, we come to realize the matter of having our head covered is not just merely an action, but having our head covered is a lesson. It is a sign among the children of God. It is a constant sign to remind all the children of God the position in which we ought to stand when we gather in His presence. Our fellowship does not emphasize on having our head covered. If you do not want your head covered, we do not insist on it. But sisters realize when they have their heads covered it is not just another adornment for their heads. Now I have an adornment on my head that signifies I am more spiritual than you. No, that is not the case. If that was the case, then it is indeed a superfluous action. The Lord wants our head covered in order for us to realize the accurate position we ought to stand, which is to display the Lord Himself.

Whenever we are brought back to the presence of the Lord, we will be delivered from the difficulties among man. A very important point we can see in the book of Philippians is that we must return back to the presence of the Lord. How will we know when we have returned into the presence of the Lord? It has to do with the relationship you have with other members of the body. You might say, "As long as I am towards the Lord, that is enough. As long as I am with the Lord, the relationship among the members is other peoples' business, not mine. If I am right with the Lord, and He tells me I have done well, then that is enough." If such a thought is correct, then I think throughout church history there would be many more monasteries all over. If I am good with the Lord, then that solves all the issues. But we thank God, when we enter into Christ, God first wants us to know what it means to be in Christ. The easiest way for us to understand the fact that we are in Christ, is to know how vast Christ is. How vast is Christ? We cannot fathom, but there is a fact that we know. Regardless of what it is, if you are placed in Christ, Christ is able to accommodate you. We have over a thousand people in this conference. It appears to be a lot of people. Can Christ accommodate all of us? When we are gathering in this university, have you considered whether it can accommodate all these people? We don't need to be mindful of this. Christ is much greater than this university. He is so vast that we cannot fathom. Even if we have more people, Christ can accommodate all. If we are in Christ, we will not have half of our body inside of Christ and half of it outside of Christ. That is impossible. If we are in Christ, we are a whole. That is why we cannot agree that one can stay in a monastery and just pay attention to his relationship with the Lord and be satisfied with it. No, the Lord desires a body. The Lord said His main focus and work is to build His body. If the body is not manifested, then the work of Christ is not complete. Once the body is displayed, then the testimony of Christ will be clearly shown.

When our hearts return to the Lord, when we are connected with the Lord, very naturally we would think of our brothers and sisters. No one needs to teach us. It is from within. We will pay attention to the children of God who are with us in Christ. Even though we may not have a deep understanding or a close relationship with one another, as we cannot avoid feeling unfamiliar when we first meet, this feeling does not keep from being called to gather together in the grace of God. When we are all connected in the Lord, that body is already formed. Even though the body has been formed, we must go one step further to see the members that formed this body must be fitly joined together. I do not have to explain this. I believe brothers and sister already understand. It is because in our daily lives, even in our physical body, the members of our body have to work coordinately together. When you are hungry, how do you solve that problem? You have to look for food. Where do we look for food? The food is in the refrigerator or in the store. How do we go get the food? Do we need to teach you, brothers and sisters? You do not need to be taught. How do you go to the refrigerator? Do you crawl on your hands? Are you joking? I have two legs so why would I walk with my hands? You use your legs to walk to the refrigerator. Now we are at the refrigerator. There is food inside. So eat. How do I eat? The food is inside the refrigerator. You do not need to be taught. The hand

will move and open the refrigerator, and take the food and put it to the mouth. Would the mouth say, "Who are you? What are you putting in my mouth?" You would not ask that. You would just eat. This is the body. How do you know this is the body? Because all the members are coordinately working toward one purpose, to provide nourishment for the body, for the body to grow so the body would not be weak.

Brothers and sisters, what I just said was a good thing. Now let me tell you something bad. You are sick and need to take medication, but the medicine is very bitter. When you put it in your mouth, do you swallow? You don't have to swallow, but you swallow it anyway. Why do you swallow that is bitter? Because you know even though you are swallowing something bitter now, it would help heal your sickness. So you have no problem with that. Brothers and sisters, in our daily living, in our physical bodies, our Lord lets us learn how to live in the coordination of the body. When we live in our own bodies, I know how to manage and I don't need you to teach me. But when we talk about the members in the body of Christ, it is not simple for all of us to manifest this fitly joined together fact of one body. Now I might have a quick temperament. He has a slow temperament. It is hard to put these two people of different temperaments together. But the Lord says, "Now you live in the body of Christ. You are not in your own body. If you are in your own body, then you are not in Christ. If you are in Christ, then your body is not that which will influence your actions."

We thank our God. When we return to church history, we will see the church has gone through much hardship to come to today. We know about the early church. We have more or less an idea of the church during the middle period. And we are now in the modern day church. We all see this condition: when the hearts of the Lord's children are toward the Lord, they live out the relationship which is among the members of the body. Just as the greetings of Paul in the letter to the Romans, he sent greetings to Aquila and Priscilla. They were Paul's good fellow workers, and they risked their own necks for Paul's sake. Brothers and sisters, now we can see the relationship among the members would cause one to forget his own hardship and safety for the sake of another's rest.

Brothers and sisters, I wonder how you feel when you read Paul's greeting to Aquila and Priscilla? For brothers and sisters who grow up in the United States, it may not be easy for you to understand this. For those came from China, you should be able to understand this to some extent. There is one crime you do not want to be associated with in any way: to be an anti-revolutionist. If you are labeled as an anti-revolutionist, there will be much consequence. But thank the Lord, there were many in the church who were labeled as anti-revolutionists. I was fortunate enough to be labeled as one. Now we know what the consequences were for those who were labeled as anti-revolutionists. At that time, we were put in prison. At that time I was still a young man. It was fifty, sixty years ago. I was not a student any more as I had finished school about two or three year ago. In our midst, there was a brother who was in the same situation. At

that time he was only in high school. He was sixteen. Because we were labeled anti-revolutionists, we were put into camps. We did not have any family there. We were arrested. At that time, even those outside of prison did not have enough food. Then of course those in the prison camps would be starving. How did we get by under those conditions? Family members were allowed to bring items to you in prison once a month. Now we did not have any family there. Who would deliver goods to us? People did not have enough to eat, how can they spare any to share with others? The prisons were filled with people. The cells were about the size of the dorm rooms that we are living in now, but there would be over a dozen people in there. I did not have any family to send me packages. But when the time of the deliveries came, there would be something for me each month. Because I was not well physically, medicine was delivered to me. Other prisons in the same cell, some have been there a long time, never received anything. But I would receive a package every time, making others to be envious of me. Within me I have a deep appreciation. Who delivered it? Aside from brothers and sisters, no one would remember these individuals. As for the brothers and sisters who delivered these, what hardship must they bear? If you don't know what it means to be labeled an anti-revolutionist, then you would not understand. But if you know the consequences, then you can appreciate it. After I was released, then I learned the monthly deliveries were not that simple. There was a set time to send packages. If you pass the deadline, they would not accept the package. If you come before the set time, no one would be there to accept it. During that time of political turmoil, all the prisons were filled, so there were many who tried to deliver goods to those in prison. Brothers and sisters needed to gather the items very early in the morning, and needed to line up outside the prison in the middle of the night. They had to get in line in the middle of the night, hoping to get the package to us quickly. So I have deep emotions when I read the greetings of Paul to Aquila and Priscilla saying that they risked their necks for Paul. This is members of body. We thank the Lord. The relationship of the members of the body is not by force. If we truly live in Christ, and we focus on the fact that the Lord is our lord, this is a very natural response.

When we first begin to grow in the Lord, it is difficult for us to know what it means to live in the body. You know there are members of the body, but we do not know the practical relationship among the members of the bod. Gradually as we mature, we know what it means to be a member, and we enter into that body. When we read into the conditions of the church in Philippi, perhaps we might say our condition is not like their condition. When we have no difficulties, we cannot fully understand the situation; but when difficulties come, then we realize, yes, the minor issues between members will become a major one amongst the church. But what happens when it becomes a major issue? We cannot allow for it to go on. We must deal with it.

When we see the process of maturity in the life of Paul, we recall the incident he had with Barnabas about Mark. Mark was traveling with them to serve the Lord. We do not know the exact reason, but Mark was not able to fully follow on. As they were getting ready for their second journey, Paul would not allow Mark to go along. Paul said, "I definitely will not take

Mark. I cannot use Mark.” Then Barnabas said, “If you do not want Mark, then I will take him.” If we end it there we would say there was problem between Paul and Barnabas. Indeed it was a problem, yet their hearts were still towards the Lord. When Paul was in prison in Rome, in the epistles to the brethren he mentioned Mark again. He said to the Colossian church, “Mark is to come to you. You may not know who Mark is. He is the cousin of Barnabas. When he comes, receive him well.” And when Paul writes 2 Timothy, Paul says to Timothy, “When you come, you must bring Mark because he is useful to me for my ministry.” Brothers and sisters, do you see? It seemed there was a problem between Paul and Barnabas. God allowed this problem to happen in order for them to see that they claimed to honor the Lord but they did not fully honor the Lord as they insisted their own ways. As a result they separated. The Lord allowed them to experience this problem so that they would see they had to reconcile and had to reunite if their hearts were indeed toward the Lord. In the beginning Paul insisted, “I cannot take Mark.” In the end Paul clearly said, “I cannot do without Mark.” What is the reason? We thank the Lord. This is one body. This is members of one body. Whenever we see the body, we know how to live in the body. If we cannot live in the body, even if we claim we know the Lord is lord, in reality we are not truly honoring Him as lord.

We thank the Lord. Even though the Book of Philippians does not directly deal with the relationship among the members of Christ’s body, in reality it shows us very practically the body of Christ. So all the children of God know to live in one body and the body will be brought to the point where there is complete joy, then the heart of the Lord would be fully satisfied. When the Lord sees that His body has matured to this point, He will say, “The time has come. I shall return.” We thank the Lord, when He appears in glory, we shall also appear together with Him in glory. During this process, what hinders us from living in such a joy is man himself. Whenever we are delivered from this self and truly honor the Lord as supreme, the Lord is joyful, and we are also joyful. Let us pray.

Lord, keep us in your light that we would not walk according to our own pleasure. Let our hearts be always toward You, our choices be always according to You, and what we desire to gain is You Yourself. And may Your desire be accomplished upon us. May Your glory will become our glory and we will be delivered from all bondage and hindrance and be able to receive the glory of Your abundance. Lord, we look to You. Indeed we know, we would not have a good end if we depend on ourselves. May you deliver us from our own flesh. Lead us to walk until we see You face to face. All glory be Yours. All love and adoration be Yours. We pray in the Lord Jesus Christ’s name. Amen.