

**Labor Day Weekend Blending Conference
for the Mid-Atlantic Churches**

September 3-5, 2021

Message 1

**Meeting on the Position of the Church
in Church-Consciousness**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; 18:15-20; Heb. 10:25

I. We must realize that we Christians are a meeting people—Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 14:23a:

- A. A Christian is a meeting person; without meeting, there is no Christian life and no church life—Matt. 16:18, note 5; 18:15-20.
- B. It is difficult for any Christian to grow without attending the meetings; there is no way for any Christian to serve God without meetings, and it is impossible for Christians to express Christ if there are no meetings—1 Cor. 14:23-26, 31.
- C. The church life is a meeting life; we should not build up a custom of not meeting, but a custom of meeting all the time—Acts 2:42, 46-47; Heb. 10:25.

II. We need to know the position of the church—Matt. 16:18; 18:17:

- A. In the entire New Testament the first place that mentions something regarding the meetings of believers is Matthew 18:
 - 1. In verse 15 the Lord said that if a brother sins against you, you must go to him and do whatever you can to recover him; if he will not listen to you and will not listen to two or three, then you must bring the case to the church in verse 17.
 - 2. This must be the local church, the church on this earth, the church in a place, the church in the locality where you are; if the offending brother neglects to listen to the church, the result is that he will be considered by the church like a Gentile and a tax collector—v. 17, and note 2.
 - 3. This tells us that we need the church, and we need to be in the church; we should not consider ourselves so spiritual and so heavenly while neglecting to hear the church.
 - 4. God has chosen us, His people, to be in the church; God has no intention of choosing a myriad of individuals, but to choose a collective, corporate people as the Body of Christ—16:18; Eph. 1:22-23.
 - 5. Because we all have been born again and have the life of God within us, we are a part of the church in nature, but in position we may be outside of the church, which is the same as a Gentile—John 3:3, 5-6; Eph. 2:19; cf. Matt. 18:17.
 - 6. It is a serious thing not to be in the church—cf. Lev. 25:29, and note 1.
- B. If we would meet properly, our meeting must be related to the church, and our meeting must belong to the church—Matt. 18:15-20:
 - 1. Some use Matthew 18:20 to justify any meeting where two or three are gathered in the Lord's name; but they neglect the context of this verse; the context tells us that the meetings of the believers must be something of the church, something which takes the stand of the church.
 - 2. There are many examples in the book of Acts in which the believers met in homes, yet what they were doing in their meetings was simply carrying out what the church in Jerusalem intended and decided—Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:5b-16.
 - 3. The proper way to meet is to meet either as part of the church or as the church; if the whole church comes together, we meet as the church; if it is not possible for the entire church to come together, we must meet in different places as parts of that one church—1 Cor. 14:23, 33.

4. This matter has very much to do with the oneness of the Body; whenever we meet, we must meet for the church; that means that we are absolutely one with the church and that there can be no divisions; in this way our meetings will be kept in the church in oneness.

III. We must be church-conscious in our meetings—Matt. 18:15-20:

- A. There are many Christian meetings today which are churchless; those who attend them have no concept whatever of the church, so their meetings are not church-related or church-conscious:
 1. Strictly speaking, if we know the Word of the Lord, we will realize that to meet in a churchless way is actually sin because if we meet without paying due attention to the church, we are meeting in a divisive way.
 2. God's purpose is to build up a Body for His Son; if we meet without keeping the oneness of the church, we are damaging the Body of Christ by our meetings.
 3. We all must be exceedingly clear that whenever we meet, we must be church-conscious.
- B. The early Christians were church-conscious and church-related:
 1. In the Holy Spirit's record regarding the early days of the church, the word *church* is used over and over; based upon this fact, we have the principle that we must always be church-conscious:
 - a. "All those who believed were together" (Acts 2:44a)—this shows that the believers at that time were meeting people; they were the people who came together all the time.
 - b. "And when they had been released, they went to their own people" (4:23a)—in verse 31 we see that this was a meeting; this also strongly proves that in the early days the Christians were accustomed to meet together.
 - c. "And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all those who heard these things" (5:11)—the context of this verse indicates that what occurred must have been in a meeting; this proves that the Christian meeting must be something of the church; it must even be the church.
 - d. "And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church...But Saul was devastating the church, entering house after house" (8:1a, 3a)—in the ancient time all the believers were church-conscious; they did not consider themselves as individual believers but as the corporate church; when they were persecuted, that meant the church was persecuted.
 - e. "And the account concerning them was heard in the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem"—11:22a—in the early days the believers considered that their ears were the ears of the church.
 - f. "There was a considerable number assembled together and praying" (v. 12)—in the early days the Christians were not separated ones but gathered ones; they were a gathering people.
 - g. "Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers" (13:1a)—the prophets and teachers were all part of the church in a practical way and were in the church; we must be church-conscious and church-related not only in our meetings but also in our Christian work, ministry, and service.
 - h. "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church" (14:23a)—this proves that where there were believers, there was a church.
 - i. "The churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily" (16:5)—it does not say the believers, but the churches; what was within the believers in the early days was just the church.
 2. In these last days may we learn to be so church-conscious; this matter is almost totally related to the meetings; this is the first principle we must learn for our meetings; we must meet in a church way.

Message 2

Principles of Meeting from the Gospels and the Acts

Scripture Reading: Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-19; Luke 24:36-51; John 20:19-23; 21:1-17; Acts 1:4-8

I. At the end of the four Gospels we have the record of the Lord after His resurrection meeting with His disciples many times; based upon this record, we can see fourteen principles of how to meet:

- A. When we read Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and 21, and Acts 1 and 2, we see that the disciples did nothing but meet; meeting together became their life, their business, their occupation; they were a meeting people.
- B. We need to take the new way of meeting, which is fully revealed in all the records of the Lord Jesus meeting with His disciples; in these occasions, we see Him setting up the principles of meeting.

II. We need to meet outside of religion and without any forms—Matt. 28:16:

- A. All the disciples were godly Jewish people; all God's people, according to their religion, went to the temple to meet and to worship, to offer the sacrifices, to observe the rituals, and to keep the forms; however, not one of the meetings that the Lord Jesus had with the disciples after His resurrection was held in the old religious way—John 20:19-29; 21:1-22; Matt. 28:16-20.
- B. Today, in principle, we are in the same situation as the early disciples; we also have a religious background with today's temples, rituals, and forms; however, religion for us must be a thing of the past.

III. We need to meet in resurrection as the Lord's brothers—John 20:17; Heb. 2:12:

- A. We were born again through the resurrection of Christ, so we have become His brothers—1 Pet. 1:3; John 20:17; Rom. 8:29.
- B. Whenever we come to the meetings, we must come as the Lord's brothers in resurrection; therefore, we should never bring anything of the old nature into the meeting; this is basic.
- C. When we come to the meetings, we should not look at ourselves but at Him; we should not look at our situation but at what He is; the blood covers all our failures, and immediately, by applying the blood, we can be in resurrection and in the third heaven.

IV. We need to meet with some personal experiences of Christ—John 20:11-18; Luke 24:1-36:

- A. Many of the disciples in the early days, before they were in the meetings, had some wonderful, precious experiences of Christ—John 20:11-18; Luke 24:1-36.
- B. We also need to have this kind of personal experience of our dear Lord in our daily life; then when we come to the meeting, we have something bubbling and overflowing from us as a testimony to all the others—cf. *Hymns*, #1216.

V. We need to meet at the place appointed by the Lord—Matt. 28:7, 16:

- A. The Lord went far to the north, to Galilee, to meet with His disciples; He did this deliberately, purposely, to move the Christian meeting away from the Jewish religious center; the Lord wanted the meetings to be absolutely removed from religion.
- B. Today, in principle, we have no right to choose a place to meet; we all must meet in the place appointed by the Lord—Deut. 12:5-14.

VI. We need to meet with the Lord Himself—Matt. 28:7:

- A. When we come to a meeting, we need to have a deep realization that our only purpose is to meet our Lord Jesus—*Hymns*, #204, #215.
- B. We go to the meeting not to hear a great speaker but to meet Jesus; we do not go to the meeting to listen to a good message but to meet our Lord.

- VII. We need to meet to satisfy the Lord and be satisfied by Him—John 21:5; Luke 24:41-43:**
- A. The meaning and purpose of the proper meeting is to give the Lord something to eat and also for Him to give us something to eat—John 21:5; Luke 24:41-43.
 - B. To meet is to eat; our meeting must be a kind of eating, a kind of feasting; we bring something as a feast for Christ, and Christ brings something as a feast for us.
- VIII. We need to meet to worship the Lord—Matt. 28:16-17:**
- A. In Matthew 28 when the disciples saw the Lord Jesus on the mountain, immediately they worshipped Him (vv. 16-17); when we meet with the Lord in His resurrection, we have to worship Him.
 - B. To worship Him means to adore and exalt Him as the very Lord in our spirit—John 4:23-24.
- IX. We need to meet to be breathed upon by the Lord—20:22:**
- A. In John 20, in the first evening after His resurrection, the Lord came to His disciples, and the main thing He did was to breathe upon them; this was their basic need, and this is also our basic need—cf. Ezek. 37:1-14; *Hymns*, #844.
 - B. If we are open to Him, He is breathing out, and we are breathing in; we come together not to receive some teaching but to be breathed upon by the Lord Jesus.
- X. We need to meet for the Lord's speaking—Acts 1:3:**
- A. In all these cases of the Lord meeting with His disciples after His resurrection, He spoke to them; whenever we come together, we also need the Lord's speaking.
 - B. The Lord's speaking is something new, something which is not only constant but instant and up to date.
- XI. We need to meet to know Christ according to the Scriptures—Luke 24:27, 44-47:**
- A. It was not until after His resurrection that the Lord met with His disciples and purposely opened their understanding by opening the Scriptures—vv. 27, 44-47.
 - B. In our meetings we must look to the Lord that He would grant us this, that He would give us an opened Bible that we may see more things of Christ.
- XII. We need to meet to see the resurrected and ascended Christ—John 20:24-29; Acts 1:6-11:**
- A. The disciples met with the resurrected and ascended Christ in their meetings.
 - B. In all our meetings we need to see that the very Christ with whom we are meeting is the resurrected One and also the ascended One.
- XIII. We need to meet for the Lord's commission—Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-48; John 21:15-23; Acts 1:8:**
- A. When the Lord met with His disciples after His resurrection, He gave them a commission.
 - B. Today, if we meet in the proper way, surely we will be commissioned with something by the Lord; there should be some kind of burden transmitted from the Lord to us.
- XIV. We need to meet to pray—Acts 1:12-14; cf. Matt. 6:31-33:**
- A. In Acts 1 we see that after the disciples met with the Lord Jesus, after they saw Him ascend to the heavens, they returned to Jerusalem and were occupied continually in prayer—vv. 12-14.
 - B. We need to meet to meet in this way: to pray in one accord for the kingdom, for the spread of the Lord's recovery, for the building up of the local churches.
- XV. We need to meet for the empowering of the Holy Spirit—Acts 2:1-4:**
- A. On the day of Pentecost when the disciples met together, suddenly the Holy Spirit filled the room where they were sitting, and they were all clothed with power from on high—vv. 1-4.
 - B. In many meetings we need this kind of empowering; when we are meeting in the proper way, suddenly we will be empowered from the heavens.

Message 3

Meeting with the Resurrected Christ and for the Ascended Christ

Scripture Reading: Matt. 28:8-20; Mark 16:9-19; Luke 24:9-49; John 20:11-29; 21:1-24; Acts 1:6-13

I. We need to meet with the resurrected Christ:

- A. According to the record of Matthew and John, the meetings which the Lord Jesus held with His disciples were meetings with the resurrected Christ—Matt. 28:8-20; John 20:11-29; 21:1-24:
 1. The resurrected Christ is the very Christ who is the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b.
 2. The main thing that this resurrected Christ did in this kind of meeting was to breathe into His disciples and say to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit”—John 20:22.
 3. Today this resurrected, life-giving Christ is in our spirit living within us—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:22.
 4. We must realize that whenever we as the disciples of Christ come together, we come with Jesus, we bring Him with us; we come to meet with the living Christ, the resurrected One—Matt. 28:8-20; John 20:11-29.
 5. We must never forget that these meetings with His disciples after His resurrection were Christ’s first meetings with the whole Christian church; this must be the example, and we must heed the principles from these meetings.
- B. The proper way to meet is to realize the presence of the living Christ:
 1. Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and 21, and Acts 1 are a full record as a kind of portrait revealing the presence of the resurrected Christ, showing how living He is and how He is with us all the time.
 2. If we are alone, He is with us (John 20:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:5, 7); if we are two or three, He is with us (Matt. 28:8-10); if we are seeking and loving Him, He is with us (John 20:11-17); if we are one who has failed, He is also with us (21:1-17); when we are conscious of His presence, He is with us (20:19, 26-28); when we are not conscious of His presence, He is more with us (Luke 24:9-35).
 3. We should never forget this one verse: “Behold, I am with you all the days” (Matt. 28:20); He is always with us.
 4. If we would have a proper meeting, a living meeting, it must not be something religious, not something of teaching or of keeping certain forms and rituals; the proper meeting of Christians is to meet with the resurrected Christ who is so living within us; for this reason, we need practical, daily experiences of such a living one—*Hymns*, #1281.

II. We need to meet for the ascended Christ:

- A. The Gospels of Mark and Luke and the book of Acts show us meetings for the ascended Christ—Mark 16:14-19; Luke 24:46-51; Acts 1:4-9; 2:1-41:
 1. These three books tell us clearly that this resurrected Christ who met with His disciples after His resurrection ascended to the heavens; while He was holding one of the meetings with His own, He ascended before them—Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9.
 2. This is not a kind of teaching or information; this is a kind of sightseeing; before the disciples met *with* the resurrected Christ; now they met *for* the ascended Christ.
 3. To meet with Christ, we need to breathe in Christ as life, but to meet for Christ, we need the rushing violent wind to blow upon us—2:1-2.
 4. To meet for the ascended Christ, we need power to demonstrate that the One whom we serve is now in the heavens and has been made Lord and Christ; this is the second kind of Christian meeting—vv. 33-36.

- B. The big difference between meeting with the resurrected Christ and meeting for the ascended Christ is that we meet with the resurrected Christ mainly for our enjoyment, but we meet for the ascended Christ for the building up of the church:
 - 1. Our meeting with the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit is mainly for breathing Him in that we may partake of something of Him—John 20:22; 21:5, 12, 15.
 - 2. However, to meet together is not just a matter of enjoying Christ but also a matter of functioning so that the church may be build up—Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 14:4:
 - a. To build up the church we need to bring new ones in and build others up with one another; all this requires the function, the gifts—Acts 2:1-41.
 - b. By His ascension Christ has received the gifts, and He has given the gifts to His church for the building up of the Body—Psa. 68:18, and note 1; Eph. 4:7-12.
 - c. Resurrection is for life, but the ascension is for the gifts; meeting with the resurrected Christ is for our personal breathing, eating, and satisfaction, but for the perfecting of the saints, for the building up of the Body, we need to meet for the ascended Christ—*Hymns*, #271.
- C. We meet for the ascended Christ in faith:
 - 1. To meet with the resurrected Christ we may have some feeling, but to meet with the ascended Christ we need not feeling but the exercise of faith—Rom. 8:6; cf. 2 Cor. 4:13.
 - 2. We need to claim the baptism of the Holy Spirit in faith—1 Cor. 12:13; *Hymns*, #273:
 - a. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was once for all accomplished on the day of Pentecost; it is not for any individual believer, but has been accomplished for the Body of Christ, the church—Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4; *Hymns*, #277.
 - b. Now, since we have all been baptized into the church, the Body, we have the position to believe that what was accomplished for the church on the day of Pentecost is for us; therefore we may claim it, take it, and apply it by living faith—1 Cor. 12:13; *Hymns*, #276.
 - 3. We need to exercise the spirit and faith—cf. 2 Cor. 4:13:
 - a. We need to be fully released in the exercise of our spirit, the exercise of our faith—1 Cor. 14:15; *Hymns*, #866.
 - b. To realize the power, authority, headship, and lordship of the ascended Christ requires the exercise of living faith in our spirit.

III. For these two kinds of meetings we must pay a price:

- A. The disciples were willing to pay any price to maintain good meetings:
 - 1. After the resurrection the disciples were in Jerusalem: they were frightened; they were under threatening and persecution; that was the price they had to pay—John 20:19.
 - 2. Then at a certain time the Lord Jesus told them to go to a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16); then the Lord Jesus again took the lead and went back to Jerusalem; after this, He requested them to stay in Jerusalem, informing them that something would happen on this earth for His administration (Acts 1:4); the disciples going so far and staying so long in addition to being in a situation of threatening and persecution was the price they were called upon to pay.
- B. The reason why we enjoy the Lord's presence so richly in certain meetings is that many have really paid the price to attend the meetings.
- C. We are the meeting people; we would like to pay any price to keep up the standard of the meeting.
- D. If we really mean business for the church, we must realize that the church is in the meeting; to be here for the church means to be here for the meeting—cf. Rom. 12:1.

Message 4

Meeting in the Lord's Name, by Love and by Prophesying, with a Proper Life in Spirit, and by Demonstrating Our Spirit

Scripture Reading: Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 14:1, 32; Luke 24:36-51; John 20:19-23; 21:1-17; Acts 1:4-8

I. We need to meet in the Lord's name; the reality of the Lord's name is in the Spirit; the Spirit is in our spirit; so we must exercise our spirit—Matt. 18:20; John 14:26; Rom. 8:16:

- A. The reality of meeting the name of the Lord is to meet in the Holy Spirit—*Hymns*, #863, s. 6:
 - 1. Concerning the truth of Christian meetings, to be in the name of the Lord Jesus (in the gospels) is the seed, to be in the name of the Lord to receive the Holy Spirit (in the Acts) is the growth, and to be in the Spirit (in the epistles) is the harvest—Matt. 18:20; Acts 2:38.
 - 2. Thus, we see that the name of the Lord Jesus is very much linked with the Holy Spirit; without the Holy Spirit there is no reality of the name of the Lord Jesus.
 - 3. All the power and reality of the name of Jesus is in the Holy Spirit and is the Holy Spirit.
 - 4. In John 14:26 the Lord tells us that the Holy Spirit will be sent in His name; the Lord Jesus promised to give us something in His name, and what He gave us was the Spirit; the Spirit is the reality of His name.
 - 5. In 1 Corinthians 12:3 we read, “No one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit”; when you call on the name of Jesus, you are in the Spirit; you call “Lord Jesus” and you get the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the reality of Jesus.
- B. Since the Holy Spirit today is in our spirit, we must exercise our spirit—Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 1:6-7:
 - 1. The reality of the name is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit today is in our spirit; this is why we must exercise our spirit.
 - 2. The key, the secret of our meeting together, is the exercise of our regenerated human spirit; 1 Corinthians 14:32 is the strongest proof; verse 31 tells us that we “can all prophesy”; then verse 32 follows by telling us that prophesying is just the exercise of our spirit.
 - 3. To prophesy means to take the initiative to exercise our spirit; it seems that we take the lead, but when we do, the Spirit of God follows and flows out, because today the Holy Spirit is mingled with our spirit.
- C. We need to see the way to exercise our spirit:
 - 1. We can take the action and initiative in our spirit just by saying, “Lord Jesus!”; “no one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit”—12:3.
 - 2. When you say “Lord Jesus,” you are in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; there is no need for you to wait for inspiration; you are already in it; we all have to learn to say “Lord Jesus” in the meeting, in our home, and a thousand times a day—*Hymns*, # 782; # 1083.
 - 3. Then in the meetings, the second way to keep yourself in the Holy Spirit is to prophesy; to be in the Holy Spirit means to prophesy—1 Cor. 14:31-32.

II. We need to meet by love and by prophecy—the greater gift and the excellent way—1 Cor. 12—14:

- A. At the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle says that we should earnestly desire “the greater gifts”; the greater gift is not speaking in tongues or healing, but prophesying, for it is prophesying that builds up the church—14:3-4.
- B. Paul told us that we should earnestly desire the greater gifts, yet he said that he would show us a most excellent way; the excellent way is love—13:1.
- C. From 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 the main impression we get is that there are two outstanding things that we must seek—love and prophecy; we need to pursue love, and we must seek to prophesy; love is the life, and prophecy is the function—14:1.
- D. We need to realize that both love and prophecy are things of the Spirit and that these are the very things that build up the church; in 1 Corinthians, we can see that there are only two things that build up: the first is love (8:1) and the second is prophecy (14:5).

- E. Finally, in chapter 15 we are told that this Christ who is our love and our life, our prophecy and our function, is the life-giving Spirit—v. 45.

III. We need to meet with a proper life in spirit—1 Cor. 1:2, 9; 2:4; 7:40:

- A. If we are going to meet in a proper way, we must experience and enjoy the Christ whom 1 Corinthians presents; then we will have Him as our life in the spirit in our daily walk.
- B. When we come together, then, we need only exercise our spirit to prophesy something of Christ; when we meet together, we can say something of Him whom we have already experienced and enjoyed in our daily living; this is the way for us to meet.
- C. 1 Corinthians tells us clearly that God's intention is to put us into Christ and make Christ everything to us—1:24, 30; 15:45:
1. We have seen in chapter 1 that Christ to us is the power and wisdom of God (v. 24), and of God are we in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom—righteousness, sanctification and redemption—v. 30.
 2. Then Paul goes on to tell us that this Christ who is the last Adam has been made a life-giving Spirit (15:45); now all that He is to us must be realized, must be experienced, not by any other organ of our being but the spirit—cf. 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:10, 6.
 3. In 1 Corinthians 6 we are told that the Holy Spirit of God dwells in us (v. 19) and that he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit—v. 17.
- D. By looking into the context of all the chapters in 1 Corinthians and obtaining a full scope, we realize that the function in the meeting depends on the life in our daily walk; the way to meet together properly is to live properly:
1. This simply means to take Christ as our life and our everything in our spirit; therefore, we must learn how to exercise our spirit constantly—cf. Rom. 8:4.
 2. We have seen that the apostle Paul was one who did this very thing; he was so strong in his spirit; he was forever exercising his spirit (1 Cor. 4:21; 5:3-4; Col. 2:5); this is the proper way to live, and this kind of living is the first necessity of the proper way to meet.

IV. We need to meet by demonstrating our spirit—1 Cor. 2:1-4; 2 Tim. 12:7:

- A. Now we must see that whatever we speak for Christ, whatever we do in the meeting, must be a demonstration of the spirit; this is quite important; Christ can never be ministered to others without the demonstration of our spirit—1 Cor. 2:1-4
- B. We all must learn to say something for Christ in the meeting with a demonstration of the spirit; we have to exercise this; we have to do this—2 Tim. 1:7.
- C. Whenever anyone stands to prophesy, there should be a demonstration of the spirit; this is the proper way to meet; this is not a matter of learning methods—methods do not work.
- D. If we are going to speak something for Christ, we must live by Christ; the meeting life depends upon this; the Christian meeting is not a kind of performance but a demonstration; the Christian meeting must be an exhibition of what we are in Christ—Hymns, #864.
- E. The most important thing for you and me in our daily life is to continually exercise our spirit to touch the Lord by this simple way of calling on His name—“O Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus!”
- F. We all must learn to continually say something for Christ in our daily life; the more you speak, the more victorious you will be; learn to sing the hymns wherever you are; these two things—speaking and singing—will help you be so living, active, and aggressive in functioning in the meetings.
- G. If you mean business with the Lord for the meeting, you must be punctual; like a basketball team, if we would play a good game, we must all be present before the time and prepare ourselves and we should always come to the front.
- H. We must stand against our natural disposition; if we are one who is not disposed to speak in public, we must continually take the initiative to speak in the meetings for Christ; if we are one, on the other hand, for whom it is so easy to speak, we must oppose ourself; it is good for us to be quiet for awhile until another disposition has been built up in us.

Message 5

The Way to Come to the Meetings and the Practice of Praise

Scripture Reading: Psa. 84:1-2; 55:14; 122:1; 42:4; 96:8; 1 Tim. 4:7

- I. **Now we come to the matter of how to come to the meetings—not how to carry on the meetings or how to behave ourselves in the meetings, but how to come to the meetings before we arrive; our coming to the meeting should be a kind of preparation.**
- II. **In the Psalms we see that when the saints of ancient times came to the congregation of the Lord's people, they came with at least seven things:**
 - A. First, we should come with a love for the Lord's dwelling place—Psa. 84:1-2; Hymns, #852:
 1. A love for the Lord's dwelling place, practically speaking, is a love for the meetings.
 2. If we really love the meetings, we will say that the church meetings are our practical home, our practical family life; we should be able to say, "Without the meetings I am homesick."
 3. We all must learn the lesson of loving the meetings; unless circumstances definitely hinder, we must certainly come to the meetings; if we really love the meetings, we can frequently find a way around the circumstances or through the circumstances to be there.
 4. Nothing can take the place of the meetings; nothing else can give us the blessing, the comfort, the life, the light, the edification, and the building up, etc., that we receive from the meetings—*Hymns*, #1152.
 - B. Second, we should come to the meetings "in sweet counsel"—Psa. 55:14:
 1. Before we come to the meeting, it is good to have some fellowship; it is so good to hold sweet counsel with brothers and sisters on the way to the meeting, to fellowship or to praise together in anticipation of the coming feast.
 2. This is the second way to prepare ourselves and to come to the meeting; in so doing, our hearts are turned to the Lord, and our spirits are refreshed and released.
 - C. Third, we should not go to the house of God individually, but in company if possible; not just one by one, but group by group—42:4; 122:3-4:
 1. Even in coming to the meetings, we need some kind of coordination; we need to come together in company.
 2. Going to the meetings together really helps; this is a real testimony to the enemy and our neighbors in the world who are watching.
 - D. Fourth, we need to come to the meetings with a voice of joy—42:4:
 1. We need not wait till we enter the meeting hall before we shout our hallelujahs and sing our praises to the Lord; while we are still on the way, we should begin.
 2. It is rather difficult, however, for us to do this by ourselves; we need a company; we need a multitude; perhaps four or five of us can come together, shouting, "Hallelujah! Amen! Jesus is Lord!"
 - E. Fifth, we should also come to the meetings with thanksgiving and praise—100:4:
 1. While we are still on the way to the meeting we should begin to offer our thanksgivings and praises to Christ; we can thank and praise Him for the precious blood which cleanses us from all our sins and shortcomings and thank and praise Him for all He has been to us today.
 2. We can also thank and praise Him for all that He will do in the coming meeting; by so doing, we will be well prepared.
 - F. Sixth, we have to give glory to the Lord, we have to glorify Him on the way, letting others know that we are on our way to the meeting; this is a real glory to the Lord's name—96:8.
 - G. Seventh and last, we must come with some offerings, either burnt offerings or other offerings; we all need to come to the meetings with something of Christ as the offerings that we may offer to God; none of us should come empty-handed—96:8; cf. 1 Cor. 14:26, note 1.

III. We need the practice of praise; meeting by praising is one of the major items of godliness; therefore, coming together to praise the Lord is a matter of exercise—1 Tim. 4:7:

- A. We need practice to build up a habit of opening our mouth; we need practice to learn how to utter praises and how to compose praises from our experiences of Christ; in other words, we must learn how to conduct our meetings, not by a leader but by everyone.
- B. We must be very clear first that the principle which must govern us in all our meetings is the principle of incarnation, the mingling of God and man:
 - 1. Today, in the dispensation of grace, God would never do anything by Himself; He requires human cooperation; on the other hand, we can never do anything by ourselves; we require God's cooperation.
 - 2. The key to meetings in such an age is the release and demonstration of our spirit; if we simply release our spirit, the Lord Jesus as the life-giving Spirit will simultaneously be released; this is the principle of incarnation.
- C. The meeting may be started at any time and by any way—it must be something of the Spirit without forms and regulations; we may begin with a hymn, with a testimony, by calling on the Lord, or by praising the Lord. we all must get into the flow, open our mouth, and go right ahead:
 - 1. We should simply open ourself to the Lord and utter something from deep within our spirit—short, quick, real, and fresh.
 - 2. We are all the heavenly team, coordinating together to score for the Lord; there is just one ball for the whole team, so we must play in a coordinated way—*Hymns*, #867, s. 2.
- D. First, we should never behave in the meetings in an independent and individualistic way; we should seek to be sensitive in our spirit and sense the flow of the meeting; once anything is begun in the meeting, we should simply follow and coordinate with others.
- E. Second, for a good coordination we must care well for others, using not only our mouth but also our ears; if we begin to speak and we hear others speaking, we should immediately stop our voice and let the others finish their praise.
- F. Concerning our utterances while pray-reading or praise-reading the Word, it would be more impressive if we would, on the one hand, use the very words of the verses as our prayers or praises and, on the other hand, mingle the Word with our fresh experiences—Psa. 45:1-2.
- G. In our meetings we also need some variety; there is no need to fall into any kind of rut; what we have within us is a living Spirit—*Hymns*, #1142:
 - 1. A person who walks in the spirit is always exceedingly sensitive.
 - 2. Our aim must always be to uplift, enrich, or intensify the spirit, whether by singing, testimony, praise, or any other means.
- H. The sisters must be bold to participate; the brothers, on the other hand, may be too bold; they must give opportunity to the sisters that they also may enter in; the sisters, however, must be strengthened and emboldened both in spirit and voice.
- I. If we are accustomed to opening our mouth in a natural way, we must learn to be restricted; we should give more opportunity to those who are usually quiet to enter in and participate in the praise; if we are not accustomed to opening your mouth, we should learn to open it.
- J. Every time we come to the meetings, we must come fully open to the Lord, not knowing just how the meeting will be carried on; we should just praise the Lord according to the instant sense in our spirit; one has begun, and we will all cooperate to play the same ball.
- K. The new way of meeting is a way in the Spirit; if we walk according to the Spirit, we will certainly not act in contradiction to the Word; everything will correspond to the Word; but the Spirit must be the leading, controlling factor—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16.
- L. We all must learn, therefore, how to exercise our spirit, release our spirit, strengthen our spirit, and demonstrate our spirit; then the Lord will be exhibited, the Father will be glorified, the saints will be edified, and the church will be built up in a practical way in the locality where we live; practice this above all, and you will be ready for the meetings.