

The Real Meaning behind the Universe

It is crucial for every human being to see and understand the real meaning behind the entire universe. God's purpose in creating the universe is to have an expression of Christ's fullness displayed and lived out through His Body. We need to know that the expression of Christ in His Body is both for God's satisfaction and for the proper human life and existence on the earth.

It may never have occurred to us that God had a reason for creating all things. He was not *unsure* about what He was doing in the universe. Indeed, creation came into being based upon what God had previously planned on "the drawing board." For example, when you produce an automobile, you do not go to the assembly line and throw some metal together in a haphazard way. To produce an automobile, you must first go to the drawing board. You have to go to the architects and designers. Then, based upon the design, you produce it. You create it according to the design.

Seeing the Position of the Body in the Universe

Now just consider the universe with its solar systems, as well as us as human beings with a capacity to think, reason, feel, and choose. Look at the symmetry of

our body. Consider the miracle of having life and living on this earth with a sense of existence. We are not haphazard entities. We have been brought into existence according to God's original thought for the earth. Thus, when we talk about the Body of Christ, we are not talking about a favorite subject; nor are we talking about an issue that some Christians emphasize. We are speak-

ing and testifying about the very meaning of the universe. The Body is not merely one doctrinal point among many

others. Neither is it an isolated truth, some "thing" apart from Christ. No! The Body is actually the Body of *Christ!* It is Christ Himself expressed in His fullness.

When the Lord was on the earth, He was one man in a human body. As the Son of God, He expressed God. Then He was crucified and resurrected to become a life-giving Spirit. Since that time, He has gotten into millions of people. Now His fullness is made up of all those He is living in and flowing out of. They are expressing His fullness. By this we can see that the Lord as the Head is incomplete without us. His being incomplete is revealed by the fact that *we are* the very members of His Body. Indeed, 1 Corinthians 6:15 actually says that our bodies "are members of Christ." We are not just vain and meaningless people. We are members of Him. He is in us and we are in Him. It is this reality of the Body of Christ that is the meaning of the universe. Thus, the position of the Body is more than strategic.

The Meaning of the Universe and the Body of Christ

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The Joints of Supply in the Body

Let us consider Paul's word in Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (KJV). Then verse 16 says, "[Out] from whom the whole Body, [being fitly] joined together and [being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and] according to the operation in the measure of every part, [causes the growth] of the Body unto the [building up] of itself in love." So, as we are growing up into Him as the Head in verse 15, out from Him there is something happening on the earth. There is a joining and a knitting together. When the joining and the knitting happens, the Body happens! The Body is a living, organic reality that "happens." The Body is not a mere organization or method of doing things. The Body "happens" because there are joints of the rich supply, that is, members who are experiencing the supply from the Head in their daily lives.

The Head becomes our rich supply by our growing up into Him in every area of our living. Day by day, we just experience a participation, not in the bad self or the good self, but a participation in Christ. We bypass the road of the self and go directly to Christ. This reminds me of a game I played as a boy, which had a move telling you, "Do not pass 'Go' . . . go directly to . . ." I was always impressed with the phrase, "Do not pass 'Go' . . . but go directly to . . ." In other words, do not pass anything through your self anymore. Just go directly to Christ! He is the Savior. He is the Repairer. He is the Healer. He is the One that changes us. It is not you or I. It is Him! We just go directly to the Lord Himself and grow up into Him in all things.

There is a rich supply coming into our spirit as we are interacting with the Lord Jesus. Interrupt your self-effort, interrupt your striving, interrupt your condemnation, interrupt the depression starting to come over you. Just interrupt it with your exercised spirit, the part that is deeper than your mind. Just open your mouth and let the Spirit of Christ flow out. Jesus! Just call, Jesus! By this you connect yourself with the rich supply and become a person who is a joint of the rich supply.

Joints refer to points of contact. They are the points that are touching each other. It is at those points that the Body is joined and knit together. The Body is joined by the joints of the supply — where there is a *contact* of life-supply, where there is a *touch* of life-supply. Paul says that *we* are the joints of the rich supply. For example, when I enjoy the rich supply of Christ in the middle of my depression that wants to take me over, I

cause other members contacting me to be joined and knit together with the supply of life. That supply is being transmitted directly from my being to that person. This is what builds up the Body. This is what supplies the saints with God — the joints of the rich supply.

The Significance of the Inner Operation in the Joints of Supply

This is a marvelous thing — on this earth as a human being I can live as a member of the Body of Christ. To be a member is to be a joint of the rich supply. In Ephesians 4:16 Paul says, "according to the operation in the measure of every part, [causes the growth] of the Body unto the [building up] of itself in love." My being a joint of the rich supply is according to the operation of the divine Life in my being. So when you contact me, I do not spread death to you. I do not toss you and carry you about with every kind of wind — the wind not only of my teaching, but the wind of my self interacting with myself. I do not toss you and carry you about, but I cause you to be joined and knit together and supplied. Thus, my being a joint of the rich supply is according to the operation in the measure of every, or each one, part.

In every one of us as members of the Body, there is a divine operation going on. It is hidden from the outside. It is not a matter of outward appearance. Inwardly we are linked to God and God is living in us. Yes, you have your bad points and I have my bad points. You have your reactions, your attitudes, your problems, and your relationships with yourself and other people. However it manifests itself, we all have the flesh. But now we also have a divine operation going on within us. So we do not need to get into the cycle of Romans 7, where the good self, or the good flesh, is trying to overcome the bad flesh. This produces nothing but death and wretchedness. But the operation within us is God wanting us to move out of our mind into our spirit — to leave that striving mode and sink ourselves into Him. Then we just draw. We just drink the Spirit, and there is an operation in the measure of each one part.

God has allowed certain things over your life and my life. As we together are all faithful to enjoy His inner operation by drinking Him, calling upon Him, drawing from Him, and then just going along and flowing with that river in us, you and I become a joint of the rich supply. We are not trying to "have the church." We are not organizing it. We are not setting up a program or "setting up shop." The Body is a reality when all of us are simply joints of this rich supply, experiencing Christ and coming together wherever we are. Then there is a

joining and knitting together and a supply. There is a reality because we are all contacting one another with the rich supply coming from the Head. Amen!

This is the Body. The Body on the earth today is happening in this way. And it is this reality that is the very meaning of creation — of every blade of grass, every flower, every fish, every animal. The whole universe revolves around what God wanted back in eternity past, before there was ever an earth (Prov. 8:22-23). God's eternal purpose was to express His Son in His fullness through the church (Eph. 3:10). And He needs all of us interacting with Him for that fullness to be expressed. This is the Body.

Speaking of Christ, Colossians 1:15 says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn [of] all creation." Now listen to verse 16: "For [in] Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on the earth." It says, "all things." Then Paul wants to make sure we know it is everything, so he adds, "visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and [unto] Him."

Look at the three prepositions in verse 16. It says, "Because *in* Him all things were created." That means He is the intrinsic power of this universe. He is the One in whom it was created. Then the last part of verse 16 says, "All things have been created *through* Him." That means He is the means through which everything came into being. Even as John 1:3 says, "All things [came into being] through Him, and without Him [not one thing came into being which has come into being]." The Holy Spirit uses emphatic language here. "Without Him not one thing came into being which has come into being." So, through Him everything came into being.

Do you want to know the meaning of your life? I remember when I was in junior high school. I was about 13 years old. One day at recess something happened to me. I was standing by a little shack where candy was sold. I'll never forget it. As I stood there, for some reason I looked up at the sky. And as I looked at the clouds it just came to me, "What is the meaning of all this? Why are we here? What is this?" Have you never had such a feeling? Have you never asked, What is the meaning of everything? Why are we here? Of course, I did not have an answer at that time. But thank God, we have an answer. *In* Him, *through* Him, and *unto* Him all things have come into being.

The goal of the whole universe, the purpose of everything, is *unto* Him. The last phrase of Colossians 1:16 reveals this: "And *unto* Him." This shows us that

creation is fully in, through, and unto Christ. When you look into why God created all things, you can only come up with this — it is altogether because of Christ through and through. Now look at verse 17. "And He is before all things." This means that before everything, Christ was the One there in the Father's heart. He is the reason why the Father and the Son created the universe. Then verse 17 continues, "And in Him all things [cohere]." Cohere means that everything is being held together in Him. So right now, if it were not for Christ, this entire universe would come apart. He is the cohesion, the cohering factor, of the universe. It is held together because of Him.

Paul begins to introduce the importance of the Body, leading into it with this fact — Christ is the cohesion of all things. Even in a physical sense, it is His universe. It belongs to Him. Everything belongs to Him. God has a desire and goal, which is to have a Body fully expressing His Son. Immediately after this holy ground of seeing the centrality of Christ in creation, verse 18 says, "And He is the Head of the Body, the church." It is hard to utter this kind of word. You can only feel it. Here is creation. Everything is for Him, and He holds everything together. We are talking about grand things in this universe. Then Paul specifies the kind of Christ He is: "He is the Head of the Body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He [might have the first place]."

Verse 18 shows us the position of the Body, the church, in the whole scheme of creation. Yes, Christ is the goal of creation. Yes, Christ is the means of creation. Yes, Christ is the cohesion of all creation. And moreover, this Christ who is everything is the Head of the Body, the church. As the resurrected One, who has been raised from the dead, He is the firstborn among all the brothers, so that in everything He would have the first place.

However, the universe and creation were damaged by Satan. The enemy came in and apparently frustrated God's created order. God had originally intended that everything would be for Christ. But the archangel Lucifer, who wanted to be like God, usurped authority and became the devil (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28). For so many years he has attempted to damage and usurp God's purpose.

The Body and Reordering the Universe

But God sent His Son to redeem us fallen people who have been damaged by the devil and separated from God. His Son came to do a redemptive work — to
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The Church *to* God

Church. This is a word we are all so familiar with. Most people, including unbelievers, have grown up in close proximity to “church.” Many have attended church. Thus, through childhood and adolescence, we developed certain concepts about the church — about its definition, its significance, and its purpose. So when we hear the word “church,” it automatically triggers well-formed ideas of what we think it means. In fact, many unbelievers quite naturally assume that they know what the church is, just as they know what a school, a hospital, or a civic center is. It seems to be a fairly easy thing to grasp — nothing too complex or deep about it.

And what about believers? How do we Christians perceive the church? *What* is the church to us? *How important* is the church? *Why* is the church on this earth? Different answers would no doubt be given to these questions. To some believers, the church is a physical building. So often we hear such comments as “the church on Main Street is beautiful.” To these believers, the church is associated with a physical structure. Hence, the importance of the church is, for the most part, limited to having a convenient place to meet. As such, the church is not as significant as many other items in the Bible.

Other Christians would say that the church is not the building, but it is the weekly church service. The church consists of people who gather once a week for an hour to sing hymns, listen to the choir and then a sermon, dismiss and go home until next week. In their thought, the church is limited to that hour each week. This is a widely held view of the church and is why we so often hear the phrase “I’m going to church,” meaning that I am going to attend the weekly church service. Of course, “going to church” is merely one of many items in their regular schedule for the week. How important is the church to these believers? It is only as important as most other items on the weekly schedule. Often the church is not highly valued because it is allotted a nominal amount of time each week and no more. In other words, its value could be stated as being worth one or two hours per week.

Others would go further and state that the church is not merely a building or a weekly service, but that it consists of the people, the true believers, who need to be edified and who need the opportunity for their specific gifts to be exercised. Hence, the purpose of the church is to render personal edification and to provide a setting for the manifestation of individual gifts. The value of the church to these believers is measured in direct proportion to the level of blessing they receive (Am I being blessed by the sermons, the worship, the choir, the Sunday school?), or to the degree of freedom they have for exercising

their gifts (Am I able to manifest my gift without much restriction?).

Others view the church as merely a holding tank that God has provided for us until we die or until Jesus comes again. It is a place to “wait it out.” We know that Christians are not supposed to be involved with sin or the world, so we must attend church as a temporary way-station until the coming of the kingdom. Once the kingdom comes, it is thought, the church’s purpose is over. As a result, the church will cease to exist. In other words, the church’s purpose is only temporal, not eternal.

Others see the church as purely an evangelical organization. Its full occupation should be to preach the gospel and lead others to salvation. Apart from this, the church has no real purpose or value. Only the salvation of souls has any real significance.

Others consider the church as an institution that is an integral part of their culture and heritage. For instance, if I’m an Italian, then most likely I’m a member of the Catholic church. If I’m a Greek, then I’m a member of the Greek Orthodox church. If I’m a German, then I’m a member of the Lutheran church (and so on). Yes, I am a believer, but to me the church has as much to do with my cultural heritage as it does with my relationship with God.

Still others see the church as the only hope to save our country and to preserve the conservative values that our country was founded on. The political system, the media, and the educational system seem to be taking our society on a course doomed to self-destruction, and the church is viewed as the only glimmer of hope for saving it. So the church is seen as a means to implement conservative social and political action. And to be relevant, it must be engrossed in numerous causes and programs.

Finally, other believers would say that the church has little or no value. In fact, the church is an embarrassment. It is considered a hindrance in the preaching of the gospel because unbelievers point to hypocrisy and division in the church and, as a result, are made skeptical of the reality of Christ. These believers would prefer to avoid the topic of the church or make it a minor item that can be summarily dismissed.

These are some of the common perceptions of the church among believers today. We may adhere to one or more of them. And there may be elements of truth in some of them. But let us ask ourselves some questions that many of us may have failed to raise during our entire Christian life. Let us ask,

What is the church *to God*? and, How important is the church *to God*? and, What is *God's purpose* for the church? In God's grand purpose and value system, is the church merely a physical structure? Or, is it simply a one hour Sunday service? Or, is it just a place for personal edification and individual gifts to be manifested? Or, is it a holding tank or an evangelical organization or a cultural institution or a means for political or social action? Is this the extent of God's purpose for and value of the church?

We know that such matters as the redemption of Christ, the preaching of the gospel, the Lord's second coming, and the kingdom are greatly significant. But with God, does the church carry the same degree of significance as these items? In God's value system, where exactly does the church rate? Is it a minor item or a major one? And if it is a major item, how major is it?

Returning to Apostolic Revelation

To properly understand God's estimation of the church, we must come to the Word of God. The Word of God alone must be the basis for assessing the divine worth placed on the church. In the sixteenth century, both Martin Luther and John Calvin contended for the principle of *sola scriptura* (only the Scriptures) for the basis of understanding justification. They realized that human tradition, even church tradition, had to be laid aside. Layers of tradition had accumulated over the centuries in Roman Catholicism regarding the means of our justification before God. It was tradition which taught that justification was obtained by the sacraments and mediated through the church. But Luther and Calvin laid aside historic tradition and returned to the Word of God. Their basic question was, What does *the Bible* say about the means of justification? What was the revelation that the Holy Spirit gave through the apostles? After much study in the Word, they discovered that justification was based on faith and faith alone. This discovery, we know, commenced the Reformation.

This same principle must be applied to the church. Instead of resorting to human traditions that have accumulated over two thousand years, or to current perceptions of the church that are floating about in our modern day, let us return to the Word of God. Let us shut ourselves up to apostolic revelation. Such an approach is crucial for a proper understanding of the church. Why? Because the church is in the category of revelation. It is not in the realm of human thought, idea, or invention. The church is not a human institution or organization that can be fully comprehended by the intellect. The church is something that is out of God Himself. Therefore, it requires revelation to see and comprehend it. It requires an unveiling by the Holy Spirit.

This is why the Lord unveiled the church to Peter and the other apostles immediately following Peter's revelation about ***the Christian*** Vol. 11, No. 4

the Lord as the Christ (Matt. 16:13-18). Peter had correctly answered the Lord's question, "Who do you say that I am?" He had emphatically stated that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then, the Lord responded to Peter by telling him two things. First, He told Peter that this revelation was given to him by the Father. The Father had unveiled Peter's eyes to realize that Jesus was not just a prophet or a man of God, but God Himself! He was the very incarnation of the Son of God. He was God in the flesh. And Peter did not figure this out on his own. We know his answer was not based on the keen perception of his mind, because the Lord said to him, "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you." Such an answer required divine revelation. It required the Spirit to open the eyes of his heart.

Second, the Lord told Peter that he needed to see one more thing. God needed to unveil one additional matter to him. Peter not only needed to see *Christ*, but he also needed to see the *church*. He not only needed to see *who Jesus was*, but he also needed to see *who he himself was* — a stone that would be built up with many other stones as the church. The Lord told him, "And I also say to you that you are Peter [which means a stone], and upon this rock [the confession of Jesus as the Christ] I will build My church." Jesus was revealing to Peter that His grand, universal project in this universe is to build His church, of which he would be a significant part.

Thus, the church is a matter of divine revelation. Of course, we all need our eyes opened to see who Christ is — He is the Son of God. But once we see Him, then immediately the Lord desires that we see the church. He wants us to see what His building project is in the universe. He wants us to see that we are all individual stones in that building. This too requires revelation.

Paul spoke in very similar terms. When he talked about the church, he never offered his own philosophy or clever ideas. Instead, he spoke from the standpoint of revelation. He spoke what was shown to him by the Spirit. And he confesses that apart from the Spirit, he would have nothing to say about the church. Why? Because the church is a great divine mystery. The church is a matter that was hidden in the heart of God for generations. Paul says, "This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32).

But eventually this mystery which was hidden in God was made known to men. How? Through the apostles. Paul declares, "by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief, by which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit, that in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of

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shed His blood and to reconcile us in one Body back to God — and reorder the whole universe according to what He originally planned before the foundation of the world. God’s procedure is to forgive us, to wash us, and to give us Christ as our righteousness. He reconciles us to Himself and comes into us. Then He opens our eyes to see that He has not only solved our sin problem, but He has reconciled us in one Body and made us members of Himself (Eph. 2:16). Now, the Head and the Body together are going to reorder the universe. Amen!

The procedure in this reordering is to assemble us together as the church, to gather us as the Body. The purpose of this assembling is that together we would touch Him not only as our Savior, not only as our Lord, but as our Head. The moment you touch Him as the Head, you are connected to every member. We are members of His Body and He is the Head. This procedure is God’s procession on the earth today. He is proceeding, marching through the earth. Psalm 68 begins, “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered.” Then verse 18 says, “You have led captivity captive.” He captured us who were captured by the devil, and He defeated us and put us in His train of vanquished foes. And now His procession is going through the earth. Psalm 68:24 says, “They have seen Your procession, O God . . . into the sanctuary.” He is proceeding into His sanctuary, and His procession is a Body procession. It is His Body moving on the earth. It is the church expressing Christ in His fullness.

At the end of this age, God has ordained to deal with Satan by casting him into the abyss for a thousand years, and then eventually casting him into the lake of fire. The lake of fire will be the trash can for cleaning up this universe. All rebellion and everything against God and against Christ will one day be cleaned up forever. God’s order for creation and the universe will be fully restored in a new heaven and a new earth. He is proceeding right now with the next step toward His coming back to set up His kingdom. He is now operating to set His Body in order, in Him and with Him, that it would organically express His fullness as a testimony over the whole earth. Whether it is a small or a large group of believers, there is a living reality of the Head flowing through all the members; and the members are pouring out the riches of this Christ, expressing Him. This is God’s order in cleaning up the universe. This is how He is restoring all things.

The Nature of the Headship of Christ

Paul’s burden is for us to know that all of creation is for Christ, and that this Christ is the Head of His Body.

The practical nature of His headship is that He is a life-giving Spirit in our spirit. He is not the Head in the sense of being a president. He is not the Head in the sense of being a man in the corporate office from whom you receive orders from afar. The nature of His headship is that He is a living Person right within your spirit and my spirit. This living Person is like a little inward monitor — “a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12). This still small voice touched me last week, saying, “Apologize to your son. You were a little abrupt. You were too quick.” In apologizing to my son, I was following the headship of the Life within me that registered with a slight feeling in my consciousness. Following this inner headship is part of God’s order to make us joints of supply, and to join and knit us with other members in our contact with one another. Being headed up is not just for individual spirituality. This is how God is heading up the universe — by Christ practically being the Head of the members of His Body, the church.

Thus, we can see that our daily life is full of meaning. Every problem we have is for us to experience a deeper and richer Christ. By this, you and I are causing Him to want to come back soon. The bride is saying, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:17, 20). The reason the bride can say, “Come, Lord Jesus,” is that she is so filled in her affections with love for the Lord. Where does this love come from? This loving affection spontaneously rises within your being as a result of letting the Lord defeat your self. You are letting Him defeat not only the bad self, but also your own interaction with yourself — your striving over yourself, handling yourself, as good as it may seem. Instead, just allow Him to defeat you.

This is the defeat — you are not doing it anymore. God is taking over. To see this, let us turn to Joshua chapter 5. Joshua was about to go into the land of Canaan with the children of Israel. They were on the very border, having passed through the Jordan. There was a large portion of Christ for them to experience, typified in the Old Testament by the land of Canaan. Joshua 5:13-14 says, “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted His eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, Are you for us or for our adversaries? So He said, No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” In other words, “I am for neither of you.” Then we read, “And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, and said to Him, What does my Lord say to His servant? Then the Commander of the Lord’s

army said to Joshua, Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.”

These verses reveal Joshua’s inner experience. At that particular juncture in his life, he was still in this scenario — good and bad. “Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?” Joshua is in control of things. He is still in the driver’s seat, so to speak. This was his mode of thinking.

As believers, certain things may have happened in our past which cause us to ask the question, Is it going to be this way now in contrast to the way it used to be? To this question, I would say, “Neither.” We are not the Lord of our lives anymore. It is not whether you are going to overcome your adversaries. It is not that you are going to be built up in *yourself* now. No! The Lord was not coming to take sides with Joshua. He was coming to take over. Amen.

This means that now we interact with the Lord in a new kind of way. In our lives, it is not a matter of me or them; it is not a matter of what happened or what we are going to do next. It is a matter of falling on our face and moment by moment never allowing the headship of Christ to disintegrate into a presidency or a corporate headquarters. It is allowing His headship in my spirit to be my reality. And it happens by my going along with that little impulse, that little feeling, that little consciousness, and saying, “Amen, Jesus.” When He says, “Apologize,” I say, “Amen, Lord. Thank You for the supply. I take You now. I am not going to struggle with myself. I am not going to reason. I am not going to get into that scenario. I am going to experience You. Just You, Jesus.” Then we become connected to the rich supply. When you are connected to the rich supply, when that supply is flowing from the Head into you, you are a point of contact. When people are around you, you supply them with God. You join. You knit. The Body happens. Fellowship happens.

The Meaning of the Lord Defeating Us

But if there is not this kind of defeat — if instead we are winning the battle, we are still doing it ourself or having our way — then the bride-love, the spontaneous love the bride has for the Bridegroom, is quenched, or snuffed out. And in us we do not find that “Thanks be to God!” that Paul expresses in 2 Corinthians 2:14, where he bursts forth with, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ and through us diffuses the fragrance of [the knowledge of Him] in every place.” We know that for God to “always lead us

in triumph in Christ” does not mean that He is just giving us some victory. It means that He has defeated us. The whole nature of the Greek words refers to someone who conquered all his foes. In the ancient world, when the captain of an army conquered all his foes, he put them behind him and led them in a triumphant procession through the streets; and all the ones that were defeated and conquered became his trophies, his tokens of victory. At the same time, in this procession there were censers containing incense with sweet smells, giving off a fragrance in the streets. Today, it would almost be like witnessing a parade that is filled with the fragrant smell of flowers.

Paul said, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance [the sweet scent, the smell] of [the knowledge of Him] in every place.” There is just a scent coming from a person who knows God. And the way the scent becomes so strong is by living absolutely defeated moment by moment. Allow the Lord to defeat every rise of the flesh by interrupting it to take Christ. For example, you may see that you are trying to establish your own righteousness. You are striving once again. The way you can tell is by your prolonged depression. Prolonged depression comes because you are still working out your own kind of righteousness. The moment you sense this depression, this mood, this discouragement hanging over you, interrupt it by calling “Jesus.” You are depressed and discouraged because you are working out your own righteousness, and you cannot come up with “the goods.” Let Him defeat you. It is a matter now of submission. Romans 10:3 tells us not to establish our own righteousness, but to submit to the righteousness of God. That means get defeated on the spot. Quit working on your good self. Bypass it all and go directly to Christ and drink once again. “Lord, thank You, You are my righteousness. Amen.”

As we allow this kind of defeat in our experience, what spontaneously comes out of our mouth is “Thanks be to God!” We cannot help it. Thanks be to God! Those who come to a meeting with praise, and who smell like God, are the ones who have been defeated all day long. But when you come to the meeting and there is not much praise and not much thanksgiving, that must mean there is still self-will there. There is still the stubbornness. There is still the oldness. We are still staying in our own religious concept or thought. But just let Him defeat you, and He will lead you in His triumph. Amen.

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Praise the Lord, Saints. This is what it is all about. It is about creation, the Body, the joints of the rich supply, and this operation in the measure of every part as the Lord defeats us again and again. When you are a person defeated by the Lord, you are left with nothing but Himself. Your boast is in Him. Your righteousness is in Him. Your sanctification is in Him. Your glory is in Him. Your expectations are in Him. You are not expecting from yourself. Your victory is in Him. Everything is in Him. So we just continue to enjoy Him.

We are enjoying Christ in such simplicity. All week long in the church life, in the Body, there is the connection, the fellowship, the Christ in us living for why we have been created. We have been created to be joined, connected, and then blended with one another as members of one Body. First we see the Body, then we come into the church life, and then we experience being blended together. There is an organic blending between all of us as members.

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul talks about how God blends the Body. The blending is the organic fellowship of all the members. As members we are not all the same, just as the members of my body are not all the same. My little finger is not the same as my left hand, but my little finger and my left hand are identical in life. In function they are different, but in life they are identical. Likewise, though we are different members of the Body, together we are enjoying the same life.

To be identical in life together, you and I have to get defeated. As you and I are defeated, our functions will be made manifest more and more. Then we are joints of the rich supply, and the Body happens. The fullness of Christ is expressed through His members, the universe gets headed up, and the Lord is a little closer. Amen. The bride is saying, "Come," because those kinds of affections are in her. She has no heart for anything but her lovely Bridegroom.

— Bill Freeman

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the promise through the gospel" (Eph. 3:3-6). By these verses we can realize that the church, which is the Body of Christ, is in the realm of divine mystery. Yet this mystery was revealed to men by the Spirit through the apostles. Then the Spirit used the apostles to record that revelation of the church in the Word of God. Thus, the Bible unveils to us the apostolic revelation of the church.

Now what is needed? Simply to have the eyes of our heart enlightened to see this apostolic revelation in

the Word of God. This is what Paul prayed for in the book of Ephesians. He prayed that God would give the Ephesian believers a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Christ (Eph. 1:16-18). And the full knowledge of Christ includes not only the Head but also the Body. In other words, Paul knew that for the Ephesian believers to fully apprehend who Christ is, they had to realize the unsearchable riches of the Head (Eph. 3:8, 18-19). But they also needed to see the church as the Body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23). Without seeing His Body, their knowledge of Christ would be sorely deficient. This is why Paul imparts such a transcendent vision of the church in the book of Ephesians.

— Kirk Eland

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Finally, we can see that the church is a matter of revelation from the book of Revelation. We know that the apostle John received a number of visions from the Spirit, which are recorded in this book. But have you ever realized that the first vision that John saw was a vision of the churches? In chapter one, he saw seven golden lampstands and the Son of Man walking in the midst of the lampstands (Rev. 1:10-20). This vision is then interpreted for us. The lampstands are churches, and the Son of Man is the resurrected, glorified Christ walking in their midst and speaking to them as the Spirit. What does this mean? It means that the church on this earth is not just another human institution. Nor is it even a religious institution. Rather, the church is a divine, spiritual entity that requires revelation to apprehend. Even the aged apostle John needed revelation to see the church as lampstands. By the natural eye, the church appears

