

‘Lord, May You Build Your Church’

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Introduction

What is the church? Is it fine that if the church is healthy? Is it fine if the church is reviving and growing? Personally, I like the phrase "a true church" rather than "a healthy church" or "a happy church." The reason is because I think the church is not the true church these days. At the same time, I think the church should be the Lord-centered church. The reason is because the people-centered churches show people's glory more than the Lord's glory. And in the church where the people's glory appears, all kinds of sinful things cover the Lord's glory. That's why they church must become the Lord-centered church. Our church must be a church that gives glory to the Lord, a church that obeys the Word of the Lord, a church that shows the glory and power of the Lord.

Is it okay for only the church numbers are growing? Why is the church sinning more to God as the number of member increases? The church is now guilty of spiritual adultery like a prostitute. The church is now guilty of idolatry, serving both God and money in covetousness. The church is now dishonoring God's holy name. Now the church is corrupt and is digging its own grave. Now, the church members are hurt by contention and conflict within the church and people outside of the church are criticizing and mocking the church. Now, we the church are hiding the glory of God.

What should we do? Shouldn't weep tears of repentance? Shouldn't we return to God in mourning and contrite hearts? We must mourn and repent according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And we must return to God. We must return to the word of God. And we must obey that word of God. Since the Lord has promised to build up His church (Mt. 16:18), we must hold onto that promise word of the Lord and humbly participate in His work of building His church. As we do so, we must forsake our will and follow the will of the Lord. And we must forsake the world's ways and devote ourselves to building His church in His way. In particular, we must hold on to the word of the Lord's promise and pray for His church (Acts 1:14). And we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ch. 2) and serve the Lord's body, the church, as the Holy Spirit leads. We must boldly proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (2:14f., 4:31). Then the Lord will add those who are saved to His body (2:47).

What is a church?

“Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:1-3)

We face the age in which we cannot help but to ask, “What is a church?” When we look at the church these days, we cannot but question “Is this the church that God is talking about in the Bible?” Even in the eyes of us Christians, there are so many disputes, conflicts, and sinful things going on in the church. Can you imagine how the non-Christians see the church? We have to nothing to say. We must be reprovved and rebuked by the Word of God. And we must be conscience-stricken when we hear the words of rebuke (Acts 2:37). And we must repent (v. 38). We must not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2). In order to do so, we must humbly listen to the Word of God. And I think one of the words of God that we must listen to is the Book of First Corinthians. The reason is because the present church is similar to the Corinthian church, where there were conflicts and sinful things. And among the words of First Corinthians, I want to think about what the Bible says about the church based on 1 Corinthians 1:1-3. The reason is because we have to know what church is in order for the church can be true church.

There are three important things about the Corinthian city that we should know first (Park Yun-sun):

- (1) There were ports in the city of Corinth, where many different peoples lived together, as trade was active there. Thus, lots of Jews also lived there.
- (2) There were many shrines for Egyptian idols in the city of Corinth. The reason is that there were lots of ships coming to this port by trade car from the port of Alexandria in Egypt and they imported idols.
- (3) As there was trade in Corinth, there were many rich people, as well as many slaves and poor people. And as this city was so wicked and corrupted, it gave the nickname “corinthians” to those who committed adultery.

Apostle Paul came to this city of Corinth for the first time around the end of AD 51, during his second missionary journey. He then spent 18 months there in preaching the gospel and made great progress (Acts 18:1-11). And Paul left Corinth around AD 53 and preached the gospel everywhere. And he wrote this book of First Corinthians in the spring of AD 57 while he was staying in Ephesus.

In 1 Corinthians 1:1-3, Apostle Paul gives greetings to the Corinthian church saints. This Paul's greeting gives us an outline in three parts:

First, the verse 1 introduces the writer who was writing the letter of First Corinthians.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:1 – “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.” The one who wrote 1 Corinthians is Apostle Paul. He introduced himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (v. 1). And “Sosthenes” in verse 1 is probably Paul's secretary. Scholars presumed that Sosthene, who had previously been a leader in the Corinthian synagogue, now believed in Jesus and became a brother in Jesus (MacArthur).

Second, the verse 2 introduces the recipient who was receiving the letter of First Corinthians.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:2 – “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.” The recipients of the letter of First Corinthians can be divided into two categories: the Corinthian church and all those Christians everywhere.

Third, the verse 3 introduces the Paul’s greetings.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:3 – “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This Paul's greeting is something we find in the other letters of Apostle Paul: “grace” refers to God's saving grace, and “peace” refers to the peace of the soul through God's saving grace (MacArthur). The reason why we who believe in Jesus can truly enjoy the peace of the soul is because we who have been sinners have received grace to be reconciled to God because of the death of Jesus on the cross (Park).

I would like to meditate on three things about the Corinthian church, the recipient of the letter of First Corinthians, and all the Christians everywhere, based on Paul’s greetings. In the meantime, I want to know and learn more clearly what the church is, and what church our church should be. In doing so, I hope and pray that we will live out according to the lessons and become the true and ecclesial church that the Bible speaks of, and the triumphant community that shines the light of the Lord, the Head of the Church.

What is the church in the Bible? Three things are said in 1 Corinthians 1:2:

First, the church is “the church of God.”

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:2a – “To the church of God which is at Corinth” These days, when I hear bad news about such large churches through internet news, somehow the church looks like the church of a single pastor, the church of elders, or even the church of the family of the flesh. For example, when I looked at a Christian website last week, the news said that a senior pastor paid more than \$ 1.8 million in salaries to 23 family members a year before a large church in California went into bankruptcy (Internet). Another example is the people in Westboro, Baptist Church of Kansas, who protested at the funeral of the youngest 9-year-old Christina Greene of six people who died in an Arizona shooting that happened some time ago. It was a church that was founded by Pastor Fred Phelps and his children, and descendants played the pivotal role in that church. This church had previously protested at a funeral service for a Iraq’s war soldier with the picket saying ‘Thank God for the dead soldier’ and ‘God hates homosexuals.’ At the funeral of Elizabeth Edwards, the wife of former Senator John Edwards, who was a vice-president of the Democratic Party in the United States in 2010, they held a protest with a picket saying ‘God, thank you for bringing down breast cancer’ (Internet). Are these true Christians who said these kinds of things at the other people's funerals? Is this the true church where such people gather to worship God? I remember the words of Pastor Dwight Linton, an American missionary who came to our church a long time ago and led a revival meeting. He said that 'There is so much humanism in the Korean church.' Now it seems that rotten smell is stronger than Jesus’ aroma in our Korean churches. Isn’t that why such book like ‘77 Reasons why I Don’t Want to Go to Church’

came out? Here are some of the 77 reasons: (1) For young people without church experience: ‘There is no quiet church,’ ‘I hate the lie that if I believe in Jesus, I will be rich,’ ‘I saw a religious fanatic who destroyed a family,’ ‘A church is a pressure group without concessions.’ (2) For young people with church experience: ‘I hate the incongruity of the corporatized church,’ ‘I have not seen a real believer in the church,’ ‘I hate many hypocrites,’ ‘I like Jesus but I hate church.’

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul told the Corinthian church saints, the Christians everywhere, and us that the church is “the church of God.” What does it mean by “the church of God”? It means that the church is not a church that belongs to people and established by them but the church that belongs to God and established only by God (Park). Then what kind of church is the church that is established only by God? God who caused His only begotten Son Jesus to die on the cross and enables those whom He loves and chose before the creation to believe in Jesus who was crucified and risen from dead, called them from this sinful world and make them to be His children are the church of God. According to Acts 20:28, the church of God is ‘the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.’ The church of God is the people who have been bought with the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, who have been forgiven of their sins and become precious children of God. What is the characteristic of this church of God? It is unity. In other words, the church of God is one church as the Holy Trinity God is one (Jn. 17:22). Hence, Apostle Paul refers to the church of God as ‘one body of Christ’ (1 Cor. 12:12, 27). Although there are various members in one body, it is the church that is one body that is made up of many parts – on body of Christ (v. 12). But the characteristic of the people's church is quarrels (1:10, 11) and divisions (12:25).

This morning I had a conversation with Pastor Victor Gomez, who is in charge of the Hispanic Ministry (HM) at our church. And I heard the story of a new sister in Christ in Hispanic Ministry through Pastor Gomez. When she first came to our church and attended the first joint worship, the Korean Ministry (KM), the English Ministry (EM), and the Hispanic Ministry (HM), and she experienced God’s presence and the church was in harmony. When I heard this, I thought that the Lord was faithfully fulfilling His promise of Matthew 16:18, ‘I will build My church.’ And I thanked the Lord. Our church is the Lord’s church. It belongs to the Lord and the church that the Lord has purchased with His precious blood.

Second, the church is “those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy.”

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:2ab – “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling.” The church is being defiled now. The church is now polluted with all kinds of sinful things. The church is now lost its holiness due to greed, greed, desire, pride, falsehood, conflict, quarrel, sexual depravity, and so on. When I thought about what caused it, I remembered Numbers 11:4 and the book of Judges. When we look at Numbers 11:4, the reason why the Israelites started wailing and said, “If only we had meat to eat!” was because the rabble who were among them had greedy desires. What does it mean? Why is the church, God’s holy people, lost its holiness and defiled? What is the cause? It is because of those who have greedy desires among us. In other words, the church is being polluted because we who live in the world are being badly influenced by the worldly people who do not believe in Jesus. A similar word is found in the book of Judges. In Judges 1, the Israelites who entered the land of Canaan violated the word of God, and they didn’t drive out the Canaanites completely (Jdg. 1:19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33). As a result, the Canaanites became as “thorns” in the Israelites’ sides and the Canaanites’ gods became their snare (2:3). Although we must live as holy people of God as we live in this filthy, ugly, sinful world, we are not. Although we must cast out all evil, ugly, and evil, and seek the holiness of God, we are not. Rather, the church is now polluted by the dirty and ugly sins of the world. As a result, the church now is being criticized and ridiculed by the people in this world because we are not living a life distinct from the world and not taking the role of light and salt of the world. What is the problem? In a word, the problem is that the church is not separate from the world. The true church of God should be separated from the world. But now the church is in harmony with the world, and there is endless disharmony in the church. This is the Satan's work. Now

Satan is exchanging everything upside down (Rom. 1:23). Satan is making the church divided and harmonized with the world.

The church must be holy. The church, the congregation of saints sanctified in Christ Jesus, must be holy. The church has a holy name that God cherishes. Why should the church be holy? What is the reason? The reason is that it is God's will that the church to be holy (1 Thess. 4:3). In other words, our church must be holy because the Lord who is the Head of the Church is holy. This is God's will. Then what is "holy"? The word "holy" means "set apart," or 'separate, or distinguish.' For example, in the tenth plague of Exodus, as God distinguished the Israelites who put sheep's blood on their doorposts from the Egyptians, God separated the church from the world and sin by the precious blood of Jesus. I remember Exodus 33:14-15 that I meditated on the early Morning Prayer meeting. When we look at that passage, we see Moses praying to God. Moses asked God not to send him and the Israelites up from the place where they were to Canaan unless God Himself will go with them. Why did Moses pray to God like this? Why did he want God to go with them? In verse 16 we find the answer: "... What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" What distinguish the church from the world is because God is with us, the church, and goes with us. This distinctive holy people of God are "saints". Therefore, the Bible calls us "saints".

Then how should the life of the saints be?

(1) The saints must love God (life of love).

Look at Psalms 31:23a – "Love the LORD, all his saints!" The saint who loves God endures the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Look at Revelation 14:12 – "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus."

(2) The saints must fear God (holy life).

Look at Psalms 34:9 – "Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing." The saints who fear God hate evil. Therefore, they obey Ephesians 5:3 – "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints." In a word, the saints do right. Look at Revelation 19:8 – "It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

(3) The saints must praise God and thank God (life of worship).

Look at Psalm 30:4 – "Sing to the LORD, you saints of his; praise his holy name." We, as saints, are to present our bodies to God as holy living sacrifices to God. This is the spiritual worship that we should offer to God (Rom. 12:1).

Third and last, the church is all who call on the name of Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:2 – "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:" Here, "all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" refers to those who believe in Jesus everywhere, that is the Christians everywhere (Park). Apostle Paul wrote this First Corinthians not only to the Corinthian church saints, but also to all the Christians everywhere. What is the reason? The reason is because the church is one. In other words, Paul wrote this First Corinthians not only to the Corinthian church saints, but also to all the Christians everywhere, because he wanted to emphasize that all of them are one in Jesus. The church is one.

Although there are many local churches here and there where believers in Jesus are gathered, the church is one in Jesus Christ. Although there are many different members in the church, the church is the one body of Christ. When I think of this, I wondered why Apostle Paul's Corinthian letter was written not only for the Corinthian church saints, but also for all Christians everywhere. The reason is to teach the Corinthian church saints who were in conflict that the church is one in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, by setting the Corinthian church as an example, Paul wanted to encourage all the churches in everywhere not to be in conflict and be divisive but keep the unity of the one body of Jesus Christ.

These days' churches seem to have expanded its churchism. The local churches became more inclined to think only of their own churches. The care for other churches was gradually lost. As a result, this idea is prevalent that if our church is fine, it doesn't matter what happens to other churches. The churches tend to be as if a large market enters a small city and thus all the small shops around it lose their customers, causing the store to suffer and even close. As the larger church continues to grow and expands its local churches with the same name, the small churches around the larger church are struggling. In the midst of this, the small churches seem like actively seeking to bring each other's church members to their own churches. By doing so, the churches are busy filling up the number of church members in the chapel rather than loving and nurturing one soul with the love of Christ, and raising each soul as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. What do you think? Is it important to fill the chapel with the number of members, or is it important to love one soul with the love of Christ, raise him/her as the Lord-centered leader and send him/her to expand the kingdom of God? We must guard local churchism. And we must not forget that all who believe in Jesus are one body of Christ in the Lord. Although there are many churches, all who believe in Jesus are one in the Lord. Therefore, we should not quarrel, not be in conflicts and fight with each other. Rather, we must love one another with the Lord's love. And we must ask God for the unity of the church, as Jesus prayed in John 17. We must pray to God, 'Lord, may You make all churches one.' We must not show the world that the churches in fights, quarrels, and strife. Rather, we must now strive to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit, believing that all the believers Jesus calls are already one in the Lord (Eph. 4:3). Therefore, we must be the church that shines the light of Jesus in this dark world.

We learned three things about what the church is: (1) The church is the church of God, (2) The church is those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, and (3) The church is all who call on the name of Lord Jesus Christ. I hope and pray that our church will be the Lord's church that keeps the unity of the Holy Spirit, believing that we are already one in Christ with every believer in every place, as those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy and as those who call on the name of Lord Jesus Christ – the church of God.

‘A church that is the church’

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.” (Acts 2:42-43)

Pastor Rick Warren (Saddleback Church) said: ‘The most important issue of the 21st century church is not church growth, but church health. The problem is not whether the number of the church membership is large or small, but its health.’ And he proposed five ways to measure church growth: The church needs ... (1) To grow warmer through fellowship, (2) To deepen through discipleship, (3) To become stronger through worship, (4) To be wider through ministry, and (5) To grow bigger through evangelism. He said that rather than the number of church members, the percentage of church members who are mobilized for ministry and mission is a more accurate measure of the health of the church.

When I think about this, I wondered if our church is a healthy church. However, I personally prefer to use the word ‘A church that is the church’ rather than “a healthy church”, so I wondered if our church is a church that is the church. Before that, I first thought about what kind of church is ‘A church that is the church.’ Here, when I say "A church like the church" I mean the church that the Bible says. I would like to think about what kind of church is the church that is mentioned in the Bible centered on Acts 2:42-43. I would like to think of four things. I hope and pray that we will learn from the Bible what the church is and will be used by the Lord in building His church.

Look at Acts 2:42 – “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” After hearing the words of Apostle Peter, 3,000 people repented of their sins and were baptized and became the disciples of Jesus Christ. Then those 3,000 disciples continually devoted on four things. We too must continually devote ourselves on these four things in order for our church to be ‘A church that is the church’:

First, ‘A church that is the church’ continually devotes to the Word of God.

Look at today's Acts 2:42 – “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching” The 3,000 people who received Jesus through Apostle Peter's preaching were new believers who had just believed in Jesus. So they had no choice but to be taught by the apostles to promote their faith to grow. Luke, the author of the book of Acts, depicts the ideal relationship between Jesus and his disciples in the Book of Luke as the true disciples listening to the word of the Lord at His feet (Lk. 2:46; 8:35; 10:39) (Yoo Sang-sup). In pursuing our ideal relationship with Jesus, we must faithfully listen and learn the Word of God. This is a test question from a professor at the Chongshin Seminary: ‘What do the church saints need the most?’ The answer was ‘The Word of God.’ Each of the church saints may have different views of what they need the most. But from the spiritual point of view, what we need the most is the Word of God. Therefore, the members of “A church that is the church’ should continually devote all their efforts in learning the Word of God. We must continually devote ourselves in learning God's Word diligently.

Second, ‘A church that is the church’ continually devotes to fellowship.

Look at Acts 2:42 – “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship ...” Here, the Greek word for “fellowship” is “koinonia” (κοινωνία). And the word “koinonia” has two meanings: (1) It means sharing together and (2) It means to give what you have to someone else.

The Christian term "fellowship", which is often used by us, the Christians, these days, is questionable whether it is what the Bible says. Is Christian fellowship having an interesting conversation that the people in this world enjoy? Is it just having a social activity together? The fellowship we are talking about is not just about having the interesting conversation with people and having fun time. It doesn't just mean playing a game in a Christian setting, or just talking about what happened last week. That's what we did even before we were born again. There is some new sharing in the fellowship spoken of in the Bible. It is ‘to have time of sharing what we have learned in the Word of God and of praying together,’ ‘to have intercession and pray for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are in difficulties,’ ‘to share what we have with each other’ (Internet).

What is the fellowship mentioned in Acts 2:42? In Greek, there is a definite article that is "the fellowship." Here “the fellowship” refers to ‘the spiritual fellowship.’ On the day of Pentecost, it was the Holy Spirit who dwelled in them about 3,000 new believers and it was the Holy Spirit whom they shared together. Therefore, we can see that the early Jerusalem church was dedicated to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit within the community of the Holy Spirit is natural. Therefore, the early Jerusalem church was not just a humanistic community where people united in unity and union, but was the communion body of the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Spirit as the center and core (Yoo).

Third, ‘A church that is the church’ continually devotes to the communion.

Look at Acts 2:42 – “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread ...” Here, “the breaking of bread” refers to the communion (the Lord’s Supper). In other words, the early church saints devoted themselves to the communion.

We too should devote ourselves continually to the communion. Through the Lord’s Supper, we must humbly receive the bread and wine that symbolize Jesus' flesh and blood and enjoy the grace of the Lord.

Fourth and last, ‘A church that is the church’ continually devotes to prayer.

Look at Acts 2:42 – “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Here, the word “prayer” is plural. In other words, the early church in Jerusalem was totally dedicated to various kind of prayers. Another fact is that there is definite article before the word "prayer." So it means “the prayer.” In other words, the prayer of the early church in Jerusalem shows that its members imitated the prayers of about 120 persons who continually devoted themselves to prayer with one mind (1:14-15). This fact that continued as it was when the church expanded to about 3,000 new believers really challenges us. For the church in Jerusalem, the numerical growth of the members meant that the number of people who devoted to prayer increased. This confirms to the church in Jerusalem that prayer is not just a means for church growth, but an essential aspect of the church's existence (Yoo).

What was the result of wholehearted devotion of the early church saints to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer? Look at Acts 2:43 – “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.” What does this mean? In short, when they wholeheartedly devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer, the result was that the church had spiritual authority in the society of unbelievers (Park). But now the spiritual authority of the church fell too far in our society of unbelievers. How many churches are not devoted wholeheartedly to the things

we suppose to, but devoted to other things, so that we fight, quarrel, and there are conflicts and division in the church thus lose spiritual authority among unbelievers? Now even the unbelievers have no fear and awe for the church. Rather, the church is now ridiculed and ignored by them. What is the cause? This is because we Christians are not devoted to the things we suppose to. We should devote ourselves to the Word of God, true fellowship, communion, and prayer. As a result, the church should be established in spiritual authority even before unbelievers, and becomes 'A church that is the church' that is praised not only by God but also by the people of this world. I hope and pray that the Lord will build our church as 'A church that is the church.'

The true church

“His foundation is in the holy mountains. The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Selah. ‘I shall mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me; Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: ‘This one was born there.’ But of Zion it shall be said, ‘This one and that one were born in her’; And the Most High Himself will establish her.’ The LORD will count when He registers the peoples, ‘This one was born there.” Selah. Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes shall say, ‘All my springs of joy are in you.”” (Psalms 87:1-7)

A. W. Tozer's book, “The Incredible Christian” is a reinstatement of true faith to warn of hypocrisy and to be a true Christian. The author criticizes the faith that has been lopsided to one side, the faith with experience but without theology, and the unpleasant faith that isn't deeply moved in meeting God but only has dead orthodoxy, and etc. as 'fake faith' distorted by modern church materialism. And he shouted that we must return to the true faith of becoming the real salt of the world and of willing to bear our own cross. Since true Christians believe in Christ's victory, they are willing to suffer in order to participate in His victory. Five things are listed in Pastor Tozer's book list (Internet):

- (1) The real is not ashamed of the rugged cross (chapter 1),
- (2) The real rejects the cotton candy gospel and believes in the crown of thorns gospel (chapter 2),
- (3) The real gives priority to the Lord over the Lord's work (chapter 3),
- (4) The real desires holiness over happiness (chapter 4),
- (5) And the real is true to the basics of faith (chapter 5).

On the other hand, distorted Christians stress more than they need on their favorite Bible texts. In doing so, other texts are relatively underestimated. Pastor Tozer wrote eight things in his book list:

- (1) Fake is instant (chapter 7),
- (2) Fake neglects transformation of character (chapter 8),
- (3) Fake misunderstands the discipline of God as carrying the cross (Chapter 9),
- (4) Fake seeks forgiveness of sins by doing (chapter 10),
- (5) Fake ignores creeds (chapter 11),
- (6) Fake neglects theology (chapter 12),
- (7) Fake neglects feelings (chapter 13),
- (8) Fake has no spiritual balance (chapter 14).

We, the believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, should listen to 1 John 4:1 – “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” We must distinguish the spirit. In spirit, there is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who came from God, and who leads us rightly to the truth and the evil spirit, a false spirit, that deceives us and corrupts us. We must distinguish between these two spirits. In particular, we must be able to distinguish false prophets, false churches, false church members, and true prophets, true churches, and true church members. How can we do so? Those who

are led by the evil spirit, the spirit of deception, who lead the church are false prophets, those who are taught by false prophets are false churches, and those who are taught by false prophets are false church members. And those who lead the church as they are led by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth from God, are true prophets; those who are instructed by the true prophets are the true church, and those who are instructed by the true prophets are true church members (Internet).

I would like to receive the lessons by meditating on what the true church is based on Psalms 87. And I pray that our lessons will be applied to our churches so that our churches will become more and more established as the true church in the Lord's eyes.

First, the true church has firm foundation.

Look at Psalms 87:1 – “His foundation is in the holy mountains.” This word indicates that the spiritual foundation of the true church is solid (Park). In other words, the true church is solid. How can the true church be solid? It is because the Lord who is the Head of the Church establishes His church “on this rock” (Mt. 16:18). Here, the “rock” is the Peter's confession of faith, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). In other words, the church, built on the rock, is a community of people who, like Peter, rightly confess their faith in Jesus. Furthermore, the church, built on the rock, is not only the community of the believers who make the right confession of faith, but also who live according to their confession of faith as Jesus' disciples. More specifically, “rock” here refers to Jesus Christ. Look at Ephesians 2:20 – “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.” As Apostle Paul said, it is the church that is built on the rock has been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in which Christ Jesus is the corner stone. The expression “the corner stone” is found in 1 Peter 2:6 and Ephesians 2:20. The word “cornerstone” in Greek is “akrogoniaios” (ἀκρογωνιαίος), and the “akro” means “high,” and refers to “the rock built up high.” All of the Israel's buildings start with cornerstone, and the direction of the building is determined by the direction of the cornerstone. In other words, Jesus must be the cornerstone so that the church must stand, and the direction of all church must move according to the Christ's direction. Therefore, when we are all built together on the foundation of the word of the Lord, on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ at the center of the Word, and there is God who comes as the Holy Spirit in this house being built together, this church becomes the beautiful church and the true church (Internet).

Then why does the Lord build His church on the solid rock? This is what it says in Psalms 87:2 – “The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob.” The Lord has established His church firmly because He loves his church. I hope and pray that our church will become the true church in God's eyes. May God's beloved church, in which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, and in where God's servants proclaim the Word of God so that the church can be built on the solid rock and thus have the firm foundation.

Second, the true church is glorious.

Look at Psalms 87:3 – “Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Selah.” Why is the true church glorious? The reason is because the true church is “the city of God” (v. 3). In other words, the true church is glorious because God is there. This is what Dr. Park Yun-sun said: ‘It's not because the city of God itself is beautiful, but because the Lord of glory loves it.’ The true church is glorious because the city of God which the Lord of glory loves is honored by God. This reminds me of the Augustine's book “The City of God.” The time when Augustine was living, it was the time when the Roman Empire was collapsing. The fall of the Roman Empire led to the writing of his famous book “The City of God.” The original title of this book explains the intention of writing this book, ‘The greatest city of the world will fall, but the city of God will dwell forever’ (Internet). Rome recognized Christianity as a state religion in AD 313 and finally established a great empire of politics and religion. Therefore, at that time, the people thought of Rome as the kingdom of God and called it the Holy Roman Empire.

They assured that Rome would be a nation that would never perish. But these Romans were attacked and destroyed by the barbarians (Goths). So people deeply troubled and ask, 'How can the kingdom of God be destroyed by the barbarians?' Augustine meditated on this problem. After meditating deeply, he concluded: 'Roman, the kingdom of the world, is not the kingdom of God. Therefore, Rome can be destroyed at any time. The true kingdom of God is under the Lord's reign, and it is completed at the Lord's Second Coming. And this kingdom of God will not perish but will last forever' (Internet).

Our church is firmly established by the Lord of glory. The Lord of glory is building up His church faithfully according to His promise of Matthew 16:18, which He delighted and because He loves our church. Therefore, we must ask the Lord to build up His church as "a radiant church" (Eph. 5:27). May the Lord purify our church with the Word and make it holy (v. 26).

Third, the true church is established by the Lord Himself.

Look at Psalms 87:5 – "But of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her"; And the Most High Himself will establish her." Here, "And the Most High Himself will establish her" means the Most High Lord Himself will establish Zion, His Church. This is the same meaning as the promised word of the Lord Matthew 16:18 that our church holds: 'I will build my church....' These two Bible verses Psalms 87:5 and Matthew 16:18 clearly tell us that the true church, the Body of the Lord, is established by the Most High Lord, the Head of the Church. And in the Lord's own establishment of the church, the Gentiles will repent and return to Him and become the Zion people (v. 4) (Park Yun-sun).

The Lord's glorious church, established by the Lord Himself, is the people of all the nations He has chosen, multiethnic and universal. Just as the Jews did not embrace the Gentiles, this church never has preconception that there is wall between nations and denies multi-ethnicity and diversity. The church that the Lord Himself establishes is the firm church. And the church that the Lord Himself establishes is the glorious church. The glorious church is being built up by the glorious Lord. Let's keep in mind that our church is the Lord's church. And let us not forget that the church, which is the body of the Lord, is established by the Lord Himself (Ps. 87:5; Mt. 16:18). Therefore, we must not sin against God by trying to build His church in our strength and in our own ways. If we build His church with our own strength and in our own ways, the foundation cannot be firm. And if the foundation is not strong, the church will be shaken and fall. And such church will only manifest the glory of man, not the glory of God. May the Lord Himself build His church.

Fourth and last, the true church is the community of the heavenly citizens.

Look at Psalms 87:6 – "The LORD will count when He registers the peoples, "This one was born there." Selah." Here, "The Lord will count when He registers the peoples" is a prophecy of the New Testament period when all the people who believe in Jesus Christ enter into Heaven, that is, all the believers enters salvation (Park). Among the nations in this prophecy include Rahab that is Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia (v. 4). Although these nations are enemies of Israel, the psalmist foretold that in the future God would also make them to repent and bring them back to God. That's why the psalmist said in verse 4, "... among those who know Me" In other words, all those who acknowledge God, both Jews and Gentiles, will be regarded by God as citizens of heaven (Park). Therefore, all those citizens of heaven respond to God's grace: "Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes shall say, 'All my springs of joy are in you'" (v. 7). That is, they praise God because they are thankful for God's grace.

Let us all hold onto the word of Philippians 3:20-21 by faith: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into

conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” Our citizenship is in heaven, never on earth. We must not forget that we have citizenship in eternal heaven. Therefore, we must live as heavenly citizens while living on earth. We must live with solid faith built on the Rock, Jesus Christ. We must live for the glory of God. We must move forward to the city of God.

How do we know the true church and the fake church? The true church is a church built on a solid foundation. The true church is a glorious church. The true church is established by the Lord Himself. And the true church is a community of heavenly citizens. But the fake church is a church built on a shaking foundation or sand. The fake church seeks human glory. The fake church is built by people. And the fake church is a community of worldly citizens. I hope and pray that our churches will be established as the true church of God.

The Antioch church (1)

“So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.” (Acts 11:19-30)

William Barclay, a well-known Bible teacher and commentator, said the meaning of service like this: ‘When the world evaluates, the standard is how many people are you dominating, and how many people are going to come when you use your finger to give a sign to come? Also the worldly standard is intellectual standard, academic excellence or a number of executive meetings. Many also judge the greatness of a person based on his/her bank balance and how much of his/her assets and material possessions. But Jesus' evaluation has nothing to do with them. The Lord's evaluation standard is only one. And that one is how many people are you serving. There is greatness in it. If you really want to be like Jesus, there is nothing more than surrendering yourself to serve someone. This is a Christian challenge and an inevitable responsibility when the world is watching the church with suspicion. And this is a way to actively defend faith’ (Internet). What kind of church should our church be when the world is watching our church with suspicion? What are the challenges and the inevitable responsibility that our church has? It is to imitate Jesus. In particular, it is living a life of serving others like Jesus. Therefore, our church must be a “serving church.” I hope and pray that we serve our churches, serve our families and serve our neighbors. Let’s serve humbly, joyfully and voluntarily.

I would like to think and learn about what kind church was Antioch church based on Acts 11:19-30, under the heading “The Antioch church” and apply what we learn to our church so that our church can be like Antioch Church.

First, The Antioch church was a well-known church.

Look at Acts 11:22 – “The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.” Here, what was the “The news about them” that the Jerusalem church saints heard? It was the news about a large number who believed in the Lord and turned to the Lord (v. 21) when some of the scattered people, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch due to the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen and preached the Lord Jesus to the Greeks also (vv. 19-20). This news reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem (v. 22). So the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas off to Antioch (v. 22).

The words of Acts 11:19-21 are the words of God that initiated the Hispanic Ministry at our church after studying that passage during the leader bible study. Those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen went to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch and spoke the word to no one except to Jews alone (v. 19). But there were some of them who went to Antioch and preached the Lord Jesus even to the Greeks (v. 20). When I was meditating on this, I began to wonder why God was still not moving our church from the Hispanic region. And the thought that came into my mind was that maybe the Lord's will is for us to reach out and preach the gospel to the dying Hispanic souls in this area. So our church leaders began to pray to God for a Hispanic pastor who can serve our church and our church neighbors. Then, about ten months later, God sent Pastor Victor Gomez to us and he began to serve our Hispanic Ministry (HM). I asked myself these questions: 'What is the rumor of our church? Or what rumor do we want to be spread?'

One day, I once learned about our church in the Korean newspaper Religion section. Our church didn't publish an article, but a reporter who wanted to cover our church wrote about our church and published it. Perhaps it was because our church has three ministries in one church: Korean Ministry (KM), English Ministry (EM) and Hispanic Ministry (HM). I personally hope that the news about our church can be spread like this: 'Wow, that church is united by God's love,' 'It's amazing how three ministries of different cultures and languages are united together in love,' 'That church is truly a church that keeps the unity of the Spirit in diversity,' etc.. In this age when churches are divided due to problems in the churches and as a result the churches aren't a good example to the world, I hope and pray that our church may be able to show the world the unity of the church within the three ministries. One thing that is unfortunate for us to see is that our church isn't like Antioch church in which “a large number who believed turned to the Lord” (v. 21). But I am thankful that about three of our church neighborhood families come to our Hispanic Ministry worship and prayer meeting. Another thing that I am thankful is that God has been working wonderfully in Tijuana, Mexico, where our Hispanic Ministry Pastors Gomez and his wife, Mrs. Elma Gomez and others who go down to Tijuana, Mexico every month. It shows the work of God and His gospel there, that so many Mexican souls have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. When I hear these news through Pastor Gomez, I cannot help but to think about the Lord's will as to what God is doing through our church in Tijuana, Mexico (Now also in Ensenada, Mexico too). When I hear the Lord's hand is with Pastor Gomez and his mission team, and a large number who has believed are turning to the Lord (v. 21), I wonder why the power of God is manifested more in Tijuana, Mexico than in our church. In the midst of this, I talked to Pastor Gomez about if it's the Lord, we should think about establishing a district church there.

As the Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas off to Antioch after hearing the news about the God's work of salvation in Antioch church, I thought about likewise our church is sending Pastor Gomez and his mission team to Tijuana, Mexico every month. I hope and pray that through our church members' prayers and service in love, we can hear more about the God's saving work in Tijuana, Mexico. I also pray and hope to hear the same thing from other countries where our church is supporting with prayers and small amount of financial support. And I hope and pray that as our church serve humbly, joyfully and voluntarily our neighbors through community outreach, the power of the gospel may be manifested so that the good news about our church may spread to our neighborhood.

Second, Antioch church was “Christians” church.

Look at Acts 11:26 – “and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” When the Jerusalem church heard the news about God's work of salvation in Antioch, they recognized the Gentile mission and sent Barnabas, who was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, to Antioch (v. 24). And when Barnabas arrived at Antioch, he witnessed the grace of God (v. 23). In other words, Barnabas was delighted to see God's gracious work of saving the Gentiles. He actually witnessed with his own eyes that the larger number believed and turned to the Lord (v. 21). So he rejoiced and encouraged them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord (v. 23). The word of this encouragement was to keep remaining with the Lord with a purpose in mind' (Park). The result of sending Barnabas to Antioch was that considerable numbers were brought to the Lord (v. 24). Eventually, after the large number believed and turned to the Lord through some of the Jews who had come to Antioch and preached the Lord Jesus, the Antioch church grew even more through Barnabas. Therefore, since Barnabas couldn't work alone in the ministry of the Antioch church due to the larger number of believers, he went to Tarsus to find Saul (Paul) and brought him to Antioch (vv. 25-26). And for a entire year Barnabas and Paul systematically taught and trained the considerable numbers (v. 26, Yoo). As a result, the disciples of the Antioch church reached a qualitatively amazing maturity, so that for the first time they earned the nickname “Christians” from non-Christians. It means ‘followers of Christ.’ How well were they trained and followed Jesus Christ that they were called “Christians” who were followers of Christ in the eyes of the surrounding non-Christians?

Are we following Jesus Christ as His disciples? Or are we not half Christians? Someone said, ‘The condition to be unhappy is to be a half Christian.’ It means that when we live with dual life in the church and in the world, we will be unhappy. What does a ‘Christian businessman’ mean? If you think that everyone who goes to church and does business is a Christian businessman, that's a misunderstanding. If you do business and do not apply biblical principles of the business, but do your business only in worldly ways, then you aren't a Christian businessman but a Christian who goes to church and do business. A true meaning of ‘Christian businessman’ is a person who does business by applying the teachings of Jesus Christ within the principles of business. The same is true for Christian workers. ‘A Christian worker’ refers to a person who does work with the word of Christ. However, even though there are many Christians who attend church and do their works in worldly ways, but only few people do business or work like Christians who apply the biblical principles to their business or work. In order for us to be influential in changing the world, we must apply the principles of the Bible to the principles of our lives. We must abandon our double life of faith and be born again as true Christians who change the world by revealing Christ in us (Internet).

Third and last, the Antioch church was a church doing the relief.

Look at Acts 11:29 – “And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.” As the Antioch church grew up, through the ministry of Barnabas and Saul, they lived a life of following Jesus Christ so that many people earned the nickname “Christians” at the Antioch church. At that time, among some prophets who came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, Prophet Agabus prophesied through the Holy Spirit. He said that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world (vv. 27-28). And that prophecy was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius (v. 28). During the reign of Claudius, there was a series of crop failures and food shortages in Rome, Greece, Egypt, and Judea (Yoo). Because of this great famine, the people who lived in Judea suffered so much that they eventually suffered a great blow to the church in Judea and the church needed help. At that time, the Gentile church of Antioch determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea (v. 29) and sent it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders of the Jerusalem church (v. 30).

Here we can find the principle used by the Antioch church in helping the Jerusalem Church. And the principle is none other than "each according to his ability" (v. 29). This means that each of them supported their

own savings according to their own economic capabilities (Yoo). This relief from the Antioch church makes me to think of the relief of Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10). Luke, the writer of the book of Acts who recorded the life of one person Cornelius in giving many alms in Acts 10, said in Acts 11 that not one Gentile person but the Gentile church of Antioch sent the contribution for the relief of the brethren in the Jerusalem church. How amazing is God's work? Interestingly, because the Antioch Church (which had a spiritual debt to Jerusalem church), which grew under the Jerusalem church support, helped the Jerusalem church economically, the relationship and fellowship between two churches was more strengthened. How beautiful work of the Lord it is to see that there was a fellowship between the individual Jews Peter and Gentile Cornelius in Acts 10 and there was fellowship between the Gentile Antioch church and the Jewish Jerusalem church in Acts 11? In the Lord, the church is one. Both the Jewish and Gentile churches are one in the Lord.

The church that generously gives relief will be prosperous. Look at Proverbs 11:25 – “The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.” Then how should we give relief? Here are some suggestions (Internet):

(1) Give relief regularly so that you may live a life of giving relief.

If you often send relief donations, even a small amount, to those who need them, then you may be able to live a life of giving relief. Although your relief may be small for you, but it can be a great help to anyone who needs it.

(2) Look for the object of relief in prayer.

If you send relief vaguely, then you may not feel rewarding. Therefore, if you are determined to do relief, you need to pray for the Lord to reveal the object of relief.

(3) Practice relief secretly with volunteer heart.

Relief should not be forced, but should be done voluntarily. Also relief should be done in secret, not in pride. In doing so, God is honored and will reward you in secret.

(4) Praise God for the fruit of relief.

Do not rejoice alone when your relief offering bear some fruits, but praise God who guided you to the relief. In doing so, God will bless you for more so that you can do more relief.

The Antioch church was a well-known church. The Antioch church was the well-known church for the larger number of people who believed in Jesus Christ and turned to the Lord. Also, the Antioch church was Christian church. The Antioch church believers earned the nicknamed “Christians”. The Antioch church was a church that did relief. I hope and pray that the Lord will establish our church like the Antioch church.

The Antioch church (2)

“Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:1-3)

What is the cause of the decline of the Korean church? Pastor Pi Young Min said: ‘The Korean churches are concerned that the number of Christians has decreased more than many years ago. But the decrease in the number of Christians is probably a natural result. It is because the Christians live well, they have land, they have good education for their children, and they are satisfied, so they treat others indifferently. Because the Christians are at the forefront of this, it's only natural that the numbers of Christians decrease. The Christians should not be indifferent to community. Also they can't be satisfied with their own self-satisfaction that ‘I'm fine now.’ Indifference and self-satisfaction cause the community of the church to cause to fall by evil. Awake, and look around. There are so many people who need our love’ (Internet).

We have already meditated on the three things based on Acts 11:19-30 under the heading “Antioch Church (1)”: (1) The Antioch church was the well-known church (v. 22). Since the Lord’s hand was with them, the church was known as the great number of people believed and turned to the Lord (v. 21). (2) The Antioch church was “Christians” church (v. 26). The Christians who follow Jesus ... If we are true Christians, it will be okay. (3) The Antioch Church was the church doing the relief (v. 29).

I saw a pastor column in the Christian Herald (February 8, 2007). I read the article, ‘The Church of Growing Spirituality,’ written by our presbytery pastor. Introducing the recently published book, “Revolutionary Wealth,” by Alvin Toffler, Alvin Toffler said a future society is bigger and more valuable than invisible wealth. What do you think? So Toffler emphasizes ‘the intangible wealth.’ That means that in the future, money, securities, and land will not only be wealth, but invisible knowledge will form wealth as well. The pastor's question was then, ‘What is the invisible wealth to the church and Christians?’ That pastor says ‘spirituality.’ And he said that spirituality is accomplished by word of God and prayer. As I read this article, I thought about what spirituality our church should pursue. I was challenged to pursue ‘the desert spirituality.’ The basis for this challenge is the “the congregation in the wilderness” in Acts 7:38.

What is desert spirituality? In Henry Nowen's book, “The Way of Heart”, he summarized in three ways: “solitude,” “silence,” and “prayer.” It means to leave the world and go to the place of solitude. Its purpose is to meet with our Lord and to be with Him. In the meantime, we must find and fight our false ego (such as anger and greed). Solitude is a furnace of transformation. We must learn to be silent in the place of solitude. In fact, silence is the solitude of action. Why are we silent? It is to hear the voice of the Lord. Therefore, silence is not to speak the words, but to listen to God's voice. Nowen says solitude and silence are for prayer. Solitude is not being alone, but with God and silence is not speaking but listening to God. I think this is an invisible secret prayer of heart. In pursuit of this spirituality, our church will be able to become a true Christian church like Antioch (Acts 11:26). And the Christian church will earnestly praise, "Lord, I want to be a Christian In a my heart, in a my heart, Lord, I want

to be a Christian In a my heart, In a my heart” (Hymn, “Lord, I Want to be a Christian”, v. 1). The church of such true Christians cannot but will be well known (v. 22). The reason is because the hand of the Lord is with them, and a large number who believe turn to the Lord (v. 21). In the meantime, true Christians give alms according to the Lord’s will to any races, cultures, and prejudices in love (v. 29). In other words, our church should be like the church of Antioch - the church that does relief, the “Christians” church, the well-known church. In particular, I pray that our church will be well-known as the churches with various workers like Antioch church (13:1). I earnestly pray that the Lord raise up the various Christ-centered workers who have dreams among the three ministries of our church. I would like to meditate on the Antioch church in three ways under the heading “Antioch Church (2)” focusing on Acts 13:1-3. May the Lord establish our church as the Antioch church.

First, there were various workers in Antioch church.

Look at Acts 13:1 – “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” There were “prophets and teachers” in the Antioch church: “Barnabas,” Simeon who was called Niger,” “Lucius of Cyrene,” “Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch” and “Saul.” It is interesting to see that in the Antioch church, people from different origins and educational backgrounds were doing the ministry together. Barnabas was a Levite from Cyrene, Saul was a rabbi educated from Tarsus, Simeon was a black man from North Africa, Lucius was from Cyrene, and Manaen was a political and aristocratic background with a high social status. This fact shows that although the Antioch church was a Gentile-oriented church, its core Word ministers were an international character (Yoo).

How amazing is this? The Antioch church, which didn’t discriminate against race (serve with Simeon who was called Niger) and the church that didn’t discriminate against the rich and poor (serve with Manaen, a high social status who was the younger brother of Herod), was a beautiful church in the eyes of the Lord. How beautiful is it that people of diverse backgrounds come together to serve the church, one body of the Lord? Isn’t this what our church should pursue? The church that keeps unity in diversity is a beautiful church. Each member of Christ’s body must be able to serve according to each other’s ability in equality. The ideal of the church is to seek unity as a member of Jesus Christ among such diversity (Internet).

However, today’s church seems to be a “noble church” and discrimination seems to be commonplace. Today, the church is becoming the noble church where only successful people survive and tends to discriminate from one another and this is becoming common. This shows that the body of Christ, the church, is sick now (Internet). In the church, we are ignoring and discriminating each other. Environment, personality, difference between rich and poor, educational difference, job, etc. are still problems in the church. This is still guilty in violating the Lord’s will by focusing on these external things rather than the fact that the church is a family of God in Jesus. The church needs various servants. Just as there are many members in the body, there must be various workers in the church with different gifts. And the church is beautiful when these diverse gifts of workers are united in Jesus Christ, faithfully keeping the unity of the church. I hope and pray that the work of serving the church together will continue to be established by various servants in our church as the Lord continues to rise His humble servants.

Second, the Antioch church was a church led by the Holy Spirit.

Look at Acts 13:2 – “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” What are the characteristics of the church led by the Holy Spirit? There are two ways to think based on verse 2:

(1) The church led by the Holy Spirit serves the Lord.

Acts 13:2 says, “While they were worshiping the Lord.” Here, the word “worshiping” can be interpreted in two ways (Park):

- (a) This refers to personal spiritual fellowship with God. More specifically, it is talking about fasting, which is to reject physical pleasures and to receive the spiritual touch of God (Park). The fastings of the five leaders of the Antioch church was more like a fasting prayer to find the Lord's wonderful will for the Antioch church rather than because of any special problems and persecution.
- (b) The word “worshiping” can also mean corporate worship. In the Bible, the word “serving” is often interpreted to mean “worship.” For example, in 1 Thessalonians 1: 9, the Thessalonian church saints said that they abandoned idols and returned to God to live and serve the true God, where the word “serve” means ‘to worship’. The word serve also indicates that the five diverse workers of the Antioch church served in the church as prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1). When we see that Barnabas and Saul's ministry was evangelism, nurturing through word teaching, and doing the relief of the saints in Jerusalem (11:23-26, 29-30), serving in the Antioch church seems to include these things as well (Yoo).

(2) The church led by the Holy Spirit does what the Holy Spirit tells to do.

Eventually, the five leaders of the Antioch church learned the will of the Lord in fasting prayers. The will of the Lord was to set apart Barnabas and Saul. The Bible does not say clearly how they came to know the will of the Lord, whether they heard the voice of the Holy Spirit or not. According to Dr. Yoon-sun Park, ‘At this time some of the prophets of the Antioch church would have heard the voice of the Holy Spirit.’ What the Holy Spirit had commanded was “‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (v. 2). Professor Yoo Sang-sup points out two things to note here (Yoo):

- (a) The Holy Spirit raised two workers for Himself. For Himself means the Holy Spirit established Barnabas and Paul to testify the God's Word, the Word of Salvation, to make the people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.
- (b) The two men appointed by the Holy Spirit were Barnabas, the first of the five, and Saul, the last. This means that both Barnabas and Saul were called to serve the mission of the Holy Spirit, but the other three were indirectly involved in missionary work. In other words, the other three were the missionaries who send Barnabas and Saul to the mission fields and supported their mission with prayer and materially behind the scenes.

I hope and pray that our church will be led by the Holy Spirit. I pray that our church will become a church that serves the Lord and faithfully takes on the mission of preaching the gospel according to the will of the Lord.

Third and last, the Antioch church was a sending (mission) church.

Look at Acts 13:3 – “Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” The Antioch church leaders ordained Barnabas and Saul, who seemed indispensable in the Antioch church in obedience to the Spirit's command. In some ways, these are the leaders who revived the Antioch church. Nevertheless, the Antioch church leaders sent them after they laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul. What's interesting here is that the word “send” means “released” rather than sent (Park). If so, the Antioch church released

Barnabas and Saul who were indispensable, in obeying the will of the Holy Spirit and have appointed them as missionaries. This fact gives us two important lessons:

- (1) This teaches us that missionary work is very important when we see the Antioch church released very important leaders of the Antioch church, Barnabas and Paul, as missionaries.

How difficult was this for the Antioch church to send the very important leaders of the church as missionaries. I am sure it wasn't easy for the Antioch church to decide to send both Barnabas and Saul as missionaries. However, the Antioch church knew the importance of mission and was willing to obey the mission of the Lord.

- (2) This teaches us that we should send the missionaries who are prepared.

When the Holy Spirit's will was to send Barnabas and Saul as missionaries, both Barnabas and Saul were neither the beginnings of the faith or the beginners of the ministry sent to the mission field. The lesson this fact teaches us is that we must build up well-prepared mature workers and send them to missions. Professor Yoo Sang-sup says: 'It is no coincidence that those who have been prepared to go to the mission field under the direction of the Holy Spirit are successful. This shows that it is not advisable to send unverified people to the mission field. ... From now on, the churches should think more carefully about sending their mission to the mission field, not just as soon as they graduate from seminary and receive ordination. And the churches should refrain from sending people to missions who have not been tested for character, faith, or theology. Rather, only those who are best prepared under the sovereign guidance of the Holy Spirit should be sent' (Yoo).

There were various workers in Antioch church. Also, the Antioch church was led by the Holy Spirit. The Antioch Church served the Lord by doing what the Holy Spirit told them to do. And the Antioch church was a sending church. In other words, the Antioch church was a missionary church. The Antioch church sent the prepared workers Barnabas and Paul as missionaries. I hope and pray that our church be like the Antioch church: the various workers of the church keep the unity of the church in the Lord, the church that serves the Lord under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the mission church.

The church that is being cursed

“Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the LORD your God.” (Deuteronomy 28:62)

One day, I read the article on a Christian website with the title of ‘A Korean Kadafi, a Pastor Step Down.’ I wondered how this article came up by comparing the pastor with Libya's dictator Kadafi so I read it all the way. The article was about an emergency committee for reform of an organization that claimed, ‘A pastor who makes the Korean church sick by having illegal elections must repent immediately and withdraw from a group presidency.’ When I read the article, I became speechless. However, in addition to this article, we often see others articles that talk about many sinful things that are happening in the churches. But I am not surprised anymore maybe because I see too many such articles or my mind got insensitive. Then, during the early morning prayer meeting, I proclaimed the Word centered on Deuteronomy 28:47-48 and meditated on God's Word under the heading of “The church that is being cursed” centered on Deuteronomy 28:62.

Why is it “The church that is being cursed”? Isn't the church being blessed now? Aren't we Christians now asking God for blessings, blessings, and blessings? How can we dare to say that the church is being cursed? It's just my personal thought. There are too many churches now. There are too many church members now. The church is now too big. I remember the God's words to Gideon in the book of Judges: “The people who are with you are too many ...” (Jdg. 7:2). Why do you think God said that 32,000 Israelite soldiers are too many to Gideon (v. 3), who had to go war against the Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the sons of the east who were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts, and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore (v. 12)? Why did God let Gideon's 300 men to defeat the multitude of enemies? It was because “Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me’” (v. 2). God defeated many of his enemies with the Gideon's 300 soldiers, fearing that the Israelites would become boastful, saying “My own power has delivered me” (v. 2). But now the church shouts the Gideon's 300 soldiers through the lips, but in our minds, we want numerous church members like the Israelites' enemies (v. 12). So even we the pastors have no conscience to inflate our church members. Even we are proud of number of our church congregation. And we use our church congregation number to get an important title and abuse our power. As a result, the flocks of God's beloved were wounded and scattered to become the food for every beast of the field (Ezek. 34:4-5). Nevertheless, we the shepherds continue to feed our stomachs because we are feeding ourselves (v. 2). We are too abundant in all things (Deut. 28:47). Clearly, God told the Israelites, “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me’” (v. 14), he should not multiply horses for himself (v. 16), he should not multiply wives for himself (v. 17), and he should not greatly increase silver and gold for himself (v. 17). But King Solomon violated these commands of God. He had many horses, many wives, and too many silver and gold. As a result, he was led astray (v. 17) and sinned against God by serving the gods of his Gentile wives even though God clearly told him to serve the Lord their God joyfully and gladly in time of prosperity (28:47).

Now our church is abundantly blessed by God. Nevertheless, we are not serving the Lord joyfully and gladly. And now we aren't humbly enjoying God's blessings. Rather, we are abusing God's blessings. We are not glorifying God with the blessings that we have received from God. We continue to disobey God's Word now. As a result, God who rejoices in blessing us has turned the blessings He has given us into curse. Now we are cursed

when we come in and cursed when we go out (v. 19). Now God will make us to be in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty (v. 48). No matter how many we may be “as numerous as the stars in the sky” we will be left but few in numbers because we didn’t obey the word of God (v. 62). “Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you” (v. 63). Now the Lord is scattering us now (v. 64). Now we are worshiping other gods (v. 64). Now we find no repose, no resting place for the sole of our foot, we have anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart (v. 65). We live in constant suspense and are not sure of our life (v. 66). Now the church is under the God’s curse. What should we do?

Now we, the church, must be more hungry, thirsty, naked, and in dire poverty (v. 48). We should be few in number (v. 62). We should ask God to give us a mind that understands, eyes that see and ears that hear (29:4). And we must listen to God's voice to us. And we must see the God’s work of His wrath upon us. And we must realize God's will and Heavenly Father's heart. We must repent and return to God and keep God's covenant word (v. 9). Never should we, the church, think, “I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way” because “This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry” (v. 19).

The church that is like a prostitute

“So in your prostitution you are the opposite of others; no one runs after you for your favors. You are the very opposite, for you give payment and none is given to you.” (Ezekiel 16:34)

Not long ago, I read a newspaper in the Korea-American Daily, that some Korean students got a visa to study in United State and they involved in prostitution. As I was reading the news article, I was wondering why those Korean students were involved in prostitution. Many times in the news, I heard that the Koreans are caught in the prostitution business and they brought the falling down image of Korean people in United State. And I didn't know what to say.

In Ezekiel 16:34, God spoke through prophet Ezekiel to the Israelites about their prostitution. And God said that their prostitution is not like other women. In today's words, the difference is that the prostitutes get paid and sell their bodies, but the Israelites sold their bodies by giving money to the other parties. So God told the Israelites, “Every prostitute receives a fee, but you give gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from everywhere for your illicit favors” (v. 33). I would like to think about the Israelites' prostitution, giving gifts to “all your lovers”, in three ways and apply those three things to the churches in our days. I hope and pray that repentance and turning to the Lord will occur in our churches.

First, the Israelites who were in prostitution believed in their "beauty."

Look at Ezekiel 16:15 – “But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his.” The beauty of the Israelites was God's gracious gift. In other words, because God glorified the Israelites, their splendor was perfected (v. 14). This is what the Bible says about the splendor that God had given the Israelites that mad their beauty perfect: “I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey and olive oil. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen” (vv. 11-13). In a word, God gave the Israelites a proper dressing to be the queen (v. 13) (Park). As a result, their fame spread among the nations on account of their beauty (v. 14). But the Israelites trusted in their beauty and used their fame to become a prostitute (v. 15). They did a lot of prostitution with “anyone who passed by” (v. 15). Their bodies became the possession of “anyone who passed by.” In other words, the Israelites enjoyed the world in order to make themselves good by living in association with those who belonged to the world (Park). They had forgotten the grace of God and used it for themselves rather than for the glory of God.

How is our church now? Are we using all the grace and blessings that God has given us in Jesus Christ for His glory? Or are we now using all God's grace and blessings for our own glory? The church is getting too fancy. And its' splendor is not the glory of God but the glory of the church itself. The name of the church is heard more than the name of God. Even the church names are being branded. The name of the church is well known to the world. Its fame is being spread among the nations on account of their beauty. As a result, the church became proud of its reputation and believes in its splendor.

Second, the Israelites who were in prostitution viewed their prostitution as a small matter.

Look at Ezekiel 16:20 – “Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter?” The Israelites served their idols with God's grace instead of serving God (vv. 16-19). They did not use their “clothes”, “beautiful jewels”, “embroidered cloth”, ‘oil and incense, “fine flour, oil, and honey” in their worship of God, but for idols (Park). They were guilty of spiritual adultery, offering up the blessings of God to idols. They even sacrificed their sons and daughters (“slaughtered My children”) and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire” (vv. 20-21). These Jews' sacrifices refer to the sins they sacrificed to the Gentile gods (Park). In other words, they offered their children who God gave to them as His blessings, to the idols instead to God. Nevertheless, the Israelites regarded these sins as a small matter (v. 20).

How about our church? How about us? Aren't we regarding our spiritual adultery as a small matter? Aren't we using God-given blessings for ourselves and for the world, rather than for the Lord and His church? Now, the churches aren't internalizing but externalizing the God's given splendor, compromising with the world and giving glory to churches instead of God. We are offering our children, whom God gave us His gracious gifts, to the world instead to our God. Even the church officers are offering their children to the world by helping them to strive to lift the ladder of world success rather than offering their children to the Lord for His gospel, His church, and His kingdom. Although their children had borne to God (v. 20), they are offering their children for themselves and the world. But the bigger problem is that we regard this sin as small matter. As such, the church has lost the ability to regard sin as sin.

Third, the Israelites who were in prostitution were not satisfied with prostitution.

Look at Ezekiel 16:29 – “You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this you were not satisfied.” The Israelites played the harlot with the Egyptians, their lustful neighbors, and multiplied their harlotry (v. 26). This means that the Israelites were engaged in the service of idols of Egyptians who had strong bodies or strong lusts (Park). It wasn't over here, but the Israelites played the harlot with the Assyrians because they still weren't satisfied (v. 28) so they multiplied their harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this they weren't satisfied (v. 29). These words indicate that the Israelites relied more on Egypt, Assyria, or the Chaldeans than on God (Park). And the Israelites imported and worshiped the idols of these Gentile nations even though, at least, the Philistine people worshiped idols but didn't import foreign idols like the Israelites (v. 27, Park). Thus the Israelites, like a lewd woman who had been lustful, had committed spiritual adultery with these nations, and weren't satisfied enough.

How about our church? How about us? Aren't we guilty of spiritual adultery to satisfy the lust of our eyes, the lust of our flesh, and the boastful pride of our life? (1 Jn. 2:16) Aren't we so strong in lust that we are committing spiritual adultery, depending on others and other things besides God? Isn't the church sinning against God by committing spiritual adultery like the Israelites who were lustful and weren't satisfied enough?

The church shouldn't be in prostitution like the Israelites. The church shouldn't be like a prostitute. The church is the holy bride of Jesus, the Bridegroom. Therefore, the church must be clean (Eph. 5:26). The church must be holy and blameless (v. 27). God has established the Church as a glorious church before the Lord (v. 27). We should never be involved in spiritual adultery by believing in our splendor and regard it as a small matter. The church must not be a church that doesn't know enough about committing spiritual adultery, but a church that satisfies only by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church that digs its own grave

**“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.”
(Jeremiah 2:13)**

A Korean proverb says, ‘I did my own grave.’ It means figuratively saying that I am doing something foolish that ruined myself (Internet). Actually, the people of Judah in Jeremiah 2:13 dug their own graves. They committed a foolish sin that destroyed themselves. God spoke of their own foolish sin of digging their own graves in two ways: (1) They forsook God who is the fountain of living waters, and (2) They hewed for themselves cisterns. In other words, the people of Judah, who dug for themselves cisterns, forsook God and pursued “emptiness” (v. 5) and “after things that did not profit” (vv. 8, 11). The things that didn’t profit were worthless idols. They turned their back to God and their face to their gods which they made for themselves (vv. 27-28). To these apostate and rebellious people of Judah, God said through Prophet Jeremiah: “Your own wickedness will correct you, And your apostasies will reprove you; Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter For you to forsake the LORD your God, And the dread of Me is not in you,” declares the Lord GOD of hosts.” God spoke to the people of Judah who had forsaken God and chose idols that it is evil and bitter that they forsook God and had no dread of Him in them. The people of Judah, who dug their own cisterns, chose their own way of suffering.

I think this is what the church looks alike now. Since there is no fear of God, I think we are seeing the churches forsaking God and following after idols. As a result, the churches are suffering now. There are three sinful aspects of the church that are digging their own cisterns:

First, we the church are not realizing the sins that we are committing.

Look at Jeremiah 2:23 – “How can you say, ‘I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals’? Look at your way in the valley! Know what you have done!” Like the people of Judah who didn’t understand what they had done, we the church are not aware of the sins that we are committing against God and polluting ourselves. The sins of the people of Judah were guilty of spiritual adultery pursuing after their gods “like a swift young camel entangling her ways” (v. 23) and like a “wild donkey accustomed to the wilderness, That sniffs the wind in her passion” (v. 24). They had forsaken God and followed other gods to satisfy their own greedy desire (3:5). Yet they didn’t know the shame. The reason is because the people of Judah have “a harlot’s forehead” (v. 3).

I am worried that this is what our church is. We, the church, don’t know shame and are committing shameful sins against God but don’t understand our own sins. The Bible says that we have “a harlot’s forehead” (v. 3). We need to be ashamed. We must be ashamed in serving both God and money. We should be ashamed that we are forsaking God and pursuing money. We must see that there is no fear of God in us. And we must see greed and covetousness in us. We must face our sinful desire for anything other than God. We must realize that this is sinful in the sight of God.

Second, we the church are not accepting chastening of God.

Look at Jeremiah 2:30 – “In vain I have struck your sons; They accepted no chastening Your sword has devoured your prophets Like a destroying lion.” The people of Judah who didn’t realize their sins, refused to accept chastening despite being struck by God. Like the children who were disciplined by their father and still disobedient to their fathers’ words, the people of Judah didn’t return to God but continued to follow other gods even after being disciplined by Heavenly Father. They went around so much changing their way (v. 36). They went to Assyria and also went to Egypt and relied on them (v. 36). Furthermore, the people of Judah killed all the prophets who rebuked their sins, telling them to confess their sins and to repent, and proclaiming to them to return to God (v. 30). Although they were disciplined by God, they had forgotten God days without number (v. 32). Yet they said, “I am innocent; Surely His anger is turned away from me” (v. 35).

I’m worried that this is what our church looks like. Not only do we not realize our sins, but we are not conscious of it, confessing it, and repenting even in the midst of receiving God’s discipline of love. Our hearts are very hardened. Now we are guilty of not considering sin as a sin. In the meantime, we are accustomed to sinning habitually against God. And we don’t like and actually hate those who are pointing out our sins by proclaiming the Word of God. We are rejecting them. In the meantime, we are making excuses that we are innocent. And when God is silent after disciplining us with the rod of wrath, we think that God’s wrath has left us forever so we boldly commit sin against God. Now we continue to depend on others or matters other than God. Because of this we will not be prosperous (v. 37), but we forsake God and refuse to return to God. We must stop these sinful acts. And we must return to God. We are to go forth with repentance to our Heavenly Father, stretching our hands to God.

Third, we the church is returning to God in deception.

Look at Jeremiah 3:10 – ““Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,” declares the LORD.” The treacherous Judah didn’t fear God but she went and was a harlot (v. 8). She polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees (v. 9). As a woman treacherously departs from her lover, so the people of Judah had dealt treacherously with God (v. 20). Yet they didn’t return to God with their hearts, but rather in deception (v. 10).

I think this is what we the church look like. We seem to return to God by confessing and repenting of our sins at worship meetings and revival meetings, but we are hard at work trying to satisfy our greed by forgetting God and following other things. But our soul can never be satisfied with anything other than God. How long will we pretend to return to God like this? God is telling us to return with all our hearts (vv. 10, 12-14). Therefore, we must return to God with sincere repentance. We must return to God by forsaking things that we suppose to, acknowledging our sins to God, whom we should never forsake (v. 13).

Like the people of Judah who dug their own graves, we thee church are digging our own graves now. We must realize our sins. We must humbly receive God’s chastening. And we must truly return to God as we acknowledge and confess our sins. This is how the church can live.

The corrupted church

“Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt” (Exodus 32:7).

Recently, I heard a pastor saying about the Korean churches atmosphere as ‘I’m bored. Let’s change.’ I didn’t know what that meant so I asked him. According to the pastor, the words ‘I’m bored. Let’s change’ means since people are bored in the church, they are changing their pastors. And when I heard that it actually happened to the pastor’s neighboring church, I was really absurd. Although I was wondering how that could happen, I was not that surprised. Maybe the reason is because I am used to such things as I hear and see these corruptions in the church.

The background story of Exodus 32:7 tells the story of the Israelites making a golden calf and committing the sin of idolatry. When their leader Moses went up to Mount Sinai and were receiving the Ten Commandments from God, the Israelites saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, ““Come, make us gods who will go before us” (v. 1). So Aaron told them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me” (v. 2). “So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool” (vv. 3-4). Then the Israelites said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt” (v. 4). “When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, ‘Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD’” (v. 5). “So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry” (v. 6). After seeing and knowing this, God commanded Moses to go down from the mountain and told him that the Israelites had become corrupt (v. 7).

How could the Israelites say that the golden calf was their gods who brought them up out of Egypt? How could they sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the golden calf (v. 6) and sit, eat, drink, and dance (v. 19)? Isn’t this like when a leader like Aaron proclaimed that Sunday is the Lord’s Day and all the saints should come up to the Lord’s house and thus they come up and have something like “golden calf” in their hearts and they eat, drink, dance, and enjoy? Here, what is a golden calf like in a modern church? As Jesus said, I think it is money (Mt. 6:24). It seems that the desire for money is widespread now even though the Bible clearly says that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). This is an age where materialism is rampant. As we live in this age, we, self-proclaimed Christians, are polluted by materialistic thinking and cry out to the Lord in worship on Sunday to receive the material blessings. How corrupt would the church be to do such thing? But how should we view this reality of the church in which our conscience is not stricken? I think what God said to Moses about the Israelites was also to our Christians: “they are a stiff-necked people” (v. 9).

The stiff-necked Israelites were quick to turn away from what God had commanded them (v. 8). And they made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf and bowed down to it and sacrificed to it (v. 8). In the end, we, the stiff-necked Christians, quickly have left the narrow path of the cross that Jesus walked and have chosen a wide path for ourselves. And we are committing many sins because we love and idolize money. We are no longer living God-centered and inward life of faith but me-centered outward religious life. Now we have the good form of godliness, which is a life of incompetent faith that denies the power of godliness. Therefore, we are now guilty of sinning against God over and over again, being led by sinful nature, rather than being led by the Word of God. As a

result, we have now reached a spiritual state where we are accustomed to sin and sin is not considered as sin anymore. So now we are guilty of sin but not ashamed. This is because our consciences have been seared as with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:2) and we have face that is hotter than steel. What do you think the Lord's heart is when He looks at us?

God said to Moses, "Now leave me alone" (v. 10) when the stiff-necked Israelites were quick to turn away from what God had commanded them and made the golden calf and were guilty of idolatry. In the wrath, God wanted to destroy the Israelites and make Moses into a great nation (v. 10). Moses then asked God (v. 11). He pleaded with God to "Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people" (v. 12). In particular, Moses pleaded with God, saying, "Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever'" (v. 13). "Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened" (v. 14). But when Moses came down from the mountain (v. 15) and came near the camp where the Israelites were staying, he saw the golden calf and the Israelites dancing (v. 19). His anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain (v. 19). "And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it" (v. 20). When "Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies" (v. 25), he rebuked his older brother who led the Israelites into such great sin (vv. 21ff.). Then all the Levites who were for the Lord (v. 26) strapped swords to their side and went back and forth through the camp from one end to the other and killed their own brothers and friends and neighbors (v. 27). And that day about 3,000 of the people died (v. 28). The next day Moses went back to the Lord and confessed their sins in sorrow and asked Him for forgiveness (vv. 30-32). He asked the Lord to forgive the sins of the Israelites even his name would be blot out of the book He had written (v. 32).

What the corrupt church has to do is to confess and repent of the great sins we have committed against God. We must be grieved to see ourselves as guilty of the great sins, as well as the anger toward the great sins toward our holy God. And we must cry and repent. We must face the reality of our sins that we have turned away from the Lord quickly and we must repent and turn to God and walk in His way. We must no longer stiff our necks. We must no longer be out of control and selflessly serve other gods than God for ourselves. We should serve only our Lord God. He delivered us from the kingdom of Satan and led us to the kingdom of God. He alone is our true Savior. He is also guiding us to eternal rest. Therefore, we must move toward that Heavenly dwelling place even today as the Lord leads us.

The wise church

“See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” (Deuteronomy 4:5-6)

I'm a foolish pastor. I am concerned that the church will become a foolish church because of the foolish pastor. The pastor must first live by hearing the voice of God and obeying His Word but I am acting hastily. I am a foolish pastor. After praying to God, I must patiently wait with faith and wait for God's answer but I am speaking and acting carelessly. I am a foolish pastor. I am a foolish pastor who doesn't obey the voice and instruction that God gives through the Word time to time. When God says “Don't do this”, I do it. When God says “Do this”, I don't do it. I am a foolish pastor. Why is it so messy? What a foolish pastor. I ask God for forgiveness. I am instructed to stop rash actions and wait quietly before God to work. I am instructed to be passive before God. I am also instructed not to miss the timing of obeying God's Word. I want to be a pastor who listens to God's voice and is taught and humbly obey Him. Therefore, I pray that our church will be established as a wise church that is more obedient to the Word of God.

In Deuteronomy 4:5-6, God gave the Israelites, “the congregation in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), through Moses God's decrees and laws that they must keep (v. 1). And Moses taught the decrees and laws so that the Israelites might follow them in the land they were entering to take possession of it (v. 5). Then Moses exhorted them to “Observe them carefully” (v. 6). What was the reason? The reason is that obeying God's decrees and laws are their wisdom and understanding to the nations (v. 6). In other words, when the Israelites obeyed God's decrees and laws, the nations, who would hear about all these decrees and said, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people (v. 6). As I meditated on these words, I asked myself what kind of church is the wise church in God's eyes. I thought of four things:

First, the wise church knows that there is no other god beside God.

Look at Deuteronomy 4:35, 39: “You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other. ... Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.” From the day God created man on the earth and till the Israelites who went into the land of Canaan, there has anything so great as this ever happened or has anything like it ever been heard of (v. 32). And that great and awesome deeds were “all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?” “by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” (v. 34) The purpose of God's work in the sight of the Israelites in Egypt for the nation of Israel (v. 34), and the purpose of revealing this great work to the Israelites was “so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides him there is no other” (v. 35). Therefore, the Israelites who had seen and experienced God's great work of salvation should acknowledge and take to heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below that there is no other (v. 39). That is, they should know that “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (6:4).

We must know that the Lord our God is one. We must know that our God is the only true God and there is no other gods. “Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of?” “from the day God created man on the earth”? (4:32) Is there anything so great that God, who loved us and chose us before the creation (Eph. 1:4; Deut. 4:37), made His Son Jesus Christ, the true Passover Lamb, to be crucified in order to forgive all our sins and to deliver us from this Satan’s kingdom and to lead us to the true Promised Land, the Heaven, to save us? The God’s people who have seen and experienced this amazing work of God’s great salvation have to admit that “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6: 4). The people who know and believe in this one and only God are the wise people. The church that knows “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” is the wise church.

Second, the wise church is led by God.

Look at Deuteronomy 4:37-38: “Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.” The one and only God brought the Israelites out of Egypt by His Presence and His great strength (v. 37). The one and only God, came and brought the Israelites out of the Egypt by “by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds” (v. 34). And God led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exod. 13:21, Neh. 9:12, 19). Thus one and only God, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt by His Presence and His great strength (4:37), drove out before them nations greater and stronger than them and brought them into their land to give it to them for their inheritance (v. 38). In other words, the great God, in His great power, loved and chose the nation of Israel to accomplish a great work of salvation so that they could enter into Canaan, the Promised Land, and give it as their inheritance. In short, the Israelites were “your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm” (9:29). Therefore, the Israelites should be careful that they didn’t forget the Lord, who brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery (6:12). And they should be thankful to God who brought out the Israelites out of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm (Ps. 136:11-12). In other words, the Israelites should have been grateful for God’s eternal lovingkindness. Never should they grumble in their tents and said “The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us” (Deut. 1:27). Also, they shouldn’t cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, “This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt or when they committed awful blasphemies” (Neh. 9:18). Rather, the Israelites should have confessed: “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Ps. 23:1-3). This is because God fed the manna while the Israelites were in the wilderness for 40 years (Deut. 8:3), and kept their clothes not to wear out and their feet not to swell during the 40 years (v. 4). Where is the nation that is led by the one and only God like the Israelites?

Now our good Shepherd Lord is leading our church. God, who loved us and chose us before creation, not only saved us because He is pleased with us (2 Sam. 22:20, Ps. 18:19), but He is now leading us in this wilderness-like world. He led us to train us in the wilderness to humble us and to let us know that “man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut. 8:2- 3). Although we do not know our way, we believe and know that “he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). God is testing us with the Word of the Lord until what He foretold comes to pass (Ps. 105:19). God is refining us like silver (66:10). And now our God is leading us to heaven, the true Promise Land. God, who is leading us in everlasting way (Ps. 139:24), is guiding us with His counsel (73:24) and leading us safely (78:53) so that our ways are successful (Isa. 48:15). Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil, for God is with us; His rod and His staff, they comfort us (Ps. 23:4). Our God will guide us until death (48:14) and afterward will receive us to glory (73:24). This church led by God is the wise church.

Third, the wise church hears and obeys the word of God.

Look at Deuteronomy 4: 6, 33, 36, 40: “Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. . . Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? ... From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire. ... Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.” The one and only God who guided the Israelites had them hear His voice from heaven to discipline them and to hear His words from out of the fire (v. 36). Who heard the voice of God speaking out of fire and have lived? (v. 33) Also, through Moses, God let the Israelites, the wilderness church, to hear God's decrees and laws (v. 1). The responsibility of the Israelites was not to subtract from it (v. 2) but follow it (v. 1) and keep the commands of the Lord their God (vv. 2, 40). Then “you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time” (v. 40). The Israelites, who were greatly saved by the love of the one and only God, should have loved God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength (6:5). They should have kept the God’s commands upon their hearts (v. 6) and diligently taught their children (v. 7). And the Israelites, who loved God with all their heart, soul, and strength, should have heard and obeyed the word of God.

We, the church, must listen to the word of God. We must give our ears and hear God’s voice (Isa 28:23). And we must listen and obey the word of God. We must learn obedience from the things which we suffer (Heb. 5:8). We must lay down our will and obey God's will. We should not just say, “Lord, Lord,” “I love you.” If we truly love God, we must keep His commandments (Jn. 14:21). We must obey God's law. We must hear and follow Jesus' twofold commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lk. 10:27). The church that listens to and obeys the Word of God is the wise church.

Fourth, the wise church prays to God.

Look at Deuteronomy 4:7 – “What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?” The Israelites were blessed (Num.. 22:12). They were loved and chosen by God (Deut. 4:37). “Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?” (v. 34) God gave the Israelites “all the goodness” (Exod. 18:9) and delivered them out of Egypt with His great power (Deut. 9:29). There were no people in the world who survived after hearing the voice of God speaking out of fire like the Israelites (4:33). “What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?” (v. 7)

We, the church, should pray to God. We who lack wisdom must pray in faith, without doubting God (Jam. 1:5, 6). Then God will generously give us wisdom without finding fault (v. 5). Therefore, we must be wise church. And we must be the praying church. We must be the church who are devoted to prayer (Acts 2:42). The wise church prays to God because God turns His ear to us so that we will call on Him as long as we live (Ps. 116:2).

The folly of the church is not praying to God. It is our foolishness to pray “like the hypocrites” (Mt. 6:5). Also the folly of the church is to disobey God's Word. It is our foolishness not obeying God even though we are disciplined by Heavenly Father (Deut. 21:18). The foolishness of the church is to reject God's guidance and to consider ourselves wise (Prov. 3:7) and to rely on our own understanding (v. 5). It is our foolishness to be guided by the world. The foolishness of the church is not knowing the one and only God. It is our foolishness to be tempted by covetousness which is idolatry (Col. 3:5) and serve both God and money (Mt. 6:24). Now the church must abandon all our foolishness (Prov. 9:6). We must abandon our covetousness, our own wisdom, and reliance on our

own understanding. We must also forsake the sin of disobedience and the sin of not praying. We must be the wise church. We must know that there is no other gods beside God. We must be led by God. And we must listen to God's Word and obey it. We must pray to God. May the Lord raise us as His wise church.

The growing church

“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.” (Acts 9:31)

This is an article on ‘How to radically change the church’ in the “Church Growth Institute”: ‘The greatest church is a church that is not afraid of change. God is the leader of change. How can we effectively and fundamentally change the church? I suggest 10 things:

- (1) Gain leadership for change. People are looking at a leader and change begins with that leader. Build a leadership team for reform.
- (2) Seek the sign of a healthy church. The purpose of change is to become a healthy church. The changed church is the result of the sum of diagnosis, prescription, effort, and ability. Medical examination and prescription are essential. The signs of the healthy church are faith, leadership, excellence, dedication, creativity, and obedience.
- (3) Have a creative crisis. The biggest crisis is no sense of crisis. A sense of urgency is the driving force of new creation. Reformation is possible not by pleasant conversation but by desperate action.
- (4) Settle the wrong past. Anyone who sees the rearview mirror without looking ahead will fail. Neither the past form of ministry nor the present form of ministry is desirable. It has to be changed to the paradigm of future ministry. Seek meaning rather than form, and creation rather than preservation.
- (5) Reevaluate your budget and finances. In the future, economic problems will have the greatest impact on the church. If you don't manage your money properly, your spirituality can be destroyed. The budget and financial situation reveal the growth potential of the church.
- (6) Focus on your vision. The most important thing is purpose and vision. Those who have a vision are distinguished in their behavior, relationships, abilities, and spirituality. You must not work hard to achieve your vision. You have to risk your life. Vision is about delivering and accomplishing more than owning. Vision must be for the whole, not the part.
- (7) Make the saints strong. Strengthening the saints is a shortcut to growth. Let it be a church with a large number of believers who help pastors rather than one pastor who helps them. Training the lay people is the biggest pastoral mission.
- (8) Celebrate a small success. Success brings success. You need to be able to celebrate a little success so that you can plan for the bigger success. Organizations with adequate rewards and recognition are healthy.
- (9) Pursue the reproduction of change. Change is contagious. Changes in one person are communicated to others, and the success of one organization is extended to the success of another. A healthy church

exists as a distribution model, not a model of ownership. Even if you realize the need for change and make sure you are motivated, you are already more than half successful.

- (10) Settle the culture of change. Change is not just two events, but a lifestyle that continues every day. It is most important that change become the culture of the church. When culture changes, everything changes' (Internet).

I want to think about four things about the growing church based on Acts 9:31, and apply them to our church.

First, there is peace in the growing church.

Look at Acts 9:31 – “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace.” The environment in which the early church had peace was not peace without persecution and difficulty, but internal peace among these things (Yoo). This inner peace is the peace that the Lord gives in a world without peace. In John 20:19, 21, Jesus appeared to His disciples who were afraid and gathered on the first evening after the crucifixion and resurrection and said, "Peace be with you!" The peace of the Lord to His disciples in fear is peace that this world could not understand and that this world could not give. There must be this peace in the church. There must be peace from the Lord. But what about churches these days? Is there any peace that the Lord gives? What are the churches that we know? Aren't they many problems that are breaking the peace of the church? The Bible Acts 9:31 tells us that “the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace.” Not in one church, but in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, all the churches were enjoying the peace of the Lord. How amazing is this? Doesn't it sound too unreal for us? Interestingly, in Acts chapters 8-9, the church spread to many places through the saints scattered throughout the region due to the persecution of Stephen's martyrdom. Therefore, the gospel of Christ was preached here and there through the scattered saints, and churches were established. Eventually, scattered disciples of Jesus spread the peace of God as well as the gospel of Jesus. But what about now? Rather than being scattered by persecution, the saints are experiencing the scattering of God through sin in the church, and the scattered saints are guilty of going to another church and breaking the peace rather than preaching the gospel. There are peacemakers in the church, but there are peace-breakers in the church as well.

We must be peacemakers as sons and daughters of God. Look at Matthew 5:9 - “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” And in order to be peacemakers, we must let the peace of God to guard our hearts and our minds. In order to do this, we must not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, we must present our request to God (Phil. 4:6-7). Pastor Ken Sande, founder and representative of Peacemaker Ministry, has been instrumental in resolving hundreds of conflict cases involving biblical division, business, employment, and family disputes since 1982 using the Bible principles. There are many books on conflict resolution, including his representative book, “The Peacemaker: The Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict.” “To be a peacemaker, the Christians must first grasp the principle of conflict resolution through the Bible. ... We should meditate and study the life of Jesus Christ, the perfect example of a peacemaker. We also need systematic training to put these principles into practice in our lives. ... Learning to view conflict from a biblical perspective can solve many problems associated with avoiding and responding to conflicts. The Bible does not teach that all conflict is bad. Rather, some differences are taught to be natural and beneficial. The Christians should not avoid conflicts or require others to always agree with us, but should learn to rejoice in the diversity of God's creation and to work with people of different perspectives (Rom. 15:7, 14:1–13). The Christians should be able to remove the roots of conflict and open the way for true peace (Jam. 4:1-2, Mt. 18:15)’ (Internet).

Second, the growing church is being built up.

Look at Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up” Here “being build up” means building up, not an external business aspect, but an internal godliness (Park). May local churches in early churches were largely built spiritually, united in saints in love internally rather than externally built up largely. In order for the church to be built spiritually, it must be edified with love. According to Dr. Yun-sun Park, “love edifies” in 1 Corinthians 8:1 is the same as saying that it builds up. If so, the lesson that the growing church is being built up means that the growing church is a church that edifies in love.

How is this in contrast with the churches these days? How do we explain the signs of division within in the churches that may have been built largely externally, but internally there are conflicts and divisions more than the element of love? There must be love in the church. There must be love that edifies. Then the church will grow. What must we do to be such a church?

(1) We must attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of Jesus.

Look at Ephesians 4:13 – “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” But the truth we must bear in mind here is that we must be careful with knowledge that puffs up. Look at 1 Corinthians 8:1 - ... Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”

(2) We must speak the truth in love.

Look at Ephesians 4:15 – “Instead, speaking the truth in love”

(3) We must serve the church according to our gifts with the help of the Lord who is the head of the church.

Look at Ephesians 4:16 – “from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

More specifically, how can we edify our faith?

(1) We should not give offense to everyone.

Look at 1 Corinthians 10:32-33: “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.” We should seek the profit of others. It’s a way to edify others when we think ‘Will this profit others?’ before we speak and act. If we see the newcomers are getting hurt and prevent them from attending the church, it is because the believers’ words and actions are not example to them. Especially we must be careful with our tongue. We must try not to commit sin with our tongue.

(2) We must strive to give glory to God.

Look at 1 Corinthians 10:31 – “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The edifying faith is everything that leads a life to glorify God. On the contrary, if we live for the sake of our will, our faith is not edifying faith. In the church, if we keep on saying that self-assertion is right, it is not edifying even it is right. For the truth, we must risk our lives and keep the incision of faith, but other than the truth it is edifying to do everything to glorify God and not for ourselves. So if it is

glorifying God when we lose, then we should lose. And if yielding is glorifying God, then we should yield (Internet).

Third, the growing church proceeds with the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Look at Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” Here, “the fear of the Lord” means ‘the believer is devoted in obeying His will, consciously and acting in the presence of God’ (Park). The growing church is conscious of God's holy presence in the fear of the Lord. Therefore, in reverence in God's holy presence, we try to accomplish only the will of the Lord. One of the Lord's wills is written in Amos 5:14 – “Seek good and not evil, that you may live;” This is the growing church. Those saints in the growing church leave evil and do good. This is the living saint and living church. In this church there is the comfort of the Holy Spirit. In other words, there is comfort in the Holy Spirit for those who obey His will in the Lord's ordinances by fearing God rather than fearing people in the midst of persecution of the wicked. This Holy Spirit is God comforting us when we are in trouble. In particular, the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ (2 Cor. 1:5). Therefore, the Holy Spirit comforts us in all our affliction (v. 4). In the church, a community of these people, there is inner peace during the time of trouble (Park).

The church must have the comfort of the Holy Spirit as the saints who fear the Lord live in obedience to God's will. No matter how difficult or adversary we are in obeying the will of the Lord, we do not need to worry because the Holy Spirit works in those who do the truth and gives them sufficient comfort. As the Romans 15:4 says, the Holy Spirit gives us hope through the encouragement of the Scriptures. The church that is gathered with those who fear the Lord and are comforted is growing.

Fourth and last, the growing church continues to increase.

Look at Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” This means that the number of church members is increased. If the church has a lot of numbers without internal grace, it will not enjoy spiritual peace. But the church with internal grace, such as “the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit,” can grow both quantitatively and spiritually (Park). In Acts 2:47, the Bible says that the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved, in 4:4 the number of the men came to be about 5,000, and in 6:1, the Bible says “the disciples were increasing in number.” In Acts 6:7, the Bible says that “the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem.”

Pastor Kyung Ho Kim of Wildflower Hyangin Church writes: ‘I believe that the greatest disease that the church cannot follow Christ's path is growth ideology. The growth ideology disease is not only in the big church but also in the small church. The churches are doing multiplying movement and constantly presenting the growth of numbers. As far as the increase in numbers is concerned is the sign of the kingdom of God, the way of Christ, the reality is far from following Christ in that life and following the way of Christ in this field of history. The need to cure the church growth disease is what I felt with my skin during my ministry. In fact, the pastor is the most vulnerable to church growth disease. So I decided myself to draw a line from there, and when I reached the scale of independence, I thought that it would be a healthy way to grow a self-sustaining community church by setting up a branch church’ (Internet). What do you think of Pastor Kim's comment? Should the church's numerical growth (quantitative growth) be criticized unconditionally? We must be very wary of criticizing quantitative growth while insisting only on the quality of the church. Of course, stealing sheep in pursuit of church quantitative growth is also a big problem for the church, but the fact that there is no quantitative growth is also a problem. Pastor William

Chadwick confessed his conscience in his book, "Sheep Stealing," calling himself the pastor who pursued church growth first by stealing the sheep. In this book he pointed out the problem of horizontal movement of the church members in the dark side of the church growth. He boldly pointed out that trying to bring other church members (sheep) to my church is stealing sheep. Listen to what he said: 'As the growth of church numbers slowed down in the 1990s, there were increasing criticism about church growth in the past was not caused by 'conversion growth', but by 'transfer growth' (horizontal movement of members). The church has grown only statistically, with little growth in the kingdom of God.' He honestly confessed that he was a pastor who pursued transfer growth, and he realized later that what the church really needs to pursue is not transfer growth, but conversion growth. In fact, he specifically confessed the history of the so-called stealing of sheep by attracting the other church members and fattened his church while hurting them (Internet).

I hope and pray that there is peace in our church. I also hope and pray that our church can be built up. I pray that our church will proceed with the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord continue to add the new believers in our church.

Is it okay for only the church numbers are growing?

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” (Acts 9:31)

At 8:00 last night, something unexpected happened during the English Ministry Bible Study. The first thing I didn't expect was that I expected only two people to come. Nevertheless, I preached last Sunday's worship service and suggested that we stop the Friday Bible Study meeting by the end of the year as I spoke with two leaders of English Ministry. After that, we had not been gathering on Friday for a few weeks and I thought that I should not do this. So I told the English Ministry people that at 8 o'clock Friday evening, I should do the Bible Study and share what I learned with that person even only one person come. So I thought only one high school student would come on that Friday night Bible Study. Or maybe one of our leaders, a college student, might come. But there were seven people. Second, what I did not expect was to have a sincere conversation in the Lord after a Bible study with one of those seven members. I was grateful and happy to know him more through that heart-to-heart conversation. After the Bible study, as other members practiced praise, I talked more with him. What was so grateful in the conversation was that he said that he had peace in his heart, even in the most difficult circumstances he was experiencing. After studying the Bible with seven people, I dropped couple of them home and returned to my home with my beloved first daughter.

Before I went to sleep that day, I was reading in Acts 9, which I supposed to read in the next day Morning Prayer meeting, and my eyes stopped at verse 31. The reason is because even in that verse 31 the phrase “it grew in numbers” came out like Acts 6:1, “when the number of disciples was increasing,” that I meditated in yesterday Morning Prayer meeting. So I decided to meditate on Acts 9:31 and I read Acts 9:1-30 again. The reason is because I wondered how the Lord made the Early Church grow in number. The reason I think the Lord increased the number of believers in the Early Church is because of Acts 2:47 – “praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” As I was reading Acts 9:1-30, I found the answer in verses 19-20 and 28 how the Lord increased the number of believers in the Early Church: “... Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ... And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.” In this passage, the way the Lord increased the number of believers in the Early Church was that the Lord converted and commissioned Saul on Damascus, who persecuted Jesus (vv. 4-5) and who was “a chosen instrument of Mine” (v. 15), and Saul (Paul) immediately began to proclaim Jesus “in the synagogues” (v. 20) and “in Jerusalem” (v. 28) that “He is the Son of God” (v. 20), “speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord” (v. 28). In other words, the Lord increased the number of believers by keep Saul increasing in strength (v. 22). The Jews who were confounded and who lived at Damascus (v. 22) conspired to kill Saul (v. 23), even the Grecian Jews tried to kill him (v. 29). In the midst of this persecution and tribulation, Saul fearlessly (v. 27) and boldly (v. 28) spoke (vv. 22, 28) “in the name of the Lord” (v. 28) that “Jesus is the Christ” (v. 22) so that the number of believers increased in the Early Church.

But was it all? Did the number of believers increase in the early church because Saul only spoke boldly in the name of Jesus? Is it worthy in the Lord's eyes that only the church numbers are growing? I don't think so. The basis of my thought is Acts 9:31 – “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.” When

we look at this verse, there are at least three things that the Lord did to establish the Early Church as a church worthy of the Lord's eyes:

First, the Early Church was at peace.

Look at Acts 9:31 – “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace.” Isn't it amazing? How did the early church find peace during tribulation and persecution? It was peace from the Lord. God the Holy Spirit united the Early Church saints through the bond of peace. And the Early Church saints made every effort keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

Second, the Early Church was built up.

Look at Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up;” How did the Early Church believers build up? It was through the word of God's grace that built them up (20:32). Therefore, in the midst of trouble and persecution, the Early Church saints made level paths for their feet and took only ways that were firm (Prov. 4:26).

Third, the Early Church went on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Look at Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit,” The Early Church saints were persecuted because they lived in obedience to the Word in fear of the Lord and hated evil. But in the midst of it, the Holy Spirit comforted them.

In the midst of that, the number of believers increased in the Early Church (v. 31). But the Early Church was not a church with only the number of believers increased. It was the church that enjoyed peace, was built up and went on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit (v. 31). May our church be such church.

The robbers who infiltrate in the church

“Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’” (Matthew 21:12-13)

This is what the Bible Malachi 3:8 says, ““Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings.” As a result, the Bible says that the nation Israel was under a curse (v. 9). How did the Israel come to this point? Why did the Israelites rob the Lord? The more serious problem is that when the Lord said that the Israelites have robbed the Lord, they responded, “How do we rob you?” (v. 8) In other words, the Israelites didn’t realize that they were robbing the Lord. This was indeed the serious problem. How can a thief steal and not know that he is stealing? Without knowing they were robbing, their conscience was not stricken, and thus they would not even feel the need to confess and repent their sin.

In Matthew 21:12-13, Jesus drove out all who were buying and selling in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. And He said, ““My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’” How can we Christians make the house of the Lord the “den of robbers”? Since we all know that the house of the Lord is the house of prayer, how can the Lord say that we who are gathered and praying to Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus are robbers? Why does it sound like the Lord is saying that it can be a lot more than just one or two robbers in the church? Maybe the Lord isn’t seeing well. Obviously, when there are so many prayers in the house of the Lord, such as in the early morning prayers and all-night prayers, how is the Lord saying that we are making the house of the Lord the “den of robbers”? Who are those “robbers”? We Christians?

Those whom saw Jesus who entered the temple were those who were buying and selling, money changers, those selling doves. Jesus told them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a 'den of robbers’” (v. 13). Then were those who were buying and selling, money changers, those selling doves the robbers? At that time, those who traded in the temple were those who initially traded in the corners of the temple to provide convenience for those who came to observe the Passover from afar (cows, sheep, or pigeons). However, it became more and more depraved, flowed into commercialism, and became a marketplace in the temple (Park). And the “money changers” were people who changed money to provide convenience to those who could not bring temple taxes to foreign shekels (Park). Perhaps those who made a profit would be greedy for wealth and make the house of prayer to the place of buying and selling, and heard from Jesus that “you are making it a ‘den of robbers’.”

How can this reproof apply to us, the Christians, who are living in the 21st century? When we apply the “robbers”, who are like bandits, to us, we can say that we consider the God’s temple like the den and plunder the riches of those who come and go to the temple and take profit from them. Then wouldn't it be possible to say that we are the robbers, those who take profit from doing business in the church, like those who sell and buy money in the temple area at the time of Jesus? Here I am not talking about lay believers, but rather thinking about the pastors. In particular, I am talking about the fake pastors who preach a fake gospel and who receive donation money from a large crowd and intercept it. I think that those fake pastors who intercept and rob offerings that are offered by the

saints who work so hard are the robbers who make the God's house the den of robbers. That's why I think that the Lord is now angry.

The causes of quarrel in the church

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,” (Philippians 2:3a)

One of the causes of quarrel in the church is empty conceit (Phil. 2:3). If there are people who are pursuing outward glory that goes too far and is hollow, then there is bound to be quarrel in the church. A good example is “the congregation in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38).

If the wilderness church is a Presbyterian church, its pastor is Moses and its elder is Aaron. And in the session of the wilderness church, there is a teaching elder, Moses, and a ruling elder, Aaron. However, “Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben” (among these four people, I think Korah was the leader of the faction against the wilderness church) made the group of faction (why few people in the church make a group of faction) and rose up against pastor Moses and elder Aaron, together with some of the sons of Israel, 150 leaders of the congregation (usually the leaders in the church start quarrel?), chosen in the assembly, men of renown (Num. 16:1-2). This is what they said to Moses and Aaron: “You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?” (v. 3) When Moses heard this, he fell on his face and prayed to God (v. 4) (what can a pastor do except kneel down and cry out to God). Then Pastor Moses rebuked Korah and all the crowds: “You have gone far enough, you sons of Levi!” (v. 7) How did Korah and all the crowds go too far? They looked upon the grace of God small. It wasn’t enough for them that God had separated them from the rest of the Israelite community and brought them near Himself to do the work at the Lord’s tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them (v. 9). So they sought for the priesthood of Aaron (v. 10). Because they considered their office that God had given them small and lightly, their thought went too far in their thoughts and actions (they exalted themselves in pride) and said the things to pastor Moses and elder Aaron. They did this because they had empty conceit vanity in their hearts (Phil. 2:3). They went too far and went against the session of the wilderness church because they sought vain glory. The Bible says that they not only went against pastor Moses and elder Aaron, but also against the Lord who established them as the leaders in the wilderness church (Num. 16:11).

Just as there were people who had empty conceit and went too far in their thought, talk and action in the wilderness church, there is a person in the big city church (especially the big church?) who is like Korah with empty conceit and who build a faction with famous or powerful people in the congregation and cause conflicts and problems in the church. It is surprising how one person like this can cause big problems in the church. Why is he causing such a big problem in the church right now? What is the person's intention? I think of James 4:1-2: “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.” Now he is quarreling because of the source of his pleasures that wage war. And the reason he argues so much is because he is greedy. What is he greedy about? Perhaps he is going too far in his thought that he wants to be exalted in the congregation. Perhaps he wants vain glory. However, even if he wants to be exalted and glory, since he is not getting what he wants he is quarreling and fighting more and more. Who is “he” here? Who is now quarreling and fighting in the church by going too far in his thinking, speaking, and acting and who is filled with empty conceit in the Presbyterian Church? Is he a church elder or a church pastor? This is indeed a serious problem. The big problem in the Presbyterian Church is not the lay people, but the pastors and the elders. Why do elders disagree with the pastors? Did elder Aaron, who spoke so well, dismiss Moses the

wilderness church because he said he could not speak well? Are the elders so good that they criticize the pastors? Why is the pastor so displeased with the elders? Did Moses, whom the Lord spoke to face to face (Exod. 33:11), deprive Aaron's eldership because he let the Israelites get out of control (32:25)? In this way, how can the church be peaceful when the pastor and the elders, who are the members of the session of the Presbyterian Church, are arguing and quarreling instead of being one mind and one will.

Pastor, elders.

The saints are hurting now.

The saints are leaving the church now.

Now the church is being humiliated, not only by the people of the world but also by other church members who are brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Now we are breaking the heart of the Lord who is looking at us, the church.

Pastor, elders,

Please stop fighting.

Please be reconciled to each other and live in harmony.

Please have one mind and one heart.

I pray that you be able to have His humble heart (Phil. 2:5).

The causes of the church's conflict (1)

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ... Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly Do not be wise in your own estimation.” (Romans 12:6, 16)

How should we view church conflict? Why are churches fighting? Don't they suppose to love each other? What is the cause of the church's conflict? One of the reasons is the lack of recognition of diversity. In other words, there is conflict in the church because we don't accept that there are people with various gifts in the church.

Often we look at marital disputes and say: 'You and I are just different, not wrong.' But when we actually think about the marital relations, I think the couples tend to think that their spouse is wrong instead of to think that s/he is just different. As a result, the couples have no choice but to fight each other. Similarly, because every relationship thinks that 'You are wrong' (which means 'I am right'), there is conflict, quarrel and fight. The reason for conflict and fighting in human relations in the church is that there is a dispute due to the thought of 'You are wrong' even though they are just different and are treating each other with that kind of attitude. This thought and attitude is the bitter root of pride that 'I am right but you are wrong.' Because of this deep-rooted thought that 'I am right, you are wrong,' we criticize each other and eventually slander. After all, the profound cause of the conflict is pride.

Apostle Paul said in Romans 12:16, “Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind” The reason for not being the same mind is because of haughty in mind. In other words, we are quarreling and fighting because we are wise in our own estimation. If we look at ourselves with our own eyes and think that 'I am wise,' we will have a dispute in the church because we are looking at the other person in the attitude of 'I am wise but you are foolish.' “This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic” (Jam. 3:15). If we harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in our hearts, we shouldn't boast (v. 14). If we boast, we are denying the truth (v. 14). What is the wisdom that the Bible speaks? Look at James 3:17 – “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” If we truly have the wisdom that God gives, we will be peace-loving as peacemakers in the church (v. 18). However, if we do not recognize the various gifts that the Lord has given to each of us, and judge and criticize the gifts given to other members on the basis of “my gift,” there will be conflicts in our church.

The church is one. The church is one because of Jesus. There is unity in the church, the body of the Lord. At the same time, there is diversity in the church. The members who received various gifts gathered to form one body in the Lord. Therefore, we have a responsibility to keep unity in diversity. The responsibility is that we all should be of the same mind. How can we all be of the same mind? There is only one way. That is, we all have the attitude of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5). As we empty ourselves and humbled ourselves, we must acknowledge each other's various gifts from the Lord. And we must strive to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:3) by using the various gifts given to each other in peace and with wisdom from above (Jam. 3:17).

The causes of the church's conflict (2)

“You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” (1 Corinthians 3:3)

There is a conflict in the church because we are still "worldly" (1 Cor. 3:3). In other words, there is jealousy and quarreling among us because we are “mere infants in Christ” (v. 1). There is quarreling in the church because we are the ones who take “milk” and aren’t ready for “solid food” (v. 2).

Those who are worldly aren’t taught by the Spirit (2:13). They don’t accept the things that come from the Spirit of God because they are foolishness to them (v. 14). Also those who are worldly cannot understand the work of the Spirit because they aren’t spiritually discerned (v. 14). Therefore, not only they don’t participate in the works of the Holy Spirit in the church but they cannot do so. One of the works of the Holy Spirit is to keep the unity of the church (Eph. 4:3). Clearly, God commands us to make every effort to keep their unity of the Holy Spirit, but those who are worldly don’t obey the command. The reason is because they don’t follow the Holy Spirit but walk like mere men (1 Cor. 3:3). Like the saints in the Corinthian church, those who are worldly who walk like mere men say “I am of Paul” and “I am of Apollos” (1:12).

This is also happening in churches these days. Those who are worldly in the church say 'I am of my senior pastor' and 'I am of my assistant pastor.' The senior pastor or assistant pastor, like Paul and Apollos, are just servants through whom we believed, “even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one” (3:5). I think the bigger problem is the church leaders, not the laymen. Although we, the church leaders, like Paul and Apollos, are just the Lord’s servants, through whom people come to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task” (v. 5), we tend to forget this often and thus cause the congregation members to be divided and the church to be in conflicts. In other words, we, the church servants, are causing the Lord’s church to be in conflicts and to be divided because we think that we are something even though we are nothing (v. 7) and are only those who plant the seed like Paul and water like Apollos (v. 6). We are just planting the seed and watering it. It is God who makes it grow (v. 7). We are nothing. We must not think that we are something. God is everything. But we are forgetting this fact and causing church to be in conflict. After all, we are seeing the conflicts and divisions of the church because of the church leaders, who are worldly, rather than the worldly lay people.

In order to prevent church conflict, we all need to be “spiritual” men and women (v. 1). We must all grow up in Christ and put childish ways behind us (13:11). We are no longer to drink milk (3:2). We must be spiritual people who can eat solid food (v. 2). We must live by the guidance of the Holy Spirit who searches all things, even the depths of God (2:10). The Holy Spirit who dwells in us helps us to know the things freely given to us by God (v. 12). We must discern the divine grace that God has given us (vv. 13, 14). We who know the mind of the Lord (v. 16) are to love the church just as the Lord loves His body. We must love His kingdom, His house of Thine abode, the Church our blest Redeemer saved With His own precious blood” (Hymn “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” v. 1). We are to humbly serve His church with the heart of Christ. Although we may have the strain of toil and the fret of care, we must walk with the Lord in lowly paths of service free (Hymn “O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee, v. 1). Victory!

“For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end.” (Hymn “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” v. 3).

The Lord's way of building the church and the world's way

As I was teaching the Bible based on Acts 4 to my church leaders, God the Spirit gave me precious understanding and thus I am writing this. That precious understanding is I saw the pattern of how the Lord builds the Lord's church (the Early Church) in Acts 4. But I was surprised because I thought that the pattern how the Lord builds His church and the pattern how the churches in our days are the opposite. I thought about five patterns of the Lord's building up the Early Church.

Before we consider five patterns of the Lord's building up of the body of the Lord (Mt. 16:18), we first need to consider the historical background of Acts 4. It is the fact that the apostles and churches who were leaders of the early church had persecutors. The persecutors were internally religious leaders [The priests, the captain of the temple, the Sadducees (Acts 4:1), the rulers, elders, teachers of the law (v. 5), the high priest (v. 6)] and externally the Gentiles [the nations (v. 25), the kings, the rulers (v. 26)].

It's not much different now days. There are external persecutors who oppose the church, while others internally oppose and make it difficult to build the church. In Acts 4, the religious leaders who were internal adversary called Apostle Peter and John and questioned them "By what power or what name did you do this?" (v. 7) since they were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead (v. 2). Then Acts 4:8 says that Apostle Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit.

The first way the Lord builds up the church is through prayer.

Look at Acts 4:24--30: "When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'" After apostles Peter and John were released, they went to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them (v. 23). And when they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God (v. 24). Through this united prayers of the Early Church believers, we must be challenged. There are two things we can be challenged:

(1) We must begin prayer by recognizing God's sovereignty.

Look at Acts 4:24 – "When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.'" Although there were persecutions and sufferings to the Early Church saints, they prayed to God by recognizing God's sovereignty instead of looking at their environment of being persecuted and of suffering. We should imitate their example of faith.

(2) We must hold on to the word of God's promise and pray.

Look at Acts 4:25-26: “You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.’” In this passage, the author of the book of Acts Luke quotes from Psalms 2:1-2. And we can see the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Psalms 2:1-2 in Acts 4: 27-28: “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.” There were enemies who persecuted the apostles, just as there were enemies who persecuted Jesus. And there are still those who oppose us, the Christians who follow Jesus. Now we cannot deny that they are adversaries internally or externally in real life. In this reality, we must pray to God with the word of promise God has given us. Then we will be able to see with our own eyes how the Lord fulfills the word of that promise in our real life. Therefore, we can be used as the Lord's instruments in building up the body of the Lord with spiritual discernment.

The second way the Lord builds up the church is by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Look at Acts 4:8, 31: “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ... After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” The church can only be built if the Lord allows us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This means that it is the Lord who builds the church and the church is established by the filling of the Holy Spirit from the Lord. The Spirit-filled life can be described in three ways in Acts 4:1-20:

(1) The Spirit-filled life is a bold life.

Those who are filled with the Spirit are bold. When Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, the religious leaders who persecuted him and the other apostles were astonished when they saw the courage of Peter and John speaking courageously and realized that they were unschooled and ordinary men (v. 13).

(2) Those who live with filled with the Holy Spirit are those who live before God.

Look at Acts 4:19 – “But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.” When the rulers, elders and teachers of the law (v. 5) called Apostle Peter and John in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (v. 18), Peter and John told them that they should listen to the word of God before God (v. 19).

(3) Those who live with filled with the Holy Spirit are those who live with confidence.

Look at Acts 4:20 – “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Apostle Peter and John said, ‘We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’ Because they saw and heard, they confidently preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. In order for the church to be established rightly, we must all be filled with the Holy Spirit and live boldly and confidently before God.

The third way the Lord builds up the church is evangelism.

Look at Acts 4:8-12: “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected,

which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.'" Apostle Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit he spoke courageously that only in the name of Jesus Christ (v. 10, cf. vv. 7, 12, 17, 18) can be saved (v. 12) before the religious leaders who opposed him. The religious leaders threatened Peter and John not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (v. 18). Since the religious leaders who persecuted the apostles didn't know the mystery and love in the name of Jesus, they warned the apostles to speak no longer to anyone in His name (v. 17). But I think to Peter and John, the name "Jesus" meant precious jewels and secret in their hearts that gave them joy and love. Thus Peter said to a man crippled from birth who was asked Peter and John for money at the temple gate: "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (3:2-3, 6).

The fourth way the Lord builds up the church is that He adds those who are saved.

Look at Acts 4:4 – "But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand." The fact that the number of men who heard the apostles' sermons and believed was about 5,000 is intimately connected with the Jesus' two fish and five loaves miracle which fed about 5,000 men as well. There are at least three similarities in these two events: (1) The appearance of 5,000 people (Lk. 9:14 and Acts 4:4), (2) The multitudes heard the Word (Lk. 9:11 and Acts 4:4) and (3) There was a miracle of healing before the event (Lk. 9:11 and Acts 3:1-10). It is no coincidence that the author, who presented the two fish and five loaves miracle as a (spiritual) food for the apostles to present to the people, recorded about 5,000 people were saved by hearing the words from the apostles. At the heart of the two fish and five loaves miracle is eternal life (salvation) given by Jesus, who is the bread of life, through His flesh that was 'ripped off' on the cross and given to the people. Those who were saved through the apostles' preaching were about 5,000 people (v. 4). The Bible Acts 2:47 says, "... the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." As we read Acts 4, Luke writes, "many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand." People may increase the number of people, but the lesson is that the Lord adds only those who are saved.

The fifth and the last way the Lord builds up the church is to form His community.

Look at Acts 4: 32-35: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. d With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." Luke, the author of the book of Acts describes the Early Church community as follows: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."

In short, the way the Lord builds up the church is the top-bottom method. In other words, the church is established because the Lord initiates. But the world's way of building the church is the opposite. In other words, I think the way how we, the Christians, are trying to build His church is the bottom-top method. And the first way in that method is to form a community. But the first way of the Lord's method is prayer.

Although we try to be one heart and one mind in the church, but nowadays, so many churches are trying to build their churches with various minds and purposes. I don't think we can say that this is God's way. The second method is prayer, but even this prayer often cries out for situations, feelings, and thoughts, with the attitude that we must acknowledge our sovereignty rather than hold on to God's promises and pray. The third worldly way is to increase the number of church members. It seems like it isn't the people who hear the gospel and are saved are added to the church, but the number of members seems to be increasing because of horizontal movements of the church members, even stealing them. It seems that more people are coming to church because of the names of the

people rather than hearing the name of Jesus Christ. It seems that we must go to the fourth method to seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Although this should be the first, it is at the very end in the worldly way of building the church. But I think that the fill with the Holy Spirit is mysterious whether it is biblical or emotional.

As I think about the today's church, I wonder what would the Lord thinks. We must go back to the Word of God. We must go back to Acts chapter 4 given by God. Since the Lord has promised to build His church (Mt. 16:18), I sincerely hope and pray that the Lord to build His church in His way.

How does the Lord strengthen His church?

“Those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God of their fathers. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam son of Solomon three years, walking in the ways of David and Solomon during this time.” (2 Chronicles 11:16-17)

Is the Lord's church building up firmly? If “yes”, isn't it firmly established in our own eyes? Is the Lord's church building up firmly in God's eyes right now?

The Lord wants to strengthen His church, His body. That is why the Lord is strengthening His church today. How is the Lord strengthening His church? The Lord uses three kinds of people to strengthen His church:

The first kinds of people are those who seek God with all their heart.

Look at 2 Chronicles 11:16 – “Those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God of their fathers.” Those who sought God solely in their hearts at the time of the king of Judah Rehoboam were living in northern Israel. However, Jeroboam, the king of northern Israel, worshipped idols and drove out the priests of the Lord and made priests of his own as the peoples of other lands did (13:9). So those who sought God solely in their hearts returned to southern Judah with the priests and Levites (11:13). It was because they could no longer remain in the sinful northern Israel ruled by King Jeroboam.

The Lord is firmly building up His body, the Church, through those who seek Him solely in their hearts. Those who seek the Lord solely in their hearts do not serve God and money together (Mt. 6:24). They are not double-minded people (1 Chron. 12:33; Jam. 1:8). They live in service of the Lord with only one mind and one will.

The second kinds of people are worshipers.

Look at 2 Chronicles 11:16 – “Those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God of their fathers.” Those who sought God solely with their hearts returned from the northern nation of Israel to the southern Judah with the Levites because they could not offer the right sacrifice to God. When they saw Jeroboam sinning against God by setting up his own priests and worshiping idols, they returned to Jerusalem. Considering this fact, we can see that God raises up true worshipers and strengthened His church.

God seeks those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). And God raises those worshipers to strengthen His church. Although Rehoboam strengthened the fortresses and put officers in them (2 Chron. 11:11) and put shields and spears in every city and strengthened them greatly (v. 12). Likewise, the Lord raises up worshipers who seek God solely to strengthen His Church.

The third kinds of people are those who observe the requirements of the Lord.

Look at 2 Chronicles 13:11 – “Every morning and evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening. We are observing the requirements of the LORD our God. But you have forsaken him.” Those who sought God solely with their hearts were worshipers and lived the proper life of worship. Here, they lived the proper life of worship means they kept God's commandments. They walked in the way of David and Solomon (11:17). Here, walking in the way of David and Solomon means keeping the commandments of God. The life of worship is this way of keeping God's commandments.

The Lord, who strengthens the church, seeks the right worshipers. And He strengthens the church through the right worshipers. The right worshipers are those who live right life. And right life refers to obeying the commandments of God. The Lord is strengthening His body, the Church, through those who keep His commandments.

The church like God's army

“For day by day men came to David to help him, until there was a great army like the army of God.” (1 Chronicles 12:22)

The church of God is the Triumphant Church and the Militant Church. If the heavenly church is called the triumphant church, this world church is the militant church. We are God's people called to fight holy battles. Therefore, while living on earth as soldiers of the cross of Jesus Christ, we must fight the spiritual battle with assurance of victory. May the Lord, the Captain, establish our church as the church of God's army.

The Bible 1 Chronicles 12:22 says, “For day by day men came to David to help him, until there was a great army like the army of God.” Here the phrase “was a great army like the army of God” means that not only is the number of soldiers is many, but also that the army is superior in quality, uniting and obeying as if it were a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel (Park). When we consider David's great army that was like the army of God, we receive five application lessons:

First, the David's great army, like God's army, was trustworthy people.

Look at 1 Chronicles 12:16-18: “Then some of the sons of Benjamin and Judah came to the stronghold to David. David went out to meet them, and said to them, ‘If you come peacefully to me to help me, my heart shall be united with you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look on it and decide.’ Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the thirty, and he said, ‘We are yours, O David, And with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to him who helps you; Indeed, your God helps you!’ Then David received them and made them captains of the band.” Among those who came to help David, there were thirty warriors who were from the tribes of Benjamin and of Judah (v. 18). However, the sons of Benjamin were kinsmen of King Saul who tried to kill David (vv. 2, 29). So David had to be cautious. So David went to meet the thirty warriors who came to him, the sons of Benjamin and Judah (v. 16) and said to them, “If you come peacefully to me to help me, my heart shall be united with you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look on it and decide” (v. 17). At that time, the Holy Spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the thirty, as if he was clothed with the Holy Spirit (Park) and said, “We are yours, O David, And with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to him who helps you; Indeed, your God helps you!” (v. 18) Why did Amasai and the other 29 warriors from Benjamin and Judah tribes dedicate themselves to David? This was because they knew that the God of David was with David to help him (v. 18). So David received them and made them captains of the band (v. 18).

I hope and pray that our church leaders who battle with the assurance of victory can be trustworthy warriors. Also, I hope and pray that they can trust each other by trusting God. I pray that they are the people of faith who trust in the Lord who is the Captain and are confident that the Lord will be with us and help us.

Second, the David's great army, like God's army, was soldiers who were equipped for war.

Look at 1 Chronicles 12:23-24: “Now these are the numbers of the divisions equipped for war, who came to David at Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. The sons of Judah who bore shield and spear were 6,800, equipped for war.” The people who came back to help David were those who were equipped for war. In other words, they were qualified soldiers (Park). Who are qualified soldiers? They are trained soldiers (Park). The David's great army was trained soldiers.

I hope and pray that our church, battling with the assurance of victory, can be filled with trained soldiers of the cross of Christ. I pray that we are well trained by the Lord, the Captain, and become the soldiers of the cross who are victorious by faith in spiritual warfare.

Third, the David's great army, like God's army, was trained for war.

Look at 1 Chronicles 12:8 – “From the Gadites there came over to David in the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for war, who could handle shield and spear, and whose faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the gazelles on the mountains.” There was the Gadites among those who came back to help David. When David fled from the pursuit of King Saul, many warriors came to seek David from King Saul's wicked policies, which at one time reached 600 (1 Sam.22:2, 23:13) (Park). The warriors were trained for war who could handle shield and spear (1 Chron. 12:8).

I hope and pray that our church, battling with the assurance of victory, can be filled with warriors who are trained for spiritual war. I pray that we will be victorious churches who are victorious in the power of the Lord as warriors who are trained for spiritual war by relying only on the Lord.

Fourth, the David's great army, like God's army, helped David with an undivided heart.

Look at 1 Chronicles 12:33 – “Of Zebulun, there were 50,000 who went out in the army, who could draw up in battle formation with all kinds of weapons of war and helped David with an undivided heart.” Among the people who came back to help David were 50,000 people from the tribe of Zebulun. The Bible says that they were “with an undivided heart” (v. 33). In other words, they were sincerely loyal to David who followed only David.

I hope and pray that our church, battling with the assurance of victory, can be filled with the loyal people with the undivided heart. I pray that we look only at the Lord who is the Captain, and be victorious church in the spiritual war by faith alone.

Fifth, and last, the David's great army, like God's army, was David's supporter with a perfect heart and one mind.

Look at 1 Chronicles 12:38 – “All these, being men of war who could draw up in battle formation, came to Hebron with a perfect heart to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one mind to make David king.” All the men of war who came back to help David were 344,022 people (Park) and they tried to make David king over all Israel with “a perfect heart” and “one mind” (v. 38). In other words, all of them were in one heart fully determined and supportive of David.

I hope and pray that our church, battling with the assurance of victory, can be filled with people who are fully determined in one mind. I pray that we will be fully determined to follow only the Lord who is the Captain and be loyal to the Lord with one mind.

We, the church of God, are church that fights against ourselves, sin, the world, and Satan and death. And the Lord who has promised to build His church, is building our church as victorious church (cf. Mt. 16:18). May the Lord raise us all up to become warriors who put our full trust in God and are trained to fight the spiritual battle. May the Lord work in our hearts and build us as soldiers of the cross, loyal to the Lord who is the Captain, with undivided heart and with all our perfect heart and one mind.

1. Stand up, Stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross; Lift high His royal banner,
It must not suffer loss: From victory unto victory His army He shall lead,
Till every foe is vanquished, And Christ is Lord indeed.
2. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The trumpet call obey; Forth to the mighty conflict
In this His glorious day: Ye that are men now serve Him Against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger, And strength to strength oppose.
3. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone; The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own: Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls, or danger, Be never wanting there.
4. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The strife will not be long; This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song: To Him that wins the battle A crown of life shall be;
He with the King of glory Shall reign eternally.

Amen.

[Hymn "Stand Up for Jesus"]

The church as God's sanctuary

“When Israel went forth from Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became His sanctuary, Israel, His dominion. The sea looked and fled; The Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, The hills, like lambs. What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs? Tremble, O earth, before the Lord, Before the God of Jacob, Who turned the rock into a pool of water, The flint into a fountain of water.” (Psalms 114)

What do you think the true image of the Church is? What is the true church like? I personally meditated on the book of Acts and came to realize five principles in the form of the early church. The five principles are: (1) a church of prayer, (2) a church filled with the Holy Spirit, (3) a church boldly proclaiming the gospel, (4) a church where the Lord adds believers, and (5) a community of love. I hope and pray that we can apply these five principles to our church so that our church can be like true church.

In Psalms 114: 2, the psalmist says “Judah became His sanctuary, Israel, His dominion.” Here the psalmist says “Judah” as “His sanctuary.” In other words, the psalmist speaks of Israel as the sanctuary of God. What is the sanctuary of God? The sanctuary of God is where God is present among His people and dwell with them. There is the word of God and it is proclaimed in the sanctuary of God. It is also a place where God's people gather there to offer sacrifices, listen to the words of the covenant, and worship and pray to God. There was a great feast. The Old Testament “the sanctuary of God” refers to the New Testament “the church.” In other words, the sanctuary of God refers to the church. I want to meditate on the church, the sanctuary of God, in three ways and want to receive lessons. I hope and pray that our church will be this community.

First, the church, the sanctuary of God, is a saved community.

Look at Psalms 114:1 – “When Israel went forth from Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange language.” The psalmist is reminding what God did through Moses during the time of the exodus in which God rescued the Israelites from the barbarian Egyptians (Park). In other words, the psalmist recalls the work of salvation when God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Why did God bring the Israelites out of Egypt? Why did God save them? The reason is because God loved the Israelites and was keeping the oath that He made to their forefathers. Look at Deuteronomy 7:7-8: “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” God's salvation is achieved entirely in God's sovereignty. God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt because God set His love on them and chose them because God kept the oath which He swore to their forefathers.

In the New Testament, the Church is the true people of God who are saved. Indeed, the Greek word "ekklesia" (church) is "ek" (out of) + "kaleo" (call). In other words, the church means to be called out of. God chose the church in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will (v. 5). He saved the church from the

Satan's kingdom like Egypt to the praise of the glory of God's grace (v. 6). Therefore, whenever we think of God's saving grace, we must praise God. In other words, the church must be a community of worship. Also, when we think of the salvation God has provided in Jesus Christ, we must hope for salvation to be completed by the Second Coming of the Lord.

Second, the church, the sanctuary of God, is a community where God is with us.

Look at Psalm 114:2 – “Judah became His sanctuary, Israel, His dominion.” “His sanctuary” is where God is present among His people and dwells with them. In other words, the church must experience God's presence to know, feel, and experience that God is always with us. In particular, we must experience the fact that God is with us as we worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Also, we need to experience God's presence more deeply in crisis and adversity. In Psalms 114:2, the psalmist recalls that God was with the Israelites who were liberated from Egypt (Park). God was with the Israelites. In the days of Exodus, God was with them in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. God also walked with the Israelites in the wilderness by coming to them in the tabernacle. God gave the Law to the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai (Park). In other words, God walked with the Israelites through the Word.

When we look at John 1, the Bible says the Word who was in the beginning with God (vv. 1, 2) became flesh (v. 14). The Bible says that God who dwells among us is “Immanuel” (Mt. 1:23). In other words, God is with us. Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:16 – “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” We are the temple of God. The Spirit of God dwells in us. The Holy Spirit, who is with us all the time, is sanctifying us who are saved. Therefore, the church must be holy. In order for the church manifest that God is really with us to this dark world, the church must be holy. We must live a life that is set apart from this world by the Immanuel faith, that is, God with us. In other words, the church is the holy community of God.

Third, the church, the sanctuary of God, is a community that manifests the power of God.

God demonstrated His power many times as God delivered Israel from Egypt and led them to Canaan, the Promised Land during the Exodus. In Egypt, through ten plagues, God demonstrated His power. And in the wilderness God watered from the rock, and sent manna from heaven to feed the Israelites (Ps. 114:8). God also revealed His power in the Red Sea, and about 40 years later. When the Israelites came to the land of Canaan, God manifested His power in the Jordan River (vv. 3, 5). Before the power of God, the sea split and became like land, and water came out of the rock. In this way, the natural world also vibrated before God's power (Park). Therefore, the psalmist said in verse 7: “Tremble, O earth, before the Lord, Before the God of Jacob.” When all the people of the world see the power of God, they must fear God.

The church must manifest the power of God. The power of God is the gospel. Look at Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” We must manifest the power of God's salvation by boldly proclaiming the gospel, the power of God. The church of God is the saved community, the community that God is with, and the community that manifests God's power. May our church be such church of God.

The church under God's reign

“The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! The LORD is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He. The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the LORD our God And worship at His footstool; Holy is He. Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called on His name; They called upon the LORD and He answered them. He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept His testimonies And the statute that He gave them. O LORD our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God to them, And yet an avenger of their evil deeds. Exalt the LORD our God And worship at His holy hill, For holy is the LORD our God.” (Psalms 99)

At a Morning Prayer meeting, I meditated on Psalms 126:5-6: “Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” When the Israelites were captivated in Babylonia, they shed tears and struggled to keep their faith. At that time, God gave them the grace of salvation and brought them back to Jerusalem. God gave the Israelites the gift of the joy of salvation. Hence, the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem confessed, “We were like those who dream” (v. 1). The reason was because the Israelites experienced God's work of salvation that could not have been expected or imagined. As I meditated on these words, I reconsidered the importance of hope. We, the Christians, should dream as we look to our Lord who is our hope even when we are in difficulties and want to give up, even when we are discouraged and despaired. We must dream in the Lord, meditating on the fact that if we give up ourselves, our homes, our jobs and our business, our churches, our society, and so on, God will never give up on us. So we pray, expect, and wait.

I received this Psalms 126, especially when I personally think of our church. In other words, I am thinking of our church, praying, expecting and waiting. I want to dream in the Lord whatever difficulties and despair our church may go through. I want to continue to dream of raising the 300 soldiers of Christ and send them out into this world to expand the kingdom of God. This reminds me the hymn “There's Dream That I Dream”: “There's a dream that I dream, of my Savior divine, And I know that my dream will come true; At the morn, in the night, comes the vision of light, With a promise eternally new. O this wonderful dream is a secret of grace, And I would that this secret you knew; For I dream that last I shall look on His face And I know that my dream will come true.” d

As I meditated on Psalms 99:1-9, I thought about what church our church should be. And my prayer for our church is ‘May God reign over our church.’ I would like to be instructed in three ways about what kind of church is under God's reign under the title “The church under God's reign.”

First, there is trembling, praise, and worship in the church under God's reign.

Look at Psalms 98:1, 3, 5, 9: “The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! ... Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He. ... Exalt the LORD

our God And worship at His footstool; Holy is He. ... Exalt the LORD our God And worship at His holy hill, For holy is the LORD our God.” The psalmist says that God will reign, and all people will tremble, and the earth will shake. This is because of the great and awesome name of the Lord. That is, because God is holy (3x), we must praise and worship Him with fear and trembling. This is the church that exalts God. The three main goals of our church are (1) the church that worships the Lord, (2) the church that imitates the Lord, and (3) the church that exalts the Lord. Here, in order for us to exalt the Lord, we must praise and worship God with fear and trembling before the Holy God. We, the creatures, must praise and worship God because we fear the holy and high God, the Creator. This is what we, the creatures, should do.

But this time in which we live, people are exchanging the truth of God for a lie and are worshiping and serving created things rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). There is no fear of God at all. There is no fear of a holy God. Therefore, we are guilty of worshiping created things by exchanging the God's truth for a lie. This sinful world, which rejects God's reign, commits great sin against the holy God without fear and trembling. The same is true of religious groups that reject God's reign. People are committing great sins against God by deifying their religious leaders as gods and are worshiping them. Although creation must worship and exalt the Creator God, the sin of exalting and worshiping ourselves should not be done in the church. In other words, since the church is reign by God, we must exalt and worship God only with fear and trembling.

Second, the strength of the church under God's reign is to love justice.

Look at Psalm 99:4 – “The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.” The psalmist said, “The strength of the King loves justice.” This word teaches us the precious idea that justice is strength (Park). If this principle is applied to the church, the strength of the church under God's reign is to love justice. The reason why the church of this age is reflected in the world without strength and incapacity is because we don't love justice, don't establish justice, and don't do justice. If we live in this distorted world and don't do the righteousness and justice, then we have already lost our strength as Christians. Therefore, we can never affect the good influence of this world. This loss of influence is because we don't love God's justice and aren't doing it.

Our Lord has something to ask our church. Look at Micah 6:8 – “He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” God who reigns over us told us to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. Especially based on Psalms 99:4, we must love God's justice and do it. Therefore, I pray that in our church and through our church the Lord will establish fairness.

Third, the church under God's reign prays.

Look at Bible Psalm 99:6 – “Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called on His name; They called upon the LORD and He answered them.” Here the psalmist introduces three exemplary figures representing the Old Testament Church, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, describing God's work through them (Park). And the principle is nothing but prayer. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were the people who prayed for the church. They were men of prayer. And they were people who were answered by God in prayer (Exod. 17:11; Num. 16:43; 1 Sam 7:8, 9; 9:12) (Park). One interesting point is that in Psalms 99:7-8, the psalmist speaks of two things about the proper qualification to receive answer of prayer:

- (1) In order to receive answer to prayer, we must obey the Word of God.

Look at Psalms 99:7 – “He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept His testimonies And the statute that He gave them.” The saints under God’s reign hear the word of God. And they obey that word. That’s why they can use fair judgment and do justice. The psalmist teaches us that God will answer these saints’ prayers.

(2) We must receive forgiveness of sins in order to receive answer of our prayer.

Look at Psalms 99:8 – “O LORD our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God to them, And yet an avenger of their evil deeds.” Our God is just God. That is why our God disciplines our sins. And our God is God of love. So when we repent of our sins, our God forgives us.

Our church must be a church under God's reign. Therefore, we must devote ourselves to prayer. God's work in the church is accomplished through those who devote themselves to prayer. The Lord builds up His body, the Church, through people of prayer like Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. And those who pray are forgiven of their sins and keep the word of God. May the Lord raise us to be these prayers and build His church through us. There is trembling, praise, and worship in the church under God's reign. And the strength of the church under God's reign is to love justice. And the church under God's reign prays. I dream that our church will become like the church under God’s reign.

The church receiving grace in the wilderness

“Thus says the LORD, "The people who survived the sword Found grace in the wilderness-- Israel, when it went to find its rest.” (Jeremiah 31:2)

Are you enjoying God's rest in living in a wilderness-like world?

If we think about “wilderness,” we can think of the wilderness where the Israelites at the time of Exodus walked for 40 years toward Canaan, the Promised Land, for rest (Heb. 4:8). The wilderness was a place of no food and no water (Num. 21:5) from the Israelites' point of view, a place of complaint and resentment against God in unbelief and dissatisfaction. But the same wilderness, in God's point of view, was the place where God split the rocks and gave the Israelites abundant drink (Ps. 78:15) and God opened the doors of heaven and rained down manna upon them to eat and gave them food from heaven (vv. 23-25). It was the place of God manifesting His power and glory. The wilderness was the place where God showed His mercy and grace to the Israelites who craved intensely and tempted God (106:14) so God's anger burned (Num. 32:10). Now we are living in a world like this wilderness. I personally think of hymn “My Soul in Sad Exile” when I think about wilderness. Perhaps that's because I think the wilderness is a world of sadness, of distress, of sins and of deaths. So we see sorrow and tears in this wilderness-like world. In a world like this, God gives us grace and that grace is "rest."

In Jeremiah 31:2, God tells the Israelites through prophet Jeremiah that “The people who survived the sword Found grace in the wilderness-- Israel, when it went to find its rest.” How did God give the Israelites rest? God gave rest to the Israelites through the word of promise. Therefore, only those who believed the word of that promise could enjoy God's rest in Babylon, which was like the wilderness of sorrow (v. 13). Then, what was the word of promise that God gave to the Israelites? I thought of three things:

First, God promised to lead the Israelites in the wilderness with lovingkindness.

Look at Jeremiah 31:3 – “The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.” Since God loved the Israelites with an everlasting love, He brought them out of Egypt and led them to Canaan, the Promised Land through the wilderness. The same God promised the Israelites, through the prophet Jeremiah, to lead those who survived from the sword of the Babylonians and were taken captive out of Babylon with lovingkindness. And God promised to lead them out of Babylon, gather them from the ends of the earth, and bring them back to Jerusalem (v. 8). As a result, the Israelites would return to Jerusalem with weeping and by supplication God led them (v. 9): “O LORD, save Your people, The remnant of Israel” (v.7). When God heard their supplications, He redeemed them from the hand of the Babylon who was stronger than them (v. 11). And God promised that He would make them to walk on a straight path in which they would not stumble (v. 9). God surely heard their prayer when they asked, “Bring me back that I may be restored, For You are the LORD my God” (v. 18). And God promised to lead them with lovingkindness, to turn them back to God and “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people” (v. 1).

The Lord, who is the Head of the Church, is God who leads us like sheep and guides us in the wilderness like a flock (Ps. 78:52). The Lord is God, who delivers us and leads us out of Satan's kingdom like Egypt and Babylon, and now leads us to the green pastures and beside quiet waters (23:2). “For such is God, Our God forever

and ever; He will guide us until death” (48:14). Therefore, we must enjoy the rest of the soul by believing in the promises of the Lord, who is our God forever and who loves us with eternal love and guides us with His lovingkindness.

Second, God promised to rebuild the Israelites who were in the wilderness.

Look at Jeremiah 31:4a: “Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel!” When we think about the God’s promise to rebuild the Israelites, we can think of Jerusalem that was destroyed by the Babylonians. Of course, God’s good hand was with the Israelites whom God brought back to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the walls and temples of Jerusalem. But did God only refer to the city of Jerusalem when God promised to rebuild the Israelites? I don’t think so. How do we know that? God spoke of the Israelites as "virgin Israel" (v. 4). How are the Israelites virgin? They were spiritual adulterers who worshiped idols with God (18:13, 15). Then, how did God refer to the fornicated Israelites as “virgin Israel”? This is because God forgave their iniquity and never remembered their sin (31:34), so he saw them as they were pure virgin (Park). How amazing is this grace and love of God? God promised to rebuild the Israelites as pure virgin. Since God would rebuild them, they would be rebuilt. This was a promise that God would fulfill the work of new creation for the faithless and wandering Israelites (v. 22). God wanted to bless them (v. 23) and promised to build and plant them (v. 28). And God promised them to make the Israelites holy to the Lord and they would not be plucked up or overthrow anymore forever (v. 40).

The Head of the Church and the corner stone is the Lord who promises to build up His Church (Mt. 16:18) and faithfully fulfills that promise. The Lord is building the church as “a radiant church” (Eph. 5:27). The Lord is building us up to be the radiant church, “without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (v. 27) so that He can invite us to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). The Lord wants to plant us, His Church, in eternal heaven. Therefore, we must enjoy the rest of our soul by believing this word of God's promise.

Third, God promised that the Israelites in the wilderness would go up to Zion to praise God.

Look at Jeremiah 31: 6, 12a: “For there will be a day when watchmen On the hills of Ephraim call out, 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, To the LORD our God.' ... They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion,” God promised to redeem the Israelites (v. 11) and to make them to go up to Zion (v. 6) and go to God to sing aloud with gladness (v. 7). God promised to bring the Israelites to God and enable them to praise God by turning their mourning into joy and by comforting them and giving them joy for their sorrow (v. 13). Also, God promised to bring them to God and praise God by the grace of God to satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes in the wilderness (vv. 14, 25). All these saved Israelites have no choice but to shout for joy on the height of Zion because God promised to make their life like a watered garden and they would never languish again (v. 12).

The Lord, the Bridegroom of the Church, is God who makes us to praise Him by turning our sorrows into joy in the wilderness-like world. The Lord is making us to praise Him by making our souls like the watered garden. That same Lord is our hope for the future (v. 17) and will bring us into God's eternal rest (Heb. 4: 1, 9). Therefore, we will enter into eternal rest and will praise God forever. We must enjoy the rest of our soul by believing in this promised word of God.

The church added by the Lord

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:44-47)

The church should be an objection of praise rather than an objection of criticism to the world. And the church is not the place where we, Christians, use artificially all the worldly ways and bring people into the church to fill the empty chairs. Rather, the church adds people by the Lord. In other words, the Lord adds those who are being saved to the church (Acts 2:47). What kind of church will the Lord add?

First, the church that the Lord adds devotes to four things.

The four things are: (1) devotion to the teaching of the Word of God, (2) devotion to the fellowship, (3) devotion to the communion, and (4) devotion to prayer (v. 42).

Second, the church that the Lord adds has fellowship of the saints.

The Apostles' Creed that we Christians confess in worship say: "... I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints," Here, what does the phrase "the communion of saints" mean? We can think of two ways:

- (1) The church where there is "the communion of saints" is the church where all the believers are together and have everything in common.

Look at Acts 2:44-45: "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need." The Jerusalem Church lived a life of sharing their possessions and goods. This doesn't mean that every member of the congregation sold their entire property and dedicated it to the church, then shared it with everyone. This doesn't mean that the saints' sharing of the property is the abandonment of their private property. It means that when there were saints who couldn't afford themselves on and off in the church, those saints who had property such as real estate sold it and solved their problem by providing their financial needs (Yoo). Not everyone in the Jerusalem church was able to do so or afford to do so, or not all of the saints who had property did so. Just portion of the saints did so. Therefore, other saints took care of the problem of poverty in the church.

- (2) The church where there is "the communion of saints" is the church where all the believer continue to meet together with one mind.

Look at Acts 2:46 – "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." This means that the

church, where the saints are having true communion with one another, make every effort to meet together with one mind whether at church or at home. Then what did the Early Church saints do when they gathered in the temple or at home with one mind?

(a) They gathered from house to house and had table fellowship with gladness and sincerity of heart.

Look at Acts 2:46: "... and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." The Jerusalem church saints went from house to house and had communion and a table fellowship with the members by sharing food (Yoo). And they did this table fellowship with gladness and sincerity of heart. That's why churches do things like cell meetings. It is to realize that we are one family in the Lord by practicing and experiencing the love of Christ from each other by sharing God-centered table fellowship while striving to meet together. Therefore, we must recognize that we are one community in the Lord.

(b) They praised God.

Look at Acts 2:47 – "praising God" It means that the Early Church saints gathered together to share the God-centered table fellowship and then praised God. We must glorify God by praising God whenever we gather together in the Lord.

Listening to the evangelistic preaching of Apostle Peter, the 3,000 people, who were pierced to the heart, repented and were baptized, continually devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. As a result, they had favor with all the people. The whole house of Israel who crucified Jesus now praised those 3,000 disciples as they had a favorable impression on the community of believers of Jesus. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved to the Early Church. Like the Early Church of Jerusalem, I hope and pray that the Lord adds to our church number day by day those who are being saved as we continue to devote ourselves to the teaching of the Word of God, to the fellowship, to the communion and to prayer.

The churches that were being strengthened in the faith (1)

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.” (Acts 16:1-5)

One day, the Lord gave me an understanding as my church leaders had the Bible study on Acts chapter 4. And that understanding was to see the pattern of how Lord built the Early Church. I have thought of the five patterns [the name of pattern: “Top to Bottom Method”]: (1) Prayer (v. 31, cf. 1:14- 15), (2) filled with the Holy Spirit (vv. 8, 31), (3) the preaching of the gospel (vv. 8-12), (4) the increase of the believers (v. 4, cf. 2:47), (5) the loving community (vv. 32-37). However, I was surprised because the worldly patterns of building the churches in the present age are thought to be the opposite. I would say that opposite way of the worldly pattern is the ‘Bottom to Top Method’:

- (1) Church: While the priority of the Lord's ways of building His church is prayer, the priority of the worldly way is the church. Although we say that we try to be one mind and one will in the church, I think that these days, so many churches are trying to build up the church with different minds and wills.
- (2) Church number: The second worldly way is to increase the number of church members. I am afraid that the number of people increase in the church is not those who hear the gospel and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ but those people move from one church to another church. The churches are stealing members from each other. It is a sad reality that more people are coming from the names of the church members than from those who hear the name of Jesus Christ.
- (3) Evangelism/Mission: The third way is to evangelize and to do mission.
- (4) Filled with the Holy Spirit: It seems like in the worldly patter of building the church, at the fourth pattern we are finally seeking to be filled with the Spirit. Although this should be the first one, it lies at the fourth in the worldly pattern of building the church. But I am wondering whether even being filled with the Holy Spirit in the worldly pattern is biblical or not.
- (5) Prayer: Even with this prayer, we often cry out in situations, feelings, and thoughts with the attitude that we should be recognized for our sovereignty rather than holding on to God's promises as we acknowledge God's sovereignty.

This is what Acts 16:5 says: “So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.” I want to enjoy the grace of meditating on how to become a church that strengthens in the faith and increase in number daily.

First, we must all be disciples of Jesus in order for our church to be a church that strengthens in the faith and increase in number daily.

Look at Acts 16:1 – “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.” After Apostle Paul contended with Barnabas (15:39), he went with Silas to the first mission trip to Syria and Cilicia, to strengthen the churches (v. 41). Then they came to Derbe and to Lystra (16:1). At Lystra, Paul performed a marvelous miracle in his first mission trip, which was to heal a man who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked (14:8ff.). As a result, there was a disturbance where people misunderstood Paul and Barnabas as the gods Zeus and Hermes in the form of human beings and offered sacrifices to them (Yoo). This place, called Lystra, was a pagan centered city where the Gentiles form an absolute majority of the population. And there, God used Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel and perform miracles in their first mission trip. As a result, many years later, when Paul returned Lystra with Silas, he saw small number of believing Jews in this Gentile city. Among the few believing Jews, Paul met a new disciple named Timothy (Yoo). This Jesus’ disciple Timothy can be said in today’s term a mixed raced man (16:1). In other words, his mother was a believing Jewish woman and her father was a Greek. Timothy's mother's name was Eunice, and she has sincere faith, which first lived in her mother Lois (2 Tim. 1:5). In Eunice’s heart, there was a faith without falsehood. She was the woman with precious faith. Those who had this kind of faith are true disciples of Jesus. The meaning of his name suits him. His name “Timothy” means ‘treasure of God (Park).

True disciples of Jesus have faith in their hearts that is free of lies. They have sincere faith. In other words, sincere faith means faithful faith, faith without hypocrisy, and faith that is not fake. For example, we can think of Abraham's faith in Romans 4:18-21.

(1) Abraham's sincere faith was a faith that believes against all hope (v. 18).

Abraham believed in the words of God's promise, “So shall your offspring be” (v. 18) that was given to him about 25 years ago, even as he was 100 years old and his body was as good as dead and that his wife Sarah’s womb was also dead (v. 19). In other words, Abraham's faith was the hope of having a son in the midst of a human medical impossibility.

(2) Abraham's sincere faith was a faith that would not be weakened in an impossible situation.

Look at verse 19: “Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead.”

(3) Abraham’s sincere faith was a faith that gave glory to God because it was strengthened in an impossible situation.

Look at verse 20: “Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.”

(4) Abraham's sincere faith was a faith that was being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised.

Look at verse 21: “being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.”

As true disciples of Jesus, we should listen and pay attention to 2 Corinthians 13:5 – “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?” I am sure you know Niagara Falls. One day in 1860, a famous American acrobat, Blondin, was trying to tie a rope over the Niagara Falls and tried to cross the 1,000 ft Niagara Gorge on a tightrope. Many people came to see because one year ago in 1859, Blondin, who tried to cross on the tightrope in Niagara Falls, succeeded in crossing on the tightrope, carrying his manager Harry Colcord on his back. As he tried to tie a rope about 50 meters high and about 300 meters long above the terrifying waterfall, the crowds gathered to see his new tightrope and cried out “Blondin, Blondin.” So Blondin asked them, ‘Do you believe that I can cross from one side to the other on the rope that hangs over this waterfall?’ Then the crowd agreed, saying, ‘Of course!’ So he asked them, ‘Who of you would ride on my back? If you believe in me, anybody come to me.’ Then no one volunteered. What does this say? This says that even though the crowd said they believed in Blondin, their belief was ultimately hypocritical and fake’ (Internet).

The churches that were being strengthened in the faith (2)

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.” (Acts 16:1-5)

In the Christian Today's newspaper (July 25, 2007), Miroslav Wolfe (Professor Henry B. Wright, Chair of The Yale University • Theology) has an article under the heading ‘How to Live with Others?’ The society we live in is ethnically, culturally and religiously complex. In such a society, if races, cultures, or religions are mutually exclusive, they create tensions, so they have no choice but to live in conflict between each other. Then, in this society, the author suggested four ways to relate to each other instead of being a person unrelated to each other:

- (1) Willingness to embrace each other. To do that, we need to imagine others as potentials to enrich me, rather than think of others as my reduction factor.
- (2) Changing your position. In order to live up to our willingness to embrace each other, we need to reverse our perspective. In other words, when we see others, we need to see them from their own perspective. We also need to see ourselves through the eyes of others.
- (3) Interaction. After we understand how we want others to be understood and how others understand us, we have to decide whether to agree, in whole or in part, or just remain in disagreement. This is where discussion mutual intervention is needed.
- (4) Embracing others. We Christians need to be able to embrace beyond pure bloodlines, nationalities, cultures, and races.

As I read this article, I applied it to our church. This is because the three ethnically and culturally different ministries (Korean Ministry, English Ministry, Hispanic Ministry) were thought to be helpful in maintaining unity in the Lord while respecting diversity. I think the three ministries will have to work harder to change their positions in order to understand and embrace each other. I also think that we should not ignore the need for mutual intervention while respecting each other's differences under the premise that we cannot fully agree. In the meantime, I pray that we will no longer be “others” but “each other” and embrace each other and be used as an instrument of preparation for building up the church in one heart and one mind.

We have already learned that we must all be disciples of Jesus in order for our church to be a church of strengthening in faith and increase in number daily, based on Acts 16:1. And we learned that the Jesus' disciples, like Timothy, have “sincere faith” (2 Tim. 1:5), that is, faithful faith, faith without hypocrisy. For example, we meditated on Abraham, a ancestor of faith, and took time to test and confirm ourselves whether we have faith or not:

(1) Abraham's sincere faith was a faith that believes against all hope (Rom. 4:18), (2) Abraham's sincere faith was a faith that would not be weakened in an impossible situation (v. 19). (3) Abraham's sincere faith was a faith that gave glory to God because it was strengthened in an impossible situation (v. 20). (4) Abraham's sincere faith was a faith that was being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised (v. 21). Today, I would like to be instructed by meditating on the remaining two things that our church must do in order to become a church that strengthens in faith and increases in numbers.

Second, we must all be well spoken disciples of Jesus in order for our church to be a church that strengthens in the faith and increases in number daily.

Look at Acts 16:2 – “The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.” Jesus' disciple Timothy, who had “sincere faith,” was well spoken by the brothers (Christians) at Lystra and Iconium. How could Timothy have been praised by those two local brothers? The reason seems to be that Timothy had sincere faith that had no falsehood. Furthermore, he seemed to have been praised by his brothers because he was a disciple of Jesus who showed true discipleship throughout his life. To be a disciple in Jesus' day means first walking with the Lord, learning, obeying, and imitating the Lord. Timothy did not walk with the Lord as a disciple of Jesus, but he lived after Jesus. In other words, Timothy was a man, who became like Christ and wished to dwell in Christ's faith and deeds, systematically and gradually moved on to all that he did for that purpose. That's why he was praised by Lystra and Iconium Christians. But the disciple of Jesus who is praised is not praised by anyone. Although we should be praised by sincere believers like Timothy, we need to guard against being praised by the world. When anyone is praised by a group of demons, they must be alert to themselves knowing that they are going to be demons. But if we are praised by true believers, we must not receive that glory but give that glory to God (Park). The wise man says in Proverbs 27:21: “The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives.”

A community that is gathered by Jesus' disciples like Timothy can become a church that is praised by others. The praised church of Jesus' disciples who resemble Jesus is, like the Antioch church, the ‘Christian church’ (Acts 11:26). When Barnabas and Saul (Paul) systematically taught and cultivated disciples of the large gathering in Antioch for a year (v. 26, Yoo), as a result, the Antioch disciples reached qualitatively amazing maturity for the first time and their nickname became “Christians” by the non-Christians. It means followers of Christ.’ How well did the Antioch church members have been trained in discipleship and followed Jesus Christ well, so that in the eyes of the surrounding non-Christians, they would be called ‘the followers of Christ’? May our church be the church of the Christians like the Antioch church. I hope and pray that we all have Jesus in our hearts, imitate Jesus and be His disciples who boast Him. Richard Foster puts it this way: ‘Maybe the greatest disease of the church today is the members of the church who are not disciples of Christ. It affects the whole life of the church and is the reason for the low spiritual level of the local congregations.’ We should never have a low spiritual level. Rather, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, we must imitate Christ. Therefore, we eagerly want to be able to exhort, like Paul, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (v. 1).

Third and last, we must all obey God's commandments in order for our church to be a church that strengthens in the faith and increases in number daily.

Look at Acts 16:4 – “As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.” When Paul wanted to take Timothy, who was well spoken by the brothers of Lystra and Iconium, along on the journey, he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area (v. 3). The reason was because Paul thought that since Timothy's father was a Greek (v. 3) Timothy's uncircumcision, like the Gentiles, would interfere with his mission to the Jews (Yoo). This wasn't yielding to the legalists and the Pharisees of the Jewish believers in Acts 15 that they must be circumcised to be saved. In other

words, Paul didn't circumcise Timothy as a means of salvation. The only reason for Paul to circumcise Timothy was to consider the Jews in Lystra and Iconium (Yoo). Here we can see Paul's wisdom. His wisdom, as it is said in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, is that Paul became all things to all men so that by all possible means he might save some (v. 22). That was why even though he was free and belonged to no man, he made himself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible (v. 19). And to the Jews he became like a Jew and to those under the law he became like one under the law to win them (v. 20). Paul did all this for the sake of the gospel, that he might share in its blessings (v. 23). After Paul circumcised Timothy, Paul, along with Silas and Timothy, traveled from town to town and urged them to observe the decisions made by the apostles and elders of the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 16:4). That decision was an ordinance for Gentile believers to keep (15:20, 29). The ordinance is written in verse 29: "You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell." The reason for giving this ordinance to the local Gentile believers was because of the reconciliation between Jewish and Gentile believers (Park). Perhaps a large number of Gentile believers and few Jewish believers were mixed in the first missionary journey that Paul and his co-workers visited at that time (Yoo). Hence, Paul and his co-workers urged the Gentile believers, the majority of the church, to consider the few Jewish believers and give them the rules prescribed by the apostles and elders of Jerusalem.

As we look back at our church, many of our Korean Ministry members should be considerate to the small number of English Ministry members and the Hispanic Ministry members. When we are considerate of them, we should refrain from things in order to reconcile to each other. For example, we the Korean Ministry members should refrain from treating the English Ministry members as kids. Although they are our children, grandchildren, and are younger than us, we should respect them and their personalities. When we think of Hispanic Ministry brothers and sisters in Christ, we the Korean Ministry members shouldn't call them "Mexican" because they may be offended by it. We must not show any prejudice against Hispanic brothers and sisters in Christ. Rather, we must throw them away, if we have one, before the cross and embrace them with the pure love of the Lord. In order for all three ministries to reconcile and to keep the unity of the Spirit is to obey His commandment which is to love one another. Just as Jesus loves us, we should commit ourselves to love each other. As we commit ourselves to get to know each other, we must humble ourselves to learn from each other and endeavor to comfort and build up each other while being patient with each other. In order for us to be responsible for our reconciliation ministry, we must not only be all peacemakers, but we must also be peacekeepers.

William Barclay, a well-known Bible teacher and commentator, spoke of the meaning of service: "When the world evaluates, its standard is how many people are we dominating, and how many people are going to come and go with one finger, and how many intellectuals, academic excellence, and executive meetings are held. And many measure the greatness of a person depending on how much the bank balance, assets, and material possessions are. But the evaluations that Jesus makes have nothing to do with them. There is only one criterion for the Lord's evaluation: how many people he serves. There is greatness in it"(Internet).

The church that isn't built by the Lord

“Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again.” (Psalms 28:5)

One day I had a conversation with my church visitation pastor on our way to lunch. I heard through my church visitation pastor that the Korean restaurant we were going to was sued by another restaurant with a similar name. When I that from him, I unconsciously said, 'That restaurant is no different from a church.' After speaking, I thought and found something wrong. It was awkward to say unconsciously that the restaurant is suing another restaurant like the church instead of the church is suing another church in a court like the restaurant. Perhaps I said so because before I went to eat I saw on a Christian website bulletin board that one of the large immigrant churches under the title '... It's not division' and what people wrote about it.

Too often we see problems in the church going to the world court. Precious offerings from the church believers are widely used to fight in the courts of the world. It is an unfortunate reality that the church offerings by the saints are being abused by the church in attorney's fees and newspaper advertisements, and so on. Think about how our Lord would see these great problems in the church whom He died on the cross and shed His precious blood. I fear whether the Lord will build these churches.

When we look at Psalms 28:5b, the Bible says that there are churches that God “will tear them down and never build them up again.” I would like to receive two lessons, centered on Psalm 28:3 and 5, which church is such church that the Lord doesn't build?

First, the church that isn't built by the Lord is a church that does not really love its neighbors.

Look at Psalms 28: 3 – “Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.” The church that the Lord doesn't build is a church whose lips resemble the Lord but whose heart is filled with hatred, envy, and jealousy. On our lips, we say “peace,” but if there is evil in our hearts, that church won't be built by the Lord. Rather, the Bible says that the Lord will “tear them down” such church (v. 5). The wise man says in Proverbs 10:18: “He who conceals his hatred has lying lips”

We should listen to this word with fear. If we don't love our neighbors in truth and in action but only with our lips, our church will not be built by the Lord. Narrowly speaking, if we, the Korean Ministry members, speak only peace with our lips and don't live the life of the peacemaker, but live the life of peace breakers, then the Lord will not build our church. More broadly, if we, the Korean Ministry members, say that Hispanic Ministry members are one family of the Lord with our lips, but have preconceived notions and discriminate against them like the people in the world, then the Lord will not build our church. If our lips are sweet but our hearts is bitter, then it is false love. It is not true love. False love cannot build the other person. It will rather destroy him/her. The wise man says in Proverbs 26:23, “Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.” We must listen to 1 John 3:18 and obey: “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” We, the Korean Ministry, should be the mother ministry. That means we should take on the role of a mother in our

church. Therefore, we must love our church members with love and deeds, especially both English Ministry and Hispanic Ministry members. Just like a mother who loves and cherishes her children no matter what, we the Korean Ministry members should embrace and love English and Hispanic ministries members. In addition, we must not just say “peace” in words but actually become peacemakers, demonstrating to the world that we are breaking down all the walls between us with the gospel of Christ and are truly one body of Christ.

Second and last, the church that isn't built by the Lord is a church that shows no regard for the works of the Lord.

Look at Psalms 28:5 – “Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again.” If we apply this word to our church, the Lord will not build our church if we don't believe the Lord's promise that ‘I will build My church’ (Mt. 16:18) unless we acknowledge that He is building His church. Rather, He will ‘tear down’ the church. Therefore, we must ask our Lord to open our spiritual eyes to the Lord to see the Lord's work of building up His church. Then we will be able to confess with our hearts that “this work had been done with the help of our God” (Neh. 6:16).

Without the Lord's help, no church can be built. In our strength, the church can never be built. Only when the faithful Lord fulfills His word of promise of Matthew 16:18 that the church of His body can be built. The amazing fact is that this work is still being done by our Lord. First of all, I am experiencing the building work of the Lord, who shows the “gap” (Neh. 6:1) in me that I am lacking and He breaks down what is to be broken down and is rebuilding me. Furthermore, I am seeing the work of the Lord in building in the lives of each of the pastors and the English ministry leaders.

Our church is the Lord's church and the Lord is building His church (Mt. 16:18). In order to be the church that is being built by the Lord, we must all love our neighbors and think about the things that He is doing. But if we don't do the ministry of making peace but love our neighbors only with our lips, then the Lord will not build our church. And if we don't acknowledge that the Lord is building the church even though we see it, then the Lord will not build our church. I hope and pray that we can participate in the Lord's work of building His church as we humbly receive these lessons. Victory!

The church that isn't constructed by the Lord

“To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit. Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place. Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts. Repay them for their deeds and for their evil work; repay them for what their hands have done and bring back upon them what they deserve. Since they show no regard for the works of the LORD and what his hands have done, he will tear them down and never build them up again. Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. The LORD is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one. Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.” (Psalms 28:1-9)

Are you sure that the Lord is building our church as He promised? (Mt. 16:18) Not only that you believe but have conviction that the Lord will build His church, do you also see with your spiritual eyes that the Lord is building our church as His promise to us ‘I will build my church’ (Mt. 16:18)? In Psalms 28:5b, the psalmist David said, “... he will tear them down and never build them up again.” Based on this word, I would like to meditate on three things as to what church the Lord does not build. Nowadays, many books are published about the church growth and many pastors and lay leaders are interested in church growth. But I want to think about how the Lord does not build the church. Therefore, I want to be taught three things by Psalms 28:1-9 about what our responsibility in order for our church to be built by the Lord.

First, the church that isn't constructed by the Lord doesn't make the Lord the Rock.

Look at Psalms 28:1 – “To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit.” The fact is that church that doesn't have the Lord as the Rock doesn't pray. The psalmist David made the Lord the Rock and cried out to Him in the midst of the misery of the wicked enemies (Park). The fact that David cried to God indicates that David's heart relied on God. Look at verse 7: “The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.” David cried out to God earnestly for God's help in his terrible situation, because without God's salvation (vv. 8, 9) he would be like those who have gone down to the pit (v. 1b). David regarded God's unanswered prayer as death. That is, David considered the answer of his prayer as a life (Park). This precious lesson this fact gives us is that the church that makes the Lord the Rock is a prayer church that considers prayer as life.

Like David, we should make the Lord “My rock” and cry out to Him. Look at David: “Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place” (v. 2). Look at verse 6: “Praise be to the LORD, for he has heard my cry for mercy.” The church that the Lord doesn't build doesn't pray and thus there is no answer of prayer. Therefore the church doesn't give praise to God. In other words, the church that the

Lord doesn't build has no prayer and no praise. But our church is a church that the Lord builds. Our church is the church that cries out to the Lord as we consider Jesus and His promise word as the rock. We should continue to rely on the Lord and ask Him to help us.

Second, the church that isn't constructed by the Lord is the church whose words and hearts do not match.

Look at Psalms 28:3 – “Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.” Here, the phrase “the wicked, ... those who do evil” isn't normal wicked but the extreme wicked whom God cannot accept even in His longsuffering (Park). David, who was suffering because of these wicked men, cried out to his Rock, and David pleaded that ‘their end would not be like the end of the wicked (vv. 3-5) (Park). What are the characteristics of these wicked men? They speak peace with their neighbors, while evil is in their hearts (v. 3). In short, the wicked and those who do evil are hypocrites. They speak peace, while evil is in their hearts. David sought God's justice and asked God to repay the actions of these wicked and their evil. In other words, David asked for a just God to repay the wicked and those who do evil. Look at verse 4: “Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices; Requite them according to the deeds of their hands; Repay them their recompense.” These wicked men, or hypocrites, don't regard the works of the Lord nor the deeds of His hands. Look at verse 5: “Because they do not regard the works of the LORD Nor the deeds of His hands, He will tear them down and not build them up.” Not only the hypocrites don't do the God's work nor can they do so because they don't regard the works of the Lord nor the deed of His hands

We should strive to be in harmony with our words and our hearts. We shouldn't be guilty of hypocrites around us, saying words of peace to our neighbors, but have evil in our hearts (v. 3). In order to do this, our hearts must rely on God who is “my strength and my shield”. Look at verse 7: “The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him,” If our hearts rely on God like David, we will not have evil in our hearts as the wicked and those who do evil. And our lips will not speak “peace” in lies, but rather we will praise God like David (v. 6). What is the reason? It is because our hearts will leap for joy like David's heart (v. 7). Our church must be in harmony with words and actions, and our hearts must be filled with His love. Never should our hearts be filled with evil and say, ‘Peace’, ‘I love you.’ Above all, we must all bear the fruit of the Spire more and more so that we may be able to love others with action rather than just mere words.

Third and last, the church that isn't constructed by the Lord is the church that does not make Him as their Shepherd.

Look at Psalm 28:9 – “Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever.” David cried out to God in the midst of the persecution of the wicked and those who do evil. In the midst of that, he was convinced that God would answer his prayers. He believed that God would help him. In this conviction, David prayed for the Israelites (v. 9). One of these prayers was, “be their shepherd and carry them forever” (v. 9). David asked the Lord to be the shepherd of the Israelites, so that the Lord would lift them up and carry them as if the shepherd were carrying sheep. But the wicked and those who do evil don't make the Lord as their shepherd. They show no regard for the works of the Lord. And they don't seek the shepherd's guidance or protection.

The saints who don't have the Lord as their shepherd cannot be built by the Lord. The church is same. The church that doesn't make the Lord the Shepherd will not be built by the Lord. It makes no sense to build the church without making the Lord the Shepherd, who is the Head of the Church and the Cornerstone, just as if we are trying to build a house without asking for the help of the builder. The wicked and those who do evil refuse the Lord to be

their shepherd and refuse to be led by Him. But we the church must consider the Lord who is the head of the church as our Shepherd. We need to hold on to the word of the Lord's promises and obey that word, putting our efforts in raising the Christ-centered leaders. In the meantime, as Psalm 23: 1 says, we must confess that "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want" and live according to that confession.

As I see my heart shaking in doubt as to whether the Lord is building our church or not, I see myself not making Him the "my rock" like David. I see myself in times when I don't rely solely on the Lord and ask Him in faith, but in doubt, there is no confidence in answer of my prayers and no praise in my heart toward Him. Going further, I see myself sinning against God and doing ministry by having so many sinful thoughts in my thought realm and by not having consistency in my word and my action. I also see myself that even though I am saying that the Lord is my Shepherd, I don't even listen to His voice even when I hear it. I am not trusting in Him completely and I am not continuing in what I have learned and have become convinced (2 Tim. 3:14). Nevertheless, the Lord is faithful in building His church as the Lord has promised to us in Matthew 16:18. How can we know this? We can know this when we look at our church leadership. Now I am convinced that Satan was attacking the leadership of our church, but in the midst of that, God was protecting us and was building stronger leadership. The Lord, who enables me to see this sovereign work of God with the spiritual eyes and enables me to dwell in conviction, is causing me to stand firm on the Rock Jesus Christ and His Word. And the Lord my Shepherd is guiding me and leading me. This Lord is carrying us. I pray that the Lord will answer our prayers and make us praise Him as our church relies on Him and prays to Him whenever it is difficult. Our church must be the church that regards Jesus as the Rock and stand firm on His Word. Our church must be the church that is in harmony with the heart and words. And our church must be the church with the Lord as our Shepherd. In the meantime, we are eagerly pray that the Lord continues to build His church for His glory.

The church that fills the joy of the Lord

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:1-4)

Pastor Rick Wren, pastor of Saddleback Church, made this claim: ‘The most important issue of the 21st century church is church health, not church growth. The issue is not about whether the church members are small or big but it is church health.’ He suggests five ways to measure church growth: (1) The church needs to grow warmer through fellowship, (2) The church needs to be deepened through discipleship, (3) The church should become stronger through worship, (4) The church should be broadened through ministry, and (5) The church needs to grow through evangelism. And he said, ‘Percentage of church members mobilized for ministry and missions, rather than the number of church attendants, is a more accurate measure of the health of the church.’ When I heard about this, I thought about whether our church is a healthy church or not. But I would like to use the term ‘The Biblical church’ rather than ‘The healthy church’. In other words, I am thinking about whether our church is the biblical church or not. What kind of church is the Biblical church?

The Scripture Acts 2:42-43 tells us in four ways what the Biblical church is: (1) First, the Biblical church is devoted to the teaching of the Word of God. When Apostle Peter preached the Word of God, 3,000 people received Jesus. As the young believers, they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42). The Biblical church members are learning the Word of God earnestly and faithfully. (2) Second, the Biblical church is devoted to the fellowship. Fellowship is sharing and giving to others what they have. The Biblical church members are helping each other as they share and give. (3) Third, the Biblical church is devoted to the communion. Through the communion, the saints of the church receive the grace of the Lord as they humbly receive by faith the bread and wine that symbolize Jesus’ flesh and blood. (4) Fourth, the Biblical church is devoted to the prayer. The first century Jerusalem church was committed to various prayers. They imitated the prayer of the group numbering about 120 believers (1:4) even when they expanded to 3,000 believers. The numerical growth of the Jerusalem church meant an increase number of the prayers. The Biblical church members are devoted to prayer.

As we look at Philippians 2:4, Paul wrote a letter to the saints of the Philippian church, saying, “Make my joy complete.” And he taught them four ways in which they could fill his joy. I am going to apply these four lessons to our church. So, under the title of “The church that makes the Lord’s joy complete,” I want to think about these four lessons and hopefully we can make the Lord’s joy complete by obeying those four Biblical principles.

First, there is encouragement in Christ in the church that makes the Lord’s joy complete.

Look at Philippians 2:1 – “Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ,” Here, what does “encouragement” mean? In the original Greek language, “encouragement” means "exhortation", "encouragement"

and "comfort." So in Philippians 2:1, the word "encouragement" means earnestly exhort or admonish or encourage for the purpose of firmly establishing the Philippian church saints' faith (Zodhiates). Apostle Paul used this word many times in his letters besides today's text, one of which is 2 Corinthians 8:4 – "they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints." Then in Philippians 2:1, what was Paul urgently pleading the Philippian church saints? What was he urgently encouraged them to do? It was "being of the same mind" (v. 2). Look at Philippians 2:2 – "make my joy complete by being of the same mind" Here, "being of the same mind" refers to "one mind"(1:27). In other words, Paul's encouragement in Christ to the Philippian church saints was for them have the one and same mind. The reason was because that was conducting themselves in the manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (v. 27). Unfortunately, the Philippian church saints weren't conducting themselves in the manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. How can we know this? We can know this by looking at Philippians 4:2 – "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord." In the Philippian church these two women were not in the same mind. That was why Paul wrote to the saints of the Philippian church to have one mind (1:27) and the same mind (2:2). And in Philippians 4:2, Paul specifically mentioned these two women's name Euodia and Syntyche and told them to agree with each other in the Lord. I think these two women served the Lord and His church out of selfish ambition or vain conceit (2:3). Because of their selfish ambition or vain conceit, Euodia and Syntyche couldn't agree with each other in the Lord.

What is "vain conceit"? The Naver dictionary defines this: 'Vain conceit is going far enough where there is hollow and just mere outward glory or outward show that is more than necessary.' If there is anyone in the church who has vain conceit, then it is inevitable that contention will arise. A good example of this is in Numbers 16. Korah and On rose up before Moses, together with 250 leaders of the Israel congregation and were against Moses and Aaron (vv. 1-3). What they said to Moses and Aaron was "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (v. 3). "When Moses heard this, he fell facedown" (v. 4). And he said to Korah and all the multitude, "You Levites have gone too far!" (v.7) Then Moses said to the Korah and the Levites: "Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them?" (v. 9) What did Moses mean? The Korah and the Levites considered God's grace small. Although God had separated them from the rest of the Israelite community and brought them near Himself to do the work at the Lord's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them, they regarded it small. Though they were not to regard it small but they did and they tried to get the priesthood too (v. 10). Because the Korah and the Levites regarded their duty small, they had gone too far in asking for the priesthood to Moses and Aaron. After all, they weren't only against Moses and Aaron, but also God (v. 11). The result was the death of Korah and all those who were against Moses and Aaron (vv.33, 35). We must be careful to think too highly of ourselves. And we must be careful not to go too far in words and actions. We must think, speak, and act appropriately before God. We must not do anything out of selfish ambition or vain conceit (Phil. 2:3). We must never take lightly the ministry that God has given us by grace. Instead, we should serve joyfully, humbly and voluntarily with gratitude for the ministry that God has given us because He loves us and set us apart to serve.

What was Paul's sincere encouragement to the saints of the Philippian church who weren't conducting in the manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? In other words, what kind of mind that Paul was thinking when he encouraged them to have the same mind, one mind and be like-minded? Look at Philippians 2:3 – "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." The mind that Paul was thinking when he thought about the Philippian church saints was humble mind. And humble mind is considering other better than ourselves (v. 3). How is this possible? How can we consider others better than ourselves? For example, when we look at another person and actually our faith is stronger than him and our Christian life is much better than him, how can we consider him better than ourselves? I looked for the answer in Romans 5:20 – "... But where sin increased, grace increased all the more." As we realize how great our sins are before our holy God, we are bound to realize how great the grace of God is toward us. In doing so, we cannot help but confess humbly, like

Apostle Paul: “For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9). Actually, Paul was not in the least inferior to those “super-apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). Nevertheless, he confessed, “I am the least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15:9). Then Paul confessed in Ephesians 3:8, “Although I am less than the least of all God's people” Then, toward the end of his life, Paul confessed: ‘I am the worst sinner’ (1 Tim. 1:15). The more humble we are in front of God than in front of people, the better we can consider others better than ourselves. In doing so, we can "serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13). Also, we can be devoted to one another in brotherly love and honor one another above ourselves (Rom. 12:10).

When we all hear Paul's gentle exhortation and have humble heart, our churches can have the same mind and glorify God with one mind and one in spirit. The humble heart that we must bear is "the heart of Christ Jesus". Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:5 – “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” When all the members of our church have the Jesus' humble heart, we will be able make the Lord's joy complete.

“O Mas-ter, let me walk with Thee In low-ly paths of serv-ice free;
Tell me Thy se-cret, help me bear The strain of toil, the fret of care.
(Hymns “O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee”, verse 1).

Second, there is comfort from His love in the church that makes the Lord's joy complete.

What do you do when you desperately need comfort in your trouble? Maybe we try to rely on our close family members or friends. So we share and pour out what is in our hearts to them. However, no matter how much we try to get close to them and get comfort from them, we feel that we are strangers and aliens to our own family members and close friends (Ps, 69:8). Instead of getting comfort from them, we may be discouraged by them.

When we look at Numbers 32:7, we see those who discouraged the Israelites. They are the Gadites and Reubenites. How did they discourage the rest of the tribes of Israel? They did so by asking Moses not to make them cross the Jordan (v. 5) but to give them the lands of Jazer and Gilead (v. 1) that were suitable for their livestock (v. 4). When Moses heard their words, he said to the Gadites and Reubenites, “Shall your countrymen go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from going over into the land the LORD has given them?” (vv. 6-7) So the Gadites and Reubenites discouraged the rest of the ten tribes. But Moses said that not only them but their ancestors also discouraged the Israelites (vv.9, 14). Their ancestors' hearts were made melt (Deut. 1:28) because of the bad report by the ten spies about the land of Canaan they had explored (Num. 13:32; 14:35, 36) and thus they cried and wept aloud (Num. 14:1). After all, the Gadites and Reubenites' ancestors were discouraged because they believed in the bad report by the ten spies and not believed in the good report by Joshua and Caleb. In fact, those ten spies didn't trust God and thus made the bad report that discouraged the Gadites and Reubenites' ancestors. Likewise, the Gadites and Reubenites discouraged the rest of the Israelites because they had forgotten the responsibility of the whole community of Israel and only sought for their selfish desires. In conclusion, like their ancestors, the Gadites and Reubenites discouraged the Israelites because they didn't follow God wholeheartedly (cf. v. 24).

If we don't follow God wholeheartedly, then we can make everyone in our communities discouraged. If we don't believe in God completely and distrust Him, we can make our brothers and sisters in Christ discouraged. Also, when we don't faithfully bear our community responsibility as well as personal responsibility, then we can discourage other members of the church community. We need to be the comforters, not the discouragers. Just as the Holy Spirit is comforting us, we must comfort our neighbors as we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Look at Philippians 2:1 – “... if any comfort from his love” Here, Paul is talking about Christ’s love. What Paul was saying to the Philippian church saints was for them to comfort each other with Christ’s love. Why did Paul encourage them to do so? We can find the reason in Philippians 1:30 – “since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.” It was because the Philippian church saints, like Paul, were struggling for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, they were suffering (v. 29). Because they were suffering like Paul because of those who opposed them, Paul told the Philippian church saints to comfort each other with Christ’s love. And then he told them to have the same love (2:2). What does it mean? It means that when the Philippian church saints were suffering, all the saints should love each other and comfort each other with the same love of Christ. How then does Paul tell the Saints of the Philippian Church to love one another and comfort one another with the same love of Christ? Look at Philippians 2:4 – “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” The way to comfort each other with the love of Christ is to look to the interests of others. In other words, Paul told the saints of the Philippian church to love and comfort each other by looking at other’s interests. The exhortation to look at other’s interests rather than our own interests means that our neighbor's love shouldn’t selfish love for self-interest but selfless love. In particular, I think what Paul wanted the Philippian church saints to have was the same mind in the Lord as they seek the interests of other brothers and sisters in Christ with the altruistic love of Christ, rather than seeking their own interests. The reason I think this way is that in Philippians 4:2, Paul mentioned two names, Euodia and Syntyche and exhorted them to "agree with each other in the Lord".

What will happen to the church if we all pursue our own interests and care for our own work in the church? What will happen to the church if we all think of ourselves, speak and act in our own ways, and serve the church in our own ways? Such church can never be the church that pleases the Lord. Beside this, we cannot feel the love of Christ in the church if we pursue only our own self-interest. What does the Bible say love is? The Bible 1 Corinthians 13:5 says love is not self-seeking. When Paul said to the Philippian church saints to have the same love and love and comfort each other means not to seek their own interests but to seek the others’ interests (Phil. 2:2, 4). Then how can we seek the others’ interests? In his book, "A Spirituality of Caregiving," Henry Nouwen said: The word 'kara', the etymology of 'care', means 'to grieve, to mourn, to suffer, to share the pain' ... Care is crying with people who are ill and confused, lonely, isolated, and forgotten. That is, it is to realize that their pain is in my heart. Caring is entering into the world of broken and helpless people and sharing the fellowship with weak people there. And caring is staying beside those who are suffering even the situation doesn’t improve’ (Nouwen). How much will we be comforted if we care for each other? This is what Rev. John McArthur said regarding the word “comfort” in the phrase “if any comfort from his love” in Philippians 2:1: “The Greek word translated “comfort” portrays the Lord coming close and whispering words of gentle cheer or tender counsel in a believer’s ear” (MacArthur). When we try to comfort our brothers and sisters in Christ with the love of Christ just like Jesus did, I think we should also go near to them and whisper words of gentle cheer or tender counsel to their ears.

Several years ago I meditated on Acts 15: 35-41, under the heading "The ministry of comfort." I meditated on three things as to how we should do the ministry of comfort: (1) First, we must have a true meeting in the Lord to fulfill our ministry of comfort. It means to have meeting in the Lord to check each other's spiritual condition in the Lord. (2) Second, we must not argue with one another in order to fulfill our ministry of comfort. That is, we must reconcile each other. Paul and Barnabas had sharp disagreement about whether to take Mark with them or not on the Paul’s first missionary return visit and they parted company (Acts 15:36-40). The lesson we learned here was that we should learn to control our zeal for the Lord. Our enthusiasm should not be derailed to such an extent that it cannot be governed (Calvin). (3) Third, we need to strengthen the church in order for us to take up our ministry of comfort. How can we strengthen the church? As we listen to God's Word and as our faith grows, the church can stand firm. This is true ministry of comfort. When we are faithful in this ministry of comfort, we will be able to make the Lord’s joy complete.

Third, there is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in the church that makes the Lord's joy complete.

One day I had a conversation with the leaders of our church English ministry. And I asked them why many your people who go to college leave the church. One of the brothers in Christ then said that it seemed to be a habit when he started not coming to the church once or twice. Yet another brother in Christ said that it might be because there is no 'socializing' in the church. And then he used the word "fellowship." It seemed to me he was using those two words (socializing and fellowship) interchangeably or a similar way. What do you think? My personal opinion is that one of the Christian terms that is being abused in the church is "fellowship." How this word "fellowship" is being abused is that many believers misunderstand "fellowship" as some "activity." But fellowship is not an activity but a "relationship" (Jerry Bridges). As we first build relationship with God through intimate fellowship with Him (vertical fellowship), we must also build relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ through our fellowship with them (horizontal fellowship).

When we look at Acts 2:42, the Bible says that the early church believers devoted themselves in "fellowship." Here, the word "fellowship", "koinonia" in Greek, has two meanings. The first meaning is to share. The second meaning is to give what you have to others. The fellowship we are dealing with is not simply a fun conversation with people and eating food together. It doesn't mean that we are playing games in a Christian atmosphere or just talking about what happened last week. That's what we did before we were born again. There was something new sharing. That is, 'to have time to share what we have learned in the God's Word and to pray together', 'to intercede in prayers for other saints who are going through their own difficulties,' and 'to share our own possessions with others.' Then what is the "fellowship" in Acts 2:42? There is a definite article in front of the word "fellowship" in the original Greek language – "the fellowship." What does "the fellowship" refer to? It refers to the "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." When there was the work of the Holy Spirit in full on the day of Pentecost, not only that about 3,000 people repented and were baptized, but also they shared the Holy Spirit who dwelt in them. They devoted to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In the community of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is natural. Therefore, the early church of Jerusalem was not just a humanistic community where people came together in unity, but it was the community of fellowship with the Holy Spirit as the center and core (Yoo Sang-sup).

Look at Philippians 2:1 – "... if any fellowship with the Spirit" Apostle Paul writes a letter to the saints of the Philippian church and urged them to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this exhortation is the unity of the church. Although there are different kinds of gifts in the church, different kinds of service and different kinds of working (1 Cor. 12:4-6), "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit" (v. 11). In the Lord's church, "God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (v. 18). "God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (vv. 24-25). Therefore, we must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). How then can we do so? In today's text Philippians 2:2, Paul said to the saints of the Philippian church to "united in spirit." What does it mean? It means "one-souled" and describes people who are knit together in harmony, having the same desires, passions and ambitions (MacArthur). In Philippians 1:27, which we have already meditated, Apostle Paul told the saints of the Philippian church to conduct themselves in the manner worth of the gospel of Christ by standing firm in one spirit and contending one man for the faith of the gospel. Here, "one spirit" means "will and desire" (Calvin). Paul was encouraging the saints of the Philippian church to do the Lord's work with the same will and desire in fulfilling His will with the one mind and the humble attitude.

How can we work together for the Lord and His church as we are "being one in spirit and purpose" (2:2)? If we each do everything according to our own thoughts and wills, we cannot serve the body of the Lord in one mind and one spirit. We will each do our own work according to our own minds and thoughts. But if we all lay down our

will and pursue the Lord's will together, we will be able to cooperate with the Lord's work in one heart and one will. Therefore, all of us must lay down our will and pursue the Lord's will together. In order to do so, we must pray to God according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit: "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Mt. 26:39). Not only we must pray like this, we also need to having spiritual marking out a pillar around its bottom with a gauge for chiseling. The first thing the constructors usually do when they build a tradition Korean house is to place a main prop. Here, the main prop refers to a stone under the pillar. When they put the main prop, then they put the pillar on the main prop. However, there is one process that must go through when setting up the pillar on the main prop. It is difficult to put the pillar on the main prop, even if they choose the stone that is wide and flat. If they want to put the pillar on the main prop, they have to do a line work so that the surface of the foundation stone and the surface of the pillar fit well. The method of marking out the pillar around its bottom with the gauge for chiseling is simple. It is to cut and polish the face of the pillar and then put it on the foundation stone. It isn't to grind the foundation stone, but to always trim the surface of the pillar that is built on it and then match it with the foundation stone. The standard is not the pillars, but the foundation stones. And the better they do this, the safer and stronger the house will be (Internet). Here, I thought about spiritual marking out the pillar around its bottom with the gauge for chiseling. It is to conform our lives to the words of the Lord who is the Rock (Mt. 7:24). In other words, it is to do the will of our Heavenly Father instead of just crying out "Lord, Lord" (v. 21). The important thing here is that the standard of our lives is the Lord and the Lord's will, just as the standard of the tradition Korean house is not the pillar but the foundation stone. That means that as the pillar matches the foundation stone and not other way around, we must conform our will to the Lord's will instead of Lord's will to our will. As the disciples of Jesus Christ, we must live according to the will of the Lord upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, we will be able to make the Lord's joy complete.

Fourth and last, there is affection and compassion in the church that makes the Lord's joy complete.

This year's theme for our church is "With the affection of Christ Jesus." And the passage in the Scripture is Philippians 1:8 – "For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." This year's goal is to love your neighbor with the affection of Christ Jesus. In order to do so, we all need to long for our neighbors with the affection of Christ Jesus (v. 8), have mercy on them (Jer. 31:20) and jealously desires them (Jam. 4:5). Not only that, we must pray for them as we always thinking of them with the affection of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:9-11). All of us should participate in the gospel with the affection of Jesus Christ (v. 5). Looking back over the past several months, how much do we think we have reached this goal? Did we really have mercy on our neighbors while jealously desire them? Did we always remember and pray to God for them? Did we participate in the gospel with the affection of Christ Jesus? Have we at least looked after our neighbors and prayed with compassion and helped them?

Look at Philippians 2:1 – "... if any affection and compassion." Here the word "affection" is the same Greek word as "affection" in Philippians 1:8. As Paul wrote to the saints of the Philippian church in the jail that he longed for them with the affection of Christ Jesus (1: 8) he exhorted them to long for each other with affection (2:1). Look at 1 John 3:17-18: "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." If we love and long for our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ, I am sure we will not only shut our hearts to help them but also will not be able to do so. Rather, we will help the needy neighbors with actions and in truth. The way this affection can deepen in the relationship of the brothers and sisters in Christ is to accept and obey each other with the love of Christ. A good example of this is found in 2 Corinthians 7:15 – "His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling." When Titus visited the Corinthian church, the Corinthian church saints received and obeyed him with fear and trembling. As a result, Titus' affection abounded all the more toward them. Also, Titus' spirit had been refreshed

by them (v. 13). In other words, Titus has gained strength and courage because of the love and comfort of the Corinthian church saints. Looking at Titus, Paul was not only comforted, but he rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus (v. 13). Then what does "compassion" mean, which Paul spoke in Philippians 2:1? In Latin, "compassion" is derived from the words "pati" and "cum" and it means to suffer together. This is what Henry Nouwen said in his "Compassion": 'Compassion tells us to go to a place where there is hurts and suffering and share the broken pains, fears, chaos, and anguish' (Nouwen). Jesus said "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6:36). The mercy of our Father in Heaven is to love the enemy, and to show mercy to those who do not know the grace and to the wicked. Jesus has given us mercy by redeeming our sins. Since we have experienced His mercy, we should be merciful to our neighbors and give to the needy (Mt. 6:2-4; cf. Jam. 1:27) and forgive those who did evil to us (Mt. 18:35). In doing so, Jesus said to us "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (5:7). And the Lord will have mercy on us, forgive us and deliver us.

Apostle Paul's reason in Philippians 2:1 in telling the saints in Philippian church to have "affection and compassion" was because he wanted them to live with one purpose with affection and compassion. Look at Philippians 2:2 – "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." This word "intent on one purpose" in one word in Greek and it appears again in Philippians 2:5 – "Have this attitude in yourselves" Here, the word "Have this attitude" means to have an attitude or frame of mind think in such a way, purpose, be inclined (Friberg). In other words, Paul exhorted the Philippian church saints to aim for the purpose of having the mind of Christ Jesus and to move toward that purpose. And the mind of Jesus is not only the humble mind but also is affectionate and compassionate. So Paul earnestly encouraged the Philippian church saints to long for, love and comfort each other with this mind and to have true fellowship in the Lord.

Shouldn't we listen to this Paul's exhortation as well? Shouldn't we all have this affection and compassion of Jesus Christ as well? We too should long for, love and comfort each other with this affection and compassion of Jesus Christ and enjoy true fellowship in the Lord. In doing so, our church will be able to make out Lord's joy complete.

We must make our Lord's joy complete. In order to do so, we must exhort one another in Christ. And the exhortation is to have the same mind. And to do that, we must do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Also, we must love each other and comfort each other with the love of Christ. We should look not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others. We must love others with selfless love of Christ for their own benefits. And we must seek the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We must be united in spirit with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must lay down our own will and seek and share the will of the Lord. We must move forward with intention on one purpose in affection and compassion. We must do so with the purpose of glorifying God only. I hope and pray that our church will be able to make our Lord's joy complete as we intent on glorifying God with one mind and one spirit according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The unity of the church

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing--life forever.” (Psalms 133)

Jesus didn't say “the light of the church” to those who believe and follow Him, but “the light of the world” (Mt. 5:14). Therefore, if we are Christians who believe in Jesus, we shouldn't only concentrate on the church life and neglect our life in the world. We must live concretely as Christians in the world. Ahn Hee-hwan, the pastor of True Love Church, said that the churches had many good roles in the world. First example is blood donation. The Korean Institute for Religious and Social Ethics compared blood donation by religion from 1998 to 2001, with 81.79% of Protestant blood donations. Protestant blood donation rates are overwhelmingly high, considering that Catholic, Won Buddhism, Buddhism were only 10.54%, 0.55% and 0.86%, respectively. Second example is organ donation or bone marrow donation. In the case of bone marrow donation, the records of 2000-June 2002 also showed that Protestant was overwhelmingly high at 38%. Third example is social welfare facilities. Fourth example is homeless support groups, etc. Nevertheless, the evaluation of the church in the world is not so friendly but rather hostile. Obviously, the church has its own role of light and salt in the world, and despite its extensiveness, there is more to blame than praise to the church. What are some reasons? Pastor Ahn talks about six reasons and two of them are ugly figures of fallen pastors, especially those big church pastors, and division within the churches (Internet). Anti-Christian activity is growing rapidly because of the ugly nature of the church. We see many anti-Christians who are systematically determined, invading each site, and devoting themselves to scratching the Protestant churches. An organization called the Anti-Christian Citizen's Union even collecting fees. Their goal is to eradicate Christianity. In this situation, we Christians need to be the true churchy as we repent and return to God. The world will get darker and darker. And the world will get uglier. The more the world is like this, the more our church must shine the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world, and the more and more the church must shine its beauty to the ugly world.

What is the beauty of a true church? The beauty of the true church is that brothers and sisters in Christ live together in the Lord. Look at Psalms 133:1 – “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!” In Isaiah 53:2, the Bible says of the Messiah (Christ) as follow: “For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.” Jesus has no stately form or majesty, He has no beauty to adore, Jesus has no fine appearance, so that the people of the world are not attracted to Jesus. I think this is the present reality of the church. The world does not care about the church. Why is that? It is because in their eyes the church has no attractive beauty. Are there any beauties that we Christians look upon when they see our church? I think “No.” When we looked at our church, it lost its attractiveness. There is no beauty to adore. Why did the church become like this? Why does the church lack beauty to be seen by the world or even to our eyes? The reason is because we don't obey Jesus, who is the Head of the Church. But we must keep in mind that Jesus is beautiful in God's eyes even though there is nothing beautiful in the worldly perspective or in our eyes. Why is Jesus beautiful in God's eyes? This is because Jesus obeyed His Father till His died on the cross to fulfill the Father's will (Phil. 2:8). In other words, the image of Jesus, the Son who obeys Heavenly Father, is beautiful in God's sight. This is

the beauty of the Lord's church and our beauty. It is to obey the word of the Lord. The church that obeys the word of the Lord is beautiful in God's eyes.

Where is the goodness of the church if the beauty of the church is in obedience to the Lord's commandments? I find the answer in Romans 8:28 and Ephesians 2:10. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." In other words, the goodness of the church is the manifestation of the goodness of God. In order to do this, the church must continue to taste the goodness of God as Psalm 34:8 says. Not only that, but the church must taste the goodness of God fully. Then the church can show the goodness of the church to the world by doing good deeds since we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). Look at Matthew 5:16 – "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

In Psalm 133, the psalmist David writes this song ascending to the temple and says how good and beautiful it is for brothers to dwell together in unity. This doesn't mean that the God's people, the Israelites were not united by the blood of the pedigree brothers (Park). Rather, it means the spiritual unity of the people of God. In short, this refers to the unity of the Lord's church. How beautiful it is to God when the church of the Lord obeys His commandment to love God and to love one another with God's love and to reconcile and keep the unity of the church? The people of the world will not criticize the church if they see the unity of the church. Rather, they will be attracted to the church. As we Christians also obey the word of the Lord and love one another, we will see the beautiful image of Jesus in the church as we progress toward the unity of the church. Therefore, we must listen to God's words about the unity of the church. Ephesians 1:10 tells us that God saved His chosen people by the ransom death of Jesus Christ so that they would be one in Christ. Therefore, the church must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The church, the body of the Lord, must be built up itself in love (v. 16).

In Psalms 133:2-3, David compares the goodness and beauty of the brothers to dwell together in unity to two things:

- (1) David says, "It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes" (v. 2).

This means that the oil poured on Aaron's head is fragrant, glossy, and has tendency to spread. And as the oil runs down on the beard when it is poured on Aaron's head, the brotherly love is the love that spreads to others when God pours out (Park). The Bible says "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us", who are justified by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:5). We must practice this love of God. In other words, there must be this spreading love of God in the church. With this spreading love of God we must love one another. Then the church can keep its unity. Therefore, we can manifest the goodness and beauty of the church to this world.

- (2) David says, "It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion" (v. 3a).

According to Pastor John MacArthur, Mount Hermon is 9,200 feet high and is located north of Palestine. It is said that the snow at the top evaporates and goes up to the south, giving dew to Judah (Park). That is why dew is important to Judah. Without dew, the rice straw cannot live. Therefore, the psalmist David said that the goodness and beauty of living together in the unity of the church, the people of God, was as if the dew of Hermon fell on the mountains of Zion, just as the high dew spreads down from Mount Hermon. And from "there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore" (v. 3b). This means that God has

commanded the blessing of eternal life where God's love is (Park). That's right. When there is God's love in the church, the church can enjoy the blessings of eternal life.

The psalmist David is saying: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" The goodness and beauty of the Lord's Church is that brothers and sisters live together in unity. God's love has been poured into our hearts. I hope and pray that the church can keep the unity of the church in the Lord by spreading the love of God to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, I pray that we can reflect the beauty of the church to this world.

When we think of the church

“By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down and wept, When we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst of it We hung our harps. For there our captors demanded of us songs, And our tormentors mirth, saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion.’ How can we sing the LORD'S song In a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, May my right hand forget her skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth If I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, ‘Raze it, raze it To its very foundation.’ O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, How blessed will be the one who repays you With the recompense with which you have repaid us. How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones Against the rock.” (Psalms 137)

On May 14, 2009, I read the article under the title of ‘300 Church Personnel, Emergency Declaration for Self-Promotion of Korean Churches.’ Under the heading ‘Declaration for Pastoral Evangelism and Self-purification,’ eight things were declared: (1) Repent of being unfaithful to evangelical values, (2) Reflect on failure to love one another and of the church division and conflict, (3) Reflect on the moral hazards of pastors, and maintain a higher level of morality, (4) Realize the problem of the church's capture of growing supremacy, resulting in cross-church polarization, (5) Endeavor to be the authority of spirituality more than the degrees and honors of the world, (6) Strive to exert personal piety and socially healthy influences, (7) Accomplish the clean church politics on an evangelical basis, (8) The church will endeavor to be the light and salt of society (Internet). As I read these eight emergency declarations, I thought they were precious. If the churches live according to this declaration, the church will be able to glorify the Lord. In particular, I think the first of the eight declarations is the key. In other words, we must repent of being unfaithful to the evangelical values. A more specific statement of this first declaration is: ‘Preach the gospel of salvation that was accomplished by the blood of Jesus Christ that the apostles handed down to us and continue the Reformed tradition of the Reformers in martyrdom. The church, built on this gospel, is a soul-saving hospital and a school of learning God. However, we are committed to have deep self-reflections about whether we have focused more on worldly success than on the value of the gospel, whether we have pursued higher moral and ethical lives, and whether we have done our best to love our brothers and care for our neighbors. Through this, we commit ourselves to live faithfully according to evangelical values’(Internet). It is a declaration that I cannot disagree with. In particular, I agree that we must repent that the church has focused more on worldly success than on the value of the gospel. What do you think we Christians should do when we think of the church? What should we do when we think of the church?

First, we must weep when we think of the church.

Look at Psalms 137:1 – “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.” The psalmist wept with the Israelites who were captivated by the Babylonians and who sat by the rivers of Babylon when he remembered Zion that was destroyed by the Babylonians. Why did he weep remembering Zion? The reason is because he longed for the grace of God's restoration (Park). When the Israelites sinned against God, God told them that they would be in their low estate, that is, captives to Babylon (136:23). Eventually, the Israelites were taken

captive to Babylon because of their crimes, where the psalmist wrote this poem (Ps. 137). How sad was their Babylonian captivity. The psalmist says that when the captors, the Babylonians, demanded him and the Israelites to sing them one of the songs of Zion, they hung their harps on the poplars in order not to obey their command (vv. 2-3). The reason is that the psalmist didn't want to use holy songs for entertainment to the Gentiles (Park). How did it feel when the God's holy people were taken captive by the Gentiles, oppressed there, and were forced to sing God's holy songs for entertainment? Hence, the psalmist lamented in verse 4: "How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?" In this lament, the psalmist felt lonely in Babylonian captivity and thought about Zion on the banks of the Babylonian river and he wept. I think of his tears into two ways:

(1) The tears of the psalmist may have been tears of repentance prayer.

The psalmist's cry would have been the mourning of repentance. When he thought of the lost grace of God, he might have no choice but to think about the saints' sins and thus repented in contrite heart (Park). When I think about "the lost grace of God", I remember how I was before last Wednesday night prayer meeting. When I am full of grace, I can feel my heart full of thanks, peace, and joy. But when I forget God's grace, I am filled with heaviness, anxiety, and worry. In the midst of that, God revealed my sin and challenged me to live a life that was cut off from sin by confessing my sin. The next day Thursday, after the early morning prayer meeting, tears were in my eyes when I prayed with a piece of Kentucky Fried Chicken bread left over from the yesterday Wednesday night prayer meeting. The reason is that I remembered the words of my sermon that I preached at the prayer meeting. I was grateful for God's providence for providing daily food. When we think of ourselves, of our families, especially our church, we must shed tears of repentance. What is the reason? This is because the church has forgotten the grace of God. When the church of the Lord has forgotten the grace of God, the church has no choice but to sin against God. Therefore, our church must repent to God. Then, in repentance, true restoration, reconciliation, reform, and revival can occur in the church.

(2) The tears that the psalmist shed were probably the tears of prayer in remembering God's saving grace.

Since we know that there is only one Savior God in the heart of those who truly repent, we cannot but plead with God to save us. As the psalmist was taken captive and lived with the Israelites in captivity in Babylon, he realized and repented of their sins and asked God for mercy and grace and deliverance from the Babylonian captivity and to lead them and guide them to their home land of Judah. As Jonah looked back to the Lord in the belly of a large fish and confessed, "Salvation is from the Lord" (Jon. 2:9), the psalmist longed for the grace of God's salvation, knowing that only God could save the Israelites. When we think of the church, the Lord's body, we must truly repent and ask God for His saving grace. We must pray for deliverance from all our dirty and ugly sins. We need to ask God to be born again as the holy and clean bride of Jesus, the Bridegroom. In the meantime, we should be a church preparing for the Lord's return. I hope and pray that we can shed tears of repentance and tears of prayer for God's grace of salvation when we think of the church.

Second, we must make it the highest joy when we think of the church.

Look at Psalms 137:6 – "May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy." The psalmist confessed that although he lived captive in the nation of Babylon, he considered Jerusalem his highest joy. In other words, he made Jerusalem his greatest joy. This shows the psalmist's God-centered godly life. Although he lived in captivity in the foreign nation Babylon, the psalmist cried, remembering Zion, and longing for God. It seems as though the psalmist missed Jerusalem as a captive in

Babylon, just as a child who left home missed his parents and his home more than before. He longed for Jerusalem to be rebuilt and flourished as before, because the city of God, Jerusalem, was destroyed by Babylon (Calvin).

This should be our earnest prayer. In other words, we must pray for the Lord to rebuild the ruined church and to prosper like the early church. I think the early church was in its heyday in the history of the church. In the days when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly proclaimed the gospel, the power of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit appeared. The Lord added to the early church's number daily those who were being saved and His loving community was built. That should be our church. We must pray for this true prosperity of our church. And as we look to the church of our time, as the psalmist shed tears of repentance and tears of prayer for the grace of God's salvation, we should ask the Lord to raise our church and to reform it. Why should we pray like this when we think of the church? The reason is because our church is our highest joy. Because the Lord who is the head of the church is our highest joy, the church of His body is also our highest joy. As the Westminster Short Catechism Question 1 says "What is the chief end of man?" and its answer says "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever" we should enjoy the Lord forever. And he who rejoices in the Lord forever rejoices in His church as well. Then how can we enjoy the church as our highest joy? Like the psalmist, we must first remember and weep for the Lord's church. We must see the desolation of the church with our spiritual eyes because of our sins and weep tears of repentance. Without these tears of true repentance, we cannot taste the true joy of the Lord's work of rebuilding our church. So if we want to make the Lord's church our highest joy, we must shed tears of repentance. In the meantime, we must ask the Lord to save His church. Our earnest prayer should be for the Lord to rebuild His church. And when the Lord rebuilds His church, we must come to our highest joy, our Lord God and praise and worship Him with the songs of Zion. This is the life of those who rejoice, considering the Lord's church as their highest joy.

Third and last, we must pray to God when we think of the church.

Look at Psalms 137:7-9: "Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. 'Tear it down,' they cried, 'tear it down to its foundations!' O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us - he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks." The psalmist prayed to God for God's punishment for Babylon, the Israel's adversary and enemy. He asked God, "Remember, O Lord, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell" (v. 7). Of course, the Edomites weren't the Babylonians. Rather, the Edomites rejoiced when the Babylonians struck Jerusalem (Job 10-16). Although they were originally brothers with the Israelites, they were Israeli enemies and were the object of God's wrath (Park). Then the Edomites and the Babylonians had something in common: they were the object of God's wrath (Ps. 137:7-9). The reason was because they oppressed the God's people, the Israelites. The psalmist, who remembered Zion at the rivers of Babylon, prayed to God to tear it down the Edomites, who were compared to the Babylonians who desolated Jerusalem.

As we pray to God, we must pray for God's wrath to come to Satan, the enemy of the Church, and his wicked servants. Of course, we may not be used to this kind of prayer. But while we pray for our salvation as God's people, it is a bit unbalanced not to pray for the judgment of the wicked. This is because in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, God's salvation and God's judgment usually go together. In other words, God saves His people (the Church) by judging His people's enemies. Therefore, we must pray for the salvation of the church and the destruction of its enemies. We must pray for God's righteous judgment. We must pray that God will punish the enemies of His Church.

I think of two things when I think of the church as the body of the Lord. The words of the Lord's promise, Matthew 16:18 that the Lord will build His church and the hymn "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord". This was because in 2003, when I attended the church renewal annual retreat, the Lord gave me that promise of Matthew 16:18 and the

indwelling Holy Spirit made me to shed tears of longing for His church, Victory Presbyterian Church. I still remember that I shed tears in thinking of our church in longing and in love. I pray that the Lord to build His church so that we can grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can confesses who Jesus is and lives according to that confession. I also pray that the Lord will build our church on the solid rock. I sincerely pray that our church will be built as a true church that will fight against ourselves, the world, sin, and Satan and death and be victorious.

Why we are grateful when we think of the church

“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:4-9)

I already meditated on 1 Corinthians 1:1-3, Paul's greetings to the Corinthian church. Verse 1 speaks of Paul, the writer who wrote the book of First Corinthians, verse 2 speaks of the recipient of the letter, the Corinthian church saints and “all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”, and verse 3 speaks of Paul's greetings. Among them, especially in verse 2, I was instructed in three ways about what church is: (1) The church is the church of God, (2) The church is “those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” and (3) The church is all who call on the name of Jesus Christ (those who believe in Jesus). After receiving these lessons, I meditated on 1 Corinthians 1:4-9, reflecting back on Paul's greetings in 1:1-3. In particular, when I meditated on verses 1 and 3 centering on what the church is in verse 2, I came to this conclusion: ‘God's will for the church is grace and peace.’ In other words, God's will to all the believers in Jesus, the church of God, is grace and peace. What does it mean? It means that God wants to give us, His church, and the grace of salvation and through that grace He wants us to enjoy the peace that the world cannot give. Therefore, the true church of God has grace and peace. The true church in God's eyes worship God with thanksgiving for the grace of God's salvation and the worshippers enjoy God's given true peace. Do you see this in our victorious community?

In 1 Corinthians 1: 4-9, we can see Paul always thanked God when he thought about the Corinthian church saints and the Christians everywhere. Look at verse 4: “I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.” Based on this verse I want to think about why we should be grateful when we think of the church in two ways:

First, the reason we should be thankful when we think of the church is because of God's grace.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:4 again: “I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.” The reason why Paul always thanked God when he thought about the Corinth church was because God's abundant grace that was given to them. What was that God's abundant grace? I think we can summarize in two ways:

(1) God's abundant grace was full of realizing the truth of the gospel.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:5 – “For in him you have been enriched in every way--in all your speaking and in all your knowledge.” This is one of the reasons why Paul thanked God when he considered the Corinthian church. It is abundance of all their speaking and all their knowledge. Here, the word “speaking” in Greek

is “logos” and it refers to the truth preached, the truth of the gospel. And the word “knowledge” is the truth apprehended (Park). That is, the reason why Paul always thanked God when he considered the Corinthian church saints was because they were abundant in realizing the truth when they heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then, how did Paul know that the Corinthian church saints were rich in realizing the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer is found in verse 6: “because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.” Paul knew that the Corinthian church saints were rich in realizing the truth of the gospel because their faith stood firm in the testimony of Christ. Look at 1 Corinthians 15:1 – “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.”

This should be me and you. We must hear God's Word, realize it, and stand firmly on it. Look at Colossians 2:6-7: “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” The church must hear God's Word, realize it, and stand firmly on it. How can we not give thanks to God when we see ourselves rooted and firmly established in Jesus Christ and standing firm in the faith? May God's abundant grace be in our church so that we may hear His gospel and His truth, understand it, and firmly stand upon the words of Jesus Christ.

(2) God's abundant grace was not lacking in any spiritual gift.

Look at 1 Corinthians 1:7 – “Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” Paul always thanked God not only because God's abundant grace enriched the Word of the truth of the Gospel and the realization of the Word in saving the souls, but also God gave the Corinthian church saints all the spiritual gifts they needed to build the church (chs. 12 -14) (MacArthur). Here, all the gifts that Paul was talking about are two kinds of spiritual gifts. They are the Holy Spirit's ordinary gifts and extraordinary gifts. God gave both gifts to the Corinthian church saints. That is, God not only gave them internal gifts of repentance, faith and knowledge, but also the spiritual gifts, such as miracles, healings, tongues, and prophecies, which are external gifts (Hodge). Not only did God enrich the Corinthian church saints with the realization of the truth of the Gospel, and give them strength in evangelism, but also the spiritual gifts in order to edify His church. Paul, who knew this, had to thank God all the time. I pray that this thanksgiving is in our heart and our church. May God enrich us with all the realization of the truth of the Gospel and give us all the gifts that we need so that we can continue to do the work of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and of building up the body of Christ, His church. I hope and pray that our church will be a triumphant community that can always thank God because of the glory of God that we see in and through our church.

Second and last, the reason we should be thankful when we think of the church is because of God's given hope.

What hope did God give us? Look at 1 Corinthians 1:7b – “... as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” The hope God has given us is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The second reason why Paul always thanked God when he thought of the Corinthian church saints was because of their faith in the second coming of Jesus Christ (Park). It is the second coming faith that Jesus is coming back to this world. The Corinthian church saints waited for the second coming of Jesus Christ. And they stood firm in the word of God in the hope of His second coming. In other words, the Corinthian church saints were living in hope by faith in His second coming. In the midst of it, they were engaged in the work of preaching the gospel and building up the church of the Lord's body, using the full knowledge of the truth of the gospel and all the gifts that were graciously received from God. Here we see a connection between faith and hope. In other words, there is connection between believing in Jesus

and hoping for His return. Please think about it. Does it make sense to say that we believe in Jesus and not believe in Jesus' return? And does it make sense that we who believe in His second coming don't wait for His second coming? Because we believe in Jesus we hope for His second coming. And because we hope for His second coming, we have to stand firm in faith in these last days.

Many of us who believe in Jesus seem to be neglecting to meet Jesus in anticipation and hope for His second coming. How can we know this? We know this because our hearts are not in heaven, but on earth. We are busy building up things in this world rather than thinking of things above and storing our treasures there. Like the Israelites in the days of Exodus, many of us Christians don't look to the promise kingdom of heaven, but continue to look back and long for the things of the world. This life is never a life of faith and a life of hope. How can we who say that we desire the second coming of Jesus still seeking to go back to the world that we have already left and not looking ahead to the far better heavenly home? This kind of Christian life will be rebuked by the Lord. In other words, we are to be reproved by the Lord. Never should we be. We must be all who have nothing to be reproved by the Lord. When Paul prayed to God for the Corinthian church saints, he prayed to God, convinced that the Corinthian church saints would have no reproach on the day of His second coming: "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 8). How precious is this prayer of thanksgiving? Think about I pray to God for you, thinking that the day Jesus second coming, I always giving thanks to God in conviction that all of you will stand firmly in faith and will be blameless. How precious is this prayer of thanksgiving? I want to pray like this to God. How could Paul give this thanksgiving prayer to God? How was he convinced that the Corinthian church saints would be blameless on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Aren't you curious? I find the answer in verse 9: "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." It was because God is faithful that Paul could pray with confidence in God. If he had looked upon the unfaithful Corinthian church saints rather than faithful God, he would not have given thanks to God with confidence. But because he looked upon the faithful God, he became convinced that faithful God who loved and chose the Corinthian church saints and called them would keep them strong to the end until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we have this conviction and confidence? I think of Philippians 1:6 – "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." It is the faithful God who has begun good works in us. Paul had confidence that the faithful God would complete the good work that He began in the Philippian church saints until the day of Christ Jesus. What does it mean? It means that faithful God who began the work of salvation in them and in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is because God is faithful even though we are unfaithful. I hope and pray that we put faith in this faithful God and continue the hope of Jesus' return.

As I meditated on this Word, I couldn't help but to think about our church. Just as Paul always thanked God when he thought of the Corinthian church, I would like to thank God when I think of our church. I want to thank God for the abundant grace that God bestows on our church – the church that is faithful in the work of preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in the realization of the abundant gospel truths, and the church that participates in the Lord's work of building His church with all the spiritual gifts that aren't lacking and that are given by the Lord. Also, I want to thank God for the eternal and sure hope that God has given to our church. May we all be part of the marriage feast of the Lamb as we all are established with faith in His second coming and faith in resurrection by the grace of the Lord, and as we have nothing to be reproved on the day of Jesus Christ.

Those who love the church are prosperous

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’ Our feet are standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that is built As a city that is compact together; To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD-- An ordinance for Israel-- To give thanks to the name of the LORD. For there thrones were set for judgment, The thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. May peace be within your walls, And prosperity within your palaces.’ For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, ‘May peace be within you.’ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.” (Psalms 122)

One of the books by Philip Yancey is “Church: Why Bother?” In the book, Philip Yancey said of the community in the church : ‘The fundamental foundation of the Christian community, the reconciling love of God, transcends all nations, races, classes, ages and genders in the world. Community comes first. The conflict and problems that separate us are later.’ Although the church is a community of various people, the church of God's family must seek unity in that diversity. ‘How beautiful is the church when everything is different but the same is united into a community!’ (Yancey). I personally dream of such a beautiful community. I am dreaming of the church that faithfully keeps on the unity of the Holy Spirit in diversity, not division.

In Psalms 122: 6, this is what the psalmist David said: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.” Here “Jerusalem” symbolizes the church (Park). That is to say, those who love the church will be prosperous. That's right. Those who love the church are prosperous because God is with them. Then, what do those who love the church do? I would like to take two lessons from Psalms 122.

First, those who love the church are happy to go to church.

Look at Psalms 122:1 – “I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD.” The psalmist David was glad when he was invited by his friends to go to the house of the Lord that is the temple of the Lord. What was the reason?

- (1) The first reason is because of what was previously ruined in the temple of the Lord was now repaired (Park).

Look at Psalms 122:2, 3: “Our feet are standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that is built As a city that is compact together.” What does it mean? The psalmist David saw the Jerusalem temple being rebuilt, which had been destroyed. That was why he rejoiced and rejoiced. This should be our joy. Those who love the church should rejoice and rejoice when the fallen church repents and is beautifully restored (Park). Isn't this our joy that the church is cleansed and renewed by the true reformation of the fallen church? In the meantime, how joyful it will be when the church, which is the body of the Lord, becomes the clean bride-like church well-prepared to welcome Jesus, the Bridegroom, by the work of the Lord.

(2) The second reason why the psalmist David was happy to go up to the temple of God was because he wanted to worship God with thanksgiving.

Look at Psalms 122:4 – “To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD-- An ordinance for Israel-- To give thanks to the name of the LORD.” When David saw the rebuilt holy city of God with the good hand of God (Neh. 2:18), he was happy to go up to the temple of God and worship Him with thanksgiving in his heart. In addition, when David saw many people in the city of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:3) and righteous politics were practicing (v. 5), he rejoiced and gave thanks to God (Park).

This should be our mind and our heart. As we experience the Lord's cleansing and rebuilding of the church, we must rejoice in worshiping God with thanksgiving as we go up to the temple of the Lord. In addition, as we see the Lord makes His church to grow and to practice the right church politic by bringing revival to His church, we must be happy to go up to His church and worship God with thanksgiving in our heart. Only those who love the church and those who taste the work of what God is doing in our church will be able to go up to the temple of the Lord with joy and thanksgiving and will worship God. In the midst of the joy of worship, we will love the church more than before.

Second, those who love the church seek the peace and prosperity of the church.

Look at Psalms 122:6-8: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you. ‘May peace be within your walls, And prosperity within your palaces.’ For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, ‘May peace be within you.’” The psalmist David blessed Jerusalem because he loved Jerusalem. And that blessing was Jerusalem's peace and prosperity. Here, “peace” refers to peace between God and man and peace between man and man. In other words, those who love Jerusalem prayed for peace in Jerusalem. Those who love Jerusalem sought the blessing of peace, while the psalmist David also longed for the God's blessing of prosperity.

If we love the church, we must bless it. We who love His church must bless the church and seek God's peace of the church. Peace is the hallmark of the church, which is the Lord's body that He is with us and He builds (Park). There must be spiritual peace in the church. There should be peace not only in our relationship with God, but also in our relationship with our fellow church members. In the meantime, the body of the Lord should be prosperous because the Lord Emmanuel is with us.

This is what the hymn “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” says in verses 1 through 3: (v. 1) “I love Thy Kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved With His own precious blood,” (v. 2) “I love Thy Church, O God; Her walls before Thee stand, Dear as the apple of Thine eye, And graven on Thy hand” and (v. 3) “For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end.” We who love His church must rejoice and rejoice that the church is transformed into a clean and purified church as the bride of Jesus, the Bridegroom. When we witness the Lord's establishing work in His church, we cannot help but to go up to the temple of the Lord with joy and worship God with thanksgiving in our heart. We must also seek the peace of our church that we love. In seeking God's peace, we too should seek peace in our relationship with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. In the meantime, we must seek their blessing for the church (v. 9). May our church be filled with the blessings of peace and prosperity of God.

Is our church a mirror?

“so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.” (1 Corinthians 12:25)

Is our church a mirror to imitate, or is our church a mirror not to imitate?

Now the church is the mirror that shouldn't be imitated. How do we know that? We know this because of conflict in the church. Then, why is there conflict in the church? One of the reasons is because of those who think they stand (1 Cor. 10:12). In other words, the church is in conflict because of the arrogant people. They are creating conflict in the church by denying the diversity of the church in the name of pursuing their own unity. And they seem to admit that the church is one body of the Lord, but they deny that there are many members in one body of the Lord (12:12). The reason why they deny that there are various members with different gifts in the church of Christ's body is because they try to exalt themselves in the church by differentiating themselves from other members. As a result, there is contention, faction building, and conflict in the church. Therefore, the church is becoming the mirror that shouldn't be imitated because it cannot keep its unity in diversity.

Our church should be a mirror to imitate. In order to do this, our church must be a church that maintains unity in diversity. In other words, our church must acknowledge that there are many members in the body of Christ, and at the same time, know that the various members are one body of Christ. And the various members of our church must have the same care for one other (12:25) with the love of Christ (Ch. 13) to keep the unity of the church of the Lord's body. What must we do to do this? I would like to be instructed in three ways centered on 1 Corinthians 12:21-24:

First, we must know that we need each other in order to keep our church unity in diversity.

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:21-22: “And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; or again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.” Apostle Paul says that members of the Lord's body shouldn't say to each other that they are useless. The reason is because they need each other. Before, one of our church members used to say ‘I am useless’ to me. Whenever she said that to me, I told her ‘No no, our church needs you. You are a mother of prayer who is praying for me (a senior pastor), other church leaders and the whole congregation members. Please keep on praying for us.’ There is no unnecessary part in our bodies. Not only we need eyes, we need hands, head and feet. We need weak members in our bodies. We should never think that we don't need weak parts in our bodies. Likewise, in the church, which is the body of the Lord, we need all members, whether we are weak in faith and weak in body. We should never say ‘I am useless to this church’ or ‘You are useless to our church.’ The reason is because we need each other.

Second, we must deem honorable to each other in order to keep our church unity in diversity.

Look at the first half of 1 Corinthians 12:23 – “and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor,” God has placed the members in the church, the body of the Lord, just as He desired (v. 18). “God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked” (v. 24). The purpose is “so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (v. 25). Therefore, we, members of the church, the body of the Lord, are not to quarrel with one another and fight with each other. Rather, we must care for one another. As we care for one another, we must suffer together when one member suffers (v. 26). And if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it (v. 26). We should value and take care of those members who are less honorable in the church or those who are lacking. The reason is because God honors them.

Third, we must see beauty from one another in order to keep our church unity in diversity.

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:23b-24a: “... And the parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. ...” We have tendency to have pride in those members in the church who are “presentable” but to be embarrassed with those who are “unrepresentable.” It's as if we have a little bit of pride in our bodies that look beautiful, but we're a little bit of embarrass in our bodies that don't look beautiful. That's why God says to us that “the parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty” (v. 23). The purpose is so that they are no division in the church (v. 25). And God commands us to treat the unrepresentable members with special modesty so that the members can have equal concern for each other, whether they are presentable or unrepresentable (v. 25). Therefore, we must see the beauty of Christ from one another in order not to contend with one another but to care for one another. In other words, we must see little Christ in each other. As we look more and more like Jesus, we can keep our church unity in diversity. Then our church can manifest beauty of Christ in this ugly world.

Our church should be a mirror to imitate. In order to do so, our church must become a church that keeps the unity of the church in diversity. And the way to do so is to know that we need each other, we value each other and we see the beauty of Christ in each other. Then our church will be the mirror that shines the light of Jesus Christ in this world.

God will glorify the God's glorious church

“... And I shall glorify My glorious house.” (Isaiah 60:7b).

What is the church? Is it enough for the church to be healthy? Is it enough for the church to be revived and grown? Personally, I like phrase “A church that is the church” rather than “A healthy church” or “A happy church”. The reason is because I think the church is not so church these days. It means that I think the church these days is the Lord-centered church. The church must be the Lord-centered church. The reason is because the people-centered churches show people's glory rather than the Lord's glory. And in the church where the glory of man appears, all kinds of sinful things that cover the glory of the Lord are so prevalent that the church must become the Lord-centered church. Our church must be a church that gives glory to the Lord, a church that obeys the word of the Lord, and a church that shows the glory of the Lord.

In Isaiah 60:7b, God promised to the Israelites through Prophet Isaiah “I shall glorify My glorious house.” This promise of the prophecy is that God would glorify Jerusalem (Zion) by freeing the Israelites who had been in captivity for 70 years in Babylon to return to the land of Canaan. I have applied this prophetic word to the Lord's church, the house of God. In other words, the word of the Lord's promise to the Lord's church is, ‘I will glorify my glorious church.’ I want to meditate on how the Lord is fulfilling His word of promise and how He will complete it in the future in three ways:

First, the Lord will reveal the glory of God over His church.

Look at Isaiah 60:1-2: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ‘For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you.’” The Lord has revealed the glory of God upon His church, causing His church, the body of the Lord, to shine forth the gospel of Jesus Christ in this dark, sinful world. The Lord is causing His church to shine forth the gospel “to the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18). As a result, the Lord is causing the church that shines the gospel in this dark and sinful world so that the people who are chosen may repent and return to God from the Satan's kingdom (Isa. 60:3-4). The Lord is causing His Church to shine the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, gathering God's people into the Church of God “from the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south” (Ps. 107:3). In the future, the Lord will cause “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations will worship before You” (22:27). Then the glory of the Lord will fill the house of the Lord (2 Chron.7:2). Also, “the glory of the Lord will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together” (Isa 40:5). We will see “the glory of the Lord, The majesty of our God” (35:2).

Second, the Lord will make His church everlasting pride and eternal joy.

Look at Isaiah 60:15 – “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated With no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to generation.” Now the Lord's church is abandoned and hated. In addition to the people of the world, and even those who attend church, there are more and more people who abandon the church and hate it. Therefore, fewer people are going to church. Just as the Jews were invaded by Babylon, Jerusalem was desolated, and they were taken captive by the Babylonians and suffered, now we Christians are invaded by Satan and his people, and the church is desolated, and we are also servants of injustice and are suffering due to committing sins against God. No matter how big the church building, no matter how many church

members, what is the use when the church is the true church, and the church doesn't shine the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world? As a result, the Church is now criticized, cursed, and fingered by even Christians as well as by the world. What church is this? As time goes by, the ugliness of the church is being manifested more and more. So even we Christians are leaving the church because we hate the pastor and the church. No one seems to care about the church anymore. But the Lord, the Head of the Church, cares His church whom He bought with His precious blood (cf. 2 Chron. 36:15). The Lord loves His church (Eph. 5:25). Therefore, the Lord is building His church (Mt. 16:18). Now the Lord is building His church to be a radiant church, "without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:27). The Lord will make His church everlasting pride and eternal joy (Isa. 60:15). The Lord's church will receive the glory of the Lord (35:2). The Lord's church will be filled with His joy (Jn. 15:11; 1 Jn. 1:4). This is because "the Lord delights in you, And to Him your land will be married" (Isa. 62:4). Like "a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you" (v. 5). That is, on the day of Jesus' return to this world, we Christians will be suddenly transformed (1 Cor. 15:51), wearing glorious spiritual bodies (vv. 42-49), and will enter the New Jerusalem, Heaven (Rev. 3:12) and will participate in the wedding of the Lamb (19:7, 9). "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 13:29). Then we will see the eternal beauty and glory of the Lord. And we will be full of joy. Therefore, as we experience the beauty of the Lord and the joy of the Lord, we will pray to God: "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple" (Ps. 27:4). We ask God this way because "We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple" (65: 4). We will see "will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God" (Isa. 35:2). And because of the God who exult over us with joy (Zep. 3:17), we will exult over the Lord with joy.

Third and last, the Lord will be an everlasting light to His church.

Look at Isaiah 60:19-20: "'No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. 'Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over.'" We are the people of God who go forth daily to that high place, the Heaven. Although we now live in a world full of pains, sins, troubles, and deaths, we look to the Heaven day and night. That is why we pray to God "Amen Come, Lord Jesus" as we hold onto the Lord's promise, "Yes, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20). The day the Lord comes back to this world, we will enter in Heaven, the glorious New Jerusalem, in a glorious spiritual body. At that time God will wipe every tear from our eyes (7:17). "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (21:4). "No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. 'Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over'" (Isa. 60:19-20). There is no need of the sun or moon to shine in Heaven (Rev. 21:23). This is because "the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb" (v. 23). In eternity God will be filled with the light of God's glory in Heaven, because He will be the everlasting light in the church of God's glory. Before the throne of God, who is the light of its full glory (Rev. 15: 2), we will "bear good news of the praises of the Lord" (Isa. 60:6) and sing the song of salvation (v. 18).

The Lord loves the church and gave Himself up for her (Eph. 5:25). That's why He is sanctifying her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (vv. 26-27). The day Jesus comes back to earth, He will establish His church completely and build the glorious church. The Lord will glorify His church of glory. The Lord will reveal His glory over His church. The Lord will make His church everlasting beauty and eternal joy. The Lord will be an eternal light to His church.

Conclusion

The church is the church of God. The church is those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling. The church is all who call on the name of Jesus Christ.

The church is built by the Lord who is the Head of the Church. He builds the church that is His body as the church. The church that is the church devotes themselves to learn the word of God. Also the church that is the church devotes themselves to fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer.

The church that is the church is the true church. The true church has the solid foundation and is glorious. And the true church is built by the Lord Himself as the community of heavenly citizens. The Lord builds the true church as the church that is known as true Christians, just like the church of Antioch, to do relief and to love neighbors. Also the Lord raises various workers in the true church and makes the church the Spirit-driven mission church.

The Lord is driving out all the dirty and ugly sins in the church in making it the church that is the true church. The Lord has turned a cursed church which believes in its splendor, considering spiritual adultery a small matter, and not knowing how to be satisfied, into a blessed church. Also, the Lord enables the corrupted church and self-digging church, who falsely return to God, to realize their sins, accept God's discipline, and causes them to repent and truly return to God. Thus the Lord cleanses the church and establishes it as the bride's radiant church for the Bridegroom the Lord Jesus so that the church no longer is being criticized and ridiculed by the world.

The Lord gives peace to the church and builds it up where there is no contention or division. The Lord is also making the church stand strong and strengthening, making it a church like the army of God. The Lord is causing the church to progress in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. And the Lord is increasing the faith and number in the church, adding those who are saved. Therefore, the Lord is filling the joy of the Lord, the Head of the Church, through His church.

The Lord is building His church as the community that saves souls, the community with God and the community in which God's saving power is manifested. And the Lord's church, in which God reigns, leads us with His lovingkindness and rebuilds us in this wilderness-like world to go to God and praise Him. Even now, the Lord is sitting at the right hand of God and praying for the unity of the church. Therefore, when we think of the Lord's church, we too should pray to God. And we must thank God. We must thank God for His grace and the hope He has given us.

Let us all love the church, the body of the Lord, and become the Lord's mirror to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in this world.