

Lonely, But Never Alone

~Other Speakers A-F: Chip Brogden:

There are many in the Body of Christ who are in transition between "going" to church and "being" the Church. The Lord is speaking to many at once and calling them aside from the traditional church building meeting to gather together in homes. The more in tune with the Lord we become, the more dissatisfied and uncomfortable we become with what is being said and done in His Name. Yet, there is an uncomfortable pause between where we used to be and where we are called to be. It is a lonely time in which we will be misunderstood by many that have not seen what we have seen.

What God is impressing upon many of us who are in-between the church as a building and the church as a lifestyle is how to walk ALONE. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together when we are able to do so; yet God would have us learn to fellowship with Christ, even it means to take the lonely path.

Many times the desire to find other "like-minded believers" is not a spiritual desire. It is rather our emotion, our soul, which longs to be with people who understand us. We must love not our life (Greek: soul life) and be willing to go for a time without the comfort and fellowship of brothers and sisters if God has called us unto Himself. If we simply MUST be in the accompaniment of other brothers and sisters in order to have any sense of Christ then we are not abiding in Him as we ought.

In many parts of the world brothers and sisters in Christ are not able to meet together because of persecution. They would certainly desire to do so if they could, but if they cannot, how will they maintain fellowship and connectivity to the Body if they are unable to gather? Why, they must know Christ as Fellowship. Abiding in Him, connected to the Head, they maintain oneness with the rest of the Body.

Someone will say, "We are not persecuted. We have the freedom to gather together. Should we not take advantage of our liberty as Christians and fellowship at every opportunity?" The answer is yes, we should thank God for our freedom and make the most of it. But my question to you is, what will your spiritual state be like when that liberty is no longer permitted? Have you resources within yourself to stay in your place of abiding in Christ, or is your usefulness to God limited by your ability to fellowship with others? Can you maintain connectivity to the Body when isolated, or will you grow faint and fall away?

Some are able to maintain a sweet spirit so long as they are in fellowship with other believers. But when God allows that fellowship to be interrupted, observe how quickly that sweet spirit turns sour. They will even acknowledge their poor state and say things like, "My temper has become awful. It is because I have been out of church. I must go back this Sunday." Then they will go back to church, feel uplifted, and the sweet spirit returns. Sadly, this is the experience of a majority of people who have not learned to take Christ as their Life. Is this walking in the Spirit? It is not.

It is true that "whenever two or three are gathered in My Name, there I am." Praise God for such truth. It is equally true that, "I am with YOU always (singular)." We do not want to be lone ranger Christians who do not seek fellowship with other members of Christ's Body. At the same time, we cannot allow the absence of such fellowship to make us despondent or depressed, should we be deprived of it. If it causes us to fall away, then perhaps this is the reason God allows us to go through periods of solitude, that we may be reduced to CHRIST as our Fellowship.

When we find ourselves in such a place, let us not be too quick to seek out others until we have reaped the benefits of being alone with God. Let us remember that Christ's Body is a spiritual Body. Being in the physical presence of other members does not make us more of a member, and being removed from the physical presence of other members does not make us any less a member. Of course the exact opposite is true for those meeting together as an institution; without their physical presence and support they lose place as a member. But not Christ's Body, the Church. We are not more or less of a member by reason of our physical contact or lack of physical contact with one another.

And again, we may thirst for fellowship not so much to edify the Body as to be edified ourselves - a mindset carried over from when we used to go to church to "be fed" once or twice a week. If this is the case, it is no wonder that God would have us look to Him alone as our Edification and learn to draw upon Him before placing us in close proximity with others. One weakness of the institutional church is that the majority of members are coming to receive, to be edified, to be encouraged, to be fed. It is all "take", and very little "give". Hence, there is little Life.

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When we learn to draw upon Christ as our Source we will have abundance to give away. Fellowship with others cannot replace our daily abiding in Him. If we gather together in the Name of the Lord, yet outside of Christ, we will have much religious carrying's on but little Life to impart to one another. God would have us look to His Son as our Life, and as we do we find our need is met. Then, when we gather together, we are givers and not takers, and with all giving out of Christ, we have the blessing we sought.

Let us press into Christ with all our heart, and not be discouraged if we find ourselves temporarily without the fellowship and comfort of our brothers and sisters. Though we are lonely, we are never alone.