

**International Training  
for Elders and Responsible Ones**  
Warsaw, Poland October 4-6, 2024

**GENERAL SUBJECT:  
LIVING IN THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four  
**The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building Up of the Church**

*MC Hymns: 846*

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:16-18, 21-28

- Matt 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Matt 16:17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens.
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- Matt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.
- Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!
- Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
- Matt 16:27 For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings.
- Matt 16:28 Truly I say to you, There are some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

**I. Matthew 16 reveals the way to build up the church and also reveals the enemy of the building:**

Matt 16 be omitted.

- A. Christ, the Son of the living God, builds the church on Himself as the rock, with stones such as Peter, a transformed person—vv. 16-18.
- Matt 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Matt 16:17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens.
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- B. The gates of Hades, Satan's authority or power of darkness, attack the church to frustrate the Lord from building up the church—v. 18.
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- C. In order to build the church, the Lord had to pass through death and enter into resurrection—v. 21:
- Matt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

1. The church was produced through Christ's death and resurrection—John 12:24.  
John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
  2. The way to build up the church is to be crucified and resurrected—cf. 2 Cor. 4:10-12; Gal. 2:20.  
2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.  
2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.  
2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.  
Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
  3. The church exists and is built up only in the realm of resurrection through crucifixion—Gen. 2:21-22; cf. Eph. 4:15-16.  
Gen 2:21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place.  
Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.  
Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,  
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- D. Peter, with a good heart, rebuked the Lord and tried to prevent the Lord from going to Jerusalem to be crucified—Matt. 16:22:  
Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!
1. It was not Peter but Satan who came out through one of the gates of Hades, the gate of Peter's self, to try to frustrate the Lord from building up the church—v. 23.  
Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
  2. The self, the mind, and the soul-life are the main gates through which Satan comes forth to attack and damage the church—vv. 23-26.  
Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.  
Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.  
Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.  
Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?

## II. The building up of the church depends on the shutting up of the gates of Hades through the exercise of three keys—vv. 24-26:

- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
- A. We need to learn to exercise the key of denying the self—v. 24:  
Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny

himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

1. The flesh is the created body corrupted by sin, the nature of Satan (Rom. 6:12, 14; 7:8, 11, 17, 20); the self is the created soul plus the satanic mind, the mind of Satan.  
Rom 6:12 Do not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body so that you obey the body's lusts;  
Rom 6:14 For sin will not lord it over you, for you are not under the law but under grace.  
Rom 7:8 But sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, worked out in me coveting of every kind; for without the law sin is dead.  
Rom 7:11 For sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.  
Rom 7:17 Now then it is no longer I that work it out, but sin that dwells in me.  
Rom 7:20 But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me.
2. When the mind, the thought, of Satan was injected into the human soul, the human soul became the self, the embodiment of Satan—Gen. 3:1-6; Matt. 16:22-23:  
Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other animal of the field that Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?  
Gen 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;  
Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.  
Gen 3:4 And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die!  
Gen 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.  
Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.  
Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!  
Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
  - a. Before Eve took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into her body, the thought, the mind, of Satan was injected into her soul.
  - b. After Eve's mind was poisoned by Satan's thought, her emotion was aroused, and then her will was exercised to make a decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.
  - c. By this time every part of the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will— had been poisoned.
  - d. The self is the embodiment of the soul-life, which is expressed through the mind; thus, the self, the soul-life, and the mind are three-in-one.
  - e. Behind these three is Satan, who manipulates the self in order to damage the church—v. 23.  
Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
3. The self is the soul declaring independence from God:
  - a. The Lord does not have regard for what we do; rather, He has regard for our dependence on Him—7:21-23; cf. Josh. 9:14.  
Matt 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens.  
Matt 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, was it not in Your name that we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power?

- Matt 7:23 And then I will declare to them: I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.
- Josh 9:14 And the men took some of their provisions, but they did not ask for the counsel of Jehovah.
- b. The enemy of the Body is the self; because the self is something independent, the self is the greatest problem, the greatest frustration and opposition, to the building up of the Body.
- c. We should depend not only on God but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters—Exo. 17:11-13; Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33.
- Exo 17:11 And when Moses lifted his hand up, Israel prevailed; and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.
- Exo 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.
- Exo 17:13 And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.
- Acts 9:25 But his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.
- 2 Cor 11:33 And in a basket I was lowered through a window, through the wall, and escaped his hands.
- d. The Lord and the Body are one; hence, if we are dependent on the Body, we are also dependent on the Lord, and if we are independent of the Body, we are spontaneously independent of the Lord.
- e. When we are dependent, the self is gone, and instead of the self, we have the Lord's presence and are full of peace.
- f. Only when the self-life has been utterly dealt with by the cross are we able to touch the reality of the Body of Christ and come to know the Body.
4. The following are some expressions of the self (see *Hymns*, #866, stanzas 5 and 6):
- Hymns*, #866, stanzas 5 and 6
- 5 Freed within the spirit From self-righteousness,  
From self-condemnation And self-consciousness.
- 6 Freed within the spirit From self-will and pride,  
From self-love and glory, All to override.
- a. With the self there are ambition, pride, and self-exaltation—Matt. 20:20-28; 1 Pet. 5:5; Rom. 12:3; Num. 12:1-10; 16:1-3; Phil. 2:3-4.
- Matt 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, worshipping and asking something of Him.
- Matt 20:21 And He said to her, What do you want? She said to Him, Say that these two sons of mine will sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your kingdom.
- Matt 20:22 But Jesus answered and said to them, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup which I am about to drink? They said to Him, We are able.
- Matt 20:23 He said to them, My cup you shall indeed drink, but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.
- Matt 20:24 And when the ten heard this, they were indignant concerning the two brothers.
- Matt 20:25 But Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.
- Matt 20:26 It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant,
- Matt 20:27 And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave;
- Matt 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- 1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird

- yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
- Num 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman).
- Num 12:2 And they said, Has Jehovah indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not also spoken through us? And Jehovah heard it.
- Num 12:3 Now the man Moses was very meek, more than anyone else who was on the face of the earth.
- Num 12:4 And suddenly Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron and to Miriam, You three come out to the Tent of Meeting. So the three of them came out.
- Num 12:5 Then Jehovah came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam. And when they had both come forward,
- Num 12:6 He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, / I, Jehovah, will make Myself known to him in a vision; / I will speak with him in a dream.
- Num 12:7 My servant Moses is not so; / He is faithful in all My house.
- Num 12:8 With him I speak face to face, even openly, and not in riddles; / And he beholds the form of Jehovah. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?
- Num 12:9 And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against them, and He departed.
- Num 12:10 And when the cloud had departed from over the tent; there Miriam was, leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, leprous.
- Num 16:1 Now 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, the sons of Reuben, took men
- Num 16:2 And rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred fifty leaders of the assembly, who were summoned to the meeting, well-known men.
- Num 16:3 And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, You take too much upon yourselves, for all the assembly are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of Jehovah?
- Phil 2:3 Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves;
- Phil 2:4 Not regarding each his own virtues, but each the virtues of others also.
- b. With the self there are self-righteousness, self-justification, and exposing, criticizing, and condemning others—Matt. 9:10-13; Luke 18:9-14; 1 Pet. 4:8; John 3:17; 8:11; Luke 6:37; Matt. 7:1-5.
- Matt 9:10 And as He was reclining at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and reclined together with Jesus and His disciples.
- Matt 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your Teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners?
- Matt 9:12 Now when He heard this, He said, Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill.
- Matt 9:13 But go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.
- Luke 18:9 And He told this parable also to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised the rest:
- Luke 18:10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.
- Luke 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed these things to himself: God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even

- like this tax collector.
- Luke 18:12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all that I get.
- Luke 18:13 But the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be propitiated to me, the sinner!
- Luke 18:14 I tell you, This man went down to his house justified rather than that one; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.
- 1 Pet 4:8 Above all, have fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins.
- John 3:17 For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.
- John 8:11 And she said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.
- Luke 6:37 And do not judge, and you shall by no means be judged; and do not condemn, and you shall by no means be condemned; release, and you will be released;
- Matt 7:1 Do not judge, that you be not judged.
- Matt 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you.
- Matt 7:3 And why do you look at the splinter which is in your brother's eye, but the beam in your eye you do not consider?
- Matt 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the splinter from your eye, and behold, the beam is in your eye?
- Matt 7:5 Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.
- c. With the self there are introspection and self-despising—S. S. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 12:15-16.
- S. S. 2:8 The voice of my beloved! Now he comes, / Leaping upon the mountains, / Skipping upon the hills.
- S. S. 2:9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart. / Now he stands behind our wall; / He is looking through the windows, / He is glancing through the lattice.
- 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- d. When we are in the self, we can be offended by the church, the leading ones, or the saints—Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Col. 3:13.
- Matt 6:14 For if you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also;
- Matt 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses.
- Matt 18:21 Then Peter came and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?
- Matt 18:22 Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy times seven.
- Matt 18:23 For this reason the kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who desired to settle accounts with his slaves.
- Matt 18:24 And when he began to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.
- Matt 18:25 But since he did not have the means to repay, the master commanded him to be sold, as well as his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.
- Matt 18:26 Then the slave fell down and worshipped him, saying, Be patient with me and I will repay you all.
- Matt 18:27 And the master of that slave was moved with compassion and released him and forgave him the loan.
- Matt 18:28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him



- a hundred denarii, and he took hold of him and began to choke him, saying, Repay me what you owe.
- Matt 18:29 Then his fellow slave fell down and begged him, saying, Be patient with me and I will repay you.
- Matt 18:30 But he would not; instead, he went away and threw him into prison until he would repay what was owed.
- Matt 18:31 Then his fellow slaves, seeing what had taken place, were greatly grieved and came and explained fully to their master all that had taken place.
- Matt 18:32 Then his master called him to him and said to him, Evil slave, all that debt I forgave you, because you begged me.
- Matt 18:33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave even as I had mercy on you?
- Matt 18:34 And his master became angry and delivered him to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed.
- Matt 18:35 So also will My heavenly Father do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your hearts.
- Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in the heavens may also forgive you your offenses.
- Mark 11:26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in the heavens forgive your offenses.
- Col 3:13 Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive.
- e. With the self there are disappointment and discouragement—cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 4:1.
- Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
- Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
- 2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
- f. With the self there are self-love, self-preservation, self-seeking, and selfpity—Matt. 13:5, 20-21.
- Matt 13:5 And others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much earth, and immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of earth.
- Matt 13:20 And the one sown on the rocky places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
- Matt 13:21 Yet he does not have root in himself but lasts only for a time, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he is stumbled.
- g. With the self there are murmurings and reasonings—Exo. 16:1-9; Phil. 2:14.
- Exo 16:1 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the assembly of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure out of the land of Egypt.
- Exo 16:2 And the whole assembly of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness.
- Exo 16:3 And the children of Israel said to them, If only we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole congregation with hunger.
- Exo 16:4 Then Jehovah said to Moses, I will now rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My law.
- Exo 16:5 And on the sixth day when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.

- Exo 16:6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, In the evening you will know that Jehovah has brought you out from the land of Egypt;
- Exo 16:7 And in the morning you will see the glory of Jehovah, for He hears your murmurings against Jehovah. And what are we, that you murmur against us?
- Exo 16:8 And Moses said, This you will see when Jehovah gives you flesh to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for Jehovah hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him. And what are we? Your murmurings are not against us but against Jehovah.
- Exo 16:9 And Moses said to Aaron, Say to all the assembly of the children of Israel, Come near before Jehovah, for He has heard your murmurings.
- Phil 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and reasonings
- h. With the self there is natural affection (friendship) based on natural taste and preference—Matt. 12:46-50; Phil. 2:2b; 1 Cor. 12:25.
- Matt 12:46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside seeking to speak to Him.
- Matt 12:47 And someone said to Him, Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.
- Matt 12:48 But He answered and said to him who spoke to Him, Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?
- Matt 12:49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, Behold, My mother and My brothers!
- Matt 12:50 For whoever does the will of My Father who is in the heavens, he is My brother and sister and mother.
- Phil 2:2b ... that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,
- 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
- I. With the self there are the matters of being opinionated and dissenting— John 11:21, 23-28, 39; Acts 15:35-39; cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 40.
- John 11:21 Then Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.
- John 11:23 Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again.
- John 11:24 Martha said to Him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day.
- John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;
- John 11:26 And everyone who lives and believes into Me shall by no means die forever. Do you believe this?
- John 11:27 She said to Him, Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, He who comes into the world.
- John 11:28 And when she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here and is calling you.
- John 11:39 Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who was deceased, said to Him, Lord, by now he smells, for it is the fourth day that he is there.
- Acts 15:35 And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and announcing the word of the Lord as the gospel with many others also.
- Acts 15:36 Now after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brothers in every city in which we announced the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.
- Acts 15:37 And Barnabas intended to take John, who is called Mark, along with them also;
- Acts 15:38 But Paul did not consider it suitable to take with them this one who withdrew from them in Pamphylia and did not go with them to the work.
- Acts 15:39 And there was a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; and Barnabas, taking Mark along, sailed away to Cyprus.
- 1 Cor 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who has been shown mercy by the Lord to be faithful.
- 1 Cor 7:40 But she is more blessed if she so remains, according to my opinion; but I think that I also have the Spirit of God.



- j. When we are in the self, we are individualistic and independent—16:12.  
     1 Cor 16:12 And concerning our brother Apollos, I urged him many times to come to you with the brothers; yet it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.
- 5. If we exercise the key of denying the self to lock up the self, it is impossible for us to be offended; blessed are those who are not offended—cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60:  
     Luke 23:34 And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And dividing His garments, they cast lots.  
     Acts 7:60 And kneeling down, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
  - a. If we can be offended, it is proof that we are full of self.
  - b. If my self has been locked up, I will not be offended no matter what you do to me or how you treat me—Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60.  
     Luke 23:34 And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And dividing His garments, they cast lots.  
     Acts 7:60 And kneeling down, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
- 6. We need to learn to exercise the key of denying the self to lock up the self in every situation:
  - a. Whether a situation is for us or against us, whether the brothers love us or hate us, we must lock up the self—2 Cor. 12:15.  
     2 Cor 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?
  - b. If the self is locked up, the church will be built up.
- B. We need to learn to exercise the key of taking up the cross—Matt. 16:24:  
     Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
  - 1. To take up the cross simply means to take up the will of God; the cross is God's will—26:39; John 18:11:  
     Matt 26:39 And going forward a little, He fell on His face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.  
     John 18:11 Jesus therefore said to Peter, Put the sword into its sheath. The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?
    - a. The Lord Jesus was not forced to go to the cross like a criminal; He was willing to go because the cross was God's will—Matt. 26:39.  
     Matt 26:39 And going forward a little, He fell on His face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.
    - b. The Lord Jesus was willing to be crucified so that through His death, His life might be released to produce and build up the church—John 12:24.  
     John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
    - c. The cross was a great suffering to the Lord, but He cared not for the suffering but for the fulfillment of God's purpose—Heb. 12:2; Col. 1:24.  
     Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.  
     Col 1:24 I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church;
  - 2. *Let him...take up his cross* (Matt. 16:24) means that we are not forced to bear the cross but that we willingly take it up:  
     Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

- a. Our husband, wife, and children are God's will and are therefore our cross.
  - b. The one church is God's will, and every brother and sister in the church is God's will; thus, to bear the cross is to bear the church and to bear all the saints so that we would have the genuine oneness—John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2.
    - John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
    - John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
    - John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.
    - Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
    - Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
    - 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.
    - Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,
3. We need not only to take up our cross but also to carry our cross, that is, to remain on the cross, keeping our old man under the termination of the cross day by day—Luke 14:27; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; 1 Cor. 15:31:
- Luke 14:27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
  - Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;
  - Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
  - Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
  - 1 Cor 15:31 I protest by the boasting in you, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
- a. We have received the divine life through the Lord's crucifixion; now, in order to be built up in this life, we need to willingly and happily take up the cross.
  - b. We should not care for our taste, feeling, or consciousness; rather, we should care only for God's will, which is that we would have the genuine oneness—John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2.
    - John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
    - John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
    - John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.
    - Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
    - Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
    - 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.  
 Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

C. We need to learn to exercise the key of losing the soul-life—Matt. 16:25:

Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

1. To save the soul-life is to please the self by allowing the soul to have its enjoyment; to lose the soul-life is to lose the enjoyment of the soul:

a. God created man as a soul (Gen. 2:7) with the need for enjoyment.  
 Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

b. Receiving God into man's spirit and expressing God through the soul should be man's joy and amusement—cf. Neh. 8:10; Rom. 14:17.

Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

c. The Lord Jesus lost the enjoyment of His soul in this age so that He might find His soul-life in the coming age (John 10:11; Isa. 53:12); we must do the same (John 12:24-26).

John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will divide to Him a portion with the Great, / And He will divide the spoil with the Strong; / Because He poured out His life unto death / And was numbered with the transgressors, / Yet He alone bore the sin of many / And interceded for the transgressors.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

d. If we save our soul-life in this age, we will lose it in the coming age, but if we lose our soul-life in this age, we will find it in the coming age—Matt. 16:25.

Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

e. We need to love the Lord Jesus and to hate and deny our soul-life, not loving our soul-life even unto death—1 Cor. 16:22; 2:9; Luke 14:26; 9:23; Rev. 12:11.

1 Cor 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed! The Lord comes!

1 Cor 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he cannot be My disciple.

Luke 9:23 And He said to them all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

2. If we are willing to lose all our present soulish enjoyment for the Lord's sake, for the sake of the church, and for the sake of all the saints, others will be nourished by us and will be built up through us; this is not a suffering but a joy—Heb. 12:2.

Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy

set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

3. The kingdom reward of sharing the King's joy in ruling over the earth in the manifestation of the kingdom depends upon whether we save our soul-life in this age or lose it—Matt. 16:25-28; 25:21, 23.

Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?

Matt 16:27 For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings.

Matt 16:28 Truly I say to you, There are some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

Matt 25:21 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Matt 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

## **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

### **DENYING THE SELF FOR THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH**

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus spoke of the gates of Hades, which signify the power of darkness. In the Bible Hades is the place of death, where people are held in the power of death. Hence, it is a region where death prevails. After the Lord Jesus died, He took a tour of Hades. Acts 2:24 indicates that Hades tried its best to hold Him. However, because Christ is the resurrection, He could not be held by death. Death cannot overcome resurrection; on the contrary, resurrection always subdues death.

### **THE GATES AND THE KEYS**

The gates are mentioned in verse 18 of Matthew 16, and the keys, in verse 19. The enemy has the gates, but we have the keys. The gates do not overcome the keys, but the keys control the gates. The enemy's gates are much bigger than the keys, but the gates are nonetheless under the control of the keys, just as the doors of a building are controlled by the keys that open and close them. Hallelujah, we have the keys! Satan has many gates, but we have the keys.

Now we need to consider what the keys of the kingdom are. Shortly after I was saved, I was taught by a great Bible teacher that the keys of the kingdom given to Peter were two in number. Peter used the first key to open the gate for the Jewish believers to enter the kingdom of the heavens on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-42), and he used the other key to open the gate for the Gentile believers to enter the kingdom of the heavens in the house of Cornelius (10:34-48). I still believe that this teaching is correct. But, as we shall see, there is more to this matter of the keys than this.

In order to interpret the Bible, we must follow the basic principle of taking care of the context of every verse. In Matthew 16 Christ, the Son of the living God, the church, the kingdom, the gates of Hades, and the keys of the kingdom are all revealed. Verse 21 reveals what must take place for Peter to be transformed from a Simon to a Peter. For this, the Lord Jesus had to be crucified and resurrected. It was through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ that Simon, the son of Jonah, became Peter, a son of God. Without this transaction it would have been impossible for Simon Barjona to become Peter.

### **THE LORD AS THE PATTERN AND THE PATHWAY**

Verse 22 says, "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" With a good heart Peter was telling the Lord that God

should be merciful to Him. This verse is difficult to translate. Some say it should be rendered, “Lord, pity Yourself.” According to this rendering, Peter was telling the Lord to be merciful to Himself. Another translation is, “God be merciful to You, Lord.” It is difficult to determine the subject, whether it is God or the Lord Jesus. At any rate, the emphasis is on the self. Whether the subject is God or the Lord Jesus, the self is emphasized.

Verse 23 says, “But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan!” Then in verses 24 and 25 the Lord said to His disciples, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.” According to these verses, the Lord is the pattern and the pathway. If anyone desires to come after Him, that is, take Him as the pattern and the pathway, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him.

### **SATAN COMING OUT THROUGH THE GATES**

Verses 21 through 26 are necessary for the interpretation of verses 16 through 19. As we have seen, verse 18 speaks of the gates, and verse 19, of the keys. In order to know what the gates and the keys are, we need to consider verses 21 through 26. Satan comes out through the gates. The first gate is the self. This means that we ourselves are one of the gates of Hades through which Satan comes out. Satan may come out through the gate of self even when we have a good heart. Whether our heart is good or evil, self is the first gate through which Satan comes out. In addition to the self, verses 21 through 26 also speak of the mind and the soul, both of which are also gates through which Satan comes out. Thus, the self, the soul, and the mind are the main gates through which Satan comes forth. Many times Satan has come out through your mind because your mind has been an open gate for him.

### **THE THREE KEYS**

Verses 21 through 26 not only expose the gates but also reveal the keys. The first key is the denial of the self. Self is an open gate, but self-denial is the key that shuts it. The second key is the taking up of the cross. This means that the cross is a key to shut up the self, the soul, and the mind. The third key is the losing of the soul. Therefore, the three keys here are the denying of the self, the taking up of the cross, and the losing of the soul. Day by day we need to use these keys. Yes, Peter used the keys on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius. But we also need the three subjective keys found in this portion of the Word.

The principalities and powers in the heavenlies are gates. But in addition, the self, the soul, and the mind are three crucial subjective gates. If these subjective gates are locked, no principalities or powers will be able to come in.

### **THE CHURCH DAMAGED BY THE SELF**

My burden in this chapter is not interpretation; it is application. Throughout history the church has not been damaged mainly by Judaism or Gnosticism; it has been damaged mainly by the self. Martin Luther once said that although he was afraid of the pope, he was more afraid of the stronger pope, the self, within his own heart. Nothing damages and frustrates the building up of the church more than the self. Self is the embodiment of the soul, which is expressed through the mind. Thus the self, the soul, and the mind are three-in-one. Behind these three is Satan, who manipulates the self in order to damage the church life. We all need to heed this word for ourselves.

Simply because of the self, certain saints have left the church life. In 1948 there was a certain brother in Shanghai who was full of self and whose soul was an open gate that no one could lock. He was ambitious to be an elder, and he often complained about the situation in the church. One day he stood up in a meeting to speak many negative things. After his negative speaking, I said, “Brother, there is no need for us to waste our time. If you can find a better place, please tell me about it, and I’ll go there with you. But if you cannot find a better place, please be quiet and remain here.” He had nothing more to say. A short while later, he stopped coming to the church meetings, began a meeting in his home, and hired a traveling preacher. With the financial support of this dissenting brother, this



preacher wrote a long article opposing Brother Nee. No doubt, this brother damaged the church life. At the same time, he himself lost the church life. This was due to the self. With this brother there was no building, for he did not become a Peter but remained the son of Barjona. This was the result of Satan coming out through the self.

### **THE SERIOUSNESS OF BEING OFFENDED**

Let me honestly and lovingly say a word to you all: It is a very serious matter to be offended. Do not casually say, "I have been offended in the church life. The elders and other leading ones have offended me." Although others may offend you, you will always be the first to suffer. On the one hand, I condemn all the offenses; but on the other hand, I must say that there is no excuse for your being offended. If we were not in ourselves, we could not be offended. If I exercise the key of self-denial to lock up the self, it will be impossible for me to be offended. The reason we are offended is that the self is so open and prevailing. Through the open gate of the self, Satan comes forth, and we are offended.

Perhaps in certain matters the church may be wrong. Do not think that the church is no longer the church because it is wrong. For example, when your child makes a mistake, he is still your child. Whether the church is right or wrong, it is still the church. Although you may be offended by something or someone in the church, do not make any excuses for yourself. This frustrates the building up of the church.

### **USING THE KEY OF SELF-DENIAL**

As we have seen, Matthew 16 speaks about the building up of the church and also about the gates of Hades and the keys of the kingdom. Without the keys to lock the gates, the church cannot be built. Because there has been so little exercise of these keys, the church has not yet been built. We may talk a great deal about the building. However, when certain things take place to touch us, the self is open. Because we are open to Hades, something from Hades—Satan—comes out. How we need to use the key of self-denial to lock the self! The way to keep from being offended by others is to lock up yourself by denying yourself. Blessed are those who are not offended.

There is no excuse for being offended. When the Lord Jesus comes and sets up His judgment seat, He will tell us to settle our account with Him. He may ask us why we were offended in certain places. But if we make excuses for ourselves, the Lord will not accept them. The problem is not the offense—it is the self. Certain viruses are very contagious. However, no virus can cause a table to be sick. If you can be offended, it is a proof that you are full of self. If my self has been locked up, I will not be offended no matter what you do to me or how you treat me.

### **NO NATURAL AFFECTION**

I have spoken about being offended. Now I wish to say a word about natural affection. In the church life there should not be any natural friendships. If you regard certain ones as your special friends, it also is an indication that you are full of self. Certain ones match your taste, and you fit their taste. You feed one another's taste. This is very damaging, and it hinders the building. Among the brothers and sisters in the church, there should be a pure divine love, but there should not be any personal affection. If any personal affection creeps into your relationship with the saints, it proves that you are full of self. In the church life there should be no such affection. To me, all the brothers and sisters are the same. To have a favorite among the brothers and sisters is to be full of self. It is not to be a Peter but a son of Jonah. This damages the building.

We need to receive the mercy of the Lord to regard all the saints as our brothers and sisters but none as our friends. For the Lord's building in the church life, everything natural must be extracted. There should be no natural affection, relationship, or feeling. Rather, we all must be fearful of natural affection and shun it. Whenever a brother loves me in a naturally affectionate way, I am frightened. That is the time for me to exercise the key to deny the self. I will lock myself and avoid that brother's affection. Whenever you discover that you are feeding a brother's self and that he is feeding yours, you must use the key to lock the gate of the self. If you do not lock up the self, Satan will come out through



the door of the self. Then you and others will remain sons of Jonah. You will not be Peters, and it will be impossible for the Lord to build the church with you.

### **THE HIDDEN SELF**

More than nineteen hundred years ago, the Lord Jesus prophesied that He would build the church. But why, after so many centuries, do we not yet have the building? It is because the key of self-denial has been neglected. In these chapters I have no desire to talk about doctrines, but I do have a heart to fellowship with you all. Oh, the hidden self! Peter had a good heart, but within him there was the hidden self that became the gateway for Satan to come out. I appreciate the Lord's discernment. If I had been the Lord, I would not have had the discernment but would have appreciated Peter's concern. However, the Lord Jesus immediately discerned that Satan had come out through the gate of the self.

I am glad that in the churches we have the brothers' houses and the sisters' houses. But, through experience, we have realized that there are two kinds of results from living in such a house. Some form natural friendships; others become dissatisfied and disappointed. However, no matter what the situation maybe, you should not be disappointed. To be disappointed is a proof that you are in the self. The self of those who live in the brothers' and sisters' houses must be locked up. If the self is locked up, we shall have the building. If you exercise the key of self-denial, others may be offended, but you will not be offended. Instead, you will be built up because the self in you has been locked up. We all need to use the prevailing key of self-denial to lock the self, the soul, and the mind. Otherwise, the building up of the church will be frustrated.

### **CRUCIFIED AND RESURRECTED FOR THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH**

Verse 24 says, "If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." The "Me" in this verse means a great deal. This "Me" is the pattern, the pathway. Furthermore, this "Me" is the crucified and resurrected "Me." If we are not crucified and resurrected, there can be no church. The church comes into existence through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Not only our self, which is defiled, but even the Lord's pure, sinless self had to be denied. If the Lord had not denied Himself and gone to the cross, He could not have been resurrected, and there would have been no church. We must follow after Him. This means that we must deny ourselves as He did and must allow ourselves to be crucified as He did. Without this, it is impossible for the church to be built up. Whenever we sense that we are feeding the self-life of another, we must say, "Lord, I will follow You. I will stop having so much contact with this brother." If you do this, the building of the church will proceed.

### **KNOWING CHRIST, THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS**

When you read this word, you may feel that you are not able to fulfill it. No, we cannot do it. This is why we need to pay attention to Paul's word in Philippians 3:10: "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Here we see that Paul desired to know three things: Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. The "Him" in Philippians 3:10 is the "Me" in Matthew 16:24. We are not able to deny ourselves and go to the cross. But by the power of Christ's resurrection, we can do these things. Furthermore, through His resurrection we can enter into the fellowship of His sufferings and be conformed to His death. Although in ourselves we cannot do this, we have One living within us who can do it.

### **WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION**

In Philippians 2:12 Paul says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." In the New Testament the word *salvation* is used in various ways. Regarding our eternal salvation, we cannot work anything out. The Lord Jesus has done everything to accomplish this. But we do need to work out the salvation that enables us to be built up together. For the building of the church, we need to work out

this salvation.

The entire book of Philippians is a book on the building. Among the Philippians there was division and the lack of building. Thus, the apostle Paul wrote this Epistle to help them to be built up. Paul was telling them to workout the building, for this building was their salvation. Many Christians today are missing the building. This indicates that they are not workingout their salvation.

Suppose you are living in the brothers' house. When you first moved in, you thought that living with the brothers would be wonderful. However, after a short period of time, you found that you could not get along with certain brothers. There is nothing you should do about this. Rather, remain in that brothers' house to be killed. Although you cannot suffer this killing, there is One in you who can. You simply need to follow Him to workout your salvation.

### **GOD WORKING IN US**

Philippians 2:13 tells us how to workout our salvation: "It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." God is in us doing this work. We simply need to exercise the key of self-denial and say Amen to the Lord. We need to exercise the key to lock up the self. If we all learn this lesson, we shall be built up together, and we shall become a strong testimony. We shall be able to testify that although we have different characters, dispositions, temperaments, and backgrounds, we can be one and can be built up together. This is precisely what the Lord is dealing within Matthew 16.

### **LOCKING UP THE SELF FOR THE BUILDING**

Matthew 16 has been veiled for centuries. Perhaps you have read this chapter again and again and again without knowing what the Lord was really saying. But now the Lord has given us further understanding to see how the church can be built up through the exercise of the keys. We need to be afraid of ourselves and use the key to lock up ourselves. We should do this not only in the church life but also in our family life. If you exercise the key to lock up the self, you will have no problems in your marriage. All the problems are from Satan who comes out through the gate of the self. When this gate is locked, Satan is confined, and there are no problems.

In these chapters I am not concerned with mere doctrine. Instead, I am presenting to you what I have learned through years of suffering. We need to find out how the church can be built up. If you say that the church is built up through the cross and the resurrection, that is still too doctrinal. We need to go on to learn to exercise the key of self-denial to lock up the self in every situation. Whether a situation is for you or against you, you must lock up the self. Whether the brothers love you and welcome you or hate you and do not welcome you, you still need to lock up your self. If you do this, there will be no problems, and it will be possible to have the building of the church. But without the locking up of the self, there is no possibility of having the building. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," pp. 69-77)