

## **TWOS AND THREES**

(Fellowship from Minoru Chen on February 21, 2021)

### **Introductory Word**

Today, I want to continue into the second level in what I call the organic structure of the church. Last week, we covered the first level. The first level is simply, to use the biblical phrase, “each one” or the individual saint. It really starts there, brothers. Do not think that because we are in a collective church life, everything has to do with everybody else. There is that side. We are here in the Body, practicing the Body life. We are not here to promote individualism and independence, for sure. This is a great recovery work of the Lord. However, according to the Bible and surely according to our experience, God's dealing is not only with the church or with a group of people, but with individuals. There is a famous verse that judgment begins from the house (1 Peter 4:17). This means that one day the Lord as the judge will judge the nations. He will judge the whole world at that great white throne. But before that, in this age we are in today, His judgment would begin in the church, the house of God. Generally speaking, that is true, but how does the Lord judge the church? Well, He judges the church by judging the saints, each one. I would love in the future to share an entire conference on this matter and on these other levels of this organic structure.

### **Organic Structure**

I want all of you brothers to remember that we are speaking about the structural aspect of the church life. We do not mean a kind of human or worldly organization, or to bring worldly things or business models into the church life. Today, people who want to be a successful pastor go to Bible school. They need to take management courses, to know how to manage a church as a business. In the so-called mega

church, they have an entire marketing department. They have a CEO, a CFO, and a COO. They have it all because it is a business. It is an enterprise. We are not talking about this. I trust that you are clear.

That said, when you look at this human body that we have, you will realize, on the one hand, that it is extremely organic. It is an organism. It is not a man-made organization. It is not mechanical. We are not robots. Today there are these people who are making robots that behave, act, and do maneuvers just like a human being with muscles and bones. But they are still robots, still mechanical things. No, the Body of Christ is something of life. It is organic. It is an organism. Man, the human being in God's plentiful creation, is the top creature. In other words, it is the top organism with the greatest complexity. It is a very complex organism compared to a dog or a bee. Those are lower organisms, so they are not that complex. We are tripartite. We were made in this way by God. God made us complex. That has to do with life, because we have the highest life in creation. I do not know about the angels, but on the earth, we are the most sophisticated organism, the most advanced organism, the most complex organism. And when we take a look at it, it is full of order. It would be crazy if your body was just chaos, you would not be sitting there. Consider all the systems, all the organs, all the parts, from the cellular level all the way up. Then you introduce the mental or psychological aspects besides the physiological. And we even have a spirit that allows us to contact God. How complex is that? But we are not a mess, a chaotic glob of something. We are extremely orderly, extremely "organized", by life and not by mechanics or by machine.

### **Divinely Ordered**

Brothers do not think for a moment that the church is disorderly, that the church is just about life and spirit, and so it is all free. No, that is a wrong concept. Even the spirit is not disorderly. And this divine life is not just this human life that I described, but God's life. Can you imagine how complex that is? It is unfathomable. It is unimaginable. You will derive logically that God's life would be super complex, and therefore super orderly. Do you find that the God in the Bible is a

chaotic God? No, rather you will find He is a wise God. He is a God of order. He is tremendously organized, in an organic sense. Now these two lives are mingled total complexity. These two most complex lives; one in the human realm and one in the divine realm, are now mingled, joined, and even incorporated. Can you imagine how complex this is? Can you imagine how complex Jesus was as the first God-man? It boggles the mind.

My point is not to study the complexity, but in a small way, in the practice of our church life, we do need to look at things this way. This is because the church is the Body of Christ with many members. All the members are individually members but also members one of another, and they all directly join to the Head and to each other in some way organically. So at least you have to realize that the church life, the expression of the Body life, is not a messy situation. Today, some brothers practice the church by democracy. Democracy is a messy political system, but the best there is in the political realm. But it is people's viewpoints and opinions, and so it is just messy. The church is not like that. The church is not democratic. The church is not autocratic either. The church is theocratic. It is God ruling. But God's ruling, although direct, is also very much through and in this organism that He is now a part of. This organism is not just you and me. This organism involves and includes God, and His life and His nature mingled with us. So this church must be something divinely ordered, and not messy and chaotic.

### **Not a Human Organization**

However, we have to be careful, lest we stray into just the human organizational realm. So please do not come up with some "org chart" for me. No, we are not here for that kind of organization. In fact, part of the degradation of Christianity, of the Christian church, is that it welcomed this human organization and now it has become an organization, a political organization, a commercial organization, a religious organization. It has lost its nature. It has grown from a little mustard seed into this huge great tree on which the evil birds lodge. That is a church that has been transmuted from its original essence

and nature, and even form and expression, into something totally worldly and earthly. We must fight to never become like that. But we are still a group of people, God-men, practicing the church life in a locality. There is a practical side of how the saints would relate, how the saints would serve, how the believers would be built up together into a habitation of God in spirit. Whether it is a temple or a house, that already tells you there is something organized, that there is construction, there is a plan, there is a way that you put a building together or the Body organically.

### **A Divine—Human Organism**

This organization, this structure, in your organic body, is not an end in itself. It is for the body's survival, for the body's existence and maintenance. It is for the maintenance of life. It is not only for your body's maintenance, but for your body's growth. The growth of the Body is simply the growth of God in each member. When members grow together, in a related way, God grows in the Body and the Body grows. In fact, the Body grows by the operation of each one part (Eph. 4:16). Now it is not just life, but the service, the function of each one part that builds up the Body. You have the growth side and you have the building side. And all is to eventually have an increased reality and expression of this divine-human organism, the church, the Lord's Body. Brothers, please do not go back and take what I am saying in a legal way: now we have the chart, now we have four levels. Please do not do this. You will kill the Body. But we do need to practice these things in a living way, in an organic way, in an intrinsic way. We have to be practical because we are in a local church with so many saints. This point on *each one* is too crucial. That is why Brother Lee said that the vital group starts with one person, one believer. You may say that a group of one is not a group. But he said that is how it starts – with each one. When you have one saint vitalized, that is the beginning of a vital group. The vitality of a church does not drop from the ceiling and suddenly everyone is vitalized. When the Lord vitalizes you, and the Lord vitalizes me, and the Lord vitalizes him or her, then the Lord is starting to vitalize the church. When I become vital, living, and active, then I would spontaneously influence someone close to me or

next to me, causing them to be vital, and so on. This will produce a chain reaction. This is the principle of the vital group, which we are going to talk about today. But I do not want to use that term because it conjures up different things in different minds. Today, I would like to use the biblical words “twos and threes”. We will use Matthew 18 to cover this matter.

### **An Orderly Arrangement for Dispensing**

Let me just finish my thought about the need for order, the need for groupings of saints. The feeding of the five thousand with twelve baskets left over is recorded in all four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Lord did something quite marvelous. There were five thousand people in one place. If you can conclude those were only men, then with women and children that is a lot more people, thousands of people. By the way, the Lord used that to train the twelve disciples, including Peter. You can see this when you go to Acts. When the early church increased to thousands, they had problems because of language differences. Problems arose between the Hellenists and the Hebrew women, especially the widows in the distribution of food. Those disciples actually learned how to distribute the food from the Lord, in His feeding of the crowds in an orderly way. But then later on in chapter six of Acts, Peter would say that it was not fitting for them to be attending to tables because they should be given to prayer and to the ministry of the word. That is when they said to select seven men with wisdom and the Spirit to serve the tables, including Stephen and the others.

My point is that the Lord, in His own feeding of thousands, did not just throw those fish and bread in the air and say come and get it. How can five to ten thousand people come near the Lord to get the fish? The Lord worked a great miracle turning five loaves and two fish into a tremendous amount of food that satisfied everyone and then some. But He did not distribute the food miraculously. He increased the food miraculously, but He delivered the food, dispensed the food, practically, by a very orderly arrangement. I am looking at the Matthew account, where the Lord took the food, blessed it and broke

it and gave it to the disciples first and then to the crowds. He did not directly feed them. He trained the disciples. But how can even twelve disciples feed thousands if they were all just crowded there? He had them all recline. By the way, after they ate, the Lord collected the “trash.” The Lord took up the leftover pieces for someone to eat.

I want to impress upon you brothers that this is not a chaotic free spirit thing. It's full of the Spirit. It's full of miracles, yet full of practical order in the Lord's hands. In Matt. 14:19, footnote one, when the Lord gave the food to the disciples, Brother Lee had this footnote: *“This was to put the people in good order and showed the Lord's wisdom and orderliness.”* Have you ever seen that footnote? The more saints there are, the more there needs to be an orderly feeding. Of course, I will talk about this more when we get to the third level of the small groups, but I want to give you an advance impression that order and structure are needed to complement the miracles. If there are a lot of miracles done, but with no order and no follow up, the miracles became vapor and disappears. But here there is something practical to assist, to support, and to complement the miracle so that everyone got fed. As you will see when we get into this matter, this orderly arrangement of people into groups of fifty and one hundred reclining on the grass by companies in a regimented and orderly way, is to facilitate feeding. It's about feeding. It's about giving food and about supplying the people. Today we must supply the church, feed the saints. We need to find a way that this dispensing, this stewardship can be carried out in an orderly and efficient way. This is not to demonstrate management skills or organizational skills. It's about feeding, it's also about growing these groups or companies. Mark's account refers to this meaning as a garden plot, like a flower bed that grows flowers or plants. It's for growth, for feeding and growing; not just about organizing.

### **Twos and Threes in Matthew 18**

When we speak about the twos and threes, we must come to Matthew 18. I will just read five verses to you from that chapter, verses 16 to 20. This is about someone who sins against a brother. You

are supposed to go alone for covering purposes to restore this one.

18:16 But if he does not hear you, take with you one or two more that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

18:17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector.

18:18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

18:20 For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

Verse 20 is one of the loveliest verses in Matthew about the Lord's great promise. Matthew is a book about Emmanuel – God with us. Emmanuel is seen in the first chapter and at the end of Matthew in the last chapter, "...I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age." Those are the two brackets of the book of Matthew, and in the middle, in chapter 18, you have, "...Where two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst." This is a very rich portion to somewhat prove that the practice or the gathering or the activities of two and three is not accidental. It's not just some number out of thin air. That's why I have some boldness to say that this is the next level. The first level is each saint, each believer. The second level is not what we call the group with a dozen people or more, or the districts with dozens of people, but rather the twos and threes. Matthew 18 is the Lord Himself talking about the church life. In chapter 16 the Lord says to Peter, "I will build My church" referring to the universal church. But two chapters later in chapter 18, He's referring to the local church because he said, "Tell it to the church." If the church is not local, then how do you tell it to the church? In this practical local church life, something emerges quite outstanding, the

number of two and three. I don't think this is just a number as a type, I believe, rather, this has practical ramifications. When the Lord said, "two and three," He meant "two and three." These four or five verses talk about the same two and three brothers. It could be sisters, but in this case, it's brothers. It's an exceedingly rich passage. What the Lord promises and guarantees is that when the two and three of His own gather, they will enjoy and have His presence, God with them. This is not the whole church, which is another matter. This is just two or three members of the church.

### **Two and Three Shepherding and Restoring**

Firstly, when one tries to restore this sinful person and is rejected, then he should take one or two to go with him. The two and three in this case is for witnessing and for confirmation. One person is good, but one person has no confirmation. You cannot clap with one hand; you need to have at least have two hands to clap and to create some sound. You need at least two or three to have confirmation. The context of this is to shepherd the sinful one and to restore or rescue the sinful one by going to him and admonishing him. Then it says if this person refuses to hear them, then they should tell it to the church and the church would exercise a government on this person. But my point is that it does not jump to the church first. It's two and three under the principle of covering, but also of confirmation in the Body. For the sake of shepherding and recovery of a saint, this is done by two and three.

### **Two and Three Exercising the Kingdom Life**

This is not a small thing. Matthew is a book on the kingdom, and this is the kingdom life. The church life is the kingdom life. It's a very serious matter, and you have not just one, but two and three operating. Right here we see the principal of the Body. It's not just an individual, but twos and threes, and it's not 20 and 30, which is not needed. You just need one or two more to see the beginning of the Lord's government. Of course, these two or three must be proper and spiritual, but I am emphasizing the number. Twos and threes can do a lot if they are proper and if they are spiritual and if they are burdened.



Then verse 18 talks about binding and loosing, which clearly refers to what these people are doing. In the footnotes, Brother Lee says “binding” means to condemn and “loosing” means to forgive. Twos and threes can do that. Can you see how serious and how great this matter is? These two and three can bind and loose, control the heavens, and dictate what the heavens should do through their prayer. Verse 19 completes the thought, “...Truly I say to you that if two of you....” Now it's not even just three but even two. “If two are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.” According to the context, this must be the prayer that deals with the brother who refuses or who rejects the fellowship. Two of you. My dear saints, what authority this is with only two! The authority of the Body can be manifested, and the promise of the answered prayer is with these two in whatever they ask, provided that they are in harmony.

### **Two and Three Having the Lord's Presence**

Then in verse 20, “For where there are two or three gathered into My name...” The condition showing that these are proper ones, proper saints or believers is that they are “gathered into My name.” This means that they are gathered into the Lord's person. He promises, “...There am I in their midst.” What is this? This is Emmanuel. This is the promise of the Lord's own presence. So, this is a negative kind of account here, but it brings forth something very important and very positive of two and three saints. They are the smallest collective unit, and more than one, that would practice the church life with the Lord's presence. The Lord is in all of us, but there's no midst there. The Lord is just in me and in you. But when two of us are together, there's a midst and that's where the Lord will be. He is the third person; He's the fourth person. When two or three saints are properly gathered together the Lord's presence is guaranteed. Brothers, the Lord's presence is automatic. When you have the Lord's presence, you have a lot of things. You will have answers to your requests or prayers, and you will have the authority to bind and to loose. I have been in a gathering with just another brother or two, and suddenly, with that kind of small number, we can bind and loose. This isn't even a church

meeting, but the Body's authority is there. Now the church still has to exercise its government because the two and three is not the church, but spiritually the authority which emanates from the presence of the Lord is guaranteed and is there.

The fact that these twos or threes would go and visit this sinful brother to recover him also shows the power in the shepherding. The ability in the care of the saints comes through twos and threes. There would be echo, a confirmation, and a balance. There will also be a witnessing. All the principles of the Body are there.

### **The Twos and Threes Sovereignly Arranged**

I hope that in the church life, we can help the saints, not by way of arranging. Please do not go and arrange twos and threes. These twos and threes should be spontaneous, should be a kind of arrangement by the Lord sovereignly in the lives of the saints. It can be just brothers or sisters that you know, that you have a spiritual relationship with, or where there is some building. That can be the source of the twos and threes. It can be two or three who are serving in some particular area of the church, such as with the young people. Two or three full-timers can come together on the campus or some others in another area of service. It can be twos and threes in a small group or in a similar district. It can be one or two, two or three, in a particular neighborhood. The twos and threes can be the elders or "companions." These are spiritual companions to carry out the church life as the smallest unit of the church. Twos and threes can study the word together or read a ministry book together. Twos and threes can be a prayer group. In beseeching.org some saints come together twice a week for prayer. Some may have burden to pray every day for ten or fifteen minutes. I can also have two twos-and-threes groups. When there is some special need, there would be another twos and threes created.

I am saying all these things, brothers, to tell you that this is not something that you and I need to organize, however, it is something that we should promote. We should help the saints to practice this as

part of their church life. In other words, the church life should be filled with twos and threes everywhere to carry out all the spiritual needs of the church or to meet the various spiritual needs of the church. Based on this chapter, twos and threes gather together to enjoy the Lord's presence, because it says, "where there are two or three are gathered..., there am I" (v. 20). The twos and threes are to pray, to ask, and to bind and loose. And then the twos and threes are the group that will shepherd a brother or a saint.

I remember back in the '80s when we started to practice door-knocking, it was always by twos or threes. Usually, three saints would go knock on a door. Again, the principle of support, of the Body, of mutuality, and of strength. Ecclesiastes 4:12 tells us that two is better than one, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. There is a lot to twos and threes. Do you know the first Lord's table in the Lord's recovery was in 1921? This was a hundred years ago now and took place in the city of Foochow in China. There were three people involved: Watchman Nee plus a couple whose last name was Huang. Sorry to say that the couple did not remain in the church life, only Brother Nee. Three saw the light to leave the denominations and to gather only in the name of Christ with the Bible and to take the table. These three began what we call the recovery today. You can read Brother Nee's personal testimony of that meeting, of that first Lord's table. He said, "I still remember to this day." He gave this testimony in the '30s and that table was in 1921. He said, "how stale the bread was and how sour the wine was, but I never could forget how close heaven was to the earth." Three of them. They were not even the church so to speak. Even just three of them had something. They had the best, the Lord Himself, the Lord's presence.

### **Start by Being Personally Vitalized**

Brothers, I am just giving you a starting fellowship on this matter. There is really a lot to say about this. First, we need to help the saints to be personally vitalized. This week, [beseeking.org](http://beseeking.org) is on building up the life of fellowship with the Lord personally, individually. It has to start there. In the Old Testament, the picture of fellowship is in

Hebron. Hebron was the place of fellowship. The word *Hebron* means joined or friendship. That was where Jehovah came with the two angels to visit Abraham and Sarah, resulting in that glorious intercession for Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. By the oaks of Mamre in Hebron, which means the place of fellowship. We have to help the saints to build up their personal, secret, private, intimate, and affectionate life of fellowship with the Lord. If we have this life of fellowship, we will be vital persons. If you and I are vitalized, and he is vitalized, and a small number of saints vitalized, something will happen to that church. Do not start a movement. Do not try to do something top-down. Personal vitality is where it starts, with just one saint who is desperate for the Lord and for the increase of the recovery. That is where it begins.

We need to help the saints to build up such a life. One of the biggest frustrations or disrupters of this fellowship with the Lord is sin. That is why you have 1 John chapter one. Who says he has no sin? We all have sin. And that sin, amongst other things, disrupts our fellowship with the Lord. That is why we need to confess our sins. We have to help the saints in this most basic thing – to confess our sins, our wrongdoings, our failures, and our shortcomings. The Lord is faithful and righteous to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This is to remove the insulation and the obstacles so that this fellowship can flow freely. That is why in the book, *Vital Groups*, Brother Lee started with, “Go to the Lord, repent and confess.” That is how vitality starts. The saints need to begin to build up this vital living, this personal life with the Lord. I hope that we brothers can really help the saints to do this. Do not just have a morning revival in a formal way, in a mechanical way. We need to touch the Lord, contact the Lord. We need to call on the Lord's name. We need to pray with His word. We need to confess our sins. We need to consecrate ourselves to Him. If we would all do this, we will be vital. A vital person is a living and active person. And because of this vitality, which is our coming to God, we will also be those who are going to man, to be burdened for people in this people-centric church life, for saints, for sinners, and for seekers. We will have something to give to them and offer to them.

### **Connecting in Twos and Threes**

The next thing that vitalizing should do is to connect with another one, another two, as the Lord leads. This connecting is not just to be social, but it is a spiritual thing. The two and three is an operating unit, the smallest operating unit that will allow us to be burdened to preach the gospel, like knocking on doors, maybe not physically, but I mean reaching out. It will also cause us to operate together to shepherd the saints, the young ones, the needy ones. Two and three can pray, and even maintain a prayer life with one with another. Two and three can pursue Christ and read the ministry on the phone or over Zoom. The church meetings are just once or twice a week, but that is not the whole church life. That is just twenty percent of the church life. Eighty percent of the church life is during the rest of the week. Brothers, how do we do that? We do this by twos and threes. We can do this daily. When you see this, brothers, you will see the saints alive, active, connected, even coordinated together. Then the church life is solid. The church life is not just showing up on Sunday, or even just showing up for group meetings. The church life becomes a daily matter. It is rich and inclusive. Do you remember David's three mighty men? David said, "I am thirsty, I want to drink out of the well of Bethlehem." Three rose up, not one. One would not have been able to make it. Three broke through the Philistine lines and got the drink and came back to present it to David. But David poured it on the ground because he said that this was the blood of these men. My point is that there were three. The mission was for these three, even to give David, who is a type of Christ, a drink. Let us take this way of twos and threes.