

Twos or Threes

Fellowship from Minoru Chen on May 23, 2021

Prayer

Lord, we pray that You will visit us again today. Oh, we hold on to Your promise that when we are gathered in Your name, there You are in our midst. Lord, thank You that You are with us. We ask You to breathe into us. Revive us afresh. Lord, burden and commission us with what is on Your heart. We tell you again we are not here to stir up some human movement. Lord, we are here to move with the Spirit, to be one with the Spirit. Lord, we're here just to forge Your way, to gain what You're after in all these churches. Lord, we pray that You will be with us. Inspire us and even stir us up concerning Your need today. We are here for nothing but Christ and the church. Be with us, Lord. Amen.

Introductory Word

Amen, saints. Today, we will move on in our fellowship. I would like to get into the matter of the twos or threes starting today. Of course, this will be a series of talks and fellowship. The intention, brothers and sisters, is not just to inspire us or to educate us, but to really motivate us and, I would even say, to charge us all to really practice these things.

The Seven Churches as a Pre-figure of the History of the Church

Just before we started, as I prayed here this afternoon, I was again reminded of that warning, or actually that rebuking, that the Son of Man who walks in the midst of the golden lampstands gave to the last of the seven churches, the church in Laodicea. If you have read the book *The Orthodoxy of the Church*, you would know that Brother Nee interpreted those seven epistles as a pre-figure, a foretelling, of the

path of the church or the history of the church in this age. I would recommend that book if you have not read it.

I do not want to go through all the seven churches. We know that the first three no longer exist and were in the past, and the last four, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, will exist until the Lord returns. Thyatira refers to the Roman Catholic Church. The church in Sardis would be the Protestant Church that came out of the Catholic Church, starting at the time of the Reformation. After that you have Philadelphia. Interestingly, Brother Lee would liken Philadelphia to something that is not well known especially nowadays, but was a momentous, pivotal, and was a course-changing movement called the Brethren movement in England back in the 1800s. Today, most people do not know there was such a thing. They do not know the great teachers in that particular movement, whom the Lord used to open the word, the Bible as never before. At that time, they really brought in the divine revelation to a certain kind of a high peak.

Characteristics of the Church in Philadelphia

You would think that would be the time the Lord would come back. No, even with the Lord's promise to those who overcome in that church. The Lord's word to this particular church, this church in Philadelphia, the church of brotherly love, is "I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown" (Rev. 3:11). The promise is that this church with its overcomers is already given a crown because of the testimony that they bore as "the church in recovery." This is Brother Lee's term – he described the church in Philadelphia as "the church in recovery." They have a little power, kept the Lord's word, and have not denied His name (v. 8c). The Lord put before them an open door which no one can shut, and He shuts and no one opens" (v. 7c). He promises them that they will be kept out of the hour of trial (v. 10b), the great tribulation, which is coming to the inhabited earth. To the overcomers there, the Lord will make them a pillar in the temple of His God, and He will write upon them the name of God, the name of the city of God, and His new name – a triple name He will

write on them (v. 12). This is about the only church that He did not rebuke but rather praised and gave these precious promises to that allude to the coming kingdom.

Laodicea Coming Out of Philadelphia

However, Philadelphia was not to be the last church in this church age. There is one more and that is the church in Laodicea. You can say that the church in Laodicea came out of the church in Philadelphia. Brother Lee called the church in Laodicea “the church in degradation.” Well, the church has been degrading, since Paul's time until now. But because of the work of the Lord's recovery, through the Reformation and then on to the Brethren movement, He has been recovering the truth, the life, and so many things as if they were at the peak, and they were at the time. Unfortunately, that did not last. So there is an extra church, yet another church that would be present after the church in Philadelphia – that is Laodicea, the degraded recovered church. That does not sound so good. But Laodicea is the church that was once recovered, but later degraded.

A Warning to Us in the Lord's Recovery

Saints, this afternoon I considered about those of us in the Lord's recovery. Not to say this proudly and presumptuously, but I do believe it is a fact that the Lord took a turn, a pivot, from England to China, from the west to the east, in terms of the current or flow of the Holy Spirit in the move of His recovery work. Surprising everybody, unbelievably, in this hidden, idolatrous country of old China, He found a young man Watchman Nee. To him, He committed this commission of carrying the Lord's recovery on the earth onwards. That was 100 years ago now and because of Witness Lee, his co-worker, even after the arrest, sentencing, imprisonment, and eventual death of Watchman Nee, the flame, the torch, of the recovery did not die. It was passed on to Brother Lee, who eventually, under the Lord's leading, came to this country, back to the west, not to old Europe but to this relatively new country called the United States. This was all under God's sovereignty.

The ministry that Witness Lee had was the same ministry as Watchman Nee's. If you do not believe me, go and read *Watchman Nee – A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*. I used to teach an FTTA class using that book. Recently, I looked at chapter 30 again. In 1977, Brother Lee actually finished the manuscript to this biography of Brother Nee, except for one chapter. I believe it might have been chapter 30. It was 14 years later when Brother Lee would feel peaceful to release that chapter, somewhat matching Paul, who heard these unspeakable things and saw visions in the third heavens but kept it for 14 years. Brother Lee did the same, and so it was released in 1991. If I am correct, then chapter 30 was something that he wrote later, not in 1977. The title of that chapter is simply the title of the book: "A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age." There he just had a long message that is almost like an outline. Point by point, starting with the Triune God, to God's economy, to Christ, to the church, to the believers, all the way to the New Jerusalem, he presented all the main items of the divine revelation that were recovered or ministered by Watchman Nee. If you read this outline, you will clearly find, here and there, the points and the words that Brother Lee used that Brother Nee did not quite use in that way. But Brother Lee said all these are from Watchman Nee. That is interesting. You know what that tells me? It tells me that truly these two ministers are one, and these two ministries are one. Brother Nee laid the foundation and began this ministry in the recovery, but Brother Lee inherited it, completed and finished it, and in a good sense concluded it, all the way to the New Jerusalem. And you all know in the '90s, before he passed away, the speaking of Brother Lee arrived at the high peak stage.

So here we are, somewhat like the Brethren. They, because of John Nelson Darby and others among his contemporaries, opened up the word, interpreted the Bible, and as some testified, great light flowed out like the Niagara Falls. It shone through this open word. But only several decades after they began, the Brethren were already splitting, dividing, and breaking up into hundreds of congregations and

divisions. Here we are, 100 years later. Of course, we have gone through our own trials and problems, but the Lord's recovery is still here, advancing and going on, following this ministry.

My point is, brothers and sisters, if Laodicea was able to come out of that Philadelphia, in principle Laodicea can also come out from this Philadelphia today, the Lord's recovery among us. I do not say this in a negative way, obviously. But even Brother Lee spoke to us a kind of warning that we could become a lukewarm, degraded, and defeated church that came out of a strong, prevailing, and praiseworthy church. It is possible, so we need to be warned.

Characteristics of Laodicea, the Degraded Recovered Church

1. Lukewarmness

The first characteristic of this defeated church, the Lord said, is "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot" (Rev. 3:15). The word "hot" means boiling. It does not just mean hot. It means boiling, boiling temperature. "So, because you are lukewarm..., I am about to spew you out of My mouth" (v. 16). The first sign of a defeated or degraded recovered church is lukewarmness. It has not gone cold. It is just warm. It is tepid, lukewarm. And the Lord hated that. The Lord hated that so much to say, "I am about to spew you out. I wish that you are either cold or hot. But do not be lukewarm." We face in our church life in the recovery, brothers and sisters, such a danger, such a peril, that we would also become lukewarm.

2. Pride

The second characteristic of this degraded church is pride. They simply say, "I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing" (v. 17a). So proud; indeed, they have it. You know, the Brethren had it. And with us today, look at all the books, look at all the riches, look at all the truth. We have it, bar none. If you go to any Bible bookstore, you will not find anything even close to what we have received from

this ministry. So we are wealthy, we are rich, and in a sense we have need of nothing. We have the very best and the highest. That is pride. We do not realize that the Lord does not want us to just have these things in our possession, but that these things would be worked out, lived out in us, in our lives, so that we can be the true testimony of the Lord. But we are happy because we have it, so to speak. It is in our library. We can say these things. We can utter these things. But really, we do not have the reality of these things. These could eventually become just doctrines or head knowledge to us. Where is the living out? Where is the realization, the outworking, of these things? Pride.

3. Poverty

The third characteristic of this church is poverty. While they say they have it, they do not actually have it. In fact, they have no gold. They are even naked, without clothing. They are blind, even their eyes do not really see. Can it be possible? Yes, I can tell you, it can be possible. I would like to even say this: the revelation that we have seen, which we fail to experience and work out, can become a blinding factor to us. I do not know whether you heard what I said. It can become a blinding factor to us. Brothers and sisters, we desperately need to pursue Christ, to live out these things that we have seen and heard. So they were actually impoverished.

4. Emptiness

Then there is one more characteristic. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me" (v. 20). Here is a church, a real church, the church in Laodicea, where the Lord is not. Can you believe it? So I would like to use the word "emptiness." This is the fourth characteristic of Laodicea. It is empty. It has a shell, an appearance. But, as far as the Lord's presence is concerned, the Lord is standing outside of this degraded church, knocking at her door.

I am very warned about this brothers and sisters. We cannot be so sure that we would not repeat the fate of Laodicea, just because we

have received so much and we have seen so much. In these days, we in the Lord's recovery need to humble ourselves, and survey our own situation and evaluate. Are we lukewarm or are we boiling or burning? Are we proud or are we still able to receive with humility, poor in spirit? Are we in poverty, naked, and blind? In name we are wealthy, but in truth, in terms of spiritual reality, are we actually impoverished? And also at the very end, are we empty? Is the Lord still here? Is the Lord still among us, or is He knocking at the door out there?

Brother Lee said something further. He said that the knocking is on the door of the church. But the opening of the door is by individuals. It is personal. Each one of us has to overcome, to open the door for the Lord to come in. The Lord is still seeking for His overcomers in the church in Laodicea. I pray that all of us, many of us, will be such overcomers, that we would not become the church in Laodicea, but we would be today's church in Philadelphia. I really pray for this.

Twos or Threes in a Degraded Situation

Now, let us go on with this fellowship concerning the twos or threes. What is another way to say "twos or threes?" Brother Lee chose to use the word "vital groups." I am not using that term here, not because I do not believe in it. I do not use that term because we may have different definitions, different ideas, of what that is. Is my group vital, more vital than yours? Or is yours more vital than mine? Which is the vital group? How big is the vital group? So many things. I choose to use the phrase "twos or threes" which is a biblical phrase and a biblical number for that matter. But another word we can use is the word "companions." I do not say "group" because today when we say "small group" we may think of our small group of fifteen that meets on Fridays. No, this is not it, this is not that kind of a small group. By the way, when if I say "vital group," some saints get quite confused or puzzled about what a vital group is versus a small group. So I say "twos or threes" and I also say "companions" because two or three is absolutely a companion situation.

You do have that word in 2 Timothy 2:22: “But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace *with those* who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” *With those* refers to companions. In a degraded situation in 2 Timothy, Paul charged Timothy to not become just a wood and earthen vessel, an unworthy vessel in the great house of God. The great house of God refers to Christendom in general. He charged Timothy to be a gold or silver vessel. Therefore, he needed to flee the youthful lusts and pursue Christ with his companions.

In a degraded situation, brothers and sisters, we need companions. We need brothers and sisters who are like-minded in our pursuit of Christ, in our burden to overcome, in our absoluteness to fulfill God's purpose in this kind of degraded situation. We need companions. Even Timothy, a co-worker in Ephesus, needed to have some companions. We all need companions to overcome, to fulfill the Lord's need today.

Commission of the Twos or Threes

Another word we can use is “co-laborers.” I will even use the word “co-workers.” You may say, “Wait a minute, you are making me a co-worker? Co-workers are these big brothers, and they speak from the podium. I am a co-worker? Are you kidding me?” No, I am not. I am not kidding you. You are a co-worker. In a more general sense, we all are the co-laborers together with God on God's farm and in God's building. We all are the Lord's workers. Go back and read the Gospels and the parables that the Lord spoke.

The Lord considered us His slaves, those who are His workers, His workman, in many instances. And today, we're here not just as believers (which we are), not just as saints (which we are), not just as children of God (which we are), and not just as members of the Body of Christ (which we are), but something more. We are God's co-laborers, and this speaks of something related to work, operation, function, to carrying out some goal, fulfilling some particular purpose. That's what the *two or three* is about.

Two or three is not just companions saying: “Hey, come on over. Let’s hang out here and shoot the *breeze*.” No, that’s not the *two or three* that we are talking about. We are talking about two or three companions in the Lord. By the way, *two or three* is not a legal number: it could be two, it could be three, it could be four. In the case of the Old Testament picture, it’s Daniel and his three friends. There were four. So let’s not be legal about it, but it’s certainly not six, seven, eight, or nine. Otherwise, the Lord would not have used *two or three* so specifically and definitely.

In Matthew 18, this *two or three* that we’re talking about is not just a few sisters having tea together. No, no, it’s not like that. This *two or three* is a group with a purpose, with a commission. I would even say with a mission, with a goal. And that’s why these *two or three* must be vitalized people. They must be desperate people. They must be absolute people for the Lord’s interest and need. And today, one of the main needs of the Lord is to gain the increase for His church, and to protect that increase, and to grow that increase in the church life in this country.

That’s why we have GTCA. That’s why we have migrations. This is for the growth and spread of the Lord, for fruit-bearing of that vine tree that we talk so much about, for shepherding the young and the new, and for recovering the backslidden. All of this is to take care of people on the Lord’s behalf, that they can be gained for the Lord and for the Lord’s testimony.

Two or Three in Matthew 18

First of all, we would like to consider Matthew 18 today. We all know that in Matthew 16, the Lord spoke about the church for the first time. Actually, in the gospels, you don’t find the word church except in Matthew, once in Chapter 16, the second time Chapter 18. The difference is that in Chapter 16 He was talking about the church universal, the one church. “I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18). That church is the church universal, the one church of Christ, the one

church of the Lord.

Then two chapters later in Chapter 18 He talks about the church the second time. Except this time, He's not talking about that universal one church. He's now talking about a local church, because in Matthew 18:17, He says, regarding the offending brother who refuses to hear the saints' rebuking or reproof, "if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church..." If that church is heavenly and universal, where do you go to tell the saints? So plainly here the church in chapter 18 is the local church; it is the practical, local church that you can tell. And He says, "if he refuses to hear, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church..." (Matthew 18:17) This shows that this church has *an ear*, and this church has *a mouth*. So this is not something in the heavens, this is a practical church on the earth. Hence, Matthew 18 talks about the church life locally. Now keep that in mind.

So we have this speaking by the Lord Jesus Himself, concerning the church life. One of the most interesting things here is that in the context of dealing with this person or this brother who had a problem, again and again, the Lord used the number *two or three*. I would say three times. The first time was in Matthew 18:16: "But if [the offending brother] 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." Why didn't the Lord say five or six, ten or twelve? Why *two or three*? Well, in the Old Testament, *two or three* is important because it's for testimony, for witnessing, to bear witness, to confirm something. One person is not good. You need *two or three* witnesses to establish a word. My point is the *two or three*.

Then in verse 18 and 19, the Lord talks about binding and loosing on the earth by means of prayer. And in verse 19, He says this, "Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth..." Do you think the Lord is just throwing out that number? He could have said seven, He could have said twelve, but He just threw out *two*? I don't believe so. I think that was intentional: it just takes two of you. "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.” (Matthew 18:19)

The third time He mentioned it is in verse 20: “For where there are *two or three* gathered into My name, there am I in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). Again, it is not five or six, not seven or eight, but *two or three*. Brother Lee has a footnote for this verse; in footnote two he said, “the meetings of the believers are initiated by the Lord, who calls the believers out of all persons, matters, and things that occupy them and gathers them together into His name.” These are the *two or three* that are gathered into His name. “Such a gathering of a few people, of *two or three*, implies one of the ways for the church to meet locally. Many such meetings may be held separately in the same locality, yet they are still the unique church in that locality.” I think this is clear. So you have a local church. Whether the local church has 30 people, or 3000 people, it is still one church. But in that one church, there are many, many *two or threes*. This is the grouping that the Lord Jesus talked about. In Matthew 18, you see this.

Two or Three Companions

So what are *two or threes*? These *two or three* are companions or saints. Number one, they are the smallest gathering of a group within a local church. The smallest Christian group or community is not one, because one is not a group, it's not a community. It takes at least two to form such a unit of a community or of a group. It's the smallest; you can't go smaller than two for a group.

Flexible, Intimate, Mutual, and Engaged

Number two, not only is it the smallest, the beauty of the smallness of *two or three* is that it is flexible. You don't need to get 1000 people together or 300 people together in a meeting hall. Two can get together anywhere, anytime and in any place. You can gather in your home, at Starbucks, or in the park. It's also flexible timewise. We can get together at seven o'clock in the morning or ten o'clock at night.

It's flexible and it's mobile. It's easy for *two or three* to move around, to go here, and go there. It does not need a meeting hall to meet in.

Number three, these groups of *two or three*, being small, are extremely intimate. If you go to a meeting with three hundred people, you may not even know who's who. So people tend to find their companions or friends to sit with, because there are too many people. But *two or three* guarantees that it is something very intimate. And therefore, the twos and threes are extremely mutual, very mutual, because of that intimacy.

And another thing with *two or three*, being so small, is that you don't have a second row. I've never seen two people getting together with a second row. There's no such a thing. Neither have I seen three people meeting together with a second row. Everyone is in the front row. What does that mean? That means because of its size, everyone functions, everyone operates, everyone is engaged, everyone is involved, with no back rows and no spectators. Do you see all the goodness of the *two or three*?

Divine Numbers

Based on the Bible, both Old and New Testament, I concluded that this particular number of twos and threes are really a divine number. In other words, it's a special number, just like the number one, three, four, or five. All of these numbers have meaning in the Bible. But here, the numbers *two or three*, these particular numbers are also very meaningful.

Witness and Testimony

It denotes witness and testimony. It takes two to be a testimony. Even one day, in the Great Tribulation, there will be two witnesses, two sons of oil, not one. God's principle is at least two, if not three.

Match and Complement

It also denotes a match and complement; a match like Eve was a

match to Adam. Eve was a helpmeet to Adam. Eve complemented Adam. They matched to become one whole. If you were to cut a watermelon in half, the two halves would make a whole. That is complementary.

Companionship

Such a *two or three* also provides companionship. I would even say partnership. In the FTTA every trainee has a gospel partner. It's a sign in the training. Each trainee needs a partner. They cannot go alone. They need companionship, they need partnership, they need one another. They need a sounding board. They need to talk and fellowship.

Help and Support

Two or three is good for help and support. Here we have these famous verses in Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, "two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor; for if they fall, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls and does not have another to lift him up!" Brothers, that's why none of us should be a lone ranger, because no one will pick you up. That's not good. I fall and you fall as well, but isn't it wonderful that we have a companion that will pick us up? We *need* this companion. "Again, if two lie together, they keep warm. But how can one be warm alone?" (Ecc. 4:11) It's difficult to try to warm yourself alone. But you have another one to warm you up. These are good verses to show us the beauty, the necessity, of *two or three*.

Strength in Warfare

And then finally, the *two or three* is for strength, as in the case of warfare. "And while a man may prevail against the one, the two will withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecc. 4:12) In the Old Testament, strength is derived from this *two or three* rather than just one alone.

Examples of *Two or Three*

Now in the Old Testament, you have even Jehovah, who came to visit Abraham. There were two angels with him. That's quite interesting to me. God was on an operation to judge Sodom and Gomorrah. There were three men that came. One was Jehovah, the other were the two angels. To me, that's quite interesting.

Joshua and Caleb—it's not Joshua alone, or Caleb alone—but together, the two became witnesses against the ten spies. They said, "Let us go up at once and possess the land..." (Num. 13:30) Joshua and Caleb are co-overcomers. And they were the only ones who didn't die in the wilderness and went on to possess the land.

David's chief men, three of them, broke through the Philistine lines to get the water from Bethlehem to quench David's thirst. There were three men, not one. One couldn't do it. You need to fight, you need to get the water, you need to carry the pitcher. You need three.

Then, as I already mentioned, there was Daniel's three companions. Daniel is a spiritual person, but even Daniel needs companions. Daniel needed companions to overcome together in Babylon.

In the New Testament, you have Peter, James, and John. Out of the twelve disciples, the Lord would bring these three with him, just the three of them. At a certain time, He brought them into the house to heal a person, another time to the mountain to be transfigured, at another time to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. And these three became the key first apostles. There were three of them; not one, not just two, but three.

Then the Lord, on earth, when He commissioned the disciples to go to the villages and towns to seek the sons of peace, He sent them two by two; not one, but two by two.

Then lastly with Paul, the great apostle; even he didn't do anything

with just himself alone. In the first journey, he was sent by the Spirit with Barnabas. On the second journey, he was with Silas. The two of them were in prison together in Philippi. And eventually, Timothy joined, and there were the three of them. And when Timothy and Silas are sent here and there, another two joined them; a couple called Prisca and Aquila. Paul operates in this way, with a small number of his band of co-workers to carry out the Lord's commission.

I think this is good enough to show pictures, to show us that *twos and threes* are not just some random number that the Lord took, or some random number that's in the Bible. They have meaning and that meaning is the smallest group of "operatives" (people operating) to carry out some mission or commission that is related to God's interest on the earth at a certain time.

What the *Two or Three* do in the Local Church

Having the Lord's Presence

Now let's come back to Matthew 18. I want to talk to you about what these "*two or three*" are doing here in this local church. Of course, the context is the sinning or sinful brother, but let us just distill the principle here. In the Lord's speaking, I can think of three things that these *two or three* enjoyed or did. Number one, it says where *two or three* are gathered by the Lord into His name. This means that they gathered out of themselves, out of their own interests, out of their own purposes. He says, "There am I in their midst." So I have to believe that they have the Lord's presence.

You might say, well, I'm by myself and I have the Lord's presence. I wouldn't doubt that you have the Lord's presence, but the presence with *two or three* is different than just you and the Lord. This is the Lord's presence in the midst of His saints. In the midst of *two or three*, there's something particular that you cannot experience alone. It's only when you're with another member of the body and another believer that you enjoy *that presence*. It's the Lord's presence with His

Body, and not just as an individual.

Needless to say, with the Lord's presence comes all the things related to the Lord's presence. That means the Spirit is there. Actually, the Lord's presence is simply the Spirit. The riches of the Lord's life must be there. He is the unsearchably rich Christ. Also, the Lord's speaking must be there. Wherever the Lord's presence is, there is the Lord's speaking.

Having Fellowship

The first thing that *two or three* would do or would enjoy as *two or three* is fellowship. You know, it's much harder to fellowship with thirty people or three-hundred people. But with *two or three*, my goodness, you can have thorough fellowship, much fellowship, deeper fellowship, more specific fellowship and not just general fellowship. I think you all have that experience. There are certain things with many people that you cannot talk about, and it's not convenient. But with *two or three*, you can really touch the fine things, the detailed things, the specific things related to people and related to situations. Also there are all the things that I mentioned earlier; the mutuality, intimacy, and functioning of everyone.

Prayer

The second thing that these *two or three* would do is pray. Because here, clearly the Lord used a couple of verses to say, "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." (Matthew 18:19) Brothers and sisters, I don't know whether you get it or not. This is a huge promise from the Lord: that if two would agree on the earth in a proper way, they have such authority to bind and loose what has been bound and loosed in heaven already.

They have such authority to bind and to loose what has been bound and loosed in heaven already. I'm not saying we don't need the church prayer meetings, but have we apprehended this power? Have we

enjoyed the exercise of such authority in twos and threes related to a person or a situation? If there would be that symphonic harmony between two or three and they pray to bind and loose, it will be done. I don't know whether we have tapped into this. This is too powerful – the answered prayer and the binding and losing prayer. It just takes two or three to touch the very God of the heavens.

Take Care of Others

Finally, the last thing with the twos and threes in this chapter is that they take care of others. They deal with others, in this case, a sinning brother. But if you use it as a principle, it is in contacting people, in preaching the gospel, in bearing of fruit, in shepherding the young ones and new ones, in restoring a dormant one, in returning a prodigal. All these things have to do with the church people. Sometimes things that are more serious and need to go to the church, but here it is the function of the two or three.

Purpose of the Two or Three

Brothers and sisters, I hope that you will have a new realization that the function of the two or three here is scriptural. There is a lot of riches, power, authority, and benefit in the coming together of two or three saints.

Lastly, I would like to say that these two or three are not a social club. It is not a group of buddies to hangout. It is not two or three sisters taking tea and gossiping. This two or three being together, joining together, is purposeful, intentional. They come together with a goal, not just to talk and see each other. This is a particular group that gathers, meets, and has fellowship regarding the Lord's need and the Lord's interests, which is to gain people, sinners, seekers, and saints. We asked the leading and responsible brothers to not arrange anything. It does not work that way. Let the saints go to the Lord. We all need to go to the Lord and pray and look to Him with this view. Lord, where is my two or three? Where are my companions? Where are my co-laborers, so that we can fellowship in Your presence, so that

we can pray the prayer of authority, and so that we can seek out, find, save, shepherd, and care for people? I hope that in all the 10 churches, such a practice will be there. In the beginning it may be a little awkward, but brothers and sisters, how about we bring this to the Lord and pray about this desperately? I believe, as Brother Lee does, that practicing this in a proper way is really the practice of the overcomers. I am not criticizing, but just saying this as fact, that for too long the church life has been stuck in routine, and has become lukewarm, somewhat empty, barren, not growing, and not bearing fruit. The church has become passive, self-centered rather than people-centered, and not purposeful, not meaningful and not intentional in the fulfilling of God's purpose to meet His need. I pray that by this practice, the starting with a two and three, the Lord would have some breakthrough among us. Bring this to the Lord and pray and see how the Lord would lead you to seek out another one or two. Maybe you already have some grouping like this, if so, make this group intentional and purposeful for the gaining of the increase for the Lord. Today I will just say this much. We will say more in the coming weeks. Amen.

Questions and Responses

Question 1

I have two questions. First, is it okay to have more than one companion? Secondly, does your companion have to be in your locality?

Response

The answer is very simple – yes you can. We all have a tendency to be legal with things, so I keep repeating that we don't want to be legal. You may say we have four companions, so we break the rule. No, you did not break the rule. Don't think in a legal way. Of course, if you get into thirteen or fourteen, it will lose the character of the two and three, which is very important. So yes, you can have more than one group of two or three. But keep the usefulness and the characteristic

of the two and three as a basic operating unit in the church life to serve the Lord and to gain people.

Number two, can you have a companion outside of your area? Yes, especially today with zoom. By the way, you can have more than one group of two-or-threes. You can have two or three with someone in Germany. However, I hope that in your locality, you would at least have your two or three.

By the way, some asked the question – can these two or three be a couple, husband and wife? Absolutely yes. Priscilla and Aquila are a good example of two. They are a couple; they served together; they are companions; they are co-workers; they are husband and wife. Everywhere they went, they opened their home. They are absolutely the two or three. They even helped Apollos, the apostle, to know the Lord's way deeper. So we don't want to confine, restrict, or be legal about these things. With that said, we need to retain the character of the two and three because that retains the usefulness of the two and three as a propagating unit and a shepherding unit.

This burden was so deep in Brother Lee, and I must admit that this burden has been very much transmitted into me for decades. But there is always a concern that this will not just become some practice or movement, but that we would really touch the essence, something intrinsic about this practice of two or three. The more I consider it, the more I feel it is essential. It is the way that we will actually gain increase and even the way that we will build up the Body. But we are not used to this because we are more used to big meetings. I long to see the time when there are so many two or threes in the churches that the saints are automatically functioning. They are self-propelled, self-motivated, energized and vital for all kinds of things, especially to gain people. That would be a new day, and I looked forward that this new day would come soon among us in the United States.

I think it was in Memphis where I said that I've been speaking to inspire and encourage us. That's good and we need that. But there comes a point that we need to take action. We have to become vital. This is a good place to start. By the way, this is not the end. There are other things I still need to talk about; the small groups and the districts. But we must start here to allow the Lord a way to break through in us. It will take practice for us to bring this into being. Then the church life will be revolutionized to become living, vital, and powerful with all the saints functioning.

Question 2

I would really like to hear your fellowship on this matter. I know that both Brother Lee and Brother Nee been both spent about seven years or more among the Brethren. I know that they were recovered out of Laodicea. But today would you consider the present recovery as a recovery from Laodicea? And also, does this kind of inoculate us from falling back into Laodicea again?

Response

Well, this is a big matter and a very good question. It really takes another session to really delve into this. I would say, it was not Watchman Nee but Witness Lee who spent eight or nine years with the Brethren in China, of all places. That gave him a firm foundation in the word of God, especially in typology and prophecy. So by the time when he joined Brother Nee in the recovery, he already had a very strong foundation in that way.

Your question concerns where we are today? Are we in Laodicea or Philadelphia? Brother Lee never made it very clear, and I dare not make any pronouncement here either. All we can say is what happened historically with the Brethren. They declined and degraded from a very high situation of being Philadelphia into eventually a Laodicea condition. That happened to them. So what about us? Are we Laodicea? Are we Philadelphia? I dare not say. I would just say, that number one we hope, and number two we are warned. On the

hope side, I hope that today we are continuing on or going back (whichever way you want to put it) to Philadelphia. The warning is that if we are Philadelphia in any way, that we will not slip and degrade and become a new Laodicea. Let us have this prayer before the Lord and let us also be warned by the Lord's speaking.

Question 3

I have a question about the two or three. Can the two or three include saints of different ages? I know it can be hard to have younger and older saints in the same two or three grouping. Can you comment on this?

Response

Very good question. We have been through all these kinds of discussions and experiences. For sure, in the Body, there are some age disparities among the saints. If the brothers or sisters in a particular situation feel peaceful and feel it works that way, no problem. The two or three should not be fixed or restricted by age brackets. Having said that, if we are in a particular similar station in life, age-wise and otherwise, we share certain commonality. So in that way we can understand each other, and in that way we can pray and fellowship and even care for others. There is something to be said about that kind of similarity. For example, the college students should have twos and threes, but it would be more natural for two or three students together, right? Maybe there's a freshman and a junior. That's wonderful. Or housewives who have similar schedules and to be two and three quite naturally. Or brothers working in downtown or in the same neighborhood could come together and really labor, pray, and contact people and so on. That is something more natural. Either way is fine, but I'm just saying those are some of the things we learned.

Twelve Helpful "Two or Three" Practices

Finally, brother and sisters, below is a little document that I put together years ago because I was so much thinking about the two and threes. One day I just had this thought that two and three is quite a

special number. How can that be applied? So I wrote this down and here you have about 12 points. Please don't take this as a Bible. This is not the Bible. This is my little thought.

1. Call on the Lord two or three times after waking up.
2. Pray-read two or three verses every morning.
3. Pray to the Lord two or three times each day.
4. Read two or three chapters of the Bible a day.
5. Read two or three Life-Study messages per week.
6. Attend two or three church meetings a week.
7. Prepare a two to three-minute prophecy every week.
8. Be part of a vital group of two or three.
9. Fellowship and pray with companions two or three times a week.
10. Spend two or three hours each month to contact people.
11. Shepherd two or three persons regularly.
12. Bear a remaining fruit every two or three years.