

**LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER  
FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH  
AS THE BODY OF CHRIST**

Message One

**Loving the Lord and Loving One Another—  
the Most Excellent Way for Us to Be Anything and Do Anything  
for the Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ**

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 8:1b; 12:31b; 13:1, 4-8, 13; 14:1, 3, 4b; John 21:15-17; Gal. 6:2-3

**I. The Lord's recovery is a recovery of loving the Lord Jesus with the first love, the best love, and of loving one another for the building up of the organic Body of Christ, which is the building up of the New Jerusalem as the goal of God's eternal economy—Eph. 4:15-16; Rev. 2:4-5:**

- A. The Christ whom we love is the church-loving Christ; when we love Him, we will love the church as He does—Eph. 5:25.
- B. The degradation of the church begins with our leaving the first love toward the Lord; to love the Lord with the first love, the best love, is to give the Lord the preeminence, the first place, in all things, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psa. 73:25-26.
- C. The very life that we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus is a person, and the only way to apply and enjoy this person is by loving Him with the first love; since the Lord Jesus as our life is a person, we need a new contact with Him to enjoy His present presence at this very moment and day by day—John 11:25; 14:5-6; 1 Tim. 1:14; John 14:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rev. 2:4-7; Col. 1:18b; Rom. 6:4; 7:6; *Hymns*, #559.
- D. We must be persons who are flooded with and carried away by the love of Christ; the divine love should be like the rushing tide of great waters toward us, impelling us to live to Him and love Him to the uttermost beyond our own control—2 Cor. 5:14.

**II. Among the co-workers, the elders, the responsible ones, and everyone in the vital groups, love must prevail—1 Cor. 12:31b; 13:4-8, 13:**

- A. We have been regenerated to be God's species, God's kind (John 1:12-13), and God is love (1 John 4:8, 16); since we become God in His life and nature but not in the Godhead, we also should be love; this means that we do not merely love others but that we are love itself.
- B. We must keep ourselves in the love of God and be constrained by the love of Christ to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers—Jude 19-21; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:14-16; 4:7-21.
- C. God first loved us in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers (vv. 19-21); to abide in God is to live a life in which we love others habitually with the love that is God Himself, that He may be expressed in us—vv. 16-17; *Hymns*, #546 and #547.

**III. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—12:31b—13:8a:**

- A. The love described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 is the expression of the divine life (vv. 4-8a); furthermore, the fact that love is the fruit of the Spirit indicates that the substance of love must be the Spirit (Gal. 5:22); if we do not have love, our speaking is like that of sounding brass and a clanging cymbal, which give sounds without life (1 Cor. 13:1; 14:1, 3, 4b, 12, 31; 2 Cor. 3:6).
- B. Love is not jealous, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all things, endures all things, survives everything, and is the greatest—1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13.

- C. We should be like God in our love for others, loving people without any discrimination (Matt. 5:43-48); the first one saved by Christ through His crucifixion was not a gentleman, but a criminal, a robber, sentenced to death; this is very meaningful (27:38; Luke 23:42-43).
- D. The law of the Spirit of life is the law of Christ as the law of love—Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2-3.
- E. The law of love must be substantiated by the law of the Spirit of life so that we may be able to bear one another's burdens (v. 2; Rom. 8:2); but if we are filled with pride, we will be unable to bear others' burdens because we deceive ourselves by thinking that we are something when we are nothing (Gal. 6:3).
- F. When the law of love is activated within us, we automatically and spontaneously will be shepherds who have the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior Christ—John 21:15-17; Luke 15:3-7.
- G. When the law of love is activated within us, our labor in the Lord is a labor of love (1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thes. 1:3) in which we “support the weak” (Acts 20:35) and “sustain the weak” (1 Thes. 5:14); *the weak* refers to those who are weak either in their spirit or soul or body, or are weak in faith (Rom. 14:1; 15:1).
- H. The church life is a life of brotherly love (1 John 4:7-8; 2 John 5-6; John 15:12, 17; Rev. 3:7; Eph. 5:2; cf. Jude 12a), and the Body builds itself up in love (Eph. 4:16).
- I. “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”; we may listen to the messages of the ministry and become puffed up with mere knowledge—1 Cor. 8:1b; cf. 2 Cor. 3:6.
- J. Our God-given, regenerated spirit is a spirit of love; we need a burning spirit of love to conquer the degradation of today's church—2 Tim. 1:7.
- K. As the branches of Christ, the true vine, we need to love one another in order to express the divine life in fruit-bearing—John 15:12-17.

**IV. Psalms 22—24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion to His kingship in the coming age; in Psalm 22 we see Christ's death, His resurrection, and His many brothers produced in His resurrection to form His church; in Psalm 23 we see Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection; and in Psalm 24 we see Christ as the coming King in His kingdom:**

- A. These three psalms show that between Christ's death and resurrection in the past and Christ's coming again as the King in His kingdom in the future is the enjoyment, experience, and expression of Christ as our pneumatic Shepherd in the present.
- B. This reveals that shepherding is the bridge between Christ's first coming and His second coming; in His heavenly ministry Christ is presently shepherding people, and if we participate in His wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival, a new revival, in the Lord's recovery to bring Christ back.

**V. In taking care of the churches and in shepherding the saints, what is needed is the intimate concern of a ministering life—2 Cor. 7:2-7; 12:15; Philem. 7, 12:**

- A. In shepherding the saints, it is possible that we may kill others; the reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of intimate concern—cf. 2 Cor. 3:6:
  1. The milk of the word of God, the life supply of Christ, should be used to nourish the new believers in Christ, not to “boil” them—1 Pet. 2:2; Exo. 23:19b.
  2. If we have the ability to carry on a work but lack an intimate concern, our work will be fruitless; our heart must be enlarged to embrace all believers regardless of their condition—2 Cor. 6:10-11.
- B. How fruitful we are, how much fruit we bear, does not depend on what we are able to do; it depends on whether we have an intimate concern.
- C. A ministering life is a life that warms up others; if we would minister life to the saints, we must have a genuine concern for them, a concern that is emotional, deep, and intimate.

## Message Two

### Loving the Lord Jesus Christ in Incorruptibility

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:24; 1:4; 2:10; 3:16-17; 4:22-24; 5:18-19; 6:10-11

#### I. “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility”—**Eph. 6:24:**

- A. Grace is needed for us to live a church life that fulfills God’s purpose and solves God’s problem with His enemy—1:2; 3:2, 8, 10-11; 4:7, 29.
- B. The enjoyment of the Lord as grace is with those who love Him—6:24:
  1. Love in 1:4 refers to the love with which God loves His chosen ones and His chosen ones love Him.
  2. According to 3:17, we may be rooted and grounded in love, and according to verse 19, we can know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ; as God’s cultivated land, we need to be rooted for our growth, and as God’s building, we need to be grounded for our building up—1 Cor. 3:9.
  3. Ephesians 4:15-16 reveals that we hold to truth in love and that the Body builds itself up in love:
    - a. This is the love of God in Christ, which becomes the love of Christ in us, by which we love Christ and the fellow members of His Body—1 John 4:7-8, 10-12, 16, 19.
    - b. Love is the inner substance of God; the goal of Ephesians is to bring us into God’s inner substance so that we may enjoy God as love and enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love, and thereby love others as Christ did—5:2, 25.
- C. For the proper church life we need to love the Lord in incorruptibility—6:24:
  1. According to the usage of *incorruptible* in the writings of Paul, this word refers mainly to God and the things of God; everything natural is corruptible, but God, the divine life, and all things that are in resurrection are incorruptible—1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:42, 52-54.
  2. To love the Lord in incorruptibility is to love Him in the new creation, not in the old creation—Eph. 2:15; 4:24; 2 Cor. 5:17.
  3. To love the Lord in incorruptibility is to love Him in the regenerated and renewed spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit—John 3:6; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Tim. 1:7.
  4. To love the Lord in incorruptibility means to love Him according to all the incorruptible things revealed in Ephesians:
    - a. Ephesians speaks concerning the dispensing of the Triune God to produce the church (1:3-23; 3:16-21), of what Christ is and has done for the church (1:7; 2:13-18; 5:25-27, 29), and about the church being the Body of Christ, being the bride of Christ, and being one with Christ in the heavenlies (1:22-23; 5:23, 25-27; 2:6).
    - b. All these matters are incorruptible, and if we love the Lord Jesus in all these things, our love toward Him will be incorruptible (6:24); such a love is not a natural love; it is a love in resurrection, the love that God Himself is in His divine essence (1 John 4:16).

#### II. Paul’s blessing at the end of his Epistle to the Ephesians foreshadows a problem that would arise: the love in the church in Ephesus would fade, as indicated by the Lord’s rebuke in Revelation 2:2-5:

- A. The concluding word of Ephesians 6:24 adds a condition to the presence of grace: loving the Lord in incorruptibility; this seems to imply that if the Ephesians did not love the Lord in such a way, the grace of the Lord would no longer be with them.

- B. The church in Ephesus failed in the matter of loving the Lord; such a failure became the main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages—Matt. 24:12; Mark 12:30-31; cf. Dan. 7:25.
- C. The genuine ministry of the New Testament always stirs us up to love the Lord Jesus with the first love, strengthening us in the simplicity of enjoying Christ as our life supply—2 Cor. 11:2-3; 3:3-6.

**III. The revelation of the church in the Epistle to the Ephesians has two main aspects: the first aspect is the work of the ministry to build up the Body of Christ, and the second aspect is our spiritual life, which comprises many spiritual experiences that enable us to live a life that matches the church life:**

- A. We need to love the Lord in incorruptibility by doing the work of the ministry to build up the Body of Christ:
  - 1. What is needed today is an organic building of the Body not directly by Christ as the Head or by the gifted persons but by all the members being perfected to function as the gifted persons do—4:11-16.
  - 2. The building up of the Body of Christ comprises the following categories of work, which are eternal and glorious:
    - a. We need to visit others with the gospel to bring them into the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 15:5; cf. 2 Tim. 1:10).
    - b. We need to shepherd the new believers in home meetings (John 15:16; 21:15-17), nourishing them and helping them to grow (1 Pet. 2:2; Rom. 12:1).
    - c. We need to perfect the saints in group meetings that they may do the work of the ministry unto the organic building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 10:24-25.
    - d. We need to lead the saints to prophesy, to speak for God, one by one in the church meetings for the organic building up of the church—1 Cor. 14:3, 4b, 12, 26, 31.
- B. We need to love the Lord in incorruptibility in the spiritual experiences that match the church life as unveiled in each chapter of Ephesians:
  - 1. Chapter 1 unveils our being chosen in Christ to be holy and without blemish before God in love (v. 4); chapter 2 unveils our being God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works (v. 10); chapter 3 unveils the unsearchable riches of Christ becoming our enjoyment, Christ making His home in our hearts, and our being filled unto all the fullness of God (vv. 8, 14-19); chapter 4 unveils our putting off the old man and putting on the new man (vv. 22-24); chapter 5 unveils our being filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with our heart to the Lord (vv. 18-19); and chapter 6 unveils our being empowered in the Lord and putting on the whole armor of God (vv. 10-11).
  - 2. The key to all the spiritual experiences in Ephesians is to be strengthened into the inner man (3:16) in order to be supplied with the supporting grace (vv. 2, 8; 6:24).
  - 3. This is the miraculous yet normal way to live the church life, a revived life, a life that continually overcomes, and a life that loves the Lord in incorruptibility.

## Message Three

### **Life's Washing in Love to Maintain Fellowship**

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-17, 34-35

**I. Since John is a book of signs (2:11), what is recorded in John 13 concerning foot-washing should be considered a sign, which is a symbol with spiritual significance (vv. 1-17):**

- A. Foot-washing should not be taken merely in a physical sense but rather, and even more intrinsically, in a deeper, more important, and spiritual sense.
- B. In John 1—12 the Lord as life came and brought forth the church, composed of the regenerated ones; in their spirit the regenerated ones are in God and in the heavenlies, but in their body they are still living in the flesh and walking on the earth; this shows us the necessity of the Lord's fellowship in John 13.

**II. "Jesus knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost...Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His outer garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself; then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded"—vv. 1, 3-5:**

- A. The outer garments that the Lord laid aside signify the Lord's virtues and attributes in His expression; hence, He was putting off of what He is in His expression.
- B. The Lord's girding Himself signifies His being bound and restricted with humility—cf. 1 Pet. 5:5.
- C. The Lord washed His disciples' feet to show them that He loved them to the uttermost (John 13:1), and He charged them to do the same to one another in love.
- D. The Lord's washing of the disciples' feet was the washing away of their dirtiness so that their fellowship with the Lord and with one another could be maintained.

**III. In our experience the defilement of the feet signifies separation from God and from one another through contact with the world; foot-washing signifies the recovery of spiritual freshness and vitality and the recovery of our fellowship with the Lord and with one another:**

- A. In our experience the washing water in John 13 signifies the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), the word (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3), and life (19:34; 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 John 5:16); the Lord washes our feet by the work of the Holy Spirit, by the enlightenment of the living word, and by the operation of the inner law of life.
- B. This is not the washing away of our sins by the blood (1:9); this is why, after John 12, there is the need for such a sign in chapter 13; spiritual foot-washing saves us from staleness in our fellowship with the Lord.
- C. Today the world is dirty, and we, the saints, are easily contaminated; for us to maintain pleasant fellowship with the Lord and with one another, we need spiritual foot-washing carried out both by the Lord in His love and by one another in love.

**IV. For us to experience the washing, we need to spend time in the Lord's presence and with the saints who are full of the Spirit, the word, and the divine life—cf. Matt. 6:6; 1 Cor. 16:17-18; Acts 6:5, 8; 2 Cor. 1:15:**

- A. If we remain in the Lord's presence, the Lord will come to us and wash us, not with the blood but with the Spirit, the living word, and the inner life:

1. Whenever we are in need of such a washing, we can just open ourselves up to the Lord as we spend time in His presence and allow the inner life to flow within us.
  2. Spontaneously, something living will water, flow, and wash us, and we will become clean again; our spirit will be uplifted, and our whole being will be so pleasant in the Lord's presence.
- B. "You also ought to wash one another's feet"—John 13:14:
1. In our experience, the Lord Jesus Himself and the saints who have much life can afford us such a washing.
  2. It is the spiritual foot-washing ministered to one another that keeps us clean from the earthly touch; while we are walking and working on the earth, we not only need the Lord's foot-washing ministered directly within our spirit but also the foot-washing from the brothers and sisters.
- V. Each of us must learn how to love the brothers and sisters by ministering the spiritual foot-washing to them to cleanse them from the earthly touch; this keeps them new, fresh, and living; our loving one another in this way is a sign that we belong to Christ—vv. 34-35:**
- A. We can summarize defiled feet as staleness in our fellowship with the Lord; clean feet, however, denote fresh fellowship with the Lord.
  - B. The Lord is always fresh, and He wants us to be fresh all the time, not spiritually enervated; this is why He makes us lie down in green pastures, He leads us beside waters of rest, and He restores our soul; foot-washing sustains an intimate fellowship between us and the Lord and rekindles our spiritual vitality and spiritual freshness—Psa. 23:2-3; Acts 3:20; cf. Deut. 34:7.
- VI. There must be an enigmatic freshness, power, nourishment, and supply within us that will drive others to seek after God by our presence; others should desire to seek after God, and their spiritual energy should be revived as a result of meeting us and speaking to us—cf. Acts 20:20, 31:**
- A. We need the renewing of the Holy Spirit day by day so that we can always be fresh and invigorated—Titus 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:16-18.
  - B. Foot-washing means recovering our former feelings, bringing us back to the freshness and newness of life (Rom. 6:4), and giving us fresh strength (Psa. 27:1, 4) to recover how we previously treasured the Lord as our first love by giving Him the first place in all things (Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b).
  - C. Every one of us needs our feet washed, and every one of us needs to be prepared to wash others' feet; among all the services that Christians minister to one another, nothing is more crucial or precious than foot-washing—"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them"—John 13:17.
- VII. Foot-washing is a matter of the Lord's loving us to the uttermost in order to meet our uttermost need; each of us must learn how to love the brothers and sisters by ministering the spiritual foot-washing to them.**
- VIII. Without the spiritual foot-washing, the church life cannot be realized, and the reality of the church life would be gone:**
- A. In order to wash others' feet, we must daily be filled with the Holy Spirit, be in constant fellowship with the Lord, and live in the mingled spirit—Eph. 5:18; 3:19; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4, 6.
  - B. Therefore, the daily foot-washing definitely needs to be exercised by the Lord Himself on the one hand and by all the saints on the other hand; then we shall be able to maintain an excellent fellowship with which we shall have the real church life.

## Message Four

### **Being Perfect as the Heavenly Father Is Perfect by Being Perfected in His Love**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 5:48; 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 16-18

#### **I. At the end of Matthew 5, to conclude an exceedingly high section of the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens (vv. 17-48), the Lord Jesus said, “You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (v. 48):**

- A. The kingdom people, the audience for the Lord’s decree of the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens, are the regenerated believers of the New Testament, as the title *sons of your Father* in verse 45 indicates.
- B. The demand of the new law of the kingdom is much higher than the requirement of the law of the old dispensation (v. 22, footnote 2); this higher demand can be met only by the Father’s divine life, not by the natural life:
  - 1. The kingdom of the heavens is the highest demand, and the divine life of the Father is the highest supply to meet that demand.
  - 2. The demand of the new law of the kingdom is actually the expression of the new life, the divine life, which is within the regenerated kingdom people; this demand opens up the inner being of the regenerated people, showing them that they are able to attain to such a high level and to have such a high living.
- C. For the kingdom people to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect means that they are perfect in His love (Matt. 5:44-45); love is the nature of God’s essence (1 John 4:8, 16):
  - 1. Through the precious and exceedingly great promises given by God, we, the believers in Christ, have become partakers of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) in an organic union with Him (John 3:15; Gal. 3:27; Matt. 28:19).
  - 2. To partake of the divine nature is to enjoy what God is.
- D. To be perfect is to have God added to us, as seen in God’s word to Abraham in Genesis 17:1—“I am the All-sufficient God; / Walk before Me, and be perfect”:
  - 1. The divine title *All-sufficient God* (*El Shaddai* in Hebrew) reveals God as the source of grace to supply His called ones with the riches of His divine being for the fulfillment of His purpose; the Lord’s grace being sufficient for us is the Lord’s power being perfected in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13; John 15:5b).
  - 2. To walk before God is to walk in His presence, constantly enjoying Him and His all-sufficient supply.
  - 3. To be perfect is to have God added to us as the element and factor of perfection; practically, it means that we do not rely on the strength of the flesh but trust in God as the all-sufficient Mighty One for our life and our work.

#### **II. We need to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect by being perfected in His love—1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17-18:**

- A. “Whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected”—2:5:
  - 1. Here *the love of God* denotes our love toward God, which is generated by His love within us.
  - 2. God’s love is His inward essence, and the Lord’s word supplies us with the divine essence, with which we love God and love the brothers; hence, when we keep the divine word, the divine love is perfected through the divine life, which is God Himself and by which we live.
- B. “If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us”—4:12:

1. Here *His love* denotes God's love within us that becomes our love toward one another, and it is with this love that we love one another.
2. In God Himself the love of God itself is perfect and complete; however, in us it needs to be perfected and completed in its manifestation:
  - a. God's love was manifested to us in God's sending of His Son to be both a propitiatory sacrifice and life to us—vv. 9-10.
  - b. This love is perfected and completed in its manifestation when we express it in our living by habitually loving one another with it.
  - c. Thus, in our living in God's love, others can behold God manifested in His essence, which is love.
- C. "In this has love been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear has punishment, and he who fears has not been perfected in love"—vv. 17-18:
  1. Here *perfect love* is the love that has been perfected in us by our loving others with the love of God; such love casts out fear and has no fear of being punished by the Lord at His coming back—Luke 12:46-47.
  2. Christ lived in this world a life of God as love, and He is now our life that we may live the same life of love in this world and be the same as He is.
  3. First John 4:12 and 17 speak of God's love needing to be perfected in us, and verse 18 speaks of our needing to be perfected in love:
    - a. This indicates that we and the divine love are mingled; when love is perfected in us, we are perfected in love; we become love, and love becomes us.
    - b. Through God's dispensing of Himself into us, we become love in the sense of being constituted with God as love.

**III. The genuine Christian perfection taught in the New Testament is according to God's New Testament economy that God wanted to become a man that many men may become the God-men for the producing of the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) to consummate the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2) as God's ultimate goal (Eph. 3:8-10; 1:9-10):**

- A. Second Corinthians 13 was written to encourage the believers to be perfected by the experience of Christ as life and the enjoyment of the processed and consummated Triune God in the Father's love, with Christ's grace as the expression of the Father's love, and through the Spirit's fellowship that dispenses the Father's love in Christ's grace into the believers—vv. 5, 9, 11, 14.
- B. This kind of Christian perfection is for the building up of the Body of Christ, and the perfecting ones are the gifted persons, such as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers—Eph. 4:11-12.
- C. In 2 Peter we see that the divine love, *agape*, is the ultimate development of the divine nature (1:7), and holiness is the manner of life that partakes of the divine nature (3:11):
  1. We believers have received the divine life with the divine nature (1:4), which is God Himself for us to enjoy; when we enjoy this divine nature to the uttermost, love will be the consummation; then we become a being of love.
  2. The divine love sanctifies us, separates and saturates us, to make us a people who are fully holy, utterly golden; we become pieces of "gold" put together to be a golden lampstand (Rev. 1:12), bearing the testimony of the "golden" Jesus, and consummating in the New Jerusalem, a city of pure gold (21:18), for the accomplishment of God's economy.
  3. Our teaching and shepherding of the saints in the church life should be according to God's economy for the working out of the New Jerusalem.