

Message Three

The Intrinsic Building Up of the Church for Its Organic Function

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:11-16; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28

- I. The intrinsic building up of the church is through all the perfected members of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:11-16:**
- A. Christ, the ascended Head, has given gifts—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers—for the perfecting of the saints in the local churches—vv. 11-12; 1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 13:1.
 - B. The perfecting of the saints is “unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ”—Eph. 4:12:
 - 1. The word *unto* in Ephesians 4:12 means “resulting in,” “for the purpose of,” or “with a view to.”
 - 2. The many gifted persons have only one ministry, that is, to minister Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ, the church; this is the unique ministry in the New Testament economy—2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12.
 - 3. According to the grammatical construction of Ephesians 4:12, the building up of the Body of Christ is the work of the ministry:
 - a. Whatever the gifted persons do as the work of the ministry must be for the building up of the Body of Christ—vv. 12, 16.
 - b. This building up is not accomplished directly by the gifted ones but by the saints who have been perfected by the gifted ones; the work of the gifts is indirect, but the work of the saints is direct—vv. 11-12.
 - c. The gifts are joined together in coordination to perfect the saints in the church to bring out their function, each doing the work of the ministry—v. 12.
 - d. In this way, through the perfecting by the gifted ones, all the saints will do the work of the ministry, and in the end the Body of Christ will be built up—vv. 12, 16.
 - C. Eventually, all the members of the Body of Christ will “arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man”—v. 13:
 - 1. The oneness of the Spirit in verse 3 is the oneness of the divine life in reality, and the oneness in verse 13 is the oneness of our living in practicality:
 - a. The oneness of reality needs to be practiced and thereby become the oneness in practicality—vv. 3, 13.
 - b. The word *arrive* in verse 13 indicates that a process is required for us to arrive at the oneness of our living in practicality; the oneness of reality is the beginning, and the oneness in practicality is the destination.
 - 2. The oneness in practicality is the oneness of the faith—v. 13:
 - a. *The faith* refers not to our act of believing but to the things in which we believe, such as the divine person of Christ and His redemptive work accomplished for our salvation—1 Tim. 1:19; 6:10, 12, 21; Jude 3.
 - b. In the church life we have only one thing that is special—the faith; to insist upon anything besides the faith for receiving the believers is to be divisive—Rom. 14:1; 15:7.
 - 3. The oneness in practicality is also the oneness of the full knowledge of the Son of God—Eph. 4:13:
 - a. The full knowledge of the Son of God is the apprehension of the revelation concerning the Son of God as life for our experience—Matt. 16:16.

- b. The oneness of the faith altogether depends on the full knowledge of the Son of God; only when we take Christ as the center and focus on Him can we arrive at the oneness of the faith, for only in the Son of God can our faith be one—John 20:31; Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:4, 6; 1 Cor. 2:2.
 - 4. To arrive at “a full-grown man” is to arrive at maturity in life; maturity is needed for the practical oneness—Eph. 4:13.
- D. For the building up of the Body of Christ we need to hold to the truth in love so that we may “grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ”—v. 15:
 - 1. To grow up into Christ is to have Christ increase in us in all things until we attain to a full-grown man.
 - 2. *Head* in Ephesians 4:15 indicates that our growth in life by the increase of Christ should be the growth of the members in the Body under the Head.
- E. To grow in life is to grow into the Head, Christ, but to operate in the Body is to operate out from Him—vv. 15-16:
 - 1. First, we grow up into the Head; then we have something that is out from the Head for the building up of the Body—v. 16.
 - 2. Through the growth in life and the development of the gifts, each member of the Body of Christ has its own measure, which operates for the growth of the Body.
 - 3. The growth of the Body of Christ is the increase of Christ in the church, which results in the building up of the Body by the Body itself—v. 16.

II. The organic function of the church is in the organic Body of Christ and in the local expressions of the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27-28; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11:

- A. Because we are this organic Body, we should be organic and function organically in the church life—Rom. 12:4-5:
 - 1. When the grace of God in Christ as the divine element comes into our being to be our life for our enjoyment, it brings with it the element of certain spiritual skills and abilities, which, accompanying our growth in life, develop into the gifts in life that we may be able to function in the Body of Christ—vv. 6-8.
 - 2. When the entire Body is operating, the Body causes the growth of itself, resulting in the Body being built up in love—Eph. 4:16.
- B. The organic function of the organic Body of Christ is in the local expressions of the Body and by the move of the Triune God in the operations of God, through the ministries of the Lord, and through the gifts of the Spirit in His manifestations to the members of the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28:
 - 1. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 there are God the Father’s operations, God the Son’s ministries, and God the Spirit’s gifts.
 - 2. The gifts of the Spirit are to carry out the ministries of the Lord, and the ministries of the Lord are to accomplish the operations of God the Father—vv. 4-6.
 - 3. While we are functioning organically, the Triune God, who is within us, moves together with us.
 - 4. The Triune God does not move apart from us; when we move, He moves—Eph. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 12:4-6.
- C. The organic function of the church is for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ, the fullness of the all-inclusive One who fills all in all—Eph. 1:23.