

KNOWING AND CARING FOR THE CHURCH

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Six

The Organic Way to Care for the Church as the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:27-29; 2:19; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 1:3-5, 27; 4:10, 15-20

I. We need to take the organic way to care for the church as the Body of Christ:

- A. To build up the Body of Christ, the church of God, is to minister Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, essentially to people for their growth into Christ—Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 3:2a, 6, 12a; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6, 8:
 - 1. When we speak with the exercise of our spirit, we minister Christ into people; when people listen to us by exercising their spirit, they receive the essence of Christ into their being—*Hymns*, #782 and #866.
 - 2. Day by day we need to exercise our spirit consciously, purposely, and intentionally to receive Christ essentially more and more; we need to have Christ added to us and increasing in us day by day—1 Tim. 4:7; Psa. 116:12-13; Isa. 12:2-6; 2 Cor. 4:16; *Hymns*, #403.
 - 3. When our spirit is stirred up and exercised, we will be able to impart Christ as the Spirit into others—2 Tim. 1:6-7; 2 Cor. 3:6.
 - 4. Our ministering of Christ into others causes the increase of the essence of Christ in them for their growth in Christ—Col. 2:19.
 - 5. We need to learn how to exercise our spirit to follow the indwelling Christ to minister Him as the life-giving Spirit into the saints to be their life supply for their growth in life—1:27-29; cf. 2 Chron. 1:10.
 - 6. We need to help the saints realize that Christ is our life and our life supply and that we have to feed on Him, enjoy Him, and be nourished with Him—2 Cor. 1:24; Phil. 1:25.
- B. In our work and service of administrating the church, our central concern, our spirit and attitude, should be to work Christ into the believers so that Christ would increase in them—Eph. 3:16-21; Gal. 1:15-16a; 2:20; 4:19.
- C. The increase of the essence of Christ within the saints of a local church is the growth of this local church, and this is also the organic building up of this local church for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16.

II. The elders and their leading are organic:

- A. The elders are appointed according to the manifestation of the measure of their growth in the divine life—Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
- B. *Elder* denotes a person of maturity, and *overseer* denotes the function of an elder—Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; cf. 2:25:
 - 1. To make an overseer a bishop of a district to rule over the elders of various localities in that district is grossly erroneous.

2. This is what Ignatius did, and his erroneous teaching became the basis for the establishing of rank and brought in hierarchy, which is abominable in the eyes of God—3 John 9; Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-11.
- C. Both the helps by the deacons and the administrations by the elders are not organizational but organic; they are distributions of gifts of life by the Spirit—1 Cor. 12:4-7, 27-28; Acts 6:3-6.
- D. To lead, to administrate, to function as an elder in the church, is one of the gifts given according to grace—Rom. 12:6, 8.
- E. For the Lord's recovery and for the building up of the local churches, there is the need of the proper leading ones, those who have an aspiration for oversight with a pure motive—Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 3:1:
 1. "The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach"—v. 2.
 2. "Not an excessive drinker; not a striker, but gentle; not contentious; not fond of money"—v. 3.
 3. "One who manages well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (but if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the church of God?)"—vv. 4-5.
 4. "Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment suffered by the devil"—v. 6.
 5. "He also must have a good testimony from those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil"—v. 7.
- F. The church is God's family, God's household, and all the elders should be cherishing and nourishing mothers and fathers—Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10; 1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11; cf. Isa. 66:13; 63:16; 49:14-15; 64:8:
 1. In our care for the church there should be no controlling, condemnation, rebuking, or criticizing; instead, there should be cherishing and nourishing—shepherding—Eph. 5:29; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; John 21:15-17.
 2. All of us need encouragement in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of spirit, and the tenderheartedness and compassions from the inward parts of Christ Jesus to make our joy in Him full—Phil. 2:1-2; 1:8.

III. The relationship between the churches and the work, which is the work of the ministry, is organic—Eph. 4:12:

- A. God does His work by speaking, by the releasing of His word—2 Thes. 3:1; Psa. 147:15; Amos 3:7; Psa. 33:9; cf. Gen. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:6.
- B. Today God is recovering the organic building up of the Body of Christ by the speaking of His ministry—Eph. 4:11-12, 16; Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 14:4b.
- C. The work establishes the churches, and the churches cooperate with the work for its furtherance; this is organic, and it is logical and normal—2 Cor. 10:12-16; Phil. 1:3-5:
 1. The saints in Philippi participated in the furtherance of the gospel through the apostle Paul's ministry; this participation included their financial contributions to the apostle—4:10, 15-20; cf. Acts 11:30 and footnote 1.
 2. The Christ-experiencing and Christ-enjoying life is a life in the furtherance of the gospel, a gospel-preaching life, not individualistic but corporate.

3. The more fellowship we have in the furtherance of the gospel, the more Christ we experience and enjoy; this kills our self, ambition, preference, and choice—Phil. 1:7, 27; Jer. 32:39.
- D. The churches should always help the work and cooperate with the work to promote God's work, and the work should try the best to always strengthen the churches, edify the churches, establish the churches, and build up the churches for the building up of the Body of Christ.
- E. To be one with the ministry, that is, the work, is not to build up the ministry but to help the ministry to go on to further the Lord's move on this earth and to build up the churches for the building up of the Body of Christ.
- F. In order for the ministry to go on, the ministry needs the churches' cooperation, support, and prayer; this is what it means to be one with the ministry.
- G. We have to realize that the enemy hates this; we need to pray concerning anything negative that rises up against the proper, organic relationship between the churches and the work, the ministry—Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:10-24.