

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

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

The Organic Body of Christ Building Itself Up in Love

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:8-16

I. The intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ is by the giving of the gifted persons (such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers), who are constituted in the dispensing of the Divine Trinity, by Christ as the Head in His ascension (including His resurrection), to His Body—Eph. 4:8-12; Acts 2:24, 27; 1:9:

- A. Ephesians 4:8 says, “Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men”:
1. *Height* in the quotation from Psalm 68:18 refers to Mount Zion (vv. 15-16), symbolizing the third heaven, where God dwells (1 Kings 8:30).
 2. Psalm 68 implies that it was in the Ark that God ascended to Mount Zion after the Ark had won the victory (Num. 10:35); this portrays how Christ won the victory and ascended triumphantly to the heavens.
 3. Through His universal traffic and in His ascension, Christ led as captives those who had been taken captive by Satan and made them gifts to His Body—Eph. 4:8-11:
 - a. The redeemed saints had been taken captive by Satan before they were saved by Christ’s death and resurrection—cf. Luke 4:18.
 - b. In His ascension Christ led them captive; that is, He rescued them from Satan’s captivity and took them to Himself—Psa. 68:18.
 - c. In His ascension Christ led them to the heavens as His captives in His train of vanquished foes and made them gifts to His Body.
 - d. Now God is celebrating Christ’s triumph over them, His vanquished foes, and leading them as His captives in a triumphal procession in His move for His ministry to build up His Body—2 Cor. 2:14.
- B. The more Christ ascends and descends within us, capturing and vanquishing us, the more He fills us with Himself to constitute us as gifts to His Body—cf. Eph. 4:9-10.

II. The intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ is by the gifted persons’ perfecting of the saints in the divine dispensing so that all the saints may be able to do the work of the New Testament ministry, that is, to build up the Body of Christ—vv. 11-12:

- A. The Greek word for *perfecting* in verse 12 also means “completing,” “equipping,” “supplying the functions”; the way to be perfected is to grow in life and to become skillful in function.
- B. The gifted persons perfect the saints by nourishing them according to the tree of life with the life supply for their growth in life—Gen. 2:9; 1 Cor. 3:2, 6.

- C. The gifted persons perfect the saints (according to their measure) to do what they do for the direct building up of the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:11-12; cf. 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12:
 - 1. The apostles perfect the saints by visiting the churches (Acts 15:36, 40-41; 20:20, 31), by writing epistles to the churches (Col. 4:16; 1 Cor. 1:2), and by assigning their co-workers to stay in certain places to perfect the saints (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:15; Titus 1:5).
 - 2. The prophets perfect the saints by teaching them to speak the Lord into people, by speaking in the meetings to set up a model, and by helping the saints to live a prophesying life by being revived every morning and over-coming every day—Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:31; Prov. 4:18.
 - 3. The evangelists perfect the saints by stirring them up to be burning in the gospel-preaching spirit, by teaching them with gospel truths, by training them to preach the gospel, by helping the saints to be equipped with the power of the economical Spirit, and by setting an example of loving the sinners and praying for them—2 Tim. 4:5.
 - 4. The shepherd-teachers perfect the saints by shepherding—feeding and nourishing the young saints and teaching the growing saints—Acts 11:25-26; 13:1.
- D. The result of this perfecting is that we will all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—Eph. 4:13; cf. John 17:23.
- E. This perfecting will cause us to be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a satanic system of error—Eph. 4:14.
- F. Shepherding and teaching are the essential functions among the gifted persons given by Christ as the ascended Head to the churches for the building up of His Body (John 21:15-17; Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 4:17b; 7:17b; 2 Cor. 11:28-29); in addition, Christ as the Head of the church also charged the apostles to appoint elders in all the local churches to carry out His shepherding of His flock (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17a; 1 Pet. 5:2a) and to be apt to teach in order to strengthen the shepherding and carry out its goal (1 Tim. 3:2b; 5:17b).

III. The intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ is by the direct building by all the members—into the Head and out from the Head:

- A. In order to be built up, we must hold to truth in love, growing up into the Head, Christ, in all things—Eph. 4:15:
 - 1. We must hold to the divine truth of God's eternal economy, of the all-inclusive Christ, and of the church as the Body of Christ.
 - 2. We must be subject to the Head, Christ (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23; 1:22, 10), and allow His divine life to expand and increase into all our inward parts (Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; 2 Cor. 5:4).
 - 3. The word *Head* in Ephesians 4:15 indicates that our growth in Christ should be a growth as members in the Body under the Head; our growth is not only in Christ but also in His Body.

- B. Out from the Head, in the divine dispensing, all the Body is joined closely together through every joint of the rich supply and knit together, interwoven, through the operation in the measure of each one part—v. 16:
 - 1. When we grow into the Head, we can produce out from the Head many functions for the building up of His Body.
 - 2. Every member of the Body of Christ has a measure through the growth in life and can function for the growth and building up of the Body of Christ.
- C. The joints supplying and the parts functioning cause the growth of the Body unto the building up of the Body itself in the divine love—v. 16:
 - 1. All the Body causes the growth of the Body—cf. 1 Cor. 14:4b, 31.
 - 2. 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—Eph. 3:17a:
 - a. When Christ enters into the saints and lives within them, the Christ within the saints becomes the church—Col. 3:10-11.
 - b. The Body of Christ grows by the growth of Christ within us and is built up this way—1:18; 2:19.
 - 3. The love in which the Body builds itself up is the love that is the very element, the inner substance, of God; it 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, 11, 16, 19; Rom. 5:5; 8:39:
 - a. It is in the condition and atmosphere of such a divine love that we are saturated with God to be holy and without blemish before Him—Eph. 1:4.
 - b. It is in such a divine love, realized and experienced by us in a practical way, that we are rooted for growth and grounded for building—3:17.
 - c. It is in such a divine love that we bear one another for the oneness of the Body—4:2-4.
 - d. It is in such a divine love that we hold to truth, that is, to Christ with His Body—v. 15.
 - e. It is in such a divine love that we need to walk—to live, act, and have our being—as the beloved children of God, who are God-men, born of God, possessing the life and nature of God, and belonging to the species of God, to be imitators of God—5:1-2.
- D. “The direct building of the organic Body of Christ is by the Body itself. The Body is built directly by all the members of Christ functioning, each in his own measure, mainly in prophesying—speaking for the Lord...This direct building by all the members of Christ takes place through the perfecting work of all the gifted persons under the bountiful supply of the divine element of the ascended Christ in His ascension. We need to practice [this] so that we can see the reality of such an organic building on this earth” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1988*, vol. 4, “Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ,” pp. 388-389).