

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

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

**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:
 - 1. They are the Father's children, having the Father's divine life and divine nature.
 - 2. Hence, they can be perfect as their heavenly Father is.
 - 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.
 - 3. We become God's regenerated children by the coming of the Spirit of God into our spirit to regenerate us (Rom. 8:16; John 3:6) and to make our spirit the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22); if we walk according to our regenerated human spirit indwelt by and mingled with the divine Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), we are living by God's life to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law (Rom. 8:4).
 - 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.
 - 3. The virtue of this divine nature carries us into God's glory (2 Pet. 1:3), into the full expression of the Triune God; we receive the divine life by believing, and we continually enjoy the divine nature, which is the substance of the divine life; the more we enjoy the divine nature, the more we have His virtue, and the more we are brought into His glory.
 - 4. Our enjoyment of the divine nature is both for the present and for eternity—Rev. 22:1-2.
 - 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.
- E. Before God gave Moses the law, He spent time to infuse Moses with Himself—Exo. 24:16-18:
1. God's intention is to infuse us with Himself so that He will have a way to do everything in us and for us to fulfill the commandments He gives to us.
 2. The emphasis in the Bible is that we need God to come into us and do everything in us and for us—Phil. 2:12-13.
 3. The requirements of the law in the Old Testament were given to prove that man is not able, and the requirements of the commandments in the New Testament were given to prove that God is able; outside of us He gives us many commandments, but inside of us He is keeping all these commandments for us—Heb. 13:21.

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. Such a Christian perfection is the issue of the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God into the believers—the God-men:
 1. This dispensing is by God the Father as the source, the origin—Matt. 5:48; Rev. 21:18b and footnote 3, 21b.
 2. This dispensing is with God the Son as the element—2 Cor. 13:3, 5, 9, 11; Rev. 21:21a and footnote 1, first paragraph.
 3. This dispensing is through God the Spirit as the fellowship—2 Cor. 13:9, 11, 14; Rev. 21:18, 21 and footnote 1, second paragraph.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.