

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Fall Term of 2023**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE TRUTH IN PAUL'S EPISTLES—
FIRST CORINTHIANS**

Message Six

Being God's Fellow Workers for the Church as God's Cultivated Land and God's Building

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3:6-7, 9, 12, 16-17; 15:58; 16:10

- I. "We are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building"—1 Cor. 3:9; John 5:17; 2 Cor. 6:1a:**
- A. Corporately, we as the church of God have Christ as the seed of life planted in us; Christ must grow in us and produce out of us not fruit but the precious materials of gold, silver, and precious stones for the building of God's habitation on earth.
 - B. Our growth in life builds up the church as the Body of Christ, and this takes place by the growth of Christ as the divine seed of life within us—1 John 3:9; 1 Pet. 1:23; Col. 2:19; Eph. 2:21; 4:15-16:
 - 1. God causes the growth of the church through the feeding on the guileless milk and the solid food of the word by the members of Christ—1 Cor. 3:2; 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14; John 5:39-40; Matt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16.
 - 2. God causes the growth of the church through the watering on the Body of Christ by its gifted members—1 Cor. 3:6; John 7:37-39.
 - C. As God's cultivated land with planting, watering, and growing, the church should produce plants, but the proper materials for the building of the church are gold, silver, and precious stones, which imply transformation; we need not only to grow in life but also to be transformed in life—1 Cor. 3:6-7, 9, 12a; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2:
 - 1. To be transformed is to have the pneumatic Christ, Christ in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit, dispensed and wrought into our soul to replace what we are in the natural life so that Christ may increase and our natural life may decrease—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Eph. 3:17a.
 - 2. Transformation is not outward correction or adjustment but the metabolic function of the life of God in us by the addition of the element of the divine life of Christ into our being so that we may express the image of Christ outwardly.
 - 3. The process of transformation is both organic and metabolic; it is organic because it is related to life, and it is metabolic because it is related to a process in which old elements are discharged and new elements are added—Rom. 5:10:
 - a. In order to keep ourselves in the process of being transformed, we need to enjoy the Lord's continual shepherding until the end of our days—"the God who has shepherded me all my life to this day"—Gen. 48:15b; Psa. 23:1; 1 Pet. 2:25; Rev. 3:7-8.
 - b. In order to keep ourselves in the process of being transformed, we need to behold God's face (Gen. 32:30—Peniel; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6-7), seek His face (Psa. 27:8, 4), and enjoy His face as our serving supply (Exo. 25:30; 33:11a), doing everything in the face, the person, of Christ for our transformation from glory to glory (2 Cor. 2:10; 3:18).
 - D. Gold, silver, and precious stones are related to the Triune God—to the Father's nature, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's transforming work; they signify the various experiences of Christ

in the virtues and attributes of the Triune God, and they are the products of our enjoyment of Christ—1 Cor. 3:12a; 15:45b; 6:17.

- E. We are becoming gold, silver, and precious stones for God's building; in order to build with these materials, we ourselves must be constituted with them; we need to be constituted with the Father's nature, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's transformation—3:12.
- F. We also need to learn to coordinate with the transforming Spirit to perfect the saints by ministering the Triune God as gold, silver, and precious stones to them for their transformation by the Triune God's attributes being wrought into them to become their virtues; this is portrayed in Song of Songs 1:10b-11:
 - 1. After the lovers of Christ enter into the church life, they begin to be transformed by the remaking of the Spirit—vv. 9-16a; 2:1-2.
 - 2. In this transforming work there is the need of the coordination of some "transformers"—the perfecting ones who help the seekers to know God in His nature and to experience Christ—1:11; Eph. 4:11-12.

II. For our growth in life and transformation in life, we must cooperate with the indwelling Christ by dealing with our heart; the heart is the conglomerate of man's inward parts, man's chief representative, his acting agent:

- A. Our heart is a composition of all the parts of our soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will (Matt. 9:4; Heb. 4:12; John 14:1; 16:22; Acts 11:23)—plus one part of our spirit—the conscience (Heb. 10:22; 1 John 3:20).
- B. Our heart with its condition before God is organically, intrinsically, and inseparably related to the condition of our spirit, soul, and body before God:
 - 1. The exercise of the spirit works only when our heart is active; if man's heart is indifferent, the spirit is imprisoned within and is unable to show forth its capability—Matt. 5:3, 8; Psa. 78:8; Eph. 3:16-17; Rev. 3:14-22; Deut. 4:25 and footnote 1.
 - 2. The soul is the person himself, but the heart is the person in action; the heart is the acting agent, the acting commissioner, of our entire being.
 - 3. The activities and movements of our physical body depend on our physical heart; in like manner, our daily living, the way we act and behave, depends on what kind of psychological heart we have.
- C. The heart is the entrance and exit of life, the "switch" of life; if the heart is not right, life in the spirit is hindered, and the law of life cannot work freely and without obstruction to reach every part of our being; though life has great power, this great power is controlled by our small heart—Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:33-37; cf. Ezek. 36:26-27.

III. We need to cooperate with the Lord for our growth and transformation in life by dealing with our heart so that it can be kept with the four following characteristics:

- A. God wants our heart to be soft:
 - 1. When God deals with our heart, He takes away the heart of stone out of our flesh and gives us a heart of flesh, a soft heart—v. 26.
 - 2. To be soft means that our heart is submissive and yielding toward the Lord, not stiff-necked and rebellious—cf. Exo. 32:9.
 - 3. A soft heart is the good earth in which Christ can freely grow; it is a heart that is not hardened by worldly traffic, that is without self-seeking, and that is without the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches—Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23.
 - 4. God softens our heart by using His love to move us; if love cannot move us, He uses His hand through the environment to discipline us until our heart is softened—2 Cor. 5:14; 4:16-18; Heb. 12:6-7; cf. Jer. 48:11.
- B. God wants our heart to be pure:
 - 1. A pure heart is a heart that loves God and wants God; besides God, it has no other love, inclination, or desire—Psa. 73:25; cf. Jer. 32:39.

2. Our heart should be single for God so that we are fearful of nothing except offending Him and losing His presence—Psa. 86:11; Isa. 11:1-2.
3. To be pure in heart is to have the single goal of accomplishing God’s will for God’s glory (Matt. 5:8); our goal should be the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ (Phil. 3:7-14).
4. We must pursue Christ “with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”—2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:5; Psa. 73:1.

C. God wants our heart to be loving:

1. A loving heart is a heart in which the emotion loves God, wants God, thirsts after God, and yearns for God, having a personal, affectionate, private, and spiritual relationship with the Lord—42:1-2; S. S. 1:1-4.
2. We must turn our heart back to the Lord again and again and have it continually renewed so that we may have a new and fresh love toward the Lord—2 Cor. 3:16; *Hymns*, #546 and #547.
3. All spiritual experiences start with love in the heart; if we do not love the Lord, it is impossible to receive any kind of spiritual experience—Eph. 6:24; Rev. 2:4-5.
4. Our love for the Lord qualifies, perfects, and equips us to speak for the Lord with His authority; if we love the Lord to the uttermost, we will be filled and overflowing with Him—John 21:15-17; Matt. 26:6-13; 28:18-20.

D. God wants our heart to be at peace:

1. A heart at peace is a heart in which the conscience is without offense, condemnation, or reproach—Acts 24:16; 1 John 3:19-21; Heb. 10:22.
2. If we confess our sins in the light of God’s presence, we receive His forgiveness and His cleansing so that we may enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with God with a good and pure conscience—1 John 1:7, 9; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9.
3. The result of practicing fellowship with God in prayer is that we enjoy the peace of God, which is actually God as peace mounting guard over our hearts and thoughts in Christ, keeping us calm and tranquil—Phil. 4:6-7.
4. We need to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in our hearts by forgiving one another to put on the one new man—Col. 3:13-15.

IV. Keeping our heart in a condition of being soft, pure, loving, and at peace saves us from building with the worthless materials of wood (the nature of the natural man), grass (the fallen man, the man of the flesh), and stubble (lifelessness); to build with these materials is to commit the iniquity of the sanctuary; it is to mar the church as God’s temple, God’s building—Num. 18:1; 1 Cor. 3:12b, 16-17:

- A. There are sins committed in our daily life, but a worker of the Lord can commit additional kinds of sins; they are sins in God’s work; sinning in the work means offending God in His holiness, glory, and sovereignty; in God’s work everything that is incompatible with God’s will is a sin and is an iniquity of the sanctuary.
- B. There are three very important considerations in God’s work that we should never forget; if we fail in any of these three points, we have committed an iniquity against the sanctuary:
 1. The initiation of God’s work must be according to His will; no work can be initiated by ourselves—Rom. 11:36.
 2. The advance of God’s work must be according to His power; no work can be carried out by our own strength—Acts 1:8; Zech. 4:6; Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:1.
 3. The result of God’s work must be for His glory; no work should result in our own glory—John 7:18; 17:4; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Isa. 43:7; 2 Cor. 4:5.

V. We need to continually aspire to be God’s fellow workers who are “working the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 16:10) and “abounding in the work of the Lord” (15:58) by allowing Christ to work Himself into us (Eph. 3:17a) so that He may grow in us (Col. 2:19), transform us (2 Cor. 3:18), and flow out of us (John 7:37-38) to work Himself into others for the church as God’s cultivated land, God’s building (1 Cor. 3:9).