Message Three

Life—Growth, Development, Maturity, and Fruit

Scripture Reading: Mark 4:26-29; 2 Pet. 1:5-7; Heb. 6:1; Gal. 5:22-23; John 15:16

I. The Lord's recovery is a recovery of the truth and of life—John 18:37b; 10:10b:

A. The decline of Christianity is due to the fact that it has lost both the truth and the life (2 Tim. 2:25; 1:10); the loss of truth and life has produced many human methods and worldly organizations:

1. Whereas Christianity relies on organization and human work, the church relies solely on the light of the truth for the enjoyment of the Lord's life—Titus 1:1-2; 1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15; 6:19.
2. The entire content of the church must be the growth of Christ in us as truth and life—John 14:6.

B. Both the truth and the life are Christ Himself, but they are two different aspects of what He is—8:32, 36; 14:6; 11:25:

1. The truth is the outward definition and explanation, and life is the inward and intrinsic content.
2. Christ is in us as our life (Col. 3:4), but the experience of life needs an explanation; this explanation is the truth.

C. The experience of the Lord as life is contained in the Lord as the truth—John 14:6; 11:25:

1. In order to experience the Lord as life, we must know the truth—8:32, 36.
2. If we are not clear about the truth and do not understand or know the truth, we will have no way to enjoy the Lord as our life—Col. 1:5; 3:4.
3. All experienced Christians realize that we cannot enjoy Christ as life if we do not know the Bible or understand the truth in the Bible—John 17:17, 3.

II. If we would have the proper knowledge of life, we need to know what the growth of life is:

A. The growth of life is not the improvement of behavior, the expression of piety, zealous serving, the increase of knowledge, to abound in gifts, or the increase of power.

B. The growth of life is the increase of the element of God (Col. 2:19), the increase of the stature of Christ (Eph. 3:17a; 4:13), the expanding of the ground of the Holy Spirit (5:18), the decrease of the human element, the breaking of the natural life, and the subduing of every part of our soul (2 Tim. 1:7).

III. The Lord's recovery is not a movement; the recovery is Christ Himself as the seed of life sown into our being—Matt. 13:3-4a, 19:

A. The kingdom of God is the Triune God in His incarnation sown into His chosen people to grow and develop in them into a kingdom—Mark 4:26-29.

B. The kingdom of God is produced by the multiplication of the seed—v. 26:

1. The sower sows the seed, the seed grows and multiplies, and eventually the multiplication of the seed becomes the constituent of the kingdom.

2. The kingdom is not built by work but by the multiplication of the seed of life.

C. The kingdom is the enlargement of Christ, the multiplication of Christ as the seed sown into us—Luke 17:20-21; 8:5-8:
   1. The sower Himself is the seed, and the multiplication of the seed is the multiplication of the sower.
   2. Jesus Christ is the seed of the kingdom of God, and this seed has been sown into those who believe in Him; now this seed is growing and developing within the believers—Mark 4:26-29.

IV. In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we have the development of the seed of the kingdom from faith to love:

A. Our faith needs to be exercised that the virtue of the divine life may be developed to reach its maturity—v. 5.

B. Faith may be compared to a seed:
   1. In 1 Peter 1:23 the seed is the word with Christ in it as life.
   2. In 2 Peter 1 this seed becomes our faith, which is "faith equally precious" (v. 1); this faith is one with Christ as the seed.

C. The development from faith to love includes virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, and godliness—vv. 5-6.

D. Eventually, we have the full development and maturity from the seed of faith, through the roots of virtue and knowledge, the trunk of self-control, and the branches of endurance and godliness, to the blossom and fruit of brotherly love and love—v. 7.

V. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life, whereas to be matured is to be filled with the divine life that changes us—Heb. 6:1:

A. The last stage of transformation is maturity, the fullness of life:
   1. God's eternal purpose can be accomplished only through our transformation and maturity—Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:28; 2:19; Eph. 4:13.
   2. Maturity is a matter of having the divine life imparted into us again and again until we have the fullness of life—John 10:10b; 2 Cor. 5:4b.

B. The fullness of life is blessing, which is the overflow of life into others—Gen. 47:7, 10; 49:28; 1 John 5:16.

C. God will sovereignly use persons, things, and events to empty us of everything that has filled us and to take away every preoccupation so that we may have an increased capacity to be filled with God—Rom. 8:28; Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:6:
   1. A mature believer has learned that God is merciful and all-sufficient to meet his needs in every kind of situation—Gen. 43:14; 17:1; Phil. 1:19-21a; 4:11-12.
   2. The trust and rest of a mature believer are altogether in the mercy of his all-sufficient God, no longer in himself or in his ability—Rom. 9:16.

VI. Fruit denotes both expression and multiplication; we need two kinds of fruit out of the divine life—the fruit of Christian virtues and the fruit of persons regenerated with the divine life—Gal. 5:22-23; John 15:16.

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