

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2009**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE INTRINSIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH
AS THE TEMPLE OF GOD—THE GOAL OF GOD’S ETERNAL ECONOMY**

Message Fourteen

**The Most Excellent Way and the Excelling Gift
for God’s Unique Work to Build Up the Church as the Temple of God**

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3:6-17; 8:1, 3; 12:31b—13:13; 14:4b, 12, 26, 31

- I. God’s unique work in the universe is to build up the church as the temple of God by building Himself in Christ into His chosen people—Eph. 3:16-21:**
- A. The goal of our work is to minister Christ into others so that the Triune God may build Himself into their inner being—1 Tim. 4:6-7; 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 3:6-17.
 - B. What is crucial with our building work is “of what sort it is”—vv. 12-13.
- II. Love is the most excellent way to build up the church as the temple of God—12:31b—13:13:**
- A. The greatest revelation of the Bible is that God is love—Matt. 26:13; 1 John 3:1-2:
 - 1. Christ, as the Son of Man coming to redeem us from sin, is God as love cherishing us for our judicial redemption—1 Tim. 1:15.
 - 2. Christ, as the Son of God coming to impart the divine life into us abundantly, is God as love nourishing us for our organic salvation—John 10:10b; Rom. 5:10.
 - B. The love of God is God Himself; love is the inward essence of God and the heart of God—1 John 4:8, 16; 1 Cor. 3:12a.
 - C. “I drew them with cords of a man, / With bands of love”—Hosea 11:4:
 - 1. The phrase *with cords of a man, with bands of love* indicates that God loves us with His divine love not on the level of divinity but on the level of humanity; God’s love is divine, but it reaches us in the cords of a man, that is, through Christ’s humanity.
 - 2. The cords through which God draws us include Christ’s incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; it is by all these steps of Christ in His humanity that God’s love in His salvation reaches us—Rom. 5:8.
 - 3. Apart from Christ, God’s everlasting, unchanging, subduing love could not be prevailing in relation to us; God’s unchanging love is prevailing because it is a love in Christ, with Christ, by Christ, and for Christ—vv. 5, 8; 8:35-39.
 - D. We must be persons who are flooded with and carried away by the love of Christ; the divine love should be like the rushing tide of great waters toward us, impelling us to love Him and to live to Him beyond our own control—2 Cor. 5:14-15:
 - 1. Our loving God makes us those who are blessed of God to share the divine blessings that He has ordained and prepared for us (Christ as the depths of God), which are beyond our apprehension—1 Cor. 2:9-10.
 - 2. Our not loving the Lord makes us those who are accursed, set apart to a curse—16:22.

- E. The end, the result, the issue, of the charge for us to remain in and be aimed at the healthy teaching of God's economy is "love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith"—1 Tim. 1:3-6; cf. 6:3-4.
- F. To be partakers of the divine nature is to be enjoyers of love as the nature of God's essence, and we can enjoy God as love in our fellowship with Him—1 John 1:2-3:
 - 1. If we remain in the divine fellowship to enjoy what God is as love in His essence, we will be bathed in the love of God (2 Cor. 13:14); we will not only become a man of love, but we will become love itself.
 - 2. This love should saturate us until it becomes the love with which we love the brothers; the Lord desires a church of such brotherly love—Rev. 3:7a.
- G. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1)—the outward, objective knowledge that puffs up comes from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the source of death; the love that is of and in the Spirit (Rom. 15:30; Col. 1:8) comes from the tree of life, the source of life—Gen. 2:9.
- H. "If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him"—1 Cor. 8:3:
 - 1. To be known by God is to be owned and possessed by Him as His treasure; the one who is known by God becomes God's joy, entertainment, and pleasure—cf. Col. 1:10.
 - 2. To say that God does not know you means that He does not approve of your way (Matt. 7:22-23); the Lord told Balaam, "I am here, having come out as an adversary, because your way was unrestrained before Me" (Num. 22:32):
 - a. If we seek the Lord's will but are actually inclined to carry out our own desires, we may deceive ourselves, even as Balaam deceived himself—v. 8.
 - b. We should seek the Lord's will without having any other desire except to know His will and to do it—31:16; Jude 11.
- I. "Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not puffed up; it does not behave unbecomingly and does not seek its own things; it is not provoked and does not take account of evil; it does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; it covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never falls away"—1 Cor. 13:4-8a.
- J. The Body of Christ builds itself up in love—Eph. 4:16; 1:4-5; 6:23-24; cf. Gal. 5:25-26:
 - 1. God first loved us in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers—1 John 4:18-21.
 - 2. The commandment regarding brotherly love is both old and new; old, because the believers had it from the beginning of their Christian life; new, because in their Christian walk it dawns with new light and shines with new enlightenment and fresh power again and again—2:7-8; 3:11, 23; John 13:34.
 - 3. Loving one another is a sign that we belong to Christ—vv. 34-35.
 - 4. Loving to be first in the church is versus loving all the brothers with the Lord as our first love—3 John 9; Rev. 2:4; Col. 1:18b.
 - 5. Just as the Lord Jesus laid down His soul-life so that we might have the divine life, we need to lose our soul-life and deny the self to love the brothers and minister life to them in the practice of the Body life—1 John 3:16; John 10:11, 17-18; 15:13; Eph. 4:29—5:2; 2 Cor. 12:15; Rom. 12:9-13.
 - 6. We need to lose our soul-life by not loving the world with its pleasures; instead, taking in God and expressing God as love in the church life of brotherly love should be our joy, amusement, entertainment, and happiness—1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 16:25-26; Psa. 36:8-9; 43:4; cf. 2 Tim. 3:4.
 - 7. Brotherly love in the church life is expressed practically in our caring for the necessities of the needy saints without any self-serving purpose or outward self-display;

in the sharing of material things with the needy saints, the grace of the Lord's life with His love flows among the members of the Body of Christ and is infused into them—1 John 3:17-18; Matt. 6:1-4; Rom. 12:13; 2 Cor. 8:1-8.

8. Paul ends 1 Corinthians with a word of the assurance of love; this is not a natural love but the love in Christ, the love of God that becomes ours through the grace of Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit—16:24; 2 Cor. 13:14.

III. Prophesying is the excelling gift to build up the church as the temple of God— Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 14:1, 4b, 12:

- A. When we love the Lord to the uttermost and are filled with God as love, He will overflow from within us into others by our prophesying (speaking forth God) to build up the church—John 21:15, 17; 1 Cor. 14:4b:
 1. The more we love the Lord, the more we are qualified, perfected, and equipped to speak for the Lord with a service that is fragrant, sweet, fresh, and valuable to Him—John 12:3; 2 Cor. 2:15; Eph. 5:2; Rom. 7:6; 1 Cor. 3:12a; S. S. 4:16.
 2. If we are not filled with God as love, our speaking will be like “sounding brass or a clanging cymbal,” giving sounds without life instead of ministering the Spirit who gives life—1 Cor. 13:1; 2 Cor. 3:6; John 3:34; 6:63.
 3. Our love for the Lord is the factor, element, and essence of our power and authority in speaking for the Lord.
- B. Prophesying is to speak to men building up for the church, encouragement for the believers, and consolation for the saints' spiritual welfare—1 Cor. 14:3; cf. 3:12.
- C. God's desire is for all of His saints to prophesy—Num. 11:29; 1 Cor. 14:31:
 1. We are enabled to prophesy by learning in the Word of God, in the growth of life, and in our contact with God—v. 31; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Gal. 5:25; Matt. 11:28-30.
 2. We are enabled to prophesy by being perfected by the prophets—Eph. 4:11-12.
 3. We are enabled to prophesy by practicing to speak in all the meetings and by telling people about Christ—1 Cor. 14:26; Phil. 2:16a; 2 Tim. 4:2a, 5.
- D. In order to practice 1 Corinthians 14, there is the need for the highest meetings of the church, meetings in which “each one has”—v. 26:
 1. The proper church meeting is a “one another” meeting, a “round table” meeting, in which we speak to one another (Eph. 5:19), teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16), consider one another and exhort one another (Heb. 10:24-25), and listen to one another (1 Thes. 5:20).
 2. Before coming to the meeting, we should prepare ourselves for the meeting through our experience of the Lord or through our enjoyment of His word and fellowship with Him in prayer.
- E. We must speak with the elements of prophesying—constitution with the word of God, inspiration by the Spirit of God, and revelation in the light of God:
 1. We must possess a knowledge of the Word of God—the human element of learning—2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ezek. 3:1-4.
 2. We must have the instant inspiration of the Holy Spirit—the divine element of inspiration—1 Cor. 14:32, 37a; 1 John 1:6-7; Rom. 8:4.
 3. We must have a vision concerning God's interest and economy through the enlightening of the divine light—Eph. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:11-12.
- F. Thus, we speak what we see with the words of this life by the exercise of our spirit with the inspiration of the Spirit and God's cheering love to cheer God and man for the building up of the church as the temple of God—Acts 5:20; Judg. 9:12-13.