

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND GOD'S DISPENSING FOR GOD'S ECONOMY

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

Ministering Life for the Body

Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:14-17; John 15:4-5, 7; Rom. 12:4-5

I. In 1 John 5:14-17 there is the indication not only that we have eternal life and enjoy it but also that we can minister this life to other members of the Body:

- A. Verses 14 through 17 show us that the eternal life within us can overcome death both in ourselves and in other members of the church.
- B. Verse 16 is the only reference in the Bible to ministering life to someone:
 - 1. To minister life is to impart life.
 - 2. When we have the surplus of life, we can minister from this supply to others—v. 16.
- C. Verse 14 speaks of prayer in the fellowship of eternal life:
 - 1. We should ask according to God's will, not according to our way, desire, or preference.
 - 2. The prayer that is according to God's will indicates that the praying one is abiding in the fellowship of the divine life and is also abiding in the Lord Himself, and thus he is truly one with the Lord—John 15:4-5.
 - 3. The knowing in 1 John 5:15 is based on the fact that after receiving the divine life, we abide in the Lord and are one with Him in our praying to God in His name—John 15:7, 16; 16:23-24.
 - 4. In 1 John 5:16 *he shall ask* and *he will give life* refer to the same person, that is, to the one who sees his brother sinning and asks concerning him:
 - a. Such an asker, who is abiding in the Lord, who is one with the Lord, and who is asking in one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17), becomes the means, the channel, by which God's life-giving Spirit can give life to the ones for whom he is asking.
 - b. This is a matter of ministering life in the fellowship of the divine life.
 - 5. The vital point is that if we would pray for a brother according to what is described in 1 John 5:16, we need to be one with the Lord—John 15:7.
- D. The ministry of life is to minister as life the Christ whom we have experienced—2 Cor. 1:3-4:
 - 1. The ministry comes out by the working of the cross; it is by the way of the cross that we have the riches of Christ as life to minister to others—4:12.
 - 2. How much life and how much reality of the riches of Christ we can minister depends upon how much revelation we have received and how much we have suffered for what has been revealed to us—Eph. 3:8.

II. If we would minister life, we need to know, experience, and gain God as the God of resurrection—Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 1:9; John 11:25:

- A. God is working through the cross to terminate us, to bring us to an end, so that we will no longer trust in ourselves but in the God of resurrection—2 Cor. 1:9.
- B. When the God of resurrection works in us, His life and nature are wrought into us—4:16.
- C. The killing of the cross results in the manifestation of resurrection life—vv. 10-12:

1. The putting to death of Jesus destroys the natural man, the outer man, and the flesh, with the result that the inner man is given the opportunity to develop and be renewed to live out the resurrection life—v. 16.
 2. All the work that the Lord is doing on us is to destroy our outer, natural man so that we can live out the life of Christ from within us; this is the deepest thought in the New Testament concerning the life of a Christian—John 12:24-26; Phil. 1:21a.
 3. Remaining in the death of Christ and being conformed to His death is a profound principle of the Christian life—Rom. 6:4-5; Phil. 3:10:
 - a. When we remain in the death of Christ, we experience the power of Christ's resurrection—vv. 10-11; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:14.
 - b. The more we die with Christ in this way, the more His resurrection power will be manifested in us and the more we will be able to minister life to the Body of Christ—John 11:25.
 4. Our natural strength and ability need to be dealt with by the cross so that they may become useful in resurrection for the ministry of life—Phil. 3:3.
- D. The budding, blossoming, fruit-yielding rod signifies the resurrection life of Christ for us to minister life to the Body—Num. 17:8.

III. We need to know the Body in life—1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 2:19; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5:

- A. The Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in us; this life mingles with us to become the Body of Christ—1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 1:18; 2:19:
 1. The life in us is not a *member* life—it is a *Body* life.
 2. We are all one in this life; this oneness in life is the mystical Body of Christ—Eph. 5:30.
- B. Knowing the Body in life is the result of our experience of life and spiritual growth—1 John 2:12-14:
 1. In order to know the Body and touch the reality of the Body, we must progress in the experience of life and the growth of life—1 Cor. 3:1-2; 14:20.
 2. Only after we have reached the fourth stage in the spiritual life can we know the mystery of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12-13, 15-16.
 3. In order to know the Body and live in the Body, we need to deal with the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Matt. 16:24:
 - a. If we still live according to the flesh and in ourselves and serve in our natural ability, the life of the Body, which is Christ Himself in us, cannot be manifested, and we cannot know the Body.
 - b. Only when the flesh has been dealt with, the self has been abandoned, and the natural constitution has been broken can we touch the reality of the Body—1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:4-6.
- C. Knowing the Body is a dealing with individualism; all those who do not know the Body are individualists—1 Cor. 12:14-22.
- D. The proofs that we know the Body are that we are unable to be individualistic, we can discern those who are not in the Body, and we recognize the authority of Christ as the Head revealed in the order of the Body—v. 18.

IV. We need to know the Body in practice—vv. 20, 27; 15:58:

- A. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a particular locality—1:2; 10:32b; 12:12-13, 20, 27:

1. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many churches—the local expression of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1.
 2. The unique Body of Christ is expressed as the local churches—Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11.
 3. Every local church is part of the unique, universal Body of Christ, a local expression of the Body—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.
 4. If we know the Body, in our consideration the Body will be first, and the local churches will be second—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4, 16.
- B. In the Lord's recovery there is only one work—the work of the Body; what we are doing today is not our personal work but the work of the economy of God—the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:4, 12, 16.
- V. According to the teaching of the Bible and our spiritual experience, there is something called the consciousness of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:**
- A. The consciousness of the Body of Christ comes from the enjoyment of Christ—Col. 2:16-19:
1. The dear, precious One we enjoy as our food, drink, and breath is the Head of the Body—1 Cor. 10:3-4; John 20:22; Col. 1:18; 2:19.
 2. What we enjoy is actually something of Christ as the Head; thus, when we enjoy Christ, that causes Him to be our Head subjectively and experientially—Eph. 3:8, 17; 4:15.
 3. When we enjoy Christ, He, the Head, causes us to become conscious of the Body—Col. 2:19.
- B. The consciousness of the Body of Christ is the sense of Christ's life within us—3:4, 15; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5:
1. The Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in each of us, mingled with us—Col. 3:4; 2:19.
 2. Concerning the consciousness of the Body of Christ, we need to begin with the sense of the divine life within us—Rom. 8:6.
- C. The Body of Christ is universal, the life within us is universal, and the sense of the Body is universal—1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:
1. Once the divine life and the Spirit enter into us, we should have a universal sense—the consciousness of the Body—Rom. 8:2, 10-11; 12:4-5, 15.
 2. The sense of the Body is a universal matter, but this sense has been restricted in us because of our own feelings and views—Prov. 14:10; 2 Cor. 6:11-13.
 3. The more we experience the Lord's breaking and are delivered from ourselves, the more we will discover that the sense of the Body is universal—11:28-29.
 4. If we have the sense of the Body, when others suffer or are blessed, we will identify with them and feel the same hardship or blessing.
- D. As members of the Body of Christ, we need to have the consciousness of the Body and a feeling of the Body—Rom. 12:15; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:
1. To live the Body life, we need to be conscious of the Body—1 Cor. 12:26-27.
 2. If we have the consciousness of the Body of Christ and care for the Body, we will take the Body as the rule in our thoughts and actions—Eph. 4:15-16.