

Message Four

Growing Christ as the Precious Materials for God's Building

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3:1-17

- I. God's goal is to have a farm that will grow materials for the building up of His holy temple as His dwelling place—3:6-7, 9, 12, 16-17.**
- II. The believers, who have been regenerated in Christ with God's life, are God's cultivated land, a farm in God's new creation to grow Christ that precious materials may be produced for God's building—cf. 4:15.**
- III. Paul regarded all the believers in Christ as plants which need growth—3:6-7:**
 - A. In verse 1 Paul refers to the believers at Corinth as infants in Christ; their need was to grow in life to maturity, to be full-grown—2:6; Col. 1:28.
 - B. The reason for division and lack of building is that the believers remain in their natural life and natural being—1 Cor. 1:12-13; 3:3-4; 2:14.
 - C. The Corinthians, who were still infants with respect to the initial gifts, desperately needed to grow—3:2; 1:7:
 1. The Corinthians exhibited three signs of infancy:
 - a. Being unable to receive solid food but only milk—3:2.
 - b. Being full of jealousy and strife and walking according to man—1:11; 3:3.
 - c. Exalting spiritual giants to cause divisions—1:12; 3:4.
 2. The initial gifts—the divine life and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:23; Acts 2:38; Heb. 6:4)—are the seed sown into us (Mark 4:26); now these gifts need to be developed and cultivated:
 - a. In 1 Corinthians Paul is seeking to develop and cultivate the initial gifts received by the believers.
 - b. What we need in the Lord's recovery, and what the Lord is seeking among us, is more growth in life, more development of the initial gifts.
 - D. The life with which the believers grow in the church is the crucified and resurrected Christ—1 Cor. 2:2; Col. 3:4.
 - E. The growth in life is caused by God; as far as the growth in life is concerned, all the ministers of Christ are nothing, and God is everything—1 Cor. 3:6-7.
 - F. God's desire is that our heart would be open to Him, soft toward Him, and longing for Him, and that we would draw near to Him, eat Him, drink Him, enjoy Him, and digest Him that daily we would grow with the growth of God—10:3-4; Col. 2:19.
- IV. The Lord Jesus came as a Sower to sow God into us; we are the earth, the cultivated land, the farm, to grow Christ—Mark 4:3-4, 14; 1 Cor. 3:9:**
 - A. God's farm grows Christ, and Christ is for the building (v. 11); as Christians, we are growing Christ.
 - B. When we grow properly, Christ will be produced in us; the issue of our growth will be Christ—Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19; Gal. 4:19.

- C. The church is built with the Christ we experience and who is even the produce grown by us—1 Cor. 3:12:
 1. For the building up of the church, we must have the Christ who is produced through our growth in life.
 2. There can be no building without the growing of Christ as the material for God's building; as God's farm, we must grow in life to produce Christ.

V. The church is God's farm which produces gold, silver, and precious stones—vv. 9, 12:

- A. The church, the temple of God, must be built with gold, silver, and precious stones produced from Christ's growing in us—vv. 16-17.
- B. First we have the growth on God's farm; then the plants on this farm become the precious materials for God's building—vv. 6-7, 12.
- C. Gold, silver, and precious stones signify the various experiences of Christ in the virtues and attributes of the Triune God; these precious materials are the products of our enjoyment of Christ—v. 12; 15:45b; 6:17.
- D. The precious materials for God's building are related to the Triune God—to the Father's nature, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's transforming work—2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- E. We are becoming gold, silver, and precious stones for God's building—1 Cor. 3:12:
 1. In God the Father, we have His life and nature as the gold; in God the Son, we have His redemption as the silver; and in God the Spirit, we have transformation as the precious stones.
 2. 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. We need the growth in the nature of God the Father, the redemption of God the Son, and the transformation of God the Spirit; this growth makes us gold, silver, and precious stones for God's building—vv. 12, 16-17.
 4. Through digestion, assimilation, and metabolism, Christ becomes us, and we become Him; then we become the precious materials for God's building—Eph. 3:17; Gal. 4:19.

VI. God's eternal goal is the building—the temple built with precious materials on Christ as the unique foundation—1 Cor. 3:11-12, 16-17:

- A. The growth in the divine life produces precious materials for the building of God's habitation; this habitation, the church, is the increase, the enlargement, of the unlimited Christ—Eph. 2:21-22; John 3:29-34.
- B. First we have the farm for the growth in life; then we have the building for God's eternal purpose—1 Cor. 3:9; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20-22; 4:16.
- C. The actual building of the church as the house of God is by the growth in life of the believers—1 Cor. 3:6-7, 16-17; Eph. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:2-5:
 1. True building is the growth in life; the extent to which we have been built up is the extent to which we have grown.
 2. In order to have the genuine building, we need to grow by having ourselves reduced and by having Christ increased within us—Matt. 16:24; Eph. 3:17.

