

Message Nine

**The Most Excellent Way for the Building Up of the Church**

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 8:1; 12:31b—14:1; 16:24

**I. Love is the most excellent way for the building up of the church, and prophesying is the excelling gift for the building up of the church—1 Cor. 8:1; 12:31b—14:1, 4b, 12:**

- A. Paul's ultimate concern is the building up of the church, which is the primary thing in God's economy—Matt. 16:18.
- B. To take the way of love and to prophesy (to speak the Lord into others) are to enter into the contents of God's entire New Testament economy, which is Christ as the Son of Man cherishing us and as the Son of God nourishing us—Eph. 5:29.

**II. Love is the most excellent way to use the gifts, the way to be in the Body, and the way to be for the Body—1 Cor. 12:31b—13:13:**

- A. God is love; we love because He first loved us—1 John 4:8, 19.
- B. God's predestination of us unto the divine sonship was motivated by the divine love—Eph. 1:4-5.
- C. God's giving of His only begotten Son to us that we may be saved from perdition judicially through His death and have the eternal life organically in His resurrection was motivated by the divine love—John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10.
- D. God's love motivates us, His children, to love our enemies that we may be perfect as He is; He loves the fallen human race, who became His enemies, by causing His sun (signifying Christ) to rise on the evil and the good indiscriminately and by sending rain (signifying the Spirit) on the just and the unjust equally; thus, we may become the sons of the heavenly Father who are sanctified from the tax collectors and the Gentiles—Matt. 5:43-48.
- E. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"—1 Cor. 8:1:
  - 1. The outward, objective knowledge that puffs up comes from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the source of death.
  - 2. The spiritual, not fleshly, love, which is an expression of life as described in 1 Corinthians 13, builds up; it comes from the tree of life, the source of life.
  - 3. This is the love of God (1 John 4:16) infused into us by faith, which has brought us into the organic union with God.
  - 4. By this love we love God (1 Cor. 8:3) and the brothers (1 John 4:21), and according to this love we should walk (Rom. 14:15); thus, our walk builds up (1 Cor. 10:23).
  - 5. This building up refers not only to the edification of individual believers but also to the building up of the corporate Body of Christ—14:4-5, 12; 3:9-10, 12; 10:23; Eph. 4:16.
  - 6. "If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him"—1 Cor. 8:3:
    - a. Loving God is the base of our Christian life; it must be spiritual, not fleshly, although it requires the exercise of man's entire being—Mark 12:30; cf. 1 Cor. 16:22:

- (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.
- b. 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 possession, joy, entertainment, and pleasure—cf. Col. 1:10.
- c. To say that God does not know you means that He does not approve of your way—Matt. 7:22-23.
- F. "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.
- G. Love is the conclusion of all spiritual virtues and the factor of fruit-bearing that supplies us bountifully with the rich entrance into the kingdom of Christ—2 Pet. 1:5-11.
- H. The Body of Christ builds itself up in love—Eph. 4:16.
- I. The spirit that God gives us is of love; hence, it is of power and sobermindedness—2 Tim. 1:7.
- J. He who does not love abides in death—1 John 3:14b.
- K. We must pursue love while we desire spiritual gifts—1 Cor. 14:1.
- L. To overcome the degradation of the church we need to pursue love with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.
- M. Loving one another is a sign that we belong to Christ—John 13:34-35.
- N. The love of God makes us more than conquerors over our circumstantial situations—Rom. 8:35-39.

### **III. The genuine love is the issue of the enjoyment of God in His divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4:**

- A. The divine nature is what God is; God is Spirit (John 4:24), love (1 John 4:8, 16), and light (1:5); Spirit is the nature of God's person, love is the nature of God's essence, and light is the nature of God's expression.
- B. We can enjoy God as love in our fellowship with Him—vv. 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; 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.
  - 3. Paul ends 1 Corinthians with a word of the assurance of love; this is not a natural love but love in Christ, love in resurrection (4:21), the love of God that becomes ours through the grace of Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit—16:24; 2 Cor. 13:14.