

THE 2023 THANKSGIVING BLENDING CONFERENCE

GENERAL SUBJECT: THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST AND OUR GROWTH IN LIFE UNTO MATURITY

KEY STATEMENTS

We should concentrate on Christ as our unique center appointed by God,
not on any persons, things, or matters other than Christ;
for all the problems, especially the matter of division,
the only solution is the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ.

Enjoying the Lord has many aspects—the joy of the Lord’s presence,
the joy of living in the divine romance,
the joy of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity,
the joy of drinking of the river of God’s pleasures, the joy of knowing God’s love,
the joy of doing God’s will, the joy of contentment in all circumstances,
and entering into the joy of the Lord in the kingdom.

The record of Joseph’s life is a revelation of the rulership of the Spirit,
for the rulership of the Spirit is the reigning aspect of a mature saint;
the rulership of the Spirit (a life of reigning in life, being under the restriction
and limitation of the divine life in the reality of God’s kingdom)
is higher than any other aspect of the Spirit.

The joy set before us is the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom,
coming for His bride, who has made herself ready—
the maturity of the bride, the building of the bride, the righteousness of the bride,
the beauty of the bride, and the bride being a warrior to defeat God’s enemy.

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The Thanksgiving Blending Conference

November 23-26, 2023

GENERAL SUBJECT: THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST AND OUR GROWTH IN LIFE UNTO MATURITY

Message One

The Enjoyment of the All-inclusive Christ as the Unique Solution to All Problems in the Church

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:2, 9; 2:9-10; 13:1-8; Jer. 2:13; Lam. 3:22-24

- I. First Corinthians is a book on the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ as the unique solution to all problems in the church; God's intention in His recovery is to recover Christ as the unique center of God's economy and as everything to us as our portion for our enjoyment—1:2, 9, 24, 30:**
- A. We have all been called into the fellowship, the enjoyment, of Christ (v. 9); the word *fellowship* includes the thought of enjoyment; Christ is our allotted portion given to us by God for our enjoyment (v. 2; Col. 1:12).
 - B. In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul's intention was to solve the problems among the saints in Corinth; for all the problems, especially the matter of division, the only solution is the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ.
 - C. We should concentrate on Christ, not on any persons, things, or matters other than Christ; we should focus on Christ as our unique center appointed by God so that all the problems among the believers may be solved—1:9; Col. 1:17b, 18b.
 - D. Our goal is the fullest enjoyment of Christ and the fullest gaining of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ; this issues in our having the uttermost enjoyment of Christ as our prize in the millennial kingdom—Phil. 3:14; Matt. 25:21, 23.
 - E. We need to be those who are thinking "the one thing"; *the one thing* in Philippians refers to the subjective knowledge, experience, and enjoyment of Christ; the one thing is the pursuing of Christ to gain Him and possess Him—2:2, 5; 1:20-21; 3:7-14; 4:13.
 - F. To think something other than the one thing is to rebel against God's economy; God's economy is that we think the one thing; in the church life we need to help all the saints to think the one thing; our thoughts should be focused on and filled with the enjoyment of Christ for the church life, the Body life.
 - G. First Corinthians reveals that God has given the all-inclusive Christ, with the riches of at least twenty items, to us as our portion for our enjoyment; the secret of the Christian life and the church life is for us to enjoy Christ—1:9:
 - 1. We need to enjoy Christ as the portion given to us by God—v. 2.
 - 2. We need to enjoy Christ as God's power and God's wisdom as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to us—vv. 24, 30.
 - 3. We need to enjoy Christ as the Lord of glory, even as the King of glory, for our glorification—2:7-8; Rom. 8:30; Psa. 24:6-10.
 - 4. We need to enjoy Christ as the depths (deep things) of God—1 Cor. 2:10.
 - 5. We need to enjoy Christ as the unique foundation of God's building—3:11.
 - 6. We need to enjoy Christ as our Passover (5:7), the unleavened bread (v. 8), the

- spiritual food, the spiritual drink, and the spiritual rock (10:3-4).
7. We need to enjoy Christ as the Head (11:3; Col. 2:19; Eph. 1:19-23) and the Body (1 Cor. 12:12, 24-25a; Eph. 4:15-16).
 8. We need to enjoy Christ as the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20, 23), the second man (v. 47), and the last Adam, who became the life-giving Spirit (v. 45), to be everything to us.

II. God is faithful in calling us into the fellowship, into the enjoyment, of His Son, but many times we are unfaithful to His calling us into His intention—1:9; Jer. 2:13; Lam. 3:22-24:

- A. God's intention in His economy is to be the fountain, the source, of living waters to dispense Himself into us for our satisfaction and enjoyment; the goal of this enjoyment is to produce the church, God's counterpart, as God's increase, God's enlargement, to be God's fullness for His expression—John 3:29-30; Eph. 3:16-19, 21.
- B. The only way to take God as the fountain of living waters is to drink of Him and flow Him out day by day; this requires us to call on the Lord continually (with singing, thanking, rejoicing, praying, praising, and making God's saving deeds known to others)—Psa. 36:8-9; Isa. 12:3-6; 1 Cor. 12:13; John 7:37-39; 4:10, 14; Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- C. Instead of enjoying God by drinking of Him, God's people were unfaithful to Him by committing two evils—"My people have committed two evils: / They have forsaken Me, / The fountain of living waters, / To hew out for themselves cisterns, / Broken cisterns, / Which hold no water"—Jer. 2:13:
 1. First, God's people forsook God as their fountain, their source, for their enjoyment; second, they turned to sources other than God that could not satisfy them or make them the enlargement of God as His fullness for His expression.
 2. The hewing out of cisterns portrays Israel's toil in their human labor to make something (idols) to replace God; that the cisterns were broken and could hold no water indicates that apart from God dispensed into us as living water for our enjoyment, nothing can quench our thirst and make us God's increase for His expression—John 4:13-14.
- D. The evil condition of the wicked is that they do not come to the Lord to eat, drink, and enjoy the Lord; they do many things, but they do not come to contact the Lord, to take Him, to receive Him, to taste Him, and to enjoy Him; in the sight of God nothing is more evil than this—Isa. 57:20; cf. 55:1-2, 6-7.
- E. Although we are unfaithful, God is faithful, but His faithfulness is not according to our natural understanding or concept:
 1. God is faithful to take away our idols; anything within us that we love more than the Lord or that replaces the Lord in our life is an idol—Ezek. 14:3; 1 John 5:21.
 2. The outward peace in our environment, our personal comfort and ease, and our possessions can become idols to us to lead us astray; but God is faithful to take these things away so that we may drink of Him as the fountain of living waters.
 3. God is faithful in allowing us to have troubles so that we may learn not to trust in ourselves but in Him and so that He may lead us into His economy for us to enjoy Christ, to absorb Christ, to drink Christ, to eat Christ, and to assimilate Christ so that God may increase in us to fulfill His economy—Jer. 17:7-8; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; John 16:33; 1 Cor. 10:3-4; 12:13.
 4. God is not interested in anything other than our enjoyment of Christ; we may think that because of our failure, we are hopeless, but with God there is no disappointment; our failure simply opens the way for Christ to come in to be everything to us, enabling Him to bring us on to maturity—Rom. 8:28-29; Heb. 6:1a; Gen. 37:1 and footnote;

III. First Corinthians reveals that the way to enjoy the Lord is to love Him (2:9-10; 16:22) and to love one another (13:1-8a); the Lord's recovery is a recovery of loving the Lord Jesus with the first love (Rev. 2:4; 1 John 4:19) and of loving one another for the building up of the organic Body of Christ (Eph. 4:16):

- A. Our loving the Lord is the indispensable requirement for enabling us to enter into His heart and apprehend all its secrets and for our realization of and participation in the deep and hidden things God has ordained and prepared for us—1 Cor. 2:9-10; Matt. 22:37-38; Psalms 73:25; 116:1-2:
1. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ; the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be; but to enjoy Christ requires that we love Him with the first love—Rev. 2:4-5, 7.
 2. The degradation of the church begins with our leaving the first love toward the Lord; to love the Lord with the first love, the best love, is to give the Lord the preeminence, the first place, in all things, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—vv. 4-5; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psalm 73:25-26.
 3. The very life that we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus is a person, and the only way to apply and enjoy this person is by loving Him with the first love; since the Lord Jesus as our life is a person, we need a new contact with Him to enjoy His present presence at this very moment and day by day—John 11:25; 14:5-6; 1 Tim. 1:14; John 14:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rev. 2:4-7; Col. 1:18b; Rom. 6:4; 7:6.
 4. We must be persons who are flooded with the love of Christ; the divine love should be like the rushing tide of great waters toward us, impelling us to live to Him and love Him to the uttermost beyond our own control—2 Cor. 5:14.
 5. In order to love the Lord to the uttermost, we need to be those who desire and seek to dwell in the house of God all the days of our life, to behold His beauty (loveliness, pleasantness, delightfulness), and to inquire of God in His temple; to inquire of God is to check with God about everything in our daily life—Psalm 27:4.
- B. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:31b—13:8, 13; cf. 14:1, 3, 4b:
1. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"; we may listen to the messages of the ministry and become puffed up with mere knowledge—8:1b; cf. 2 Cor. 3:6.
 2. When the law of the Spirit of life as the law of love (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2-3) is activated within us, our labor in the Lord is a labor of love (1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thes. 1:3), in which we support and sustain the weak (Acts 20:35; 1 Thes. 5:14); *the weak* refers to those who are weak either in their spirit or soul or body, or are weak in faith.
 3. The Christ whom we love is the church-loving Christ (Eph. 5:25); when we love Him, we will love the church as He does; the church life is a life of brotherly love (1 John 4:7-8; 2 John 5-6; John 15:12, 17; Rev. 3:7; Eph. 5:2; cf. Jude 12a), and the Body builds itself up in love (Eph. 4:16).
 4. Our God-given, regenerated spirit is a spirit of love; we need a burning spirit of love to conquer the degradation of today's church—2 Tim. 1:7; Rom. 12:10-11.
 5. Our love for one another is made real to us as we enter more and more into the experience and enjoyment of being blended together for the oneness, the building up, and the reality of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:14-27; Rom. 16:1-16; Col. 4:16; John 12:24; Lev. 2:4-5.

Message Two

The Joy of the Triune God Becoming Our Joy

Scripture Reading: Rom. 15:13; 14:17; John 15:4, 11; Gal. 5:22

I. The Triune God is a God of joy:

- A. Romans 15:13 says, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace”:
 - 1. This indicates that joy is one of God’s attributes.
 - 2. God is the God of enjoyment.
 - 3. In our experience, if we enjoy God as grace, we will have peace, and if we have peace, we will have joy.
- B. Christ is also joy to the believers:
 - 1. In John 15:11 the Lord said, “These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full.”
 - 2. The context of this verse is the Lord’s word concerning the vine and the branches.
 - 3. For us to be branches of the divine vine is a matter of joy—a joyful life.
 - 4. Our joy always comes from our abiding in the Lord, from our abiding in His love.
 - 5. It is in this kind of life that we are full of joy.
 - 6. This joy is Christ Himself; when He abides in us, His joy abides in us to be the source of our joy that our joy may abound and become full and that we may live our days with joy.
- C. There is joy in the Holy Spirit—Rom. 14:17:
 - 1. God wants us to enjoy Him and live for His purpose—Neh. 8:10; Eph. 3:11.
 - 2. The Triune God is a God of joy, and the apostles are fellow workers with the saints for their joy—Rom. 15:13; John 15:11; 17:13; Acts 13:52; Gal. 5:22; 2 Cor. 1:24; Phil. 1:25; 2:17-18.
 - 3. We may experience the joy of the Lord’s word being in our heart—Jer. 15:16.
 - 4. A sweet thought revealed in the Word of God is that in Christ God has given Himself to us as grace to be our enjoyment—John 1:14, 16-17; 2 Cor. 13:14:
 - a. In the first reference in the Bible to God’s relationship with man, God presents Himself to man as food; this shows that God wants us to enjoy Him—Gen. 2:7, 9; Psa. 16:11; Jer. 15:16.
 - b. God’s desire is to give Himself to us to be our enjoyment—Neh. 8:10.
 - c. The secret to the Christian life is not how much we work for Him but how much we absorb Him and enjoy Him—John 15:4-5; Col. 2:6-7.

II. The joy of the Triune God is becoming our joy:

- A. In His person Christ is our joy:
 - 1. If we abide in the Lord and keep abiding in Him by abiding in His love, we will be filled with joy—John 15:10-11.
 - 2. The Lord is recovering the matters that have been missed among most Christians, and enjoying the Lord is one of the most important of these matters—1 Pet. 1:8.
 - 3. The matter of eating and enjoying the Lord is based on John 6:57.
 - 4. The Christian living is a life of eating, drinking, and enjoying the Lord day by day—v. 57; 1 Cor. 10:4.
 - 5. In order for us to be faithful, normal, and proper Christians, the primary matter that we need to take care of is enjoying the Lord; this needs to be a vision to us—Prov. 29:18; Acts 26:19.
 - 6. Our spirit needs to take the lead in enjoying the Lord—Heb. 4:12:

- a. We must learn to directly use our spirit and let the soul be a follower of the spirit.
 - b. Our spirit must take the lead aggressively in enjoying the Lord.
- 7. In His prayer to the Father, the Son said, “Now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy made full in themselves”—John 17:13:
 - a. The fullness of joy is in the real oneness.
 - b. When we are one in the Father’s name by the Father’s life, enjoying the Father together, we will have the Lord’s joy made full in us—v. 13.
- B. In the church as the kingdom of the Son of God’s love, we experience and enjoy Christ in His all-inclusiveness—Col. 1:12-13, 27; 2:9, 16-17; 3:1, 4, 11:
 - 1. Christ is our allotted portion, our good land—the divine inheritance for our enjoyment—1:12.
 - 2. Christ is the reality of every positive thing in the universe—2:16-17.
 - 3. Christ is the One sitting at the right hand of God—3:1.
 - 4. Christ dwells in us as our hope of glory—1:27.
 - 5. Christ is our life—3:4.
 - 6. Christ is the constituent of the one new man—vv. 10-11.
- C. According to 1 Peter 1:8, the believers “exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory”:
 - 1. This joy is immersed in the Lord as glory; thus, it is full of the expression of the Lord.
 - 2. By believing into the Lord and loving Him, we obtain great joy.
 - 3. The normal condition of a Christian is to have joy that is full of glory.
- D. Enjoying the Lord has many aspects, such as the joy of the Lord’s presence (Psa. 16:11), the joy of living in the divine romance (S. S. 1:1-4), the joy of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity (2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:14-21), the joy of drinking of the river of God’s pleasures (Psa. 46:4a; 36:8b), the joy of knowing God’s love (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:38-39), the joy of doing God’s will (Psa. 40:8a), the joy of contentment in all circumstances (Phil. 4:11), and entering into the joy of the Lord in the kingdom (Matt. 25:21, 23).
- E. A Christian should be a joyful person—joyful in the Spirit—Gal. 5:22:
 - 1. The Lord is our joy when we are in Him—Rom. 14:17.
 - 2. When we are abiding in the Lord, no matter what problem we have, we are joyful, and any difficulty deepens our joy in the Lord—John 15:4.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of joy—Rom. 14:17:
 - a. If we are joyful, this indicates that the Holy Spirit in us is also joyful—Gal. 5:22.
 - b. There may be nothing in the outward environment to make us joyful, but the Lord who lives in us is our joy—Col. 1:27.

Message Three
Dealing with Our Heart
for the Growth of the Divine Seed of Life within Us
unto Our Maturity in Life for God's Building in Life

Scripture Reading: Matt. 5:8; 13:3-9, 18-23; Prov. 4:23; Jer. 32:39; Eph. 3:16-17

I. We must deal with our heart in the light of the Lord's presence for the growth of the divine seed of life within us unto our maturity in life; the heart is the conglomerate of man's inward parts, man's chief representative, his acting agent:

- A. Our heart is a composition of all the parts of our soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will (Matt. 9:4; Heb. 4:12; Acts 11:23; John 14:1; 16:22)—plus one part of our spirit—the conscience (Heb. 10:22; 1 John 3:20).
- B. The exercise of the spirit works only when our heart is active; if man's heart is indifferent, the spirit is imprisoned within and is unable to show forth its capability—Matt. 5:3, 8; Psa. 78:8.
- C. The soul is the person himself, but the heart is the person in action; the heart is the acting agent, the acting commissioner, of our entire being.
- D. The activities and movements of our physical body depend on our physical heart; in like manner, our daily living, the way we act and behave, depends on what kind of psychological heart we have.
- E. The heart is the entrance and exit of life, the “switch” of life; if the heart is not right, life in the spirit is hindered, and the law of life cannot work freely and without obstruction to reach every part of our being; though life has great power, this great power is controlled by our small heart—Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:33-37; cf. Ezek. 36:26-27.

II. Our growth in life builds up the church as the Body of Christ, which takes place by the growth of Christ as the seed of life in our heart (1 John 3:9; 1 Pet. 1:23; Col. 2:19; Eph. 2:21; 4:15-16; Matt. 13:18-23); we need to cooperate with the Lord by dealing with our heart so that it can be kept with the following characteristics:

- A. God wants our heart to be soft:
 - 1. When God deals with our heart, He takes away the heart of stone out of our flesh and gives us a heart of flesh, a soft heart—Ezek. 36:26.
 - 2. To be soft means that our heart is submissive and yielding toward the Lord, not stiff-necked and rebellious—cf. Exo. 32:9.
 - 3. A soft heart is the good earth in which Christ can freely grow; it is a heart that is not hardened by worldly traffic, that is without self-seeking, and that is without the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches—Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23.
 - 4. God softens our heart by using His love to move us; if love cannot move us, He uses His hand through the environment to discipline us until our heart is softened—2 Cor. 5:14; 4:16-18; Heb. 12:6-7; cf. Jer. 48:11.
- B. God wants our heart to be pure:
 - 1. A pure heart is a heart that loves God and wants God; besides God, it has no other love, inclination, or desire—Matt. 5:8; Psa. 73:25; cf. Jer. 32:39.
 - 2. Our heart should be single for God so that we are fearful of nothing except offending

- Him and losing His presence—Psa. 86:11; Isa. 11:1-2.
3. To be pure in heart is to have the single goal of accomplishing God's will for God's glory; our goal should be the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ—Phil. 3:7-14.
 4. We must pursue Christ "with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart"—2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:5; Psa. 73:1.
- C. God wants our heart to be loving:
1. A loving heart is a heart in which the emotion loves God, wants God, thirsts after God, and yearns for God, having a personal, affectionate, private, and spiritual relationship with the Lord—42:1-2; S. S. 1:1-4.
 2. We must turn our heart back to the Lord again and again and have it continually renewed so that we may have a new and fresh love toward the Lord—2 Cor. 3:16.
 3. All spiritual experiences start with love in the heart; if we do not love the Lord, it is impossible to receive any kind of spiritual experience—Eph. 6:24; Rev. 2:4-5.
 4. Our love for the Lord qualifies, perfects, and equips us to speak for the Lord with His authority; if we love the Lord to the uttermost, we will be filled and overflowing with Him—John 21:15-17; Matt. 26:6-13; 28:18-20.
- D. God wants our heart to be at peace:
1. A heart at peace is a heart in which the conscience is without offense, condemnation, or reproach—Acts 24:16; 1 John 3:19-21; Heb. 10:22.
 2. If we confess our sins in the light of God's presence, we receive His forgiveness and His cleansing so that we may enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with God with a good and pure conscience—1 John 1:7, 9; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9.
 3. The result of practicing fellowship with God in prayer is that we enjoy the peace of God, which is actually God as peace mounting guard over our hearts and thoughts in Christ, keeping us calm and tranquil—Phil. 4:6-7.
 4. We need to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in our hearts by forgiving one another to put on the one new man—Col. 3:13-15.

III. We need to see the obstacles that God's life encounters in our heart:

- A. The first problem that God's life encounters in us is that we do not realize the darkness of our human concepts—2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4:
1. We need to see that the only thing that matters in the Christian life is how we take care of the living Christ in us—Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:19-21; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 2. Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; many people have difficulty in their spiritual life after they are saved because they do not know the pathway of life, and they do not take Christ as their life—Rom. 8:6.
- B. The second problem that life encounters in us is hypocrisy—Matt. 6:2, 5; 7:5; 23:13-29:
1. A person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of the indwelling Christ.
 2. Our natural goodness is false spirituality and is actually a great hindrance to life; the expression of life involves the rejection of our natural disposition and preference and simply allowing Christ to operate in us and break us.
 3. If we always do things according to our disposition and natural being, the outcome will always be hypocrisy.
- C. The third problem that life encounters in us is rebellion—2 Cor. 10:4-5:
1. Christ operates and moves in us in order to make us clear about His will and requirements for us and about His leading and dealing with us.
 2. However, if we do not obey but go against the feeling within, not accepting His leading or paying the price, this unwillingness and opposition are rebellion.

3. The sin that we commit the most frequently and most severely is not outward and visible; rather, it is the sin of disobeying the sense of Christ in us; Christ is living in us, and He is constantly giving us an inward sense of life—Rom. 8:6; 1 John 2:27; cf. Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; 2 Cor. 2:12-14.
- D. The fourth problem that life encounters in us is our natural capability:
 1. Many brothers and sisters truly love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, and are very godly; nevertheless, their greatest problem is the strength and greatness of their capabilities and abilities; consequently, Christ has no ground or way in them.
 2. We may be capable and talented, but we do not consider these things as sin or filthiness; instead of despising our natural capabilities, we treasure them; if they remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life.
- E. If we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross and allow these obstacles to be dealt with and removed—Matt. 16:24-25.

IV. We need to see the subjective obstacles encountered by God's life in our heart:

- A. The first subjective problem is the problem of our mind:
 1. If the things we want to do originate from our thoughts, then these things will be nothing more than religious activities, even if they are successful; they are not a testimony of Christ lived out from our spirit—cf. Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2.
 2. Although we have the life of Christ within, we do not cooperate with Christ's life in our thoughts and actions, and so this life cannot be lived out from us.
 3. When our mind is set on the spirit, our outward actions are in agreement with our inner man, and there is no discrepancy between us and God; He and we are at peace, not at enmity; the result is that we feel peaceful within—8:6.
- B. The second subjective problem is the problem of our will:
 1. Even though our mind often understands the intention in our spirit, and we know the will of God, we are unwilling to submit and obey.
 2. We may understand, know, apprehend, and deeply sense that the Lord wants us to do a certain thing, but our will refuses to submit and surrender, and we lose the Lord's presence.
 3. Both a strong will and a weak will to carry out the Lord's will are hindrances to God's life; a will that has been dealt with is both strong and pliable by being subdued and resurrected by the Lord; having a will that can cooperate with God is a great matter—Phil. 2:13.
- C. The third subjective problem is the problem of our emotion:
 1. Our emotion needs to have God's emotion, and we need to fully enter into God's emotion—2 Thes. 3:5; Phil. 1:8.
 2. We should love whatever God loves, like whatever God likes, and hate whatever God hates; our emotion and His emotion should become one emotion—Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 16:24; Rev. 2:6; Phil. 1:8.
- D. We daily need to be strengthened into the inner man so that Christ as life can make His home in the main parts of our heart—our mind, will, and emotion—Eph. 3:16-17.

V. May the Lord have mercy upon us and open our eyes to see that the central work of God in this age is that man may gain His life and grow and mature in His life; our work should be the imparting and supplying of the Lord's life to others; only the work that comes out of His life can reach His eternal standard and be accepted by Him—John 7:37-39a; 2 Cor. 4:10-12; 1 John 5:16a; 2 Cor.

3:3, 6.

Message Four
Knowing the All-inclusive Christ
and Growing with the Growth of God

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:18, 27-28; 2:2-3; 3:1-4

I. It is a blessing that we can know and experience the all-inclusive Christ as revealed in Colossians:

- A. Christ is “the Head of the Body, the church;...that He Himself might have the first place in all things”—1:18:
 - 1. In both the old creation and the new creation, Christ is the first and occupies the first place.
 - 2. Both in the universe and in the church, Christ is the preeminent One.
- B. “Christ in you, the hope of glory”—v. 27:
 - 1. Christ, who dwells in our spirit to be our life and person, is our hope of glory.
 - 2. When He comes, we will be glorified in Him.
 - 3. This indicates that the indwelling Christ will saturate our entire being so that our physical body may be transfigured and conformed to the body of His glory.
- C. In Colossians a number of important phrases point to our experience of Christ:
 - 1. “Christ in you”—v. 27.
 - 2. “Full-grown in Christ”—v. 28.
 - 3. “Walk in Him”—2:6.
 - 4. “According to Christ”—v. 8.
 - 5. “Made alive together with Him”—v. 13.
 - 6. “Died with Christ”—v. 20.
 - 7. “Holding the Head”—v. 19.
 - 8. “Out from whom”—v. 19.
 - 9. “Grows with the growth of God”—v. 19.
 - 10. These expressions give us a complete picture of the proper experience of Christ.
 - 11. “The mystery of God, Christ, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden”—vv. 2-3:
 - a. Colossians concerns the mystery of God, which is Christ the Head.
 - b. All the treasures of genuine wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ—v. 3.
 - c. This is the spiritual wisdom and knowledge of the divine economy concerning Christ and the church.
 - d. Wisdom is related to our spirit, and knowledge is related to our mind— Eph. 1:8, 17.
 - 12. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you have been made full in Him”—Col. 2:9-10:
 - a. What dwells in Christ is not only the riches of the Godhead but the expression of the riches of what God is.
 - b. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ as One who has a human body.
- D. “If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God”—3:1:
 - 1. Verses 1 through 4 imply that with Christ we have one position, one life, one living, one destiny, and one glory.
 - 2. God in the heavens should be the sphere of our living; with Christ we should live in God.

II. “Holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied..., grows with the growth of God”—2:19:

- A. To grow is to have Christ added into us—1 Cor. 3:6-7; Gal. 4:19.
- B. The growth of the Body depends on what comes out of Christ as the Head—Eph. 4:15-16:
 - 1. When the Body is supplied by holding the Head, the Body grows with the growth of God—Col. 2:19.
 - 2. The Body grows out from the Head, for all the supply comes from the Head— Eph. 4:15.
- C. The growth of the Body depends on the growth of God, the addition of God, the increase of God, within us—Col. 2:19:
 - 1. God gives the growth by giving Himself to us in a subjective way.
 - 2. The more God is added into us, the more growth He gives to us; this is the way God gives the growth—1 Cor. 3:6-7.
 - 3. Only God can give growth; only God can give us Himself, and without Him, we cannot have growth—vv. 6-7:
 - a. The addition of God into us is the growth He gives.
 - b. For God to give us growth actually means that He gives us Himself— Rom. 8:11.
- D. The growth of the Body is the building up of the Body—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19:
 - 1. Ephesians 4:12-16 occupies a special place in the New Testament because it shows the mystery concerning the building up of the Body of Christ.
 - 2. The growth of the Body of Christ is the increase of Christ in the church, which results in the building up of the Body by the Body itself—3:17a:
 - a. When Christ enters into the saints and lives within them, the Christ within the saints becomes the church—Col. 3:10-11.
 - b. The Body of Christ grows by the growth of Christ within us and is built up this way—1:18; 2:19.
 - 3. The love in which the Body builds itself up is not our own love but the love of God in Christ, which becomes the love of Christ in us, by which we love Christ and the fellow members of His Body—1 John 4:7-8, 11, 16, 19; Rom. 5:5; 8:39:
 - a. Love is the inner substance of God; when we enter into God’s inner substance, we enjoy God as love and enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love, and thereby love others as Christ did—Eph. 5:25.
 - b. It is in such a love that we hold to truth, that is, to Christ with His Body, and are kept from being influenced by the winds of teaching and from bringing in elements that are foreign to the Body—4:14-15.

Message Five

The Reigning Aspect of the Mature Life Seen in the Life of Joseph

Scripture Reading: Gen. 41:39-44, 51-52; 45:5-8; 47:14-23; 50:15-21

- I. According to spiritual experience, Jacob and Joseph are one person; Joseph represents the reigning aspect of the mature Israel, the constitution of Christ in Jacob's mature nature; as a mature saint constituted with Christ, the perfect One, Jacob reigned through Joseph—Gen. 41:39-44; Heb. 6:1a; Gal. 6:8; 5:22-23:**
- A. The reigning aspect typified by Joseph is Christ constituted into our being—4:19.
 - B. Joseph, a “master of dreams” (Gen. 37:19), dreamed that, according to God's view, His people are sheaves of wheat full of life and heavenly bodies full of light (vv. 5-11); Joseph's two dreams (vv. 7, 9), both from God, unveiled to him God's divine view concerning the nature, position, function, and goal of God's people on earth:
 - 1. We have to use the “divine telescope” to see through time and behold the New Jerusalem, where there is nothing but sheaves full of life and stars full of light; thus, the reigning aspect of the mature life never speaks negatively concerning the saints or the church—cf. 38:27-30; Matt. 7:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:8-9.
 - 2. Joseph's dreams controlled his life and directed his behavior; he behaved so excellently and marvelously because he was directed by the vision that he saw in his dreams (cf. Acts 26:19); his brothers vented their anger (Gen. 37:18-31) and indulged in their lust (38:15-18), but Joseph subdued his anger and conquered his lust (39:7-23), behaving as a sheaf full of life and conducting himself like a heavenly star shining in the darkness.
 - C. Joseph's life under the heavenly vision was the life of the kingdom of the heavens described in Matthew 5—7; by living such a life, he was fully prepared to reign as a king; according to the constitution of the heavenly kingdom revealed in these chapters in Matthew, our anger must be subdued, and our lust must be conquered (5:21-32).
 - D. The reigning aspect of the mature life is a life that always enjoys the presence of the Lord (Acts 7:9); wherever His presence is, there is authority, the ruling power (Gen. 39:2-5, 21-23):
 - 1. In the presence of the Lord, Joseph was prospered by Him; while Joseph was undergoing ill-treatment, he enjoyed the Lord's prosperity that came to him under the Lord's sovereignty.
 - 2. In the presence of the Lord, Joseph was favored with the Lord's blessing wherever he was; when Joseph enjoyed prosperity, he and those who were involved with him were blessed—vv. 4-5, 22-23.
 - E. Although his own dreams were not yet fulfilled, Joseph had the faith and the boldness to interpret the dreams of his two companions in prison (40:8); eventually, Joseph was released from prison indirectly through his speaking by faith in interpreting the cupbearer's dream (41:9-13), and he was ushered to the throne directly through his speaking boldly in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams (vv. 14-46); both release and authority came to him through his speaking:
 - 1. Andrew Murray once said a word like this: the good minister of the Word should always minister more than he has experienced; this means that we should speak more according to the vision than according to the fulfillment of the vision.
 - 2. Even if our vision has not been fulfilled, we should still speak of it to others; the time

will come when our vision will be fulfilled; Joseph's dreams were eventually fulfilled through his interpretation of the dream of the cupbearer.

3. We should not speak according to our feelings but according to the heavenly vision; we are visionaries, seers, of God's eternal economy, so we should speak according to the absoluteness of the truth of His economy—Acts 26:16-19.
- F. If we are living out Christ, we will bring either life or death wherever we are (2 Cor. 2:14-16); to the cupbearer, Joseph brought restoration; to the baker, he brought execution (Gen. 41:12-13).
- G. If we seek the Lord, He will put us into a "dungeon"; without the dungeon we cannot ascend to the throne; we must not be a "dungeon dropout"; we must stay in the dungeon until we graduate and receive the crown—Eph. 3:1; 4:1; James 1:12.

II. Joseph as a fruitful bough (Gen. 49:22) typifies Christ as the branch (Isa. 11:1-2) for the branching out of God through His believers as His branches (John 15:1, 5); in Genesis 49:22 the fountain signifies God, the source of fruitfulness (Psa. 36:9; Jer. 2:13), and the branches' running over the wall signifies that Christ's believers as His branches spread Christ over every restriction, magnifying Him in all circumstances (Phil. 1:20; 4:22; Philem. 10):

- A. In his receiving glory and gifts in his enthronement, Joseph typifies Christ, who received glory (Heb. 2:9) and gifts (Psa. 68:18; Acts 2:33) in His ascension (Gen. 41:42):
 1. The ring, the garments, and the gold chain portray the gifts that Christ received in His ascension to the heavens, which gifts He has passed on to the church—v. 42:
 - a. The signet ring signifies the Holy Spirit as a seal within and upon Christ's believers—Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; cf. Luke 15:22.
 - b. The garments signify Christ as our objective righteousness for our justification before God (1 Cor. 1:30; cf. Psa. 45:9, 13; Luke 15:22) and as our subjective righteousness lived out of us that we may be qualified to participate in the marriage of the Lamb (Phil. 3:9; Psa. 45:14; Rev. 19:7-9).
 - c. The gold chain signifies the beauty of the Holy Spirit given for obedience expressed in submission (cf. Acts 5:32); a chained neck signifies a will that has been conquered and subdued to obey God's commandment (Gen. 41:42; cf. S. S. 1:10; Prov. 1:8-9).
 2. According to the sequence of spiritual experience, we first receive the sealing of the Spirit for salvation; then we receive the garment of righteousness and begin to live Christ (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:20-21a); in order for us to live Christ, our neck must be chained, our will must be conquered and subdued, by the Holy Spirit.
- B. After being resurrected from the prison of death and ushered into the position of ascension, Joseph married Asenath, who portrays the church taken out of the Gentile world during Christ's rejection by the children of Israel (Gen. 41:45); Joseph called the name of his firstborn Manasseh (meaning "making to forget") and the name of his second Ephraim (meaning "twice fruitful"); Joseph declared, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's house," and "God has made me [twice] fruitful in the land of my affliction" (vv. 51-52).

III. The record of Joseph's life is a revelation of the rulership of the Spirit, for the rulership of the Spirit is the reigning aspect of a mature saint; the rulership of the Spirit (a life of reigning in life, being under the restriction and limitation of the divine life in the reality of God's kingdom) is higher than any other aspect

of the Spirit—Rom. 5:17, 21; 14:17-18; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rev. 4:1-3:

- A. Although Joseph was full of human feelings and sentiments toward his brothers, he kept himself with all his feelings under the rulership of the Spirit; he dealt with his brothers soberly, wisely, and with discernment, disciplining them according to their need in order to perfect them and build them up that they might be a collective people living together as God's testimony on earth; the life manifested in the story of Joseph is the resurrection life, the life of God—Gen. 42:9, 24; 43:30-31; 45:1-2, 24.
- B. Joseph's living under God's restriction, a portrait of the human living of Christ, manifested the maturity and perfection of the divine life and brought in God's kingdom—John 5:19, 30b; 7:16, 18; 14:10; Matt. 8:9-10.
- C. In Joseph's dealings with his brothers, we see that he lived a calm life, a sober life, and a discerning life with love for the brothers—a self-denying life as the practice of the kingdom life—Gen. 45:24; Matt. 16:24; 2 Chron. 1:10; Isa. 30:15a; Phil. 1:9; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; 1 Thes. 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thes. 1:3; Rom. 12:10; 1 John 4:9; Heb. 13:1.
- D. The most powerful person is the one who has the strength not to do what he is able to do—this is the real denial of the self and the genuine bearing of the cross—Matt. 16:24; cf. 26:53; 2 Cor. 2:12-16.
- E. Joseph's realization was that it was God who sent him to Egypt; in Genesis 50:20 he said to his brothers, "Even though you intended evil against me, God intended it for good" (45:5, 7; 50:19-21; cf. 41:51-52); this is the reality of Paul's word in Romans 8:28-29; Joseph received as from God all that his brothers had done to him, and he comforted those who had offended him (Gen. 45:5-8; 50:15-21); what grace, and what an excellent spirit, he had!

IV. Because Joseph suffered and denied himself, he gained the riches of the life supply (*Hymns*, #635); in order to receive food from him as a type of Christ, the people had to pay four kinds of prices: their money, their livestock, their land, and themselves—47:14-23; cf. Rev. 3:18:

- A. Money represents convenience, livestock signifies the means of living, and land represents resources; if we would receive the life supply from the Lord as the Dispenser, we must give Him our convenience, our means of livelihood, and our resources; the more we give Him, the more life supply we will receive from Him.
- B. Ultimately, in order to receive the best portion from the Lord, including food for satisfaction and seed to produce something for others (Gen. 47:23), we must hand ourselves, every part of our being, over to Him (Lev. 1:4).
- C. When we pay the highest price by handing over every part of our being to Him, we enjoy the best portion of the enjoyment of Christ.

V. The universal blessing on Joseph consummates in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth, in which everything will be new as a blessing to Christ and His believers—Gen. 49:25-26; Deut. 33:13-16; Rev. 21:5:

- A. Transformation is to be metabolically changed with the newness of the divine life, maturity is to be filled with the newness of the divine life that changes us, and blessing is the overflow of life; the ending of Jacob's life with Joseph was a life of blessing as the zenith of his shining—Prov. 4:18; Heb. 11:21; Gen. 47:7; 48:15-16.
- B. Only God is new; anything that is kept away from God is old, but anything that comes back to God is new (2 Cor. 5:17); to be renewed means to come back to God and have something of God put into us so that we are mingled with God and one with God for the Body life (4:16; Rom. 12:1-2).

- C. The secret of receiving God as our blessing of newness is to bring everything to God and let Him get into everything; the universal blessing on Joseph means that blessing is everywhere; our praises turn everything of the curse of the fall into a blessing—Eph. 5:20; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.

Message Six

The Joy Set before Christ and the Joy Set before Us

Scripture Reading: Heb. 12:2; Col. 2:15; Rev. 19:7-9; Neh. 8:10c

I. For the joy set before Him, Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, “endured the cross, despising the shame”—Heb. 12:2:

- A. The Lord loved the church and gave Himself up for her—Eph. 5:25.
- B. On the cross the Lord offered Himself as the sacrifice for sins, bearing the sins of many, being made sin for the believers, casting out the ruler of this world and judging this world, and as a grain of wheat, falling into death for the release of the divine life—Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 12:24, 31.
- C. Colossians 2:15 portrays the warfare that took place at the time of Christ’s crucifixion:
 - 1. In His crucifixion Christ was working to accomplish redemption, and God the Father was working to judge sin.
 - 2. At the same time the rulers and authorities were busy in the attempt to frustrate the work of God and Christ—v. 15.
 - 3. The rulers and authorities are evil angels, fallen angels that are subordinates of Satan working for him—Eph. 2:2.
 - 4. While God was judging sin, the evil rulers and authorities were present and were very active, swarming around the crucified Christ, pressing in very closely—Col. 2:15:
 - a. If they had not pressed in closely, God could not have stripped them off.
 - b. The words *stripping off* indicate that the rulers and authorities were very close, as close as our garments are to our body.
 - 5. In stripping off the rulers and authorities, God made a display of them openly, putting them to shame and triumphing over them in the cross—v. 15.

II. The joy set before us is the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, coming for His bride, who has made herself ready—Rev. 19:7-9:

- A. The maturity of the bride—vv. 7-9; Eph. 4:13-15:
 - 1. The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers—Rev. 19:7; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13.
 - 2. 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.
- B. The building of the bride—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16:
 - 1. God’s building is the desire of God’s heart and the goal of God’s salvation— 1:5; Exo. 25:8; cf. 1:11; 40:2-3, 34-35.
 - 2. The goal of the Lord’s recovery is to recover Christ as life and everything to us so that we may be built up—Eph. 3:8; 4:16.
 - 3. God’s building is the corporate expression of the Triune God—1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 17:22; Eph. 3:19b, 21.
- C. The righteousness of the bride—Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 22:11-13:
 - 1. As our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God— 5:6, 20.
 - 2. The living that is right with both God and man must be God as our expression in our daily living—2 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.
 - 3. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8.
 - 4. The wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-13 signifies the Christ whom we live out and

who is expressed through us in our daily living as our surpassing righteousness—5:20; Rev. 3:4-5, 18.

- D. The beauty of the bride—Eph. 5:25-27:
 - 1. As the bride, the church needs beauty; the beauty in Ephesians 5 is for the presentation of the bride.
 - 2. The beauty of the bride comes from the Christ who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church—3:17a:
 - a. Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us.
 - b. What Christ appreciates in us is the expression of Himself.
- E. Ephesians 6 and Revelation 19 reveal that the church as the bride must also be a warrior to defeat God's enemy:
 - 1. Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body; we are a corporate army fighting the battle for God's interest on earth—17:14; 19:14; cf. 2 Tim. 2:4.
 - 2. In Ephesians 5 the word is for nourishment that leads to the beautifying of the bride, but in Ephesians 6 the word is for killing that enables the church as the corporate warrior to engage in spiritual warfare—vv. 17-18.
 - 3. Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21.
 - 4. The wedding garment—Christ lived out of us as our daily righteousness— qualifies us not only to attend the wedding but also to join the army to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon—Matt. 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8, 14.

III. “The joy of Jehovah is your strength”—Neh. 8:10c:

- A. According to Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of our Lord is our strength:
 - 1. It is not a matter of our having strength; His joy upholds us—1 Thes. 5:16.
 - 2. The Lord's joy has nothing to do with circumstances; He rejoiced in God's will; there was joy in knowing and doing God's will.
 - 3. We should not try to copy the Lord but receive the joy of the Lord:
 - a. We can have something of the Lord imparted to us.
 - b. We can have the joy of the Lord; His joy will be our strength.
- B. At the end of his life Watchman Nee said, in the midst of his sufferings, “I maintain my joy”—*Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 182.
- C. *I maintain my joy* indicates that he was practicing the word of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always.”
- D. Through the mercy and grace of God, may we all be able to maintain our joy by the joy of the Lord as our strength.