

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

RA Hymns: 1206, 431

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

- 1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1 Cor 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
- 1 Cor 2:10 But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
- 1 Cor 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
- 1 Cor 13:2 And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- 1 Cor 13:3 And if I dole out all my possessions to feed others, and if I deliver up my body that I may boast, but do not have love, I profit nothing.
- 1 Cor 13:4 Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not puffed up;
- 1 Cor 13:5 It does not behave unbecomingly and does not seek its own things; it is not provoked and does not take account of evil;
- 1 Cor 13:6 It does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
- 1 Cor 13:7 It covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- 1 Cor 13:8 Love never falls away. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless.
- Jer 2:13 For 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.
- Lam 3:22 It is Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, / For His compassions do not fail;
- Lam 3:23 They are new every morning; / Great is Your faithfulness.
- Lam 3:24 Jehovah is my portion, says my soul; / Therefore I hope in Him.

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:

- 1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1 Cor 1:24 To those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
- 1 Cor 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

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).

1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light;

- 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.
- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Col 1:17b ... and all things cohere in Him;
- Col 1:18b ... He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- 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.
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Matt 25:21 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.
- Matt 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.
- 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.
- Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,
- Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
- Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.
- 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 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. We need to enjoy Christ as the portion given to us by God—v. 2.
1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who are theirs and ours:
2. We need to enjoy Christ as God's power and God's wisdom as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to us—vv. 24, 30.
1 Cor 1:24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
1 Cor 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
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.
1 Cor 2:7 But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the wisdom which has been hidden, which God predestined before the ages for our glory,
1 Cor 2:8 Which none of the rulers of this age have known; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;
Rom 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.
Psa 24:6 This is the generation of those who seek Him, / Those who seek Your face, even Jacob. Selah.
Psa 24:7 Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in.
Psa 24:8 Who is the King of glory? / Jehovah strong and mighty! / Jehovah mighty in battle!
Psa 24:9 Lift up your heads, O gates; / And lift up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in.
Psa 24:10 Who is this King of glory? / Jehovah of hosts
4. We need to enjoy Christ as the depths (deep things) of God—1 Cor. 2:10.
1 Cor 2:10 But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
5. We need to enjoy Christ as the unique foundation of God's building—3:11.
1 Cor 3:11 For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
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).
1 Cor 5:7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened; for our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed.
1 Cor 5:8 So then let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
1 Cor 10:3 And all ate the same spiritual food,
1 Cor 10:4 And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ.
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).
1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ.
Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

Eph 1:19 And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength,
 Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,
 Eph 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come;
 Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
 Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
 1 Cor 12:25a That there would be no division in the body, ...
 Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
 Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

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.

1 Cor 15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Cor 15:23 But each one in his own order: the firstfruits, Christ; then those who are Christ's at His coming;

1 Cor 15:47 The first man is out of the earth, earthy; the second man is out of heaven.

1 Cor 15:45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

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:

1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jer 2:13 For 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.

Lam 3:22 It is Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, / For His compassions do not fail;

Lam 3:23 They are new every morning; / Great is Your faithfulness.

Lam 3:24 Jehovah is my portion, says my soul; / Therefore I hope in Him.

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.

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,

Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are

Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever

and ever. Amen.

- 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.

Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.

Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.

Isa 12:3 Therefore you will draw water with rejoicing / From the springs of salvation,

Isa 12:4 And you will say in that day, / Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon His name! / Make His deeds known among the peoples; / Remind them that His name is exalted.

Isa 12:5 Sing psalms to Jehovah, for He has done something majestic! / Let it be made known in all the earth!

Isa 12:6 Cry out and give a ringing shout, O inhabitant of Zion, / For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.

John 4:14 But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.

Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

1 Thes 5:16 Always rejoice,

1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,

1 Thes 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- 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.

John 4:13 Jesus answered and said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again,

John 4:14 But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.

- 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.

- Isa 57:20 But the wicked are like the tossed sea, / For it cannot be calm, / And its waters toss up mire and mud.
- Isa 55:1 Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, / And you who have no money; / Come, buy and eat; / Yes, come, buy wine and milk / Without money and without price.
- Isa 55:2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, / And the result of your labor for what does not satisfy? / Hear Me attentively, and eat what is good, / And let your soul delight itself in fatness.
- Isa 55:6 Seek Jehovah while He may be found; / Call upon Him while He is near.
- Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, / And the evildoer, his thoughts; / And let him return to Jehovah, and He will have compassion on him; / And to our God, for He will pardon abundantly.

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.

Ezek 14:3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I be inquired of at all by them?

1 John 5:21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.
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.

Jer 17:7 Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah / And whose trust Jehovah is.

Jer 17:8 And he will be like a tree transplanted beside water, / Which sends out its roots by a stream, / And will not be afraid when heat comes; / For its leaves remain flourishing, / And it will not be anxious in the year of drought / And will not cease to bear fruit.

2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have affliction, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

1 Cor 10:3 And all ate the same spiritual food,

1 Cor 10:4 And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ.

1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
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; 47:7 and footnote.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

Heb 6:1a Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, ...

Gen 37:1 And ¹Jacob dwelt in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of

Canaan.

note 1 At this point Jacob was a transformed person, but he was not yet mature. To be transformed is to be metabolically changed in our natural life (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18); to be mature is to be filled with the divine life that changes us. We may be changed in our natural life (transformed) yet not be filled with the divine life (mature). The last stage of transformation is maturity. Jacob's transformation began at the time God touched him (32:25), and it continued until the end of ch. 36, when the process of transformation was relatively complete (see note 31 in ch. 37). Genesis 37:1—43:14 is a record of the process of Jacob's maturity.

Genesis shows a complete picture of how human beings can be remade and transformed to express God in His image and represent God with His dominion. This book ends as it begins—with God's image and dominion. The last fourteen chapters indicate that after Jacob had become Israel, he bore the image of God and, through Joseph, exercised the dominion of God. For God's expression and dominion there is the need of maturity. Only a mature life can bear God's image and exercise His dominion.

Gen 47:7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob ¹blessed Pharaoh.

note 1 The strongest manifestation of Jacob's maturity in life is the fact that Jacob blessed everyone, including Pharaoh (vv. 7, 10), Jacob's two grandsons (ch. 48), and his own twelve sons (49:1-28). Jacob's supplanting hands became blessing hands (48:14-16). Maturity in life is a matter of being filled with God as life, and blessing is the overflow of life, the overflow of God through the maturity in life. To bless others is to bring them into the presence of God and to bring God into them as grace, love, and fellowship that they may enjoy the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (14:18-19; Num. 6:23-27; 2 Cor. 13:14). That Jacob blessed Pharaoh indicates that he was greater than Pharaoh (Heb. 7:7).

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):

- 1 Cor 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
- 1 Cor 2:10 But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
- 1 Cor 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed! The Lord comes!
- 1 Cor 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
- 1 Cor 13:2 And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- 1 Cor 13:3 And if I dole out all my possessions to feed others, and if I deliver up my body that I may boast, but do not have love, I profit nothing.
- 1 Cor 13:4 Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not puffed up;
- 1 Cor 13:5 It does not behave unbecomingly and does not seek its own things; it is not provoked and does not take account of evil;
- 1 Cor 13:6 It does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
- 1 Cor 13:7 It covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- 1 Cor 13:8a Love never falls away. ...
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

- 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; Psa. 73:25;

116:1-2:

- 1 Cor 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
- 1 Cor 2:10 But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
- Matt 22:37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
- Matt 22:38 This is the great and first commandment.
- Psa 73:25 Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth.
- Psa 116:1 I love Jehovah because He hears / My voice, my supplications,
- Psa 116:2 Because He inclines His ear to me; / Therefore I will call upon Him all my days.

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.

Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.
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; Psa. 73:25-26.

Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

Col 1:18b ... He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;

2 Cor 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength."

Psa 73:25 Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth.

Psa 73:26 My flesh and my heart fail, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever.
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.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

John 14:5 Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going; how can we know the way?

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

1 Tim 1:14 And the grace of our Lord superabounded with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

John 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, he is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will

- manifest Myself to him.
- John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.
- 2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- 2 Cor 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.
- Rev 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
- Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.
- Col 1:18b ...He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Rom 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.
- Rom 7:6 But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.
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.
- 2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
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—Psa. 27:4.
- Psa 27:4 One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple.
- 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 Cor 12:31b ... And moreover I show to you a most excellent way.
- 1 Cor 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
- 1 Cor 13:2 And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- 1 Cor 13:3 And if I dole out all my possessions to feed others, and if I deliver up my body that I may boast, but do not have love, I profit nothing.
- 1 Cor 13:4 Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not puffed up;
- 1 Cor 13:5 It does not behave unbecomingly and does not seek its own things; it is not provoked and does not take account of evil;
- 1 Cor 13:6 It does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
- 1 Cor 13:7 It covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- 1 Cor 13:8 Love never falls away. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless.
- 1 Cor 13:13 Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.
- 1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
- 1 Cor 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.
- 1 Cor 14:4b ...but he who prophesies builds up the church.
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 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

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.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ completely.

Gal 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Thes 1:3 Remembering unceasingly your work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father;

Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

1 Thes 5:14 And we exhort you, brothers, Admonish the disorderly, console the fainthearted, sustain the weak, be long-suffering toward all.

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).

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God, and everyone who loves has been begotten of God and knows God.

1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.

2 John 5 And now I ask you, lady, not as writing a new commandment to you but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

2 John 6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you walk in love.

John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I have loved you.

John 15:17 These things I command you that you may love one another.

Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Jude 12a These are the hidden reefs in your love feasts, feasting together with you without fear, ...

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

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.

2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

Rom 12:10 Love one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another.

Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

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.

- 1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.
- 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
- 1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
- 1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
- 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
- 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
- 1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
- 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
- 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,
- Rom 16:2 That you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been the patroness of many, of myself as well.
- Rom 16:3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
- Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;
- Rom 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.
- Rom 16:6 Greet Mary, one who has labored much for you.
- Rom 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.
- Rom 16:8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.
- Rom 16:9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved.
- Rom 16:10 Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those of the household of Aristobulus.
- Rom 16:11 Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.
- Rom 16:12 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Greet Persis, the beloved sister, one who has labored much in the Lord.
- Rom 16:13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother as well as mine.
- Rom 16:14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers with them.
- Rom 16:15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints with them.
- Rom 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.
- Col 4:16 And when this letter is read among you, cause that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans also, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- Lev 2:4 And when you present an offering of a meal offering baked in the oven, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened cakes mingled with oil or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

Lev 2:5 And if your offering is a meal offering baked on a flat plate, it shall be of fine flour mingled with oil, unleavened.