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

RA Hymns: 1206, 431

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:

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 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,
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, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is 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!

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.
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; 

Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, ...

And Jacob dwelt in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.

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.

And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

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).

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):

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."

But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed! The Lord comes!

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.

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.

And if I dole out all my possessions to feed other, and if I deliver up my body that I may boast, but do not have love, I profit nothing.

Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not puffed up;

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.

Love 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. ...

But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.

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 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 puff[s] 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.

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 16:15  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.
Message Two

The Joy of the Triune God Becoming Our Joy

JL Hymns: 1153, 717

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

Rom 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

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.
      Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.
      Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,
   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.
      Rom 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.
      John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full.
      John 17:13 But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy made full in themselves.
      Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.
      Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
      2 Cor 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we are fellow workers with you for your joy; for by faith you stand.
      Phil 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,
Phil 2:17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and I rejoice together with you all.
Phil 2:18 And in like manner you also rejoice, and you rejoice together with me.
3. We may experience the joy of the Lord’s word being in our heart— Jer. 15:16.
Jer 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, / And Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart, / For I am called by Your name, / O Jehovah, God of hosts.
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:
John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.
John 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ.
2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
   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.
   Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
   Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
   Psa 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; / In Your presence is fullness of joy; / At Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
   Jer 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, / And Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart, / For I am called by Your name, / O Jehovah, God of hosts.
   b. God’s desire is to give Himself to us to be our enjoyment—Neh. 8:10.
   Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.
   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.
   John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
   John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
   Col 2:6 As therefore you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him,
   Col 2:7 Having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

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.
   John 15:10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.
   John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full.
      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.
   1 Pet 1:8 Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,
3. The matter of eating and enjoying the Lord is based on John 6:57.

   John 6:57    As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

4. The Christian living is a life of eating, drinking, and enjoying the Lord day by day—v. 57; 1 Cor. 10:4.

   John 6:57    As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

   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.

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.

   Prov 29:18  Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; / But happy is he who keeps the law.

   Acts 26:19  Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

6. Our spirit needs to take the lead in enjoying the Lord—Heb. 4:12:

   Heb 4:12   For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

   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.

   John 17:13  But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

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:

   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;

   Col 1:13   Who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

   Col 1:27   To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

   Col 2:9    For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,

   Col 2:16   Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,

   Col 2:17   Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.

   Col 3:1    If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

   Col 3:4    When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

   Col 3:11  Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

   1. Christ is our allotted portion, our good land—the divine inheritance for our enjoyment—1:12.

   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;

   2. Christ is the reality of every positive thing in the universe—2:16-17.

   Col 2:16   Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath.

   Col 2:17   Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.

   3. Christ is the One sitting at the right hand of God—3:1.

   Col 3:1    If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are
4. Christ dwells in us as our hope of glory—1:27.
   Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

   Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

6. Christ is the constituent of the one new man—vv. 10-11.
   Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
   Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

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).

Psa 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; / In Your presence is fullness of joy; / At Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
S. S. 1:1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.
S. S. 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine.
S. S. 1:3 Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you.
S. S. 1:4 Draw me; we will run after you
2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
Eph 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,
Eph 3:15 Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named,
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 3:20 But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us,
Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.
Psa 46:4a There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God, ...
Psa 36:8b ... And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.
Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers
Rom 8:39 Nor height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Psa 40:8a I delight in doing Your will, O My God; ...
Phil 4:11 Not that I speak according to lack, for I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content.

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. A Christian should be a joyful person—joyful in the Spirit—Gal. 5:22:

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

1. The Lord is our joy when we are in Him—Rom. 14:17.
   Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

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.
   John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

3. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of joy—Rom. 14:17:
   Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
   a. If we are joyful, this indicates that the Holy Spirit in us is also joyful—Gal. 5:22.
      Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
   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.
      Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,
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

MC Hymns: 744

Matt 5:8    Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Matt 13:3    And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.
Matt 13:4    And as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the way, and the birds came and devoured them.
Matt 13:5    And others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much earth, and immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of earth.
Matt 13:6    But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered.
Matt 13:7    And others fell on the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them.
Matt 13:8    But others fell on the good earth and yielded fruit, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.
Matt 13:9    He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
Matt 13:18   You therefore hear the parable of the one who sowed.
Matt 13:19   When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown beside the way.
Matt 13:20   And the one sown on the rocky places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
Matt 13:21   Yet he does not have root in himself but lasts only for a time, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he is stumbled.
Matt 13:22   And the one sown in the thorns, this is he who hears the word, and the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches utterly choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
Matt 13:23   But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.
Prov 4:23    Keep your heart with all vigilance, / For from it are the issues of life.
Jer 32:39    And I will give them one heart and one way, to fear Me all the days, for their own good and for the good of their children after them.
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,

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).

Matt 9:4    And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts?
Heb 4:12    For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
Acts 11:23  Who, when he arrived and saw the grace of God, rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain with the Lord with purpose of heart;
John 14:1   Do not let your heart be troubled; believe into God, believe also into Me.
John 16:22  Therefore you also now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.
Heb 10:22  Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
1 John 3:20  Because if our heart blames us, it is because God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

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.

Matt 5:3  Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
Matt 5:8  Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Psa 78:8  That they might not be like their fathers, / A stubborn and rebellious generation, / A generation that did not set their heart right, / And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

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.

Prov 4:23  Keep your heart with all vigilance, / For from it are the issues of life.
Matt 12:33  Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for by the fruit the tree is known.
Matt 12:34  Offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
Matt 12:35  The good man, out of his good treasure, brings forth good things, and the evil man, out of his evil treasure, brings forth evil things.
Matt 12:36  And I say to you that every idle word which men shall speak, they will render an account concerning it in the day of judgment.
Matt 12:37  For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.
Ezek 36:26  I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will give you a heart of flesh.
Ezek 36:27  And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and My ordinances you shall keep and do.

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:

1 John 3:9  Everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God.
1 Pet 1:23  Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.
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 2:21  In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
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.
Matt 13:18  You therefore hear the parable of the one who sowed.
Matt 13:19  When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown beside the way.
Matt 13:20  And the one sown on the rocky places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
Matt 13:21 Yet he does not have root in himself but lasts only for a time, and when affliction or persecution occurs because of the word, immediately he is stumbled.

Matt 13:22 And the one sown in the thorns, this is he who hears the word, and the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches utterly choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Matt 13:23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.

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.

   Ezek 36:26 I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

2. To be soft means that our heart is submissive and yielding toward the Lord, not stiff-necked and rebellious—cf. Exo. 32:9.

   Exo 32:9 And Jehovah said to Moses, I have seen this people, and indeed they are, a stiff-necked people.

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.

   Matt 13:3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.

   Matt 13:4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the way, and the birds came and devoured them.

   Matt 13:5 And others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much earth, and immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

   Matt 13:6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered.

   Matt 13:7 And others fell on the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them.

   Matt 13:8 But others fell on the good earth and yielded fruit, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.

   Matt 13:9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

   Matt 13:18 You therefore hear the parable of the one who sowed.

   Matt 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown beside the way.

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   Matt 13:23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.

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.

   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 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

   2 Cor 4:17 For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory,

   2 Cor 4:18 Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."
Heb 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline?
Jer 48:11 Moab has been at ease from his youth; / And he is settled on his lees / And has not been emptied from vessel to vessel; / Nor has he gone into exile. / Therefore his taste remains in him, / And his scent is not changed.

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.
   Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
   Psa 73:25 Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth.
   Jer 32:39 And I will give them one heart and one way, to fear Me all the days, for their own good and for the good of their children after them.
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.
   Psa 86:11 Teach me, O Jehovah, Your way; / I will walk in Your truth. / Make my heart single in fearing Your name.
   Isa 11:1 Then a sprout will come forth from the stump of Jesse, / And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
   Isa 11:2 And the Spirit of Jehovah will rest upon Him, / The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, / The Spirit of counsel and might, / The Spirit of the knowledge and fear of Jehovah.
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.
   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.
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.
   1 Tim 1:5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith;
   Psa 73:1 Surely God is good to Israel, / To those who are pure in heart.

C. God wants our heart to be loving:
1. A loving heart is a heart in which the emotion loves 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.
   Psa 42:1 As the hart pants / After the streams of water, / So my soul pants / For You, O God.
   Psa 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, / For the living God. / When will I come and appear / Before God?
The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine.

Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you.

Draw me; we will run after you

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.

But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

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.

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.

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.

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.

Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.

He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him, having an alabaster flask of ointment of great value, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at table.

But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, Why this waste?

For this could have been sold for much and given to the poor.

But Jesus, knowing it, said to them, Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a noble deed to Me.

For the poor you have with you always, but you do not always have Me.

For in pouring out this ointment on My body, she has done it for My burial.

Truly I say to you, Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age.

D. God wants our heart to be at peace:

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.

Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

And in this we will know that we are of the truth, and we will persuade our heart before Him,

Because if our heart blames us, it is because God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

Beloved, if our heart does not blame us, we have boldness toward God;

Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
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.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 Tim 1:5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith;

1 Tim 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

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.

Phil 4:6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every man’s understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

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.

Col 3:13 Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive.

Col 3:14 And over all these things put on love, which is the uniting bond of perfectness.

Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.

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:

2 Cor 3:14 But their thoughts were hardened; for until the present day the same veil remains at the reading of the old covenant, it not being unveiled to them that the veil is being done away with in Christ.

2 Cor 4:4 In whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.

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.

Gal 1:16 To reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles, immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood,

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,

Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

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.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

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.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
B. The second problem that life encounters in us is hypocrisy—Matt. 6:2, 5; 7:5; 23:13-29:

Matt 6:2 Therefore when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.

Matt 6:5 And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.

Matt 7:5 Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.

Matt 23:13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you close off the kingdom of the heavens in the face of men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter.

Matt 23:14 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour the widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers. For this reason you shall receive greater judgment.

Matt 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you go about the sea and the dry land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as yourselves.

Matt 23:16 Woe to you, blind guides, who say, Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound.

Matt 23:17 Fools and blind men, which is greater, the gold or the temple which sanctifies the gold?

Matt 23:18 And, Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift which is upon it, he is bound.

Matt 23:19 Blind men, which is greater, the gift or the altar which sanctifies the gift?

Matt 23:20 Therefore he who swears by the altar swears by it and by all the things upon it;

Matt 23:21 And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by Him who dwells in it;

Matt 23:22 And he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

Matt 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you give a tenth of the mint and the anise and the cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law-justice and mercy and faithfulness. But these you should have done and not neglected the others.

Matt 23:24 Blind guides, who strain out the gnat but swallow the camel!

Matt 23:25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inwardly they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

Matt 23:26 Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and the dish so that their outside also may become clean.

Matt 23:27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you resemble white-washed graves, which outwardly appear beautiful but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

Matt 23:28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Matt 23:29 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build up the graves of the prophets and adorn the tombs of the righteous,

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:

2 Cor 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds,

2 Cor 10:5 As we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.
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.

Rom 8:6  
For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

1 John 2:27  
And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

Eph 3:1  
For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles-
Eph 4:1  
I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

Eph 6:20  
For which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

2 Cor 2:12  
Furthermore, when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was open to me in the Lord,

2 Cor 2:13  
I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.

2 Cor 2:14  
But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.

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.

Matt 16:24  
Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Matt 16:25  
For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

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.

Phil 2:5  
Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,

1 Cor 2:16  
For who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Eph 4:23  
And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Rom 12:2  
And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

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.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

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.

Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

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 Thes 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ.

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.

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.

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

2 Cor 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?

1 Cor 16:24 My love in Christ Jesus be with you all.

Rev 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.

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.

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,

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.

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 7:39a  But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; …

2 Cor 4:10  Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Cor 4:11  For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Cor 4:12  So then death operates in us, but life in you.

1 John 5:16a  If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. …

2 Cor 3:3  Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.

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.
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

Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;

Col 2:2 That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,

Col 2:3 In whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Col 3:1 If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Col 3:2 Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth.

Col 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

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.
   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.
      Col 2:3 In whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.
   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.

Eph 1:8 Which He caused to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence,
Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him.

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.

Col 3:1 If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
Col 3:2 Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth.
Col 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in 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.

1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he who plants anything nor he who waters, but God who causes the growth.
Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you.

B. The growth of the Body depends on what comes out of Christ as the Head—Eph. 4:15-16:

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.

1. When the Body is supplied by holding the Head, the Body grows with the growth of God—Col. 2:19.

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.

2. The Body grows out from the Head, for all the supply comes from the Head—Eph. 4:15.

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ.

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:

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.

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.

1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he who plants anything nor he who waters, but God who causes the growth.

3. Only God can give growth; only God can give us Himself, and without Him, we cannot have growth—vv. 6-7:

1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he who plants anything nor he who waters, but God who causes the growth.

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.

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

D. The growth of the Body is the building up of the Body—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19:

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.

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.

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.

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
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.

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:

Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...

a. When Christ enters into the saints and lives within them, the Christ within the saints becomes the church—Col. 3:10-11.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

b. The Body of Christ grows by the growth of Christ within us and is built up this way—1:18; 2:19.

Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
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.

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:

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.
1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God has loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another.
1 John 4:16 And we know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.
1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.
Rom 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.
Rom 8:39 Nor height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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.

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

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.

Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
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

EM Hymns: 280, 395

Gen 41:39 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God let you know all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.

Gen 41:40 You shall be over my household, and according to your word all my people shall be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than you.

Gen 41:41 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.

Gen 41:42 And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck.

Gen 41:43 And he made him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they cried out before him, Bow the knee! And he set him over all the land of Egypt.

Gen 41:44 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, yet without your consent no man will lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt.

Gen 41:51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, for, he said, God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's house.

Gen 41:52 And he called the name of the second Ephraim, for, he said, God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.

Gen 45:5 And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Gen 45:6 For the famine has been in the midst of the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.

Gen 45:7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

Gen 45:8 So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Gen 47:14 And Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

Gen 47:15 And when the money from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan had been spent, all the Egyptians came to Joseph saying, Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For our money is gone.

Gen 47:16 And Joseph said, Bring your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.

Gen 47:17 And they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and for the flocks of sheep and for the herds of cattle and for the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year.

Gen 47:18 And when that year had ended, they came to him the second year and said to him, We cannot hide from my lord that our money has been spent, and the herds of cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord except our bodies and our lands.

Gen 47:19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we and our land will become servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.

Gen 47:20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them; and the land became Pharaoh's.

Gen 47:21 And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end.

Gen 47:22 Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an assigned portion from Pharaoh, and they lived off their portion which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.

Gen 47:23 Then Joseph said to the people, Now that I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you that you may sow the land.

Gen 50:15 And when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the evil which we did to him?

Gen 50:16 And they sent a message to Joseph, saying, Your father charged before he died, saying,

Gen 50:17 Thus shall you say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong. So now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Gen 50:18 And his brothers also went and fell down before him and said, We are here as your servants.
And Joseph said to them, Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? Even though you intended evil against me, God intended it for good, to do as it is this day, to preserve alive a numerous people. Now therefore do not be afraid; I will sustain you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

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:

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<td>Heb 6:1a</td>
<td>Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, ...</td>
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<td>Gal 6:8</td>
<td>For he who sows unto his own flesh will reap corruption of the flesh, but he who sows unto the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life.</td>
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<td>Gal 5:22</td>
<td>Meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.</td>
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<td>Gal 5:23</td>
<td>The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.</td>
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A. The reigning aspect typified by Joseph is Christ constituted into our being—4:19.

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<td>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:</td>
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<td>Gen 37:19</td>
<td>And they said one to another, Here comes this master of dreams.</td>
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<td>Gen 37:5</td>
<td>Then Joseph had a dream; and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.</td>
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<td>Gen 37:6</td>
<td>And he said to them, Listen to this dream which I have had:</td>
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<td>Gen 37:7</td>
<td>There we were, binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf rose up and remained standing; and then your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.</td>
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<td>Gen 37:8</td>
<td>And his brothers said to him, Will you indeed reign over us and actually be a ruler among us? So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.</td>
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<td>Gen 37:9</td>
<td>And he had still another dream and told it to his brothers and said, Now I have had another dream: There were the sun and the moon and eleven stars, bowing down to me.</td>
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<td>Gen 37:10</td>
<td>And he told it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the ground to you?</td>
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<td>Gen 37:11</td>
<td>And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in his heart.</td>
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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.

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<td>And at the time of her delivery, there were twins in her womb.</td>
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<td>Gen 38:28</td>
<td>And while she was giving birth, one put out a hand; and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, This one came out first.</td>
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But when he drew back his hand, his brother suddenly came out; and she said, What a breach you have made for yourself! Therefore his name was called Perez.

And afterward his brother came out, who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and his name was called Zerah.

Do not judge, that you be not judged.

For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you.

And why do you look at the splinter which is in your brother's eye, but the beam in your eye you do not consider?

Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the splinter from your eye, and behold, the beam is in your eye?

Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.

And finally be all of the same mind, sympathetic, loving the brothers, tenderhearted, humble-minded;

Not rendering evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing one another, because you were called to this, that you might inherit blessing.

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.

Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

And when they saw him from a distance and before he came near to them, they conspired against him to put him to death.

And they said one to another, Here comes this master of dreams.

Now then, come and let us slay him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, A wild beast has devoured him; then we will see what will become of his dreams.

But when Reuben heard it, he tried to deliver him out of their hand and said, Let us not take his life.

And Reuben said to them, Shed no blood; throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him; for he is our brother, our flesh. And his brothers listened to him.

So when some Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And these brought Joseph into Egypt.

And when Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes.

And he returned to his brothers and said, The boy is not there; so as for me, what shall I do?

Then they took Joseph's coat and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the coat in the blood.

And when Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face.
Gen 38:16  And he turned aside to her by the way and said, Come now, let me come in to you; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, What will you give me, that you may come in to me?

Gen 38:17  And he said, I will send you a kid from the flock. And she said, Only if you give me a pledge until you send it.

Gen 38:18  And he said, What pledge shall I give you? And she said, Your seal and your cord and your staff that is in your hand. And he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him.

Gen 39:7  Now after these things his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, Lie with me.

Gen 39:8  But he refused and said to his master's wife, Behold, with me here, my master is not concerned about anything in the house, and he has put everything he has in my charge.

Gen 39:9  There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great evil, and sin against God?

Gen 39:10  And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

Gen 39:11  And one such day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house were there in the house.

Gen 39:12  And she grabbed him by his garment, saying, Lie with me! But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and went outside.

Gen 39:13  And when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,

Gen 39:14  She called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, See, he has brought in a Hebrew man to us to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I called out with a loud voice;

Gen 39:15  And when he heard that I lifted up my voice and called out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside.

Gen 39:16  And she placed his garment beside her until his master came home.

Gen 39:17  And she spoke to him with these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought to us, came in to me to lie with me, and I called out with a loud voice;

Gen 39:18  And when he heard that I lifted up my voice and called out, he left his garment beside me and fled outside.

Gen 39:19  And when his master heard the words of his wife that she had spoken to him, saying, This is the way your servant treated me; his anger burned.

Gen 39:20  And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while he was there in the prison,

Gen 39:21  Jehovah was with Joseph; and He extended kindness to him and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.

Gen 39:22  And the chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the prison; and whatever was done there, he was the one to do it.

Gen 39:23  The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in his charge, because Jehovah was with him; and whatever he did, Jehovah caused it to prosper.

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).

Matt 5-7  be omitted.

Matt 5:21  You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not murder, and whoever murders shall be liable to the judgment."

Matt 5:22  But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to the judgment of the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, Moreh, shall be liable to the Gehenna of fire.

Matt 5:23  Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you,

Matt 5:24  Leave your gift there before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
Matt 5:25  Be well disposed quickly toward your opponent at law, while you are with him on the way, lest the opponent deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

Matt 5:26  Truly I say to you, You shall by no means come out from there until you pay the last quadrans.

Matt 5:27  You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery."

Matt 5:28  But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman in order to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matt 5:29  So if your right eye stumbles you, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna.

Matt 5:30  And if your right hand stumbles you, cut it off and cast it from you, for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to pass away into Gehenna.

Matt 5:31  And it was said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

Matt 5:32  But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her who has been divorced commits adultery.

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):

Acts 7:9  And the patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt; yet God was with him

Gen 39:2  And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he became a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

Gen 39:3  And his master saw that Jehovah was with him and that Jehovah caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

Gen 39:4  And Joseph found favor in his sight, and he ministered to him; and he made him overseer of his house and put all that he had in his charge.

Gen 39:5  And from the time he made him overseer in his house and put him over all that he had, Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; and the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field.

Gen 39:21  Jehovah was with Joseph; and He extended kindness to him and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.

Gen 39:22  And the chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the prison; and whatever was done there, he was the one to do it.

Gen 39:23  The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in his charge, because Jehovah was with him; and whatever he did, Jehovah caused it to prosper.

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.

Gen 39:4  And Joseph found favor in his sight, and he ministered to him; and he made him overseer of his house and put all that he had in his charge.

Gen 39:5  And from the time he made him overseer in his house and put him over all that he had, Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; and the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field.

Gen 39:22  And the chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the prison; and whatever was done there, he was the one to do it.

Gen 39:23  The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in his charge, because Jehovah was with him; and whatever he did, Jehovah caused it to prosper.

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:

Gen 40:8 And they said to him, We have had a dream, and there is no one to interpret it. And Joseph said to them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell it to me.

Gen 41:9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my sins today.

Gen 41:10 Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and he put me in custody at the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker.

Gen 41:11 And we both had a dream in one night, I and he; each of us had a dream with its own interpretation.

Gen 41:12 And a young Hebrew man was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us; to each one he interpreted according to his dream.

Gen 41:13 And as he interpreted to us, so it happened; Pharaoh restored me to my office, and he hanged the baker.

Gen 41:14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself and changed his garments, and he came to Pharaoh.

Gen 41:15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream, but there is no one who can interpret it; and I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.

Gen 41:16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not of me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.

Gen 41:17 And Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, In my dream, there I was, standing on the bank of the River.

Gen 41:18 And there came up out of the River seven cows, fat-fleshed and fine-looking; and they grazed in the reed grass.

Gen 41:19 Then there came up after them seven other cows, poor and very ugly-looking and thin-fleshed; I had never seen such in all the land of Egypt for ugliness.

Gen 41:20 And the thin and ugly-looking cows ate up the first seven fat cows.

Gen 41:21 And when they had swallowed them, no one would have known that they had swallowed them, for they were still as ugly-looking as at the beginning. Then I awoke.

Gen 41:22 And I saw this in my dream: There were seven ears of grain, coming up on one stalk, full and good.

Gen 41:23 Then there were seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, that sprouted after them.

Gen 41:24 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.

Gen 41:25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, Pharaoh's dream is one dream; what God is about to do He has told Pharaoh.

Gen 41:26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dream is one.

Gen 41:27 And the seven thin and ugly-looking cows that came up after them are seven years, and so are the seven empty ears scorched by the east wind; they will be seven years of famine.

Gen 41:28 This matter is just as I have spoken to Pharaoh; what God is about to do He has shown to Pharaoh.

Gen 41:29 Seven years of great abundance are now about to come throughout all the land of Egypt.

Gen 41:30 Then seven years of famine will arise after them, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will consume the land.

Gen 41:31 And the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that famine which follows, for it will be very severe.

Gen 41:32 And as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

Gen 41:33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out for a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.
Gen 41:34  Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers over the land and take a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.
Gen 41:35  And let them gather all the food of these coming good years and lay up grain under Pharaoh's authority for food in the cities, and let them keep it.
Gen 41:36  And let the food become a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that will be in the land of Egypt, so that the land does not perish in the famine.
Gen 41:37  And the word seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants.
Gen 41:38  And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find such a man like this, in whom the Spirit of God is?
Gen 41:39  And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God let you know all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.
Gen 41:40  You shall be over my household, and according to your word all my people shall be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than you.
Gen 41:41  Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.
Gen 41:42  And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck.
Gen 41:43  And he made him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they cried out before him, Bow the knee! And he set him over all the land of Egypt.
Gen 41:44  And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, yet without your consent no man will lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt.
Gen 41:45  And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah, and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.
Gen 41:46  Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and passed through all the land of Egypt.

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.

   Acts 26:16  But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;

   Acts 26:17  Delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you,

   Acts 26:18  To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

   Acts 26:19  Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

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).

2 Cor 2:14  But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.

2 Cor 2:15  For we are a fragrance of Christ to God in those who are being saved and in those who are perishing:

2 Cor 2:16  To some a savor out of death unto death, and to the others a savor out of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Gen 41:12  And a young Hebrew man was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us; to each one he interpreted according to his dream.

Gen 41:13  And as he interpreted to us, so it happened; Pharaoh restored me to my office, and he hanged the baker.
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.

Eph 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles-
Eph 4:1 I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,
James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures trial, because when he has become approved by testing, he will receive the crown of life, which He promised to those who love Him.

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):

Gen 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, / A fruitful bough by a fountain; / His branches run over the wall.
Isa 11:1 Then a sprout will come forth from the stump of Jesse, / And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
Isa 11:2 And the Spirit of Jehovah will rest upon Him, / The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, / The Spirit of counsel and might, / The Spirit of the knowledge and fear of Jehovah.
John 15:1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.
John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.
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.
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 4:22 All the saints greet you, and especially those of Caesar's household.
Philem 10 I entreat you concerning my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus,

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):

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.
Psa 68:18 You have ascended on high; You have led captive those taken captive; / You have received gifts among men, / Even the rebellious ones also, / That Jehovah God may dwell among them.
Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.
Gen 41:42 And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck.

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:

Gen 41:42 And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck.


Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.
Eph 1:13  In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.
Eph 4:30  And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.
Luke 15:22  But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

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).
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,
Psa 45:9  The daughters of kings are among Your most prized; / The queen stands at Your right hand in the gold of Ophir.
Psa 45:13  The king's daughter is all glorious within the royal abode; / Her garment is a woven work inwrought with gold.
Luke 15:22  But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.
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,
Psa 45:14  She will be led to the King in embroidered clothing; / The virgins behind her, her companions, / Will be brought to You.
Rev 19:7  Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
Rev 19:8  And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
Rev 19:9  And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

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).
Acts 5:32  And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.
Gen 41:42  And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck.
S. S. 1:10  Your cheeks are lovely with plaits of ornaments, / Your neck with strings of jewels.
Prov 1:8  Hear, my son, the instruction of your father, / And do not reject the teaching of your mother;
Prov 1:9  For they will be a wreath of grace for your head / And ornaments for your neck.

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.
Gal 2:20  I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
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 1:21a  For to me, to live is Christ …
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).

Gen 41:45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah, and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

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:

Rom 5:17 For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:21 In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rom 14:18 For he who serves Christ in this is well pleasing to God and approved by men.

2 Cor 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Rev 4:1 After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things that must take place after these things.

Rev 4:2 Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting;

Rev 4:3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance.

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.

Gen 42:9 And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them, and he said to them, You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land.

Gen 42:24 And he turned away from them and wept. Then he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from among them and bound him before their eyes.

Gen 43:30 And Joseph hurried-for his inward parts burned for his brother-and sought a place to weep. So he entered into his chamber and wept there.

Gen 43:31 Then he washed his face and came out, and he controlled himself and said, Serve the meal.

Gen 45:1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who attended him; and he cried out, Have everyone go out from me. So there was no one standing with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.
And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

So he sent his brothers away; and as they departed, he said to them, Do not quarrel on the way.

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.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

... because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.

Jesus therefore answered them and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my slave, Do this, and he does it.

Jesus therefore answered them and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

Matthew 16:24; Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Isaiah 30:15a; For thus says the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, / In returning and rest you will be saved; / In quietness and in trust will be your strength; ...

Philippians 1:9; And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all discernment,

1 Thessalonians 3:12; And the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we also to you,

1 Thessalonians 4:9; Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for me to write to you, for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another;

Hebrews 13:1; Let brotherly love continue.

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 Corinthians 2:12-16.
Furthermore, when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was open to me in the Lord,

I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.

For we are a fragrance of Christ to God in those who are being saved and in those who are perishing:

To some a savor out of death unto death, and to the others a savor out of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

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!

And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, for, he said, God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s house.

And he called the name of the second Ephraim, for, he said, God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.

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

And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

And now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

And when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the evil which we did to him?

And Joseph said to them, Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?

And Joseph said to them, Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?

Now therefore do not be afraid; I will sustain you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

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:

**Hymns #635**

1 Let us contemplate the grape vine, From its life now let us learn,  
How its growth is fraught with suff'ring, Midst environment so stern;  
How unlike the untamed flowers Growing in the wilderness  
In a maze of wild confusion, Making patterns numberless.
But the blossoms of the grape vine
Though they do have some expression,
But a day since they have flowered
Never may they wave corollas

To a post the vine is fastened;
When its branches are extended,
To the stony soil committed,
It can never choose its own way,

Oh, how beautiful its verdure,
From life's energy and fullness
Till it's full of tender branches
Stretching 'gainst the sky's deep azure

But the master of the vineyard
But with knife and pruning scissors
Caring not the vine is tender,
All the pretty, excess branches

In this time of loss and ruin,
Nay, it gives itself more fully
To the hand that strips its branches,
That its life may not be wasted,

Into hard wood slowly hardens
Each remaining branch becoming
Then, beneath the scorching sunshine,
Thus the fruit more richly ripens

Bowed beneath its fruitful burden,
Labor of its growth thru suff'renring
Now its fruit is fully ripened,
But the harvest soon is coming,

Hands will pick and feet will trample
Till from out the reddened wine-press
All the day its flow continues,
Gushing freely, richly, sweetly,

In appearance now the grape vine
Having given all, it enters
No one offers to repay it
But 'tis stripped and cut e'en further

Yet its wine throughout the winter
Unto those in coldness shiv'ring,
Yet without, alone, the grape vine
Steadfastly its lot enduring,

Winter o'er, the vine prepareth
Fruit again itself to bear;
Budding forth and growing branches,
Ne'er murmuring or complaining
Or for all its loss desiring

Breathing air, untainted, heavenly,
Earth's impure, defiled affections
Facing sacrifice, yet smiling,
Strokes it bears as if it never

From the branches of the grape vine
Does the vine, for all it suffered,
Drunkards of the earth and wanderers,
From their pleasure and enjoyment

Not by gain our life is measured,
'Tis not how much wine is drunken,
For the strength of love e'er standeth
He who has the greatest suff'renring

Without glory are and small;
They are hardly seen withal.
Into fruit the blooms have grown.
With luxuriant beauty shown.
Thus it cannot freely grow;
To the trellis tied they go.
Drawing thence its food supply;
Or from difficulty fly.
Which in spring spreads o'er the field.
Growth abundant doth it yield.
Twining freely everywhere,
Tasting sweetly of the air.
Not in lenience doth abide,
Then would strip it of its pride.
But with deep, precision stroke
From the vine are neatly broke.

Dare the vine self-pity show?
To the one who wounds it so,
Till of beauty destitute,
But preserved for bearing fruit.
Every stump of bleeding shoot,
Clusters of abundant fruit.
Leaves are dried and from it drop;
Till the harvest of the crop.

Barren is and pitiful;
Into night inscrutable.
For the cheering wine that's drunk,
To a bare and branchless trunk.
Warmth and sweetness ever bears
Pressed with sorrow, pain, and cares.
Midst the ice and snow doth stand,
Though 'tis hard to understand.

Fruit again itself to bear;
Beauteous green again to wear;
For the winter's sore abuse,
Its fresh off'ring to reduce.
As it lifts its arms on high,
Ne'er the vine may occupy.
And while love doth prune once more,
Suffered loss and pain before.

Sap and blood and wine doth flow.
Lost, and yielded, poorer grow?
From it drink and merry make.
Do they richer thereby wake?
But by what we've lost 'tis scored;
But how much has been outpoured.
In the sacrifice we bear;
Ever has the most to share.
He who treats himself severely is the best for God to gain;
He who hurts himself most dearly most can comfort those in pain.
He who suffering never beareth is but empty “sounding brass”;
He who self-life never spareth has the joys which all surpass.

Gen 47:14 And Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.
Gen 47:15 And when the money from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan had been spent, all the Egyptians came to Joseph saying, Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For our money is gone.
Gen 47:16 And Joseph said, Bring your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.
Gen 47:17 And they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and for the flocks of sheep and for the herds of cattle and for the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year.
Gen 47:18 And when that year had ended, they came to him the second year and said to him, We cannot hide from my lord that our money has been spent, and the herds of cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord except our bodies and our lands.
Gen 47:19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we and our land will become servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.
Gen 47:20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them; and the land became Pharaoh's.
Gen 47:21 And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end.
Gen 47:22 Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an assigned portion from Pharaoh, and they lived off their portion which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.
Gen 47:23 Then Joseph said to the people, Now that I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you that you may sow the land.

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

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).
Gen 47:23 Then Joseph said to the people, Now that I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you that you may sow the land.

Lev 1:4 And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him, to make expiation for him.

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:
Gen 49:25 From the God of your father, who will help you, / And from the All-sufficient One, who will bless you / With blessings of heaven above, / Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, / Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

Gen 49:26 The blessings of your father surpass / The blessings of my ancestors / To the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. / They will be on the head of Joseph, / And on the crown of the head of the one who was separate from his / brothers.
And concerning Joseph he said, May his land be blessed of Jehovah / With the choicest things of heaven, with the dew / And with the deep waters that couch beneath;

With the choicest of the crops of the sun, / And with the choicest of the yield of the moons;

With the top of the ancient mountains, / And with the choicest things of the eternal hills;

With the choicest things of the earth, and the fullness thereof, / And the favor of Him who dwelt in the thornbush. / May they come upon the head of Joseph, / And upon the top of the head of him who is separated among his brothers.

And He who sits on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said, Write, for these words are faithful and true.

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.

But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, / Which shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

By faith Jacob, while he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshipped God, while leaning on the top of his staff.

And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

And he blessed Joseph and said, / The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, / The God who has shepherded me all my life to this day,

The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; / And may my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; / And may they be a teeming multitude in the midst of the earth.

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).

So then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new.

Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

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.

Giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father,

Always rejoice,

Unceasingly pray,

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
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

Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Neh 8:10c ...And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

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.

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

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.

Heb 9:28 So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him, apart from sin, unto salvation.

1 Pet 2:24 Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.

2 Cor 5:21 Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.

C. Colossians 2:15 portrays the warfare that took place at the time of Christ’s crucifixion:

Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

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.

Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

3. The rulers and authorities are evil angels, fallen angels that are subordinates of Satan working for him—Eph. 2:2.

Eph 2:2 In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience;

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:

Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

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.

Col 2:15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

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:

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

A. The maturity of the bride—vv. 7-9; Eph. 4:13-15:

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

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.

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

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 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.

Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

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.

Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

B. The building of the bride—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16:

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
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.

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.

   Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
   Exo 25:8 And let them make a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell in their midst;
   Exo 1:11 So they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built storage cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Raamses.
   Exo 40:2 On the first day of the first month you shall raise up the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting.
   Exo 40:3 And you shall put the Ark of the Testimony there, and you shall screen the Ark with the veil.
   Exo 40:34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.
   Exo 40:35 And Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud settled on it and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

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.

   Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
   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.

3. God’s building is the corporate expression of the Triune God—1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 17:22; Eph. 3:19b, 21.

   1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
   1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
   John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
   Eph 3:19b ... 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.

C. The righteousness of the bride—Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 5:20; 22:11-13:

   Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
   Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
   Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
   Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
   Matt 22:11 But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,
   Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
   Matt 22:13 Then the king said to the servants, Bind his feet and hands, and cast him out into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.
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.

   Matt 5:6  Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
   Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

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.

   2 Cor 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.
   Eph 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.
   Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

3. Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment—Rev. 19:8.

   Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

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.

   Matt 22:11 But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,
   Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
   Matt 22:13 Then the king said to the servants, Bind his feet and hands, and cast him out into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.
   Matt 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
   Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.
   Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
   Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

D. The beauty of the bride—Eph. 5:25-27:

   Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
   Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
   Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

1. As the bride, the church needs beauty; the beauty in Ephesians 5 is for the presentation of the bride.

   Eph 5 be omitted.

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:

   Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...

   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:

   Eph 6 be omitted.
1. Spiritual warfare is a matter of the Body; we are a corporate army fighting the battle for God’s interest on earth—Rev 17:14; 19:14; cf. 2 Tim. 2:4.

   Rev 17:14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them.

   Rev 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

   2 Tim 2:4 No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.

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.

   Eph 5 be omitted.

   Eph 6 be omitted.

   Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

   Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

3. Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride as His army to fight against Antichrist at Armageddon—Rev. 19:11-21.

   Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

   Rev 19:12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written which no one knows but Himself.

   Rev 19:13 And He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God.

   Rev 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

   Rev 19:15 And out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations; and He will shepherd them with an iron rod; and He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

   Rev 19:16 And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

   Rev 19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come here; gather yourselves to the great dinner of God,

   Rev 19:18 That you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free and slave and small and great.

   Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.

   Rev 19:20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone.

   Rev 19:21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeds out of the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

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.

   Matt 22:11 But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,

   Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

   Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
**Rev 19:8**  And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

**Rev 19:14**  And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

### 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.
      
      **1 Thes 5:16**  Always rejoice,
   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.