

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO
GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH**

Messages One and Two

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

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:2, 9; 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—1:2, 9, 24, 30:

- A. We have all been called into the fellowship, the enjoyment, of Christ (v. 9); the word *fellowship* includes the thought of enjoyment; Christ is our allotted portion given to us by God for our enjoyment (v. 2; Col. 1:12).
- B. In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul's intention was to solve the problems among the saints in Corinth; for all the problems, especially the matter of division, the only solution is the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ.
- C. We should concentrate on Christ, not on any persons, things, or matters other than Christ; we should focus on Christ as our unique center appointed by God, that all the problems among the believers may be solved—1:9; Col. 1:17b, 18b.
- D. Our goal is the fullest enjoyment of Christ and the fullest gaining of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ; this issues in our having the uttermost enjoyment of Christ as our prize in the kingdom age of one thousand years—Phil. 3:14; Matt. 25:21, 23.
- E. We need to be those who are "thinking the one thing"; *the one thing* in Philippians refers to the subjective knowledge, experience, and enjoyment of Christ; the one thing is the pursuing of Christ to gain Him and possess Him—2:2, 5; 1:20-21; 3:7-14; 4:13:
 - 1. Our thinking should be focused on the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and the experience and enjoyment of Christ; focusing on anything else causes us to think differently, thus creating dissensions among us—1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:8-9, 15; 4:2.
 - 2. 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.

II. 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, the best love (Rev. 2:4; 1 John 4:19), and of loving one another for the building up of the organic Body of Christ (Eph. 4:16):

- A. Our loving the Lord is the indispensable requirement for enabling us to enter into His heart and apprehend all its secrets and for our realization of and participation in the deep and hidden things God has ordained and prepared for us—1 Cor. 2:9-10; Matt. 22:37-38; Psa. 73:25; 116:1-2:
 - 1. 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—Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psa. 73:25-26.
 - 2. 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; *Hymns*, #559.

3. We must be persons who are flooded with and carried away by 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.
 4. 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; Rom. 8:6b; Mal. 2:15-16.
- 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—13:8a:
1. The love described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 is the expression of the divine life (vv. 4-8a); furthermore, the fact that love is the fruit of the Spirit indicates that the substance of love must be the Spirit (Gal. 5:22); if we do not have love, our speaking is like that of sounding brass and a clanging cymbal, which give sounds without life (1 Cor. 13:1; 14:1, 3, 4b, 12, 31; 2 Cor. 3:6).
 2. Love is not jealous, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all things, endures all things, survives everything, and is the greatest—1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13.
 3. “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”; we may listen to the messages of the ministry and become puffed up with mere knowledge—8:1b; cf. 2 Cor. 3:6.
 4. The law of the Spirit of life is the law of Christ as the law of love—Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2-3.
 5. When the law of love is activated within us, we automatically and spontaneously will be shepherds who have the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior Christ—John 21:15-17; Luke 15:3-7.
 6. When the law of love 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 the weak” (Acts 20:35) and “sustain the weak” (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. 14:1; 15:1).
 7. The Christ whom we love is the church-loving Christ; when we love Him, we will love the church as He does—Eph. 5:25.
 8. 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).
 9. 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.
- C. 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.

III. 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:

- A. We need to enjoy Christ as the portion given to us by God—v. 2.
- B. We need to enjoy Christ as God’s power and God’s wisdom as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to us—vv. 24, 30.
- C. 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.
- D. We need to enjoy Christ as the depths (deep things) of God—1 Cor. 2:10.
- E. We need to enjoy Christ as the unique foundation of God’s building—3:11.
- F. 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).
- G. 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).
- H. 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.

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

- A. God's intention in His economy is to be the fountain, the source, of living waters to dispense Himself into us for our satisfaction and enjoyment; the goal of this enjoyment is to produce the church, God's counterpart, as God's increase, God's enlargement, to be God's fullness for His expression—John 3:29-30; Eph. 3:16-19, 21.
- B. The only way to take God as the fountain of living waters is to drink of Him and flow Him out day by day; this requires us to call on the Lord continually (with singing, thanking, rejoicing, praying, praising, and making God's saving deeds known to others)—Psa. 36:8-9; Isa. 12:3-6; 1 Cor. 12:13; John 7:37-39; 4:10, 14; Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- C. Instead of enjoying God by drinking of Him, God's people were unfaithful to Him by committing two evils—"My people have committed two evils: / They have forsaken Me, / The fountain of living waters, / To hew out for themselves cisterns, / Broken cisterns, / Which hold no water"—Jer. 2:13:
 - 1. First, God's people forsook God as their fountain, their source, for their enjoyment; second, they turned to sources other than God that could not satisfy them or make them the enlargement of God as His fullness for His expression.
 - 2. The hewing out of cisterns portrays Israel's toil in their human labor to make something (idols) to replace God; that the cisterns were broken and could hold no water indicates that apart from God dispensed into us as living water for our enjoyment, nothing can quench our thirst and make us God's increase for His expression—John 4:13-14.
- D. The evil condition of the wicked is that they do not come to the Lord to eat, drink, and enjoy the Lord; they do many things, but they do not come to contact the Lord, to take Him, to receive Him, to taste Him, and to enjoy Him; in the sight of God nothing is more evil than this—Isa. 57:20; cf. 55:1-2, 6-7.
- E. Although we are unfaithful, God is faithful, but His faithfulness is not according to our natural understanding or concept:
 - 1. God is faithful to take away our idols; anything within us that we love more than the Lord or that replaces the Lord in our life is an idol—Ezek. 14:3; 1 John 5:21.
 - 2. The outward peace in our environment, our personal comfort and ease, and our possessions can become idols to us to lead us astray; but God is faithful to take these things away so that we may drink of Him as the fountain of living waters.
 - 3. God is faithful in allowing us to have troubles so that we may learn not to trust in ourselves but in Him and so that He may lead us into His economy for us to enjoy Christ, to absorb Christ, to drink Christ, to eat Christ, and to assimilate Christ so that God may increase in us to fulfill His economy—Jer. 17:7-8; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; John 16:33.
 - 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 1; 47:7 and footnote 1.