

**LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER  
FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH  
AS THE BODY OF CHRIST**

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

**The Lord's New Commandment Given to Us—  
That We Love One Another**

TW *Hymns* 1154, 1343

Scripture Reading: John 13:34-35; 1 John 2:7-8; 3:11, 23

- John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
- John 13:35 By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
- 1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard.
- 1 John 2:8 Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
- 1 John 3:11 For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,
- 1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, even as He gave a commandment to us.

**I. In John 13, after the Lord Jesus washed His disciples' feet to show them that He loved them to the uttermost (v. 1), He charged them to do the same to one another in love (v. 14); then He said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (vv. 34-35):**

- John 13 be omitted.
- John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost.
- John 13:14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

**A. The commandment in verse 34 is the new commandment given to us by the Lord in the New Testament, which is different from the old commandments in the Old Testament:**

- John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
1. The New Testament commandments of the Lord (John 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12; 1 John 2:3, 4, 7, 8; 3:22, 23, 24; 4:21; 5:2, 3; 2 John 4, 5, 6) are not merely injunctions; they are His words, which are spirit and life as a supply to us—John 6:63.
- John 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
- 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 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 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I have loved you.
- 1 John 2:3 And in this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.
- 1 John 2:4 He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in this one;
- 1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard.

- 1 John 2:8 Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
- 1 John 3:22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.
- 1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, even as He gave a commandment to us.
- 1 John 3:24 And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us.
- 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God love his brother also.
- 1 John 5:2 In this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do His commandments.
- 1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.
- 2 John 4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.
- 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 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
2. We should love God and His children with the divine love that is conveyed to us through the words of the Lord to become our experience and enjoyment.
- B. A way to receive, experience, and enjoy Christ is by keeping His new commandment to love one another for the expression of His love that all the people may know that we are His disciples—13:34-35:
- John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
- John 13:35 By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
1. Real love is the issue of enjoying the processed Triune God in the divine dispensing—2 Cor. 13:14.
- 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.
2. When we are in the fellowship of the divine life (1 John 1:1-3), that is, in the enjoyment of the Triune God, the outcome of this enjoyment is the divine love with which we spontaneously love others; in particular, we love all those who are organically related to our begetting Father (5:1); this love is possible only because we have had the divine birth (John 1:12-13; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4, 18).
- 1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);
- 1 John 1:2 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- 1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- 1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God, and everyone who loves Him who has begotten loves him also who has been begotten of Him.
- John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,
- John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- 1 John 2:29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness also has been begotten of Him.
- 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 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 5:4 For everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which has overcome the world—our faith.
  - 1 John 5:18 We know that everyone who is begotten of God does not sin, but he who has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one does not touch him.
3. Here we have a triangular love involving God, ourselves, and all those born of God, which is in the organic union with the Triune God who is love (4:8, 16).
- 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.
  - 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.

## II. The love of God is God Himself; love is the inward essence of God and the heart of God—vv. 8, 16:

- 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.
  - 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.
- A. The love of God is the source of salvation—John 3:16; Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:4-5.
- John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.
  - Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
  - Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)
  - Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and the love to man of our Savior God appeared,
  - Titus 3:5 Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,
- B. God's predestination of us unto the divine sonship was motivated by the divine love—Eph. 1:4-5.
- Eph 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,
  - Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
- C. The love of God accomplished salvation for us; God's giving of His only begotten Son to us that we may be saved from perdition judicially through His death and have the eternal life organically in His resurrection was motivated by the divine love—John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10:
- John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.
  - 1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested among us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might have life and live through Him.
  - 1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins.
1. In the love of God, the Son of God saves us not only from our sins by His blood but also from our death by His life—Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; Rom. 5:10.
- Eph 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace,
  - Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood
  - Rom 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,
2. God loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins in His judicial redemption with the intention that we might have life and live through Him in His organic salvation—1 John 2:1; 4:9-10; John 6:57; 14:19; Gal. 2:20.
- 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous;

- 1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested among us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might have life and live through Him.
- 1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins.
- 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.
- John 14:19 Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live.
- 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.
3. God's excelling love is seen in His becoming a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins and the propitiation place for us to meet and be infused with God; God as love meets with us and speaks to us in the propitiating, redeeming, and shining Christ so that we can be infused with Him as love, mercy, and grace for His effulgent and radiant glory—Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 4:16; Exo. 25:17, 22.
- Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
- Rom 3:25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred,
- Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.
- Exo 25:17 And you shall make an expiation cover of pure gold: two and a half cubits shall be its length, and one and a half cubits, its width.
- Exo 25:22 And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.
- D. The love of God causes us to obtain salvation (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Matt. 22:3; Acts 5:32; 2 Tim. 3:15) and become His children (1 John 3:1).
- 2 Cor 5:18 But all things are out from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 2 Cor 5:19 Namely, that God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, and has put in us the word of reconciliation.
- 2 Cor 5:20 On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.
- Matt 22:3 And he sent his slaves to call those who had been called to the wedding feast, yet they would not come.
- 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.
- 2 Tim 3:15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- 1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. Because of this the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
- E. The love of God leads us in our living—2 Thes. 2:16-17; Heb. 12:6.
- 2 Thes 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope in grace,
- 2 Thes 2:17 Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good work and word.
- Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."
- F. God has poured out His love in our hearts with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), who has been given to us, as the motivating power within us, so that we may more than conquer in all our tribulations (8:37 and footnote 1).
- 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 8:37 But in all these things we <sup>1</sup>more than conquer through Him who loved us.

note 1 Because of God's unchanging love for us and the fact that Christ has accomplished everything on our behalf, neither tribulation nor persecution can suppress or defeat us; rather, in all these things we more than overcome and conquer through Him who loved us.

- G. The love of God works for us eternally—Jer. 31:3; John 13:1; Rom. 8:38-39.
- Jer 31:3 Jehovah appeared to me from afar, saying, / Indeed I have loved you with an eternal love, / Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.
- John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost.
- 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.

**III. In 1 John 2:7-8, relating to the Lord's commandment in John 13:34, the apostle John says, "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard. Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining":**

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

- A. The commandment regarding brotherly love is both old and new: old, because the believers have had it from the beginning of their Christian life; new, because in their Christian walk it dawns with new light and shines with new enlightenment and fresh power again and again—1 John 2:7-8; 3:11, 23; cf. John 13:34.

1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard.

1 John 2:8 Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

1 John 3:11 For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, even as He gave a commandment to us.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

- B. The fact that the old commandment is new is true in the Lord, since He not only gave it to His believers but also renews it in their daily walk continually; it is true also in the believers, since they not only have received it once for all but also are enlightened and refreshed by it repeatedly.

**IV. In 1 John we see that the practice of the divine love is the outcome of our enjoyment of the Triune God as the all-inclusive Spirit, the One who is moving and working within us as the anointing in the fellowship of the divine life to saturate us with all that the Triune God is, with all that He has done, and with all that He has obtained and attained—1:3; 2:3-11, 27:**

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:3 And in this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

1 John 2:4 He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in this one;

1 John 2:5 But whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. In this we know that we are in Him.

- 1 John 2:6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.
- 1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard.
- 1 John 2:8 Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
- 1 John 2:9 He who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.
- 1 John 2:10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause of stumbling in him;
- 1 John 2:11 But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
- 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.

A. If we would experience and enjoy the divine love and have it become the love by which we love others, we need to know God experientially by continuously living in the divine life—vv. 3-6; Phil. 3:10a.

- 1 John 2:3 And in this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.
- 1 John 2:4 He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in this one;
- 1 John 2:5 But whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. In this we know that we are in Him.
- 1 John 2:6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.
- Phil 3:10a To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, ...

B. In order to practice the divine love as a virtue of the divine life, we need the divine life that has been sown as the divine seed (1 John 3:9; 2:29 and footnote 7) into our being; we also need the divine Spirit (3:24); the divine life is the source, and the divine Spirit is the One who actually carries out the matter of loving others.

- 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 John 2:29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness also has been <sup>7</sup>begotten of Him.

note 7 John's writings on the mysteries of the eternal divine life stress very much the divine birth (3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; John 1:12-13), which is our regeneration (John 3:3, 5). It is the greatest wonder in the entire universe that human beings could be begotten of God and sinners could be made children of God! Through such an amazing divine birth we have received the divine life, which is the eternal life (1:2), as the divine seed sown into our being (3:9). Out of this seed all the riches of the divine life grow from within us. It is by this that we abide in the Triune God and live out the divine life in our human living, i.e., live out the life that does not practice sin (3:9) but practices righteousness (2:29), loves the brothers (5:1), overcomes the world (5:4), and is not touched by the evil one (5:18).

- 1 John 3:24 And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us.

C. We should love God and His children with the divine love and not with our natural love, which must be put on the cross; one difference between God's love and our natural love is that it is very easy for our natural love to be offended.

D. Our living in the love of God toward one another is the perfection and completion of this love in its manifestation in us—4:11-12; 2:5.

- 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God has loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another.
- 1 John 4:12 No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
- 1 John 2:5 But whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. In this we know that we are in Him.

**V. The church life for the organic building up of the Body of Christ is a life of brotherly love—4:7-8; 2 John 5-6; John 15:12, 17; Rev. 3:7; Eph. 5:2; cf. Jude 12a:**

- 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, shepherding themselves; ...
- A. The one who loves God and the brothers is enjoying the divine life; the one who does not love is abiding in the satanic death—1 John 3:14; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-3.
- 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.
- 2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.
- 2 Cor 11:3 But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.
- B. Just as the Lord Jesus laid down His soul-life that we might have the divine life, we need to lose our soul-life and deny the self to love the brothers and minister life to them in the practice of the Body life—1 John 3:16; John 10:11,17-18; 15:13; Eph. 4:29—5:2; 2 Cor. 12:15; Rom. 12:9-13.
- 1 John 3:16 In this we know love, that He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers.
- John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
- John 10:17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.
- John 10:18 No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment I received from My Father.
- John 15:13 No one has greater love than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
- Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.
- Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.
- Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice.
- Eph 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you.
- Eph 5:1 Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children;
- 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.
- 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?
- Rom 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.
- 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.
- Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope; endure in tribulation; persevere in prayer.
- Rom 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality.
- C. We need to lose our soul-life by not loving the world with its pleasure; instead, taking in God and expressing God as love in the church life of brotherly love should be our joy, amusement, entertainment, and happiness—1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 16:25-26; cf. 2 Tim. 3:4; Psa. 36:8-9.
- 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him;

- 1 John 2:16 Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.
- 1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and its lust, but he who does the will of God abides forever.
- 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.
- Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
- 2 Tim 3:4 Traitors, reckless, blinded with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
- 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.
- D. Brotherly love in the church life is expressed practically in our caring for the necessities of the needy saints without any self-serving purpose or outward self-display; in the sharing of material things with the needy saints, the grace of the Lord's life with His love flows among the members of the Body of Christ and is infused into them—1 John 3:17-18; Matt. 6:1-4; Rom. 12:13; 2 Cor. 8:1-7.
- 1 John 3:17 But whoever has the livelihood of the world and sees that his brother has need and shuts up his affections from him, how does the love of God abide in him?
- 1 John 3:18 Little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue but in deed and truthfulness.
- Matt 6:1 But take care not to do your righteousness before men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens.
- 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 6:3 But you, when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
- Matt 6:4 So that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- Rom 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality.
- 2 Cor 8:1 Furthermore we make known to you, brothers, the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
- 2 Cor 8:2 That in much proving of affliction the abundance of their joy and the depth of their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality;
- 2 Cor 8:3 That according to their power, I testify, and beyond their power, of their own accord,
- 2 Cor 8:4 With much entreaty they besought of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints;
- 2 Cor 8:5 And this, not as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.
- 2 Cor 8:6 So we entreated Titus that, even as he began before, so also he would complete for you this grace as well.
- 2 Cor 8:7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and in word and in knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love in you from us, abound in this grace also.
- E. Loving to be first in the church is versus loving all the brothers—3 John 9.
- 3 John 9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not receive us.
- F. Loving one another is a sign that we belong to Christ (John 13:34-35); if we desire to have the ability to influence people concerning the Lord and to bear fruit, we must have love for one another and become one in the church life; the best way for us to bear fruit is to love one another by taking Christ as our person and life (v. 35; 17:21, 23).
- John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
- John 13:35 By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
- John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
- John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

- G. The genuine preaching of the gospel is a matter in fellowship (Phil. 1:5) because it is a matter of the Body; the branches of a tree bear fruit in a way of fellowship (John 15:5, 12, 17); the more we live in the Body life and have the reality of the Body life, the more we will be fruitful.
- Phil 1:5 For your fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now,  
 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.  
 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.
- H. The condition of the vital groups in the church life is that of loving one another in oneness and with one accord; for the practice of the vital groups, the saints need to be trained how to have fellowship that is altogether based on oneness and one accord—Acts 1:14.
- Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
- I. In the church life of brotherly love (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thes. 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thes. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8), we receive one another (Rom. 15:7), have the same mind toward one another (v. 5), pursue the things for building up one another (14:19), bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), bear one another in love (Eph. 4:2), comfort and build up one another (1 Thes. 5:11), confess our sins to one another and pray for one another (James 5:16), forgive one another (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13), and are subject to one another (Eph. 5:21).
- Rom 12:10 Love one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another.  
 1 Thes 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 Thes 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;  
 2 Thes 1:3 We ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, even as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of each one of you all to one another is increasing,  
 1 Pet 1:22 Since you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned brotherly love, love one another from a pure heart fervently,  
 1 Pet 4:8 Above all, have fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins.  
 Rom 15:7 Therefore receive one another, as Christ also received you to the glory of God.  
 Rom 15:5 Now the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus,  
 Rom 14:19 So then let us pursue the things of peace and the things for building up one another.  
 Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ completely.  
 Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love,  
 1 Thes 5:11 Therefore comfort one another, and build up each one the other, even as you also do.  
 James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The petition of a righteous man avails much in its working.  
 Eph 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you.  
 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.  
 Eph 5:21 Being subject to one another in the fear of Christ:
- J. The proper church meeting is a "one another" meeting, a "round-table" meeting, in which we speak to one another (v. 19), teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16), consider one another and exhort one another (Heb. 10:24-25), and listen to one another (1 Thes. 5:20); we need to learn to have a proper mutual care in the meetings (1 Cor. 12:25-26).
- Eph 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord,  
 Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

- Heb 10:24 And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works,  
 Heb 10:25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.  
 1 Thes 5:20 Do not despise prophecies,  
 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.

K. We need to be dealt with and built up by the Lord (8:1) so that our administration of the church and our ministry of the word will result in the brothers and sisters spontaneously loving one another for the building up of the church; when the saints genuinely grow in their spiritual life, the experience of the divine life will result in an increase of love, because love is the issue of life (1 John 3:14); this will cause the church life to be living, prevailing, functioning, and powerful.

- 1 Cor 8:1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.  
 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### CONDITIONS OF THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

#### Loving God and the Brothers

Confessing our sins is the first condition of our enjoyment of the fellowship of the divine life. According to [1 John] 2:3-11, the second condition is that we keep the Lord's word and love the brothers.

[The Lord's] commandments are to love God and to love the brothers. We love our begetting Father, and we love all His children, all those begotten of Him.

When we are abiding in the Lord, having fellowship with Him, our abiding in Him spontaneously issues in love for God and for the brothers. Therefore, the second condition, the second requirement, of fellowship is that we love God and the brothers.

[In 1 John 2:5] "the love of God" denotes our love toward God, which is generated by His love within us. The love of God, the word of the Lord, and God Himself are all related to one another. If we keep the Lord's word, God's love has been perfected in us. This is altogether a matter of the divine life, and this life is God Himself.

God's love is His inward essence, and the Lord's word supplies us with this divine essence, with which we love the brothers. The word itself is not this essence or substance. The word is what conveys this essence and supplies it to us. Therefore, the word supplies us with the very essence of God, which is the divine love. As a result, we have something substantial within us for us to participate in and enjoy. This means that eventually the essence of God's being becomes our enjoyment. Then out of this enjoyment there will be an issue—our love for God and His children.

#### Not Loving with Our Natural Love

It should not be with our natural love that we love God and His children. On the contrary, our natural love needs to be put on the cross. We should love God and His children with the divine love, the love that is conveyed to us through the word of the Lord and that becomes our experience and enjoyment.

Many of today's Christians understand the Bible in a natural, religious, or ethical way. This is true in particular concerning the requirement to love God, the brothers, and our neighbor. From the time I was a youth I heard about loving the brothers and loving our neighbor. Today Christians often talk about loving the brothers or about loving our neighbor. Once when I was in Houston for a conference, a lady

came up to me after the meeting and said strongly, “People in this country don’t know to love others. You should travel to different places and teach Christians to love one another.”

Yes, the Bible does tell us that we should love one another and that we should love our neighbors as ourselves. However, it is not God’s intention to command us to love others with our natural love. Instead, God desires that we love Him and His children with the divine love which we have enjoyed.

### **The Love of God Becoming Our Love**

This is the reason verse 5 says that the love of God has been perfected in us. On the one hand, this love is the love of God; on the other hand, this love, having been experienced and enjoyed by us, becomes our love for God and the brothers.

How can our love for God be called the love of God? It is because this love is not our love, but is God’s love. However, this is not the love of God as it is objectively; it is the love of God experienced by us subjectively. This is the love of God becoming our love through our experience and enjoyment of Him. This love then becomes our love for God and others.

God wants us to love Him with His love. He also wants us to love His children, and even the whole world, with His love. First we need to enjoy God’s love and experience His love to such an extent that it fills us, saturates us, and becomes our very essence, causing us to be permeated with the love of God. Then with this love we shall love God, we shall love God’s children, and we shall love all people. We do not love them with our natural love; we love them with the love of God we have experienced and enjoyed. Praise the Lord for such a wonderful love! This is the love revealed in the first Epistle of John.

This experience of the love of God is altogether a matter in the fellowship in the divine life. If we do not enjoy God in the fellowship of the divine life, we cannot have such a love.

### **Loving Others with the Love of God**

If we experience the love of God, we shall have the deep realization that our natural love is one thing and that the love of God which becomes our love through experience is something very different. One difference between God’s love and our natural love is that it is very easy for our natural love to be offended.

When we love others, we become involved with them. For this reason, it is often the case that those we love in a natural way eventually become our enemies. Because natural love may have such a result, those who are wise in a human way are slow and careful in loving others. They realize that if you love others in a foolish way, sooner or later that love will cause trouble. Many divorces and separations are the result of a foolish natural love that is easily offended and leads to enmity. For example, a certain man and woman may know each other only for a short time. In a quick way they get married. Then after only a little time has gone by, they may separate or get a divorce. At first they loved each other, but not too long after they were married they became enemies. This is the result of loving each other in a natural way. If they had never loved one another in a natural way, they would not have become enemies.

It is not very likely that you will regard as your enemy a person unknown to you that you see walking on the street. Those who become your enemies are often those whom you love in a natural way. This is why some exercise their human wisdom to be very careful in loving others. They realize that loving others in a natural way leads to problems. In order to avoid these problems, they are very slow in loving others.

The point I am making here is that we need to be careful not to love others by our natural love. Rather, our natural love should be put on the cross. We need to love others by the love of God we have experienced and enjoyed. If we experience God’s love, we shall love God with this love. We shall also love the brothers with this same love. This kind of love does not cause trouble. May we all see that we need to love God and others with the divine love that has become our experience and enjoyment. (*Life-study of 1 John*, pp. 135, 138-142)

## **LOVING THE BROTHERS AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER IN THE CHURCH**

As we live in the church, we love all the brothers; that is, we love one another. The reason for this is that, as Romans 12:9-21 indicates, in the church the believers live a life of the highest virtues of the divine life and love. In verse 9a Paul says, “Let love be without hypocrisy,” and in 10a he continues, “Love one another warmly in brotherly love.” This corresponds to Peter’s word about loving “one another from the heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22).

In John 13:34 and 35 the Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” This commandment is the message which we “heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:11). We should not try in a natural way to fulfill this word. We may realize that God is love (4:8) and that we are commanded to love one another. Then in a natural, religious, and ethical way we may try to love others, imitating God’s love. In our nature as human beings there is the tendency to love in this way. This kind of love is ethical, natural, and even cultural. However, real love is the issue of enjoying the processed Triune God in the divine dispensing. When we are in the fellowship of the divine life, that is, in the enjoyment of the Triune God, this enjoyment will have a certain issue or outcome. The outcome of the enjoyment of the Triune God is the divine love. When we enjoy the Triune God, this enjoyment issues in the divine love. With this love we spontaneously love others. In particular, we love all those who are organically related to our begetting Father (5:1). We have been begotten of the Father, and many others also have been begotten of Him. If we enjoy Him, the result will be that we love all His children. Therefore, loving the brothers is the issue of enjoying the Triune God.

Instead of trying to imitate the Lord’s love, we need to be constituted of the Triune God who is love. This One abides in us and wants to impart Himself into our being and saturate us with Himself so that we may enjoy Him inwardly as love. This love should saturate us until it becomes the love with which we love the brothers.

The revelation concerning love in the New Testament is different from our natural concept of love. The very God who is love abides in us, and we abide in Him. According to 1 John 3:24, “we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us.” This Spirit keeps us in an organic union with the Triune God who is love, causing this God to become our life and even our being. Furthermore, this Spirit is saturating us with the substance of the God who is love. Eventually, the fibers of our being will be constituted of the loving essence of God. This means that the divine love becomes us. Then spontaneously we love others. However, we do not love them by our own love; we love them by God as our love. What a great difference there is between this kind of love and the love that is simply a human attempt to imitate the love of God!

According to the New Testament, the love the believers have for one another is actually a triangular love, a love that involves three parties. As a child of God born of Him, we surely love our Father, the One who has begotten us. Since we love the begetting Father, we shall also love those who have been begotten of Him. Here we have a triangular love, a love involving God, ourselves, and all those born of God. This triangular love is in the organic union with the Triune God who is love.

How is it possible for believers to love God and to love one another? This is possible only because we have had the divine birth (John 1:12-13; 1 John 5:1; 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4,18). We have been born of God, begotten of Him, and because of this birth we are able to love one another. Therefore, the triangular love is related to the divine birth. Now we love not only the One who has begotten us, our begetting Father, but also the ones begotten of Him. This is the love with which the believers love one another in the church life. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 1769-1771)

## **THE VITAL GROUPS IN THE CHURCH LIFE**

### **The Condition—Loving One Another in Oneness and with One Accord**

The condition of the vital groups is that of loving one another in oneness and with one accord (John

13:34-35). To love one another may seem very common. However, we must admit that although we do love one another, we may not love one another very much. Because we meet together day after day and year after year, we surely have human affection for one another, but the condition of loving one another in the vital groups should be more than this. We need to love one another, meeting together in a mutual love.

We not only love one another, but we love one another in oneness and with one accord. In John 17 the Lord Jesus said that when His disciples are one in the Triune God, the whole world will believe that He was sent by the Father (vv. 21, 23). This is the way to gain people. Often when we go out to visit people by twos and threes, the people whom we visit may realize that there is no oneness among us. The result is a lack of impact. But if two or three of us go out as one man, the people whom we visit will realize that there is a dynamic power among us. There will be the impact, and they will be convinced.

In John 13:34-35 the Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” By our loving one another, the whole world will know that we are the Lord’s disciples. This is the real impact. Without our speaking anything, people will be convinced because they see us loving one another in oneness and with one accord. On the whole earth, in every society everyone knows that whenever people group together, there is struggling and fighting. Wherever there are groups of people, there will be debates, arguments, and strife. But when people are among us and we are really one, they will wonder what has made us one. The Lord Jesus is the living person who has made us one. Our being one is the strongest testimony that we are the people of Jesus. We are disciples of the One who has made us one.

These are the terms and conditions for us to gain people. Regardless of how much others oppose us, if we are such people, nothing can prevent us from gaining the proper increase. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1991–1992*, vol. 3, “Fellowship concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups,” pp. 407-408)

### **Keeping the Oneness, Loving One Another, and Having the One Accord**

In John 17:19-21 the Lord Jesus prayed, “For their sake I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. And I do not ask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word, that they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.” We are all members of the Body of Christ. As such, we must have the real oneness. We are really one. However, although today we are still in the recovery and in the oneness, we need to realize that the oneness among us is not a living oneness. Our oneness is not a working oneness. We all are one, but you are you and I am I. The oneness among us is a dormant oneness, a sleeping oneness. Our oneness should be very active. The genuine oneness will cause us to take action when we hear of a need among the saints in the Body. The real oneness is an active and acting oneness.

We are one, yet we may not know the eight members of our group so well. That is not the living oneness. In John 17 the Lord said that if we have this oneness, the people of the world will know that Christ is the One who was sent by the Father (vv. 21, 23). This indicates that when we go to visit people, they will realize that we are one among ourselves. They will realize that with us there is something heavenly, something divine, that the people of the world could never have. The worldly people cannot be one, yet we are one in a living way so that our oneness is expressed and is realized by others. When they meet us, people can sense that we have the oneness.

In John 13:34-35 the Lord said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” If we love one another, we do not need to tell people that we are Christ’s disciples. The worldly people will realize this.

The first thing after the training concerning prayer is to train all the saints how to have fellowship.

Fellowship is altogether based on oneness and mutual love. We are one, and we love one another. These are two strong signs.

The early followers of Christ, including Peter and John, followed the Lord Jesus full time. They were fishermen, but they left their nets, their boat, their job, and their father to follow the Lord Jesus (Matt. 4:18-22). To the outsiders they were idle, not doing anything but following this One. They did this for three and a half years. Eventually, they saw the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of the Lord, and that kept them more in oneness. Thus, the beginning of Acts says that these dear ones were in one accord (1:14), not merely in oneness. Oneness is not as practical as one accord. They were in one accord with no different opinions, concepts, or insights. They were all one in one accord. They were one hundred twenty disciples, but they were just like one person, and they prayed in one accord. Here is the real prayer. Acts does not tell us what they prayed for or how they prayed, but after ten days of prayer, something happened—on the day of Pentecost Christ was poured out upon them as the all-inclusive Spirit (2:1-4), and the church was produced. This is what we need. We need to keep the oneness, we need to love one another, and we need to have the one accord. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1991–1992*, vol. 3, “Fellowship concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups,” pp. 423-425)