

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

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

**Being Perfect as the Heavenly Father Is Perfect
by Being Perfected in His Love**

MC *Hymns*: new hymn

Scripture Reading: Matt. 5:48; 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 16-18

- Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- 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 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 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 4:17 In this has love been perfected with us, that we have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world.
- 1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear has punishment, and he who fears has not been perfected in love.

I. At the end of Matthew 5, to conclude an exceedingly high section of the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens (vv. 17-48), the Lord Jesus said, “You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (v. 48):

- Matt 5 be omitted.
- Matt 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill.
- Matt 5:18 For truly I say to you, Until heaven and earth pass away, one iota or one serif shall by no means pass away from the law until all come to pass.
- Matt 5:19 Therefore whoever annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whoever practices and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens.
- 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 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.
 Matt 5:33 Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not break an oath, but you shall render to the Lord your oaths."
 Matt 5:34 But I tell you not to swear at all; neither by heaven, because it is the throne of God;
 Matt 5:35 Nor by the earth, because it is the footstool of His feet; nor unto Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King;
 Matt 5:36 Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.
 Matt 5:37 But let your word be, Yes, yes; No, no; for anything more than these is of the evil one.
 Matt 5:38 You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."
 Matt 5:39 But I tell you not to resist him who is evil; rather whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.
 Matt 5:40 And to him who wishes to sue you and take your tunic, yield to him your cloak also;
 Matt 5:41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.
 Matt 5:42 To him who asks of you, give; and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away.
 Matt 5:43 You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."
 Matt 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,
 Matt 5:45 So that you may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.
 Matt 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
 Matt 5:47 And if you greet only your brothers, what better thing are you doing? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
 Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

A. The kingdom people, the audience for the Lord's decree of the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens, are the regenerated believers of the New Testament, as the title *sons of your Father* in verse 45 indicates:

Matt 5:45 So that you may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

1. They are the Father's children, having the Father's divine life and divine nature.
2. Hence, they can be perfect as their heavenly Father is.

B. The demand of the new law of the kingdom is much higher than the requirement of the law of the old dispensation (v. 22, footnote 2); this higher demand can be met only by the Father's divine life, not by the natural life:

Matt 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is ²angry 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.

note 2 The law of the old dispensation deals with the act of murder (v. 21), but the new law of the kingdom deals with anger, the motive of murder. Hence, the demand of the new law of the kingdom is deeper than the requirement of the law of the old dispensation. To meet the demand of the new law of the kingdom, the higher life of the new creation is needed.

1. The kingdom of the heavens is the highest demand, and the divine life of the Father is the highest supply to meet that demand.
2. The demand of the new law of the kingdom is actually the expression of the new life, the divine life, which is within the regenerated kingdom people; this demand opens up the inner being of the regenerated people, showing them that they are able to attain to such a high level and to have such a high living.
3. We become God's regenerated children by the coming of the Spirit of God into our spirit to regenerate us (Rom. 8:16; John 3:6) and to make our spirit the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22); if we walk according to our regenerated human spirit indwelt by and mingled with the divine Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), we are living by God's life to fulfill the

righteous requirement of the law (Rom. 8:4).

Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

- C. For the kingdom people to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect means that they are perfect in His love (Matt. 5:44-45); love is the nature of God's essence (1 John 4:8, 16):

Matt 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,

Matt 5:45 So that you may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

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.

1. Through the precious and exceedingly great promises given by God, we, the believers in Christ, have become partakers of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) in an organic union with Him (John 3:15; Gal. 3:27; Matt. 28:19).

2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.

Gal 3:27 For as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Matt 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

2. To partake of the divine nature is to enjoy what God is.

3. The virtue of this divine nature carries us into God's glory (2 Pet. 1:3), into the full expression of the Triune God; we receive the divine life by believing, and we continually enjoy the divine nature, which is the substance of the divine life; the more we enjoy the divine nature, the more we have His virtue, and the more we are brought into His glory.

2 Pet 1:3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,

4. Our enjoyment of the divine nature is both for the present and for eternity—Rev. 22:1-2.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

- D. To be perfect is to have God added to us, as seen in God's word to Abraham in Genesis 17:1—"I am the All-sufficient God; / Walk before Me, and be perfect":

1. The divine title *All-sufficient God* (*El Shaddai* in Hebrew) reveals God as the source of grace to supply His called ones with the riches of His divine being for the fulfillment of His purpose; the Lord's grace being sufficient for us is the Lord's power being perfected in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13; John 15:5b).

2 Cor 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.

Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.

John 15:5b ... He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

2. To walk before God is to walk in His presence, constantly enjoying Him and His all-sufficient supply.

3. To be perfect is to have God added to us as the element and factor of perfection; practically, it means that we do not rely on the strength of the flesh but trust in God as the all-sufficient Mighty One for our life and our work.
- E. Before God gave Moses the law, He spent time to infuse Moses with Himself—Exo. 24:16-18:
- Exo 24:16 And the glory of Jehovah settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.
- Exo 24:17 And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like consuming fire on the top of the mountain to the eyes of the children of Israel.
- Exo 24:18 And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud and went up on the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.
1. God’s intention is to infuse us with Himself so that He will have a way to do everything in us and for us to fulfill the commandments He gives to us.
 2. The emphasis in the Bible is that we need God to come into us and do everything in us and for us—Phil. 2:12-13.

Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
 3. The requirements of the law in the Old Testament were given to prove that man is not able, and the requirements of the commandments in the New Testament were given to prove that God is able; outside of us He gives us many commandments, but inside of us He is keeping all these commandments for us—Heb. 13:21.

Heb 13:21 Perfect you in every good work for the doing of His will, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

II. We need to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect by being perfected in His love—1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17-18:

- 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 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 4:17 In this has love been perfected with us, that we have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world.
- 1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear has punishment, and he who fears has not been perfected in love.
- A. “Whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected”—2:5:
1. Here *the love of God* denotes our love toward God, which is generated by His love within us.
 2. God’s love is His inward essence, and the Lord’s word supplies us with the divine essence, with which we love God and love the brothers; hence, when we keep the divine word, the divine love is perfected through the divine life, which is God Himself and by which we live.
- B. “If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us”—4:12:
1. Here *His love* denotes God’s love within us that becomes our love toward one another, and it is with this love that we love one another.
 2. In God Himself the love of God itself is perfect and complete; however, in us it needs to be perfected and completed in its manifestation:
 - a. God’s love was manifested to us in God’s sending of His Son to be both a propitiatory sacrifice and life to us—vv. 9-10.

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.
- b. This love is perfected and completed in its manifestation when we express it in our living by habitually loving one another with it.
 - c. Thus, in our living in God's love, others can behold God manifested in His essence, which is love.
- C. "In this has love been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear has punishment, and he who fears has not been perfected in love"—vv. 17-18:
1. Here *perfect love* is the love that has been perfected in us by our loving others with the love of God; such love casts out fear and has no fear of being punished by the Lord at His coming back—Luke 12:46-47.

Luke 12:46 The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint his portion with the unbelievers.

Luke 12:47 And that slave who knew his master's will and did not prepare or do according to his will, will receive many lashes;
 2. Christ lived in this world a life of God as love, and He is now our life that we may live the same life of love in this world and be the same as He is.
 3. First John 4:12 and 17 speak of God's love needing to be perfected in us, and verse 18 speaks of our needing to be perfected in love:

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 4:17 In this has love been perfected with us, that we have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear has punishment, and he who fears has not been perfected in love.

 - a. This indicates that we and the divine love are mingled; when love is perfected in us, we are perfected in love; we become love, and love becomes us.
 - b. Through God's dispensing of Himself into us, we become love in the sense of being constituted with God as love.

III. The genuine Christian perfection taught in the New Testament is according to God's New Testament economy that God wanted to become a man that many men may become the God-men for the producing of the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) to consummate the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2) as God's ultimate goal (Eph. 3:8-10; 1:9-10):

- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
- 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 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
- Eph 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,
- Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,
- Eph 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
- A. Such a Christian perfection is the issue of the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God into the believers—the God-men:

1. This dispensing is by God the Father as the source, the origin—Matt. 5:48; Rev. 21:18b and footnote 3, 21b.
 - Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
 - Rev 21:18b ... and the city was pure ³gold, like clear glass.
 - note 3 Since gold signifies the divine nature of God, the city's being of pure gold signifies that New Jerusalem is altogether of God's divine nature and takes God's divine nature as its element. Pure gold, like clear glass indicates that the whole city is transparent and is not in the least opaque.
 - Rev 21:21b ... And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.
2. This dispensing is with God the Son as the element—2 Cor. 13:3, 5, 9, 11; Rev. 21:21a and footnote 1, first paragraph.
 - 2 Cor 13:3 Since you seek a proof of the Christ who is speaking in me, who is not weak unto you but is powerful in you.
 - 2 Cor 13:5 Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?
 - 2 Cor 13:9 For we rejoice whenever we are weak and you are powerful; this also we pray for, your perfecting.
 - 2 Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice, be perfected, be comforted, think the same thing, be at peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
 - Rev 21:21a And the twelve gates were twelve ¹pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. ...
 - note 1 first paragraph
 Pearls are produced by oysters in the waters of death. When an oyster is wounded by a grain of sand, it secretes its life-juice around the grain of sand and makes it into a precious pearl. This depicts Christ as the living One coming into the death waters, being wounded by us, and secreting His life over us to make us into precious pearls for the building of God's eternal expression. That the twelve gates of the holy city are twelve pearls signifies that regeneration through the deathovercoming and life-secreting Christ is the entrance into the city. This meets the requirement of the law, which is represented by Israel and is under the observing of the guarding angels (v. 12).
3. This dispensing is through God the Spirit as the fellowship—2 Cor. 13:9, 11, 14; Rev. 21:18, 21 and footnote 1, second paragraph.
 - 2 Cor 13:9 For we rejoice whenever we are weak and you are powerful; this also we pray for, your perfecting.
 - 2 Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice, be perfected, be comforted, think the same thing, be at peace; and the God of love and peace will be with 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.
 - Rev 21:18 And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.
 - Rev 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve ¹pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.
 - note 1 second paragraph
 The New Jerusalem is built of three kinds of precious materials, signifying that she is built with the Triune God. First, the city proper, with its street, is of pure gold (vv. 18, 21). Gold, the symbol of the divine nature of God, signifies the Father as the source, from whom the element for the substantial existence of the city is produced. Second, the twelve gates of the city are pearls, which signify the Son's overcoming death and life-imparting resurrection, through which entrance to the city is gained. Third, the wall of the city and its foundation are built of precious stones, signifying the Spirit's work of transforming the redeemed and regenerated saints into precious stones for the building of God's eternal habitation that they may express God corporately in His all-permeating glory. In the garden of Eden these three kinds of treasures merely existed as materials (Gen. 2:11-12), whereas in the city of New Jerusalem these precious materials become a builded city for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, which is to have a corporate expression.

- B. Second Corinthians 13 was written to encourage the believers to be perfected by the experience of Christ as life and the enjoyment of the processed and consummated Triune God in the Father's love, with Christ's grace as the expression of the Father's love, and through the Spirit's fellowship that dispenses the Father's love in Christ's grace into the believers—vv. 5, 9, 11, 14.
- 2 Cor 13 be omitted.
- 2 Cor 13:5 Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?
- 2 Cor 13:9 For we rejoice whenever we are weak and you are powerful; this also we pray for, your perfecting.
- 2 Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice, be perfected, be comforted, think the same thing, be at peace; and the God of love and peace will be with 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.
- C. This kind of Christian perfection is for the building up of the Body of Christ, and the perfecting ones are the gifted persons, such as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers—Eph. 4:11-12.
- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- D. In 2 Peter we see that the divine love, *agape*, is the ultimate development of the divine nature (1:7), and holiness is the manner of life that partakes of the divine nature (3:11):
- 2 Pet 1:7 And in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love.
- 2 Pet 3:11 Since all these things are to be thus dissolved, what kind of persons ought you to be in holy manner of life and godliness,
1. We believers have received the divine life with the divine nature (1:4), which is God Himself for us to enjoy; when we enjoy this divine nature to the uttermost, love will be the consummation; then we become a being of love.

2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
 2. The divine love sanctifies us, separates and saturates us, to make us a people who are fully holy, utterly golden; we become pieces of "gold" put together to be a golden lampstand (Rev. 1:12), bearing the testimony of the "golden" Jesus, and consummating in the New Jerusalem, a city of pure gold (21:18), for the accomplishment of God's economy.

Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,

Rev 21:18 And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.
 3. Our teaching and shepherding of the saints in the church life should be according to God's economy for the working out of the New Jerusalem.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

LIVING BY THE FATHER'S LIFE AND NATURE

At the end of Matthew 5 the Lord Jesus said, "You, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (v. 48). This word concludes this section of the constitution, a section which is exceedingly high. After reading all these requirements, we all would say that we cannot possibly fulfill them. Then we come to verse 48 which tells us that we must be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. This verse is an indicator that we have the Father's life and nature within us. We have been born of Him and we are His children. Because we are His children possessing His life and nature, there is no need for

us to imitate Him or copy Him. As long as we grow in His life, we shall be the same as He is. Thus, all the requirements of the law of the kingdom of the heavens reveal how much this divine life and nature can do for us. Our only need is to be exposed so that we may give up all hope in ourselves. When we are exposed, we shall realize that our natural life is hopeless. Then we shall renounce our natural life, turn to the life of our Father, and stay with the divine nature. Spontaneously, this life will grow in us and fulfill the requirements of this highest law. Our need today is to turn to our spirit and walk in our spirit. Whenever we do this, we live by our Father's life and nature; then spontaneously we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. It is crucial that we understand this matter, for it is altogether different from our natural concept.

From my experience I can testify that today I am not under the principle of the law. Hallelujah, I am under the principle of faith, and I have the life of my heavenly Father within me! This life is nothing other than the Father's dear Son. I am now living by this life in my spirit and walking according to the spirit. By this life in my spirit I spontaneously fulfill the highest requirements of the law of the kingdom of the heavens. This is not my boast; it is my humble testimony to give glory to the Lord. This does not mean that I am able to do anything. It means that He is able, for He is in me as my life. He is able to do the same in you and for you. In order for this to be your experience, you need to have a vision of the hopelessness of your natural life. After your natural life has been thoroughly dug out and exposed, you will realize that it is a hopeless case, that you should have no trust in it, and that you must turn to the Father's divine life and nature within you. Turn to the Father's life, stay with the Father's life, and live by the Father's life. You can easily turn to the Father's life because at this very moment it is in your spirit. Simply walk according to your spirit, and all the righteous requirements of the law will be fulfilled in you.

NOT ONLY GOD'S CREATURES, BUT ALSO HIS REGENERATED CHILDREN

We are not only God's creatures; we are also His regenerated children, possessing His life and nature. Thus, we are not God's creatures trying to copy and imitate Him; we are the Father's children living the Father's life. How did we become the children of God? It was by the coming of the Spirit of God into our spirit to regenerate us and to make our spirit the very habitation of God Himself (Eph. 2:22, Gk.). Here, in our spirit, we have become God's children having God's life and nature. If we walk according to this regenerated spirit, we are the children of God living by God's life. When we live and walk in the spirit, spontaneously we shall be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Consider a brother who has four children. The more these little ones grow, the more they live like their father. These children are not four monkeys trying to imitate a human being. No, they are children of their father who are growing into the image of their father. The more they grow, the more they live their father's life. Likewise, we are not monkeys—we are children of God. Although some of us may be rather babyish or childish, we are growing nonetheless. These young ones may be naughty, but they are growing. Wait for a certain number of years, and you will see that all these naughty little ones will be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. I am so happy that all the saints in the churches are not monkeys, but dear children. Let these children be naughty for a while. Eventually they will grow. We are not trying to imitate God. Rather we are the Father's children growing in the Father's life. This is the reason the Lord Jesus said that we should be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Now we can understand why in Matthew chapter five the Lord refers to us as the children of God or the sons of God. He was not giving a word to unbelievers, to those who were merely God's creatures; He was giving a word to the sons of God. God is no longer merely our Creator; He is also our heavenly Father. Because He is our Father, we have His life and nature. Eventually, through our growth in life, we shall be the same as He is. Wait for another period of time, and you will see that many of us will have become perfect as the Father is perfect. (*Life-study of Matthew*, pp. 251-254)

PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE

Enjoying What God Is

We need to pay close attention to the matter of being partakers of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:4 says, “Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.” Through the precious and exceedingly great promises given by God, we, the believers in Christ, who is our God and Savior, have become partakers of His divine nature in an organic union with Him. We have entered into this union through faith and baptism (John 3:15; Gal. 3:27; Matt. 28:19). The virtue of this divine nature carries us into God’s glory, into the full expression of the Triune God.

Through the “precious and exceedingly great promises” we may become partakers of the divine nature. We receive the divine life simply by believing, and the divine nature is the substance of the divine life. Although we received the divine life at the time we believed, the divine nature must be continually enjoyed by us. This enjoyment requires the grace of God. The more we enjoy the divine nature, the more we have His virtue, and the more we are brought into His glory.

To partake of the divine nature is to enjoy what God is. In order that we may enjoy all that He is, God will do many things for us according to His precious and exceedingly great promises. This will enable us to enjoy His nature, what He is. One of His precious and exceedingly great promises is that His grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9). God’s sufficient grace will work within us day by day so that we may enjoy His nature.

The divine nature refers to the riches of what God is. Whatever God is, is in His nature. Therefore, when we partake of the divine nature, we partake of the divine riches. Having received the divine life at the time of our regeneration, we must go on to enjoy what God is in His nature.

This enjoyment is both for the present and for eternity. For eternity we shall continue to partake of the divine nature. This is illustrated by the tree of life and the river of water of life in Revelation 22:1 and 2. Out from the throne of God and the Lamb the river of life flows. This signifies God flowing out to be the enjoyment of His redeemed. That flowing river will saturate the entire city of New Jerusalem, and the tree of life that grows in and along the river will supply the redeemed with God as their life supply. This is a picture of what it means to partake of the divine nature. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 63-64)

GOD’S LOVE PERFECTED IN US

In 1 John 4:12 John also speaks of God’s love being perfected in us. The love of God is perfected already in God Himself, but now this love needs to be perfected in us. This requires that the love of God become our experience. If the love of God remains in God, it will be perfected in God Himself. But when this love becomes our experience and enjoyment, it will be perfected in us. The love that is already perfected in God needs to be perfected in us through our enjoyment of this love.

The Greek word translated “perfected” in 4:12 is *teleioo*, which means to complete, to accomplish, to finish. The love of God is perfect and complete in Him. However, in us it needs to be perfected and completed in its manifestation. It has been manifested to us in God’s sending His Son to be both a propitiation and life to us (4:9-10). Yet, if we do not love one another with this love as it was manifested to us, that is, if we do not express it by loving one another with it as God did to us, it is not perfectly and completely manifested. The love of God is perfected and completed in its manifestation when we express it in our living by habitually loving one another with it. Our living in the love of God toward one another is its perfection and completion in its manifestation in us. Thus, others can behold God manifested in His love-essence in our living in His love.

GOD’S LOVE BECOMING OUR CONSTITUTION

As we consider 4:11-13, we see that we should never teach the saints to love with their own natural love, with the love that is something apart from God Himself. On the contrary, we all need to see that God abides in us, and we abide in Him. This is a matter of coinherence, of mingling, of organic union.

God is not only in us; He abides in us, dwells in us. Through this mingling, this organic union, He becomes us, and we become Him. Therefore, since God is love, this love becomes our constitution. Because we become what He is, our love for others will actually be God Himself. We love others with God as love. Because God abides in us and we abide in Him, we love with God Himself as love. (*Life-study of 1 John*, pp. 304-306)

THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AS TAUGHT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We need to be reminded of the genuine Christian perfection as taught in the New Testament. In order to see the genuine Christian perfection, we need to see the revelation of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the genuine, real Christian perfection.

The New Jerusalem has a strong base, and this strong base is God the Father's divine nature, signified by gold (Rev. 21:18b, 21b). The holy city is a golden mountain. Surely, that is strong and sufficient to bear any weight. The entire holding strength of the holy city is God's divine nature, and this base should be the base of our Christian life and work. The base, the gates, and the wall of the city are the basic building, whereas the throne, the temple, and the light are the furnishings. The intrinsic significance of all these items shows us what the genuine Christian perfection is. The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate consummation of the Body of Christ, so the genuine Christian perfection is also the Body of Christ, which is the aggregate of all the God-men living the life of the God-man.

The Genuine Christian Perfection Being according to God's New Testament Economy

The genuine Christian perfection taught in the New Testament is according to God's New Testament economy that God wanted to become a man that many men may become the God-men for the producing of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem as God's ultimate goal. In the Lord's recovery the Christian perfection is the living of the God-man.

The Issue of the Dispensing of the Processed and Consummated Triune God into the Believers

By God the Father as the Source, the Origin

Such a Christian perfection is the issue of the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God into the believers, the God-men, by God the Father as the source, the origin (Matt. 5:48). The Father in His nature is the golden base of the New Jerusalem as its source, its origin.

With God the Son as the Element

The genuine Christian perfection is also with God the Son as the element (2 Cor. 13:3, 5, 9, 11). This is typified by the pearl gates of the New Jerusalem. An oyster (Christ) lives in the salty water (the world of death) and is wounded by a grain of sand (crucified for the sinner) to produce a pearl by secreting its life-juice (dispensing His life element). The Father is the base, and the Son is the element.

Through God the Spirit as the Dispensing Fellowship

The dispensing fellowship of God the Spirit (vv. 9, 11, 14) is to secrete the divine life-juice around us by six steps: regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification. By these six steps the Spirit, as the third of the Divine Trinity, will finish His transforming work to make us completed pearls.

Second Corinthians 13 Encouraging the Believers to Be Perfected

Second Corinthians 13 was written to encourage the believers to be perfected by the experience of Christ as life and the enjoyment of the processed and consummated Triune God in the Father's love, with Christ's grace as the expression of the Father's love, and through the Spirit's fellowship that dispenses

the Father's love in Christ's grace into the believers. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?" Verse 9 says, "We rejoice whenever we are weak and you are powerful; this also we pray for, your perfecting." Verse 11 says, "Finally, brothers, rejoice, be perfected." Then verse 14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." In 2 Corinthians 13 Paul teaches his kind of Christian perfection by Christ in us. The grace of Christ, God the Son, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit as the third of the Trinity are with us all the time secreting the Triune God in His life element around us to perfect us. James's perfection is far off from this. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 2, "Crystallization-study of the Epistle of James," pp. 415-416)