

HWMR: LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST, (Week 4)

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:8-16

THE ORGANIC BODY OF CHRIST BUILDING ITSELF UP IN LOVE

Ephesians 4:8	Therefore the Scripture says, “Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men.”
Ephesians 4:9	(Now this, “He ascended,” what is it except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?
Ephesians 4:10	He who descended, He is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things .)
Ephesians 4:11	And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers ,
Ephesians 4:12	For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Ephesians 4:13	Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
Ephesians 4:14	That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
Ephesians 4:15	But holding to truth in love , we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
Ephesians 4:16	Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love .

Day 1

<i>Psalms 68:18</i>	<i>- You have ascended on high; You have led captive those taken captive; / You have received gifts among men, / Even the rebellious ones also, / That Jehovah God may dwell among them.</i>
<i>Numbers 10:35</i>	<i>- And when the Ark set out, Moses said, Rise up, O Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered; / And let those who hate You flee before You.</i>

- I. The intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ is by the giving of the gifted persons (such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers), who are constituted in the dispensing of the Divine Trinity, by Christ as the Head in His ascension (including His resurrection), to His Body—Eph. 4:8-12; Acts 2:24, 27; 1:9:**

- A. Ephesians 4:8 says, “Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and *gave gifts to men*”:
1. *Height* in the quotation from Psalm 68:18 refers to Mount Zion (vv. 15-16), symbolizing the third heaven, where God dwells (1 Kings 8:30).

2. Psalm 68 implies that it was in the Ark that God ascended to Mount Zion after the Ark had won the victory (Num. 10:35); this portrays how Christ won the victory and ascended triumphantly to the heavens.
3. Through His universal traffic and in His ascension, Christ led as captives those who had been taken captive by Satan and **made them gifts to His Body**—Eph. 4:8-11:

Day 2

*Ephesians 4:8-10 - Therefore the Scripture says, “Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and **gave gifts to men**.” (Now this, “He ascended,” what is it except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended, He is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.)*

- a. The redeemed saints **had been taken captive** by Satan before they were saved by Christ’s death and resurrection—cf. Luke 4:18.
 - b. In His **ascension** Christ led them captive; that is, **He rescued them** from Satan’s captivity and took them to Himself—Psa. 68:18.
 - c. In His ascension **Christ led them to the heavens** as His captives in His train of vanquished foes and made them gifts to His Body.
 - d. Now God is celebrating Christ’s triumph over them, His vanquished foes, and leading them as His captives in a triumphal procession in His move for His ministry to **build up His Body**—2 Cor. 2:14.
- B. The **more** Christ **ascends** and **descends** within us, capturing and vanquishing us, the **more** He **fills** us with Himself to **constitute us as gifts to His Body**—cf. Eph. 4:9-10.

Now we can see the steps by which sinners have become **gifts to the Body of Christ**. These steps include Christ’s **incarnation**, His **human living**, His **death** on the cross, His burial in the tomb, His descent into Hades, His **resurrection** from among the dead, and His **ascension** to the heavens to return to the Father. **By means of these steps we, the sinners, have become apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers.** Now we are gifts to men. Wherever the Lord may send us in the days ahead, we shall be sent as gifts to the people there.

Not only the leading apostles and prophets are gifts, but **every member of the Body is a gift**. For example, my little finger is a gift to my body. It can do something for my body that no other member can do. None of us should regard ourselves as too small to be a gift. Sometimes it is the smallest members who are the most useful and who render the greatest comfort to the Body. Therefore, **we all are gifts given by Christ to His Body**. Because of Christ’s universal traveling, we are no longer sinners, but sons of God, trophies to the Father, and gifts to the Body.

In Ephesians 4 we see the giving of the gifts, whereas in Psalm 68 we have the receiving of the gifts. According to Psalm 68, the Son received trophies from the Father as gifts. Then in Ephesians 4 the Son gave them all as gifts to the church. We, the saved ones, have been given not only to the church, but even to the whole world. Thus, **wherever we may go, we shall be a great blessing to others.** (*Life-Study of Ephesians, chapter 38*)

Day 3

Ephesians 4:11-12 - And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

II. The intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ is by the gifted persons' perfecting of the saints in the divine dispensing so that all the saints may be able to do the work of the New Testament ministry, that is, to build up the Body of Christ—vv. 11-12:

- A. The Greek word for *perfecting* in verse 12 also means “completing,” “equipping,” “supplying the functions”; the way to be perfected is to **grow in life** and to become **skillful in function**.
- B. The gifted persons perfect the saints by **nourishing** them according to the tree of life with the life supply for their growth in life—Gen. 2:9; 1 Cor. 3:2, 6.
- C. The gifted persons perfect the saints (according to their measure) to do what they do for the direct building up of the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:11-12; cf. 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12:
 - 1. The **apostles** perfect the saints by **visiting** the churches (Acts 15:36, 40-41; 20:20, 31), by **writing** epistles to the churches (Col. 4:16; 1 Cor. 1:2), and by **assigning** their co-workers to stay in certain places to perfect the saints (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:15; Titus 1:5).
 - 2. The **prophets** perfect the saints by **teaching** them to speak the Lord into people, by **speaking** in the meetings to set up a model, and by **helping** the saints to live a prophesying life by being revived every morning and overcoming every day—Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:31; Prov. 4:18.
 - 3. The **evangelists** perfect the saints by **stirring** them up to be burning in the gospel-preaching spirit, by **teaching** them with gospel truths, by **training** them to preach the gospel, by **helping** the saints to be equipped with the power of the economical Spirit, and by **setting an example** of loving the sinners and praying for them—2 Tim. 4:5.
 - 4. The **shepherd-teachers** perfect the saints by **shepherding—feeding** and **nourishing** the young saints and **teaching** the growing saints—Acts 11:25-26; 13:1.
- D. The result of this **perfecting** is that we will all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—Eph. 4:13; cf. John 17:23.
- E. This perfecting will cause us to be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a satanic system of error—Eph. 4:14.

Day 4

1 Peter 5:2-3 - Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly; Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

1 Timothy 3:1-2 - Faithful is the word: If anyone aspires to the overseership, he desires a good work. The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach;

- F. **Shepherding** and **teaching** are the essential functions among the gifted persons given by Christ as the ascended Head to the churches for the building up of His Body (John 21:15-17; Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 4:17b; 7:17b; 2 Cor. 11:28-29); in addition, Christ as the Head of the church also charged the apostles to appoint elders in all the local churches to carry out His shepherding of His flock (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17a; 1 Pet. 5:2a) and to be apt to teach in order to strengthen the shepherding and carry out its goal (1 Tim. 3:2b; 5:17b).

We have pointed out that the gifted persons in 4:11 are for the **perfecting of the saints**. What do you suppose the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers perfect the saints to do? The only reasonable and logical answer is that **they perfect them to do the same thing that they themselves do**. For example, a mathematics teacher trains his students in mathematics. His goal is to teach them to do what he himself is able to do. Eventually, through years of training, his students will also be able to become teachers of mathematics. But suppose a certain teacher has taught mathematics for many years without perfecting even one student. What a poor teacher he would be! Nevertheless, this is actually the situation that exists among many Christians today. Many Christians attend so-called church services year after year without being perfected in the least.

Once the saints have been perfected, then wherever they go, they will be **apostles**, the ones sent to that place. They will also be **prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers**. To perfect the saints to be such gifts to the Body is the Lord's way. If we do not follow this way, the Lord will not be able to get what He desires. How we thank Him that, in His mercy, He has shown us His way!

We have seen that in 4:13-15 Paul did not exclude himself. Rather, he said, "Until we all arrive...that we may be no longer babes...but holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things...." None of us should think that we have already been perfected. On the contrary, **we all need more life supply and more training**. If we are willing to grow and to be trained, then we shall not repeat the history of Christianity. If we are faithful to practice what the Lord shows us, the Lord will have a way among us. The Lord's way has never changed. His way is to perfect the saints to do the work of ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ. This is the way for the Lord to gain what He desires as the necessary preparation for His coming back. (*Life-Study of Ephesians, chapter 41*)

Day 5

*Ephesians 4:15-16 - But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ, Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the **growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.***

III. The intrinsic building up of the organic Body of Christ is by the **direct building by all the members**—into the Head and out from the Head:

- A. In order to be built up, **we must hold to truth in love**, growing up into the Head, Christ, in all things—Eph. 4:15:
1. **We must hold to the divine truth of God's eternal economy**, of the all-inclusive Christ, and of the church as the Body of Christ.
 2. **We must be subject to the Head**, Christ (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23; 1:22, 10), and allow His divine life to expand and increase into all our inward parts (Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; 2 Cor. 5:4).

3. The word *Head* in Ephesians 4:15 indicates that our growth in Christ should be a **growth as members in the Body under the Head**; our growth is not only in Christ but also in His Body.
- B. Out from the Head, in the divine dispensing, all the **Body is joined closely together** through every joint of the rich supply and knit together, interwoven, through the operation in the measure of each one part—v. 16:
1. When we grow into the Head, we can produce out from the Head **many functions** for the building up of His Body.
 2. Every member of the Body of Christ **has a measure** through the growth in life and can function for the growth and building up of the Body of Christ.

By **holding to truth in love** we grow up into Christ in all things. To be no longer babes we need to grow up into Christ. This is to have Christ increase in us in all things until we attain to a full-grown man. The word Head here in verse 15 indicates that our growth in life with Christ should be the **growth of the members in the Body under the Head**.

The fact that we grow in Christ by holding to truth in love proves that holding to truth involves more than not telling lies. Do you believe that you can grow in Christ simply by telling the truth instead of lies? This is not what enables us to grow in Christ. There are a good number of unbelievers who are honest and who do not tell lies. Nevertheless, their speaking of the truth does not cause them to grow up in Christ.

To grow up into the Head means that **we care only for Christ and the church**. We grow by caring only for Christ and the church, that is, by handling truth in love. We do not grow by some kind of honesty or sincerity related to ethical behavior.

In this verse the matter of growth is specifically related to growing up into Christ, the Head, in all things. Verses 13 through 16 all point to the need for growth. If we would be a full-grown man, **we need to grow**. Likewise, if we would be no longer babes tossed to and fro and carried about, we also need to grow. **But we should grow up into Christ**, not up into ourselves or into something else apart from Christ. (*Life-Study of Ephesians, chapter 45*)

Day 6

- Ephesians 3:17* - That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being **rooted and grounded in love**,
- Ephesians 4:15-16* - **But holding to truth in love**, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ, Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

- C. The joints supplying and the parts functioning cause the growth of the Body unto the **building up of the Body itself in the divine love**—v. 16:
1. **All the Body** causes the growth of the Body—cf. 1 Cor. 14:4b, 31.
 2. The **growth of the Body** of Christ is the increase of Christ in the church, which results in the building up of the Body by the Body itself—Eph. 3:17a:
 - a. When **Christ** enters into the saints and lives within them, the Christ within the saints becomes the church—Col. 3:10-11.

- b. The Body of Christ grows by the **growth of Christ** within us and is built up this way—1:18; 2:19.
- 3. The love in which the Body builds itself up is the love that is the very element, the inner substance, of **God**; it is the **love of God in Christ**, which becomes the love of Christ in us, by which we love Christ and the fellow members of His Body—1 John 4:7-8, 11, 16, 19; Rom. 5:5; 8:39:
 - a. It is in the condition and atmosphere of such a divine love that **we are saturated with God** to be holy and without blemish before Him—Eph. 1:4.
 - b. It is in such a divine love, realized and experienced by us in a practical way, that **we are rooted for growth and grounded for building**—3:17.
 - c. It is in such a divine love that **we bear one another** for the oneness of the Body—4:2-4.
 - d. It is in such a divine love that **we hold to truth**, that is, to Christ with His Body—v. 15.
 - e. It is in such a divine love that **we need to walk**—to **live, act**, and have our being—as the beloved children of God, who are God-men, born of God, possessing the life and nature of God, and belonging to the species of God, to be imitators of God—5:1-2.
- D. “The direct building of the organic Body of Christ is by the Body itself. The Body is built directly by all the members of Christ functioning, each in his own measure, mainly in prophesying—speaking for the Lord... This direct building by all the members of Christ takes place through the perfecting work of all the gifted persons under the bountiful supply of the divine element of the ascended Christ in His ascension. We need to practice [this] so that we can see the reality of such an organic building on this earth” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1988*, vol. 4, “Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ,” pp. 388-389).

Ephesians 4:16 is the unique verse in the Bible that shows us how the organic Body of Christ is directly and practically built up. **It is built up by each member**. Based upon this revelation we can say that the traditional way of meeting and serving in Christianity is absolutely wrong. We must see that the Body of Christ is built directly neither by the Head nor by the gifted persons but by **all the members**. The Body of Christ is built up organically by each member directly, but these members can do very little without being perfected. **The perfecting is needed**. Today in Christianity, where is the perfecting of the believers? Many preachers speak every Lord’s Day, but who is being perfected to do the work of the ministry? We also need to consider our situation in the Lord’s recovery... Who among us has been perfected? I am so burdened to see the Lord’s desire accomplished among us that I do not care for the price that I have to pay. I have seen something, and I have received a burden from the Lord to tell His people that **we must drop the old way** because with it there is not much perfecting of the saints.

We must endeavor, strive, and struggle to tear down the old, traditional way. Some have the concept that the new way is preaching the gospel by door-knocking. This is a wrong realization and concept. The new way is not mainly to preach the gospel by knocking on doors, but it is the building up of Christ’s organic Body directly by each one of the saints. If the Body of Christ is not being built up by each saint directly, we are in the traditional way. **We need the gifted persons to perfect the saints to do this direct building work**. The gifted ones need to go to the homes of the saints to sit down with them and teach them mouth to mouth. We saw from Acts 20 that Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years. He perfected the saints by teaching everything concerning God and His economy publicly and from house to house with tears. Who is doing this work among us today? The gifted ones need to go from house to house to perfect the saints with tears. (*Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ, chapter 4*)