

Message Three

The Increase of Christ Being for the Increase of the Church by Ministering Life to Others according to the Law of Increase

Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:16a; Exo. 21:5-6; Isa. 50:4-5; 1 Thes. 2:7, 11; John 15:1-5

I. First John 5:16a says, “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him”:

- A. “Life” here is *zoe*, the spiritual, eternal, divine life—see footnote 1 on John 10:10, footnote 1 on Acts 11:18, and footnote 4 on Romans 5:17.
- B. This does not mean that the asker has life of himself and can give life by himself to others; it means that such an asker, who is abiding in the Lord, who is one with the Lord, and who is asking in one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17), becomes the means by which God’s life-giving Spirit can give life to the ones for whom he is asking:
 - 1. We have the privilege of giving life to the weaker ones in order to swallow up their death; this is a matter of life-imparting in the fellowship of the divine life.
 - 2. To be ones who can give life to others, we must abide in the divine life and walk, live, and have our being in the divine life.

II. In order for us to minister life to others, we must do at least four things:

- A. We need an adequate contact with the Lord simply to spend time with Him, listening to the Lord in His dealings with us, so that we may speak a timely word to sustain the weary ones—Exo. 21:5-6; Isa. 50:4-5.
- B. We must learn in the presence of the Lord to be dealt with by Him under His light; in order to bear fruit, we must deal with the Lord to be new, fresh, and tender branches of the vine; we must deal with all the hindrances to have a living of bearing fruit, and we must deal with our natural disposition to become flexible in caring for people—1 John 1:7, 9; John 15:2.
- C. We must pick up a burden to care for people—unbelievers, young believers, new believers, and weaker believers; we must care for them as nursing mothers and exhorting fathers to be fishers of men and feeders of lambs—1 Thes. 2:7, 11; Matt. 4:19; John 21:15; S. S. 1:7-8:
 - 1. We are cared for by the Lord by caring for others in the Lord:
 - a. If we water others, we ourselves will be watered, and if we desire to grow in life, we need to help others to grow—Prov. 11:25; John 7:37-39a.
 - b. The way to receive is to give, and the more we give, the more we receive—Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35.
 - c. If we turn our prayer from merely ourselves to others, we will receive what we desire—Job 42:10; Gen. 20:17; cf. 21:1-2.
 - 2. We need to spend and be utterly spent on behalf of others, sacrificing our wealth and our life for others—2 Cor. 12:14-15; 1 John 3:16-18.
 - 3. We must deal with our disposition for the sake of fruitfulness; because Paul’s disposition was fully dealt with by the Lord, it was soft, bendable, flexible, and applicable to any situation; our disposition is the depth of our self, which must be denied—1 Cor. 9:22; Matt. 16:24.
- D. We must learn to be interested in people; every day the Lord’s people must be our “food”; many in the church need our shoulders to bear them and our breast to embrace them in love—John 4:3-14, 31-34; Exo. 28:9-12, 15-21, 29; Rom. 12:15.

III. Everything in the church must be in the nature of life, with the content of life, and in the imparting of life—John 10:10b; 14:6a; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:2, 10, 6, 11:

- A. The “currency” in the church “exchange” is not dollars but the divine life; the divine life is our only kind of “merchandise.”
- B. The church is altogether a matter of life, because the church is the organism of the Triune God as the Body of Christ and as the vine with the branches (1 Cor. 12:12; John 15:1-5); our work, speaking, fellowship, service, ministry, message, Bible study, and prayer must be in the flow and imparting of life.
- C. When the branches of the vine receive a sufficient supply of the life-giving Spirit as the life-juice of Christ, they bear fruit as the overflow of the inner life supply—vv. 4-5.

IV. We need to follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man cherishing us and as the Son of God nourishing us, experiencing and presenting Christ as the attracting factor to minister life to people and gain them in a normal way:

- A. Illustration one:
 - 1. Christ as the Son of Man became the Lamb of God to take away our sin (1:29)—cherishing.
 - 2. Christ as the Son of God became the life-giving Spirit to give life to us and transform us (vv. 32-34, 42; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6)—nourishing.
- B. Illustration two:
 - 1. Christ as the Son of Man, in the form of the serpent, destroyed the old serpent, the source of sin, through His redeeming death (John 3:14; Heb. 2:14; cf. Rom. 16:20)—cherishing.
 - 2. Christ as the Son of God speaks the words of God and gives Himself as the Spirit to us not by measure that we may have the eternal life (John 3:34-36, 15-16)—nourishing.
- C. Illustration three:
 - 1. Christ as the Son of Man (Jesus), going from Judea to Galilee, detoured into the city of Sychar, near Jacob’s well, to purposely wait for the thirsty and water-seeking, immoral Samaritan woman (4:3-9)—cherishing.
 - 2. Christ as the Son of God, sent by God as a gift, gave her to drink the water of life which springs up into eternal life (vv. 10-14)—nourishing.
- D. Illustration four:
 - 1. Christ as the Son of Man has been designated by God to judge all the people of the world, the living and the dead (5:27-29; Acts 17:31; 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; Matt. 25:31); the judgment of Christ has been preached to the sinners as a cherishing to them that they might repent unto God and receive Christ as the Son of God to have His eternal life; the judgment in Revelation 14:6-7, as a part of the judgment of Christ, will be declared to all the people on the earth as the eternal gospel—cherishing.
 - 2. Christ as the Son of God was given authority by God to give the eternal life to His believers (John 5:19-26; 17:2-3)—nourishing.
- E. Illustration five:
 - 1. Christ as the Son of Man would not condemn the sinful woman (8:11b)—cherishing.
 - 2. Christ as the Son of God (the “I Am”) would free her from sin so that she could sin no more (vv. 11b, 24, 36)—nourishing.
- F. Illustration six:
 - 1. God sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins in His humanity (1 John 4:10)—cherishing.

2. God sent His Son to us that we may have life and live through Him in His divinity (v. 9)—nourishing; this is confirmed by John 3:16: God gave us His only begotten Son that we who believe into Him may not perish through His redemption in His humanity (cherishing) but may have eternal life in His divinity (nourishing).
- G. The illustration of the entire New Testament:
1. Christ as the Son of Man came to redeem us from sins (1 Tim. 1:15)—cherishing.
 2. Christ as the Son of God came to impart the divine life into us abundantly (John 10:10)—nourishing.
- H. The illustration of Christ in eternity:
1. As the Son of Man, He is the ladder sustaining and maintaining the life union of all His believers with God (1:51)—cherishing.
 2. As the Son of God, He is the life element of the New Jerusalem as the divine and human constitution of the consummated Triune God and His glorified elect (Rev. 21—22)—nourishing.
- V. In order to minister life to others and recover the dormant saints among us, we must have the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior Christ—Luke 15:4-6, 8-9, 20-23; Hymns, #471:**
- A. We must take the Lord's heart as our heart and treasure the lost sheep—Luke 15:4-6.
 - B. We must rely on the work of the Holy Spirit—vv. 8-9.
 - C. We must love people with the Father's love and go to them with a cheerful countenance—vv. 18-24; Psa. 42:5, 11.
- VI. The increase of the church is according to the law of increase:**
- A. Christ and the church are the universal vine as the organism of the Triune God, and the believers as the branches in this vine are in an organic union with the Triune God—John 15:1-5.
 - B. Since we believers are the branches of Christ, we abide in Him as the Son and are one spirit with the Lord, thereby participating in His position and authority—1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 2:5-6; Matt. 28:18-19.
 - C. By abiding in the Son, we receive the Father's nurturing, because the Father is the husbandman, the cultivator of the vine (John 15:1); by abiding in the Son, we are able to receive the Father's nurturing and to enjoy the riches of the Father's divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), that is, to enjoy all the riches of God (Col. 2:9-10).
 - D. By abiding in the Son, we experience the Spirit of life as the realization of the Son in us, and this Spirit of life also becomes our life essence—John 14:17, 19; 15:26.
 - E. The law of fruit-bearing involves abiding in the Lord and being in union with the Triune God (v. 5); bearing fruit comes out of the law of life, not out of miracles; the law of life, which is the law of fruit-bearing, the law of increase, involves four points:
 1. We should abide in the Lord, just as the branches abide in the vine, to absorb the life supply of the Lord.
 2. We should abide in the Lord to absorb the supply of God the Father as our source of nutrients and the supply of the Holy Spirit as our watering and refreshing.
 3. We should abide in the Lord to absorb the supply of God as our light and the Spirit as our air.
 4. We should abide in the Lord and live in the church, just as a vine has to remain in the garden, in order to receive protection and care.