

LIVING UNDER THE UNIQUE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST AND IN THE UNIQUE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four Holding the Head

Scripture Reading: Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

I. To hold the Head means that there is direct and intimate communication between us and Him; in this close communication between the Head and the members, all His riches are ministered into the members, and all the negative things are swallowed up by the supply of life from the Head—Col. 2:19:

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

- A. When we hold the Head, that is, keep ourselves intimately connected to Him, His riches and life supply enter into our being and become our growth in life.
- B. The phrase *out from whom* in Colossians 2:19 indicates that the Body of Christ grows out from the Head, for all the supply comes from the Head.

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

II. To hold the Head is to acknowledge that only Christ is the Head and to come absolutely under His authority—1:18; 2 Cor. 2:12-15; 4:5-6:

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

2 Cor 2:12 ¹Furthermore, when I came to ^aTroas for the gospel of Christ and a ^bdoor was open to me ²in the Lord,

2 Cor 2:13 I had no rest in my ^{1a}spirit, for I did not find ^bTitus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into ^{2c}Macedonia.

2 Cor 2:14 But ^athanks be to God, who always ¹leads ²us in ^btriumph in ³the Christ and manifests the ^{4c}savor of the ^dknowledge of Him through ⁵us in every place.

2 Cor 2:15 For we ¹are a ^afragrance of Christ to God in those who are being ^bsaved and in those who are ^cperishing:

2 Cor 4:5 ¹For we do not ^apreach ourselves but Christ Jesus as ^{2b}Lord, and ourselves as your ^{3c}slaves for Jesus' sake.

2 Cor 4:6 ¹Because the God who said, Out of ^adarkness ^blight shall shine, is the One who shined ²in ³our ^chearts to ^{4d}illuminate the knowledge of the ^eglory of God in the ⁵face of Jesus Christ.

- A. Only the Lord is our Head, and only He has the authority to direct the moves of the members of His Body; Christ is both the life and the authority of the Body; in fact, true authority is life.
- B. As the Head, the Lord is the One who decides our pathway; we do not have any ground for our own choice; the Body's only duty toward the Head is obedience and submission without any opinion, idea, or proposal.
- C. An acceptance of Christ as the Head involves a repudiation of all other heads; Christ alone is the Head of the Body, and no one else can be the head.
- D. Today we see many human methods and ordinances abounding in the church, but human plans and human decisions are against the headship of Christ.

- E. If Christ is my Head, then I will not dare to please myself or others; I must seek to please Him alone—5:9; 1 Thes. 2:4; Col. 1:10; cf. Acts 2:36; 9:5.
- 2 Cor 5:9 Therefore also we are ¹determined, whether ²at home or abroad, to gain the honor of being ^awell pleasing to Him.
- 1 Thes 2:4 But even as we have been ^{1a}approved by God to be ^bentrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as ^cpleasing men but God, who ^dproves our hearts.
- Col 1:10 To ¹walk worthily of the Lord to please *Him* ²in all things, ³bearing fruit in every good work and growing by the full ⁴knowledge of God,
- Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both ^{1a}Lord and ^bChrist, this Jesus whom ²you have ^ccrucified.
- Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, ¹Lord? And He *said*, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
- F. Once a man realizes that he is a member in the Body, there will be a feeling of submission in him because submission is a law in the Body; in submission there is power—cf. Judg. 16:17.
- Judg 16:17 And he told her all his heart and said to her, No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb. If I were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become weak and be like all men.

III. Our relationship to the Head determines our relationship to the other members; the basis of our fellowship with one another is our mutual holding of the Head:

- A. If we hold the Head, we cannot have a special relationship, feeling, or fellowship with any individual or group of individuals; there is no room for our own preferences in the Body.
- B. We have no direct communication with one another; the mutual relationship of the members passes through the Head first:
1. For instance, when my left hand hurts, my right hand comes to its aid immediately; the right hand does this because both the left hand and the right hand are under the direction of the head.
 2. Forming parties means that a few Christians have a direct relationship with one another and are detached from the authority of the Head; they communicate with each other directly, but their communication has not passed through the Head; they have a special relationship with one another, but their relationship has not passed through the Head; they have a special friendship among themselves that does not issue from their love for the Lord—1 Cor. 1:10-13; 11:19.
- 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the ^{1a}name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all ^{2b}speak the same thing and *that* there be no ^{3c}divisions among you, but *that* you be ⁴attuned in the ^dsame mind and in the same ^{5e}opinion.
- 1 Cor 1:11 For it has been made clear to me concerning you, my brothers, by those of *the household of* ¹Chloe, that there are ^astrifes among you.
- 1 Cor 1:12 Now ^{1a}I mean this, that each of you says, I am of ^bPaul, and I of ^cApollos, and I of ^dCephas, and I of ²Christ.
- 1 Cor 1:13 Is ¹Christ ^adivided? Was Paul ²crucified for you? Or were you ^bbaptized into the name of Paul?
- 1 Cor 11:19 For there must even be ¹parties among you, that those who are ²approved may become ³manifest among you.
- C. If our fellowship is based on man, we are not holding the Head, and our fellowship is Absalom's fellowship, which drew the Israelites away from David—2 Sam. 15:2-6.
- 2 Sam 15:2 And Absalom would rise up early and stand beside the way into the gate; and when any man who had a cause that should have come to the king for judgment came, Absalom would call to him and say, What city are you from? And he would say, Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel.
- 2 Sam 15:3 Then Absalom would say to him, See, your matters are good and right, but there is no one appointed by the king to hear you.

- 2 Sam 15:4 And Absalom would say, Oh that I were made a judge in the land, that every man who had a cause or a matter to be judged would come to me, and I would do him justice!
- 2 Sam 15:5 And so when any man came near to pay him homage, he would put forth his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.
- 2 Sam 15:6 And Absalom acted in this way to all the Israelites who came to the king for judgment. And Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

D. In order to hold the Head, we must allow the cross to deeply deal with our flesh and our natural life, on the one hand, and we must learn to walk by the Spirit, on the other hand—Gal. 5:16, 24-25; cf. Rev. 14:4.

- Gal 5:16 But I say, ^{1a}Walk ^bby the ²Spirit and you shall by no means ^cfulfill the ^dlust of the flesh.
- Gal 5:24 ¹But they who are ^aof Christ Jesus ²have ^{3b}crucified the ^cflesh with its passions and its lusts.
- Gal 5:25 If we ¹live by the Spirit, let us also ^{2a}walk by the Spirit.
- Rev 14:4 These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are ^{1a}virgins. These are they who ^bfollow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men *as* ^{2c}firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

IV. If we hold the Head, we cannot have different interpretations of Scripture; differences arise when someone is not holding the Head, because He cannot possibly say one thing to one member and something else to another:

A. We have to consider “one mouth” in Romans 15:6 and “speak the same thing” in 1 Corinthians 1:10 together with “one new man” in Ephesians 2:15.

- Rom 15:6 That ¹with ^aone accord you may with ^bone mouth ^cglorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the ^{1a}name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all ^{2b}speak the same thing and *that* there be no ^{3c}divisions among you, but *that* you be ⁴attuned in the ^dsame mind and in the same ^{5c}opinion.
- Eph 2:15 ^{1a}Abolishing in His ²flesh the ³law of the commandments in ⁴ordinances, that He might ⁵create the two ⁶in Himself ⁷into ⁸one ^bnew man, *so* ^{9c}making peace,

B. The Head of the Body as the one new man is the person of the Body, and this person has one mouth to speak the same thing; when we hold Christ as the Head, we are all taking Him as our unique person, so we all have one mouth and are in one accord to speak the same thing—the unique teaching of God’s eternal economy regarding Christ and the church—1 Tim. 1:3-4; Eph. 5:32.

- 1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was ¹going into ^aMacedonia, to remain in ^bEphesus in order that you might charge ²certain ones not to teach ^{3c}different things
- 1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to ^{1a}myths and unending ^{2b}genealogies, which produce ^cquestionings rather than God’s ^{3d}economy, which is in ^{4c}faith.
- Eph 5:32 This ^amystery is great, but I speak with regard to ¹Christ ^band the church.

V. The very Christ who is the reality of all positive things is the One who is the Head of the Body; thus, to hold the Head is simply to enjoy Christ as the reality of all positive things—Col. 1:18; 2:16-17, 19:

- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you ¹in ^aeating and in drinking or in respect of a ^{2b}feast or of a ^{3c}new moon or of the ^{4d}Sabbath,
- Col 2:17 Which are a ^{1a}shadow of the things to come, but the ²body is of ^{3b}Christ.
- Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

A. Since the Christ whom we enjoy as our everything is the Head of the Body, the more we enjoy Him, the more we become Body-conscious:

1. This indicates that the enjoyment of Christ is not an individualistic matter but a Body matter—cf. Eph. 3:8; 4:15-16.
- Eph 3:8 To me, ¹less than the ^aleast of all saints, was this ^bgrace given to announce to the ^cGentiles the ²unsearchable ^{3d}riches of Christ as the gospel

- Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.
2. The more we enjoy Christ, the more we love the other members of the Body—Col. 1:4, 8.
- Col 1:4 Because we have heard of your ^{1a}faith in Christ Jesus and the ^blove which you have unto all the saints
- Col 1:8 Who also has made known to us your ^alove in the Spirit.
- B. Because Christ's headship is in resurrection (v. 18), the enjoyment of Christ spontaneously brings us into resurrection and saves us from our natural being.
- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- C. The enjoyment of Christ brings us into the heavenlies in ascension; we can be experientially in the heavens only by enjoying Christ, the Head, as the lifegiving Spirit in our spirit—3:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:10, 34.
- Col 3:1 ¹If therefore you were ^{2a}raised together with Christ, seek the things which are ³above, where Christ is, sitting at the ^bright hand of God.
- Col 3:2 Set your ^amind on the ¹things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth.
- 2 Cor 3:17 ¹And the ²Lord is the ^{3a}Spirit; and where the ^{4b}Spirit of the Lord is, there is ^{5c}freedom.
- 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your ^{1a}spirit. ^{2b}Grace be with you.
- Rom 8:10 But if ^{1a}Christ is ²in you, though the ³body is ⁴dead because of sin, the ⁵spirit is ⁶life because of ⁷righteousness.
- Rom 8:34 Who is he who condemns? ¹It is Christ Jesus who ^adied and, rather, who ^bwas raised, who is also ^{2c}at the right hand of God, who also ^{3d}intercedes for us.
- D. As we enjoy Christ and hold Him as the Head, we absorb the riches of the extensive, all-inclusive Christ; these riches become in us the increase of God by which the Body grows for its building up—Col. 2:19, 6-8; Eph. 4:16.
- Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
- Col 2:6 As therefore you have ^{1a}received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, ^{2b}walk in Him,
- Col 2:7 Having been ^{1a}rooted and being ^bbuilt up ²in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
- Col 2:8 Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his ¹philosophy and ^aempty deceit, according to the ^{2b}tradition of men, according to the ^{3c}elements of the world, and not according to ^{4d}Christ;
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

VI. In Colossians 2 Paul speaks of being rooted and of holding the Head, and in John 15 the Lord Jesus speaks of abiding in the vine:

- Col 2:1 For I want you to know how great a ^astruggle I have for you and *for* those in ^bLaodicea, even all who have not seen my face in the flesh,
- Col 2:2 That their hearts may be ^{1a}comforted, they being knit together in ²love and unto all the ³riches of the ^{4b}full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the ^{5c}mystery of God, Christ,
- Col 2:3 In whom all the treasures of ^{1a}wisdom and knowledge are hidden.
- Col 2:4 This I say that no one may ¹delude you with ^{2a}persuasive speech.
- Col 2:5 For even though I am absent in the flesh, yet in the ^{1a}spirit I am with you, rejoicing and seeing your order and the solid basis of your faith ²in Christ.
- Col 2:6 As therefore you have ^{1a}received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, ^{2b}walk in Him,
- Col 2:7 Having been ^{1a}rooted and being ^bbuilt up ²in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
- Col 2:8 Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his ¹philosophy and ^aempty deceit, according to the ^{2b}tradition of men, according to the ^{3c}elements of the world, and not according to ^{4d}Christ;

Col 2:9 For in Him dwells all the ^{1a}fullness of the ²Godhead ³bodily.

Col 2:10 And you have been made ¹full in Him, who is the ^aHead of all ²rule and authority.

Col 2:11 In Him also you were ^acircumcised with a ¹circumcision ²not ^bmade with hands, in the ³putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ,

Col 2:12 ^{1a}Buried together with Him in baptism, in which also you were ^{2b}raised together with *Him* through the ³faith of the operation of God, who ^craised Him from the dead.

Col 2:13 And you, though ^{1a}dead in your offenses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He ^{2b}made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our offenses;

Col 2:14 ^{1a}Wiping out the ²handwriting in ³ordinances, which was against us, which was contrary to us; and He has taken it out of the way, ⁴nailing it to the cross.

Col 2:15 ¹Stripping off the ^{2a}rulers and the authorities, ³He made a ⁴display of *them* openly, triumphing over them in ⁵it.

Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you ¹in ^aeating and in drinking or in respect of a ^{2b}feast or of a ^{3c}new moon or of the ^{4d}Sabbath,

Col 2:17 Which are a ^{1a}shadow of the things to come, but the ²body is of ^{3b}Christ.

Col 2:18 Let no one ¹defraud you by judging you unworthy of your ^aprize, in ^bself-chosen ²lowliness and the worship of the angels, ³dwelling on the things which he has ⁴seen, vainly ^cpuffed up by ⁵his mind set on the flesh,

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

Col 2:20 ¹If you ^{2a}died with Christ from the ^{3b}elements of the world, why, as living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ^cordinances:

Col 2:21 ¹Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch,

Col 2:22 (*Regarding* things which are all to ^{1a}perish when ²used) according to the ^bcommandments and teachings of men?

Col 2:23 ¹Such things indeed have a ²reputation of wisdom in self-imposed ^aworship and lowliness and ^{3b}severe treatment of the body, *but* are ⁴not of any value against the ^cindulgence of the flesh.

John 15:1 I am the ¹true ^avine, and My Father is the ²husbandman.

John 15:2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He ¹prunes it that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:3 You are already ^aclean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

John 15:4 ^aAbide ^bin Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit ¹of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears ^amuch fruit; for apart from Me you can do ^bnothing.

John 15:6 If one does not abide in Me, he is ^{1a}cast out as a branch and is dried up; and they gather them and cast *them* into the ^bfire, and they are ^cburned.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My ^{1a}words abide in you, ²ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

John 15:8 In this is My Father ^{1a}glorified, that you bear much fruit and *so* you will become My ^bdisciples.

John 15:9 As the Father has ^aloved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

John 15:10 If you ¹keep My ^acommandments, you will abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you that My ^{1a}joy may be in you and *that* your joy may be made full.

John 15:12 This is My ^acommandment, that you ^blove one another even as I have loved you.

John 15:13 No one has greater love than this, that one ^alay down his ¹life for his friends.

John 15:14 You are My ^afriends if you do what I command you.

John 15:15 No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all the things which I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I ^achose you, and I ¹set you that you should ²go forth and ^bbear fruit and ³*that* your fruit should ⁴remain, that whatever you ^{5c}ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

John 15:17 These things I command you that you may ^{1a}love one another.

John 15:18 If the world ^ahates you, know that it has ^bhated Me before you.

John 15:19 If you were ¹of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are ^anot of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 15:20 Remember the word which I said to you, A slave is not ^agreater than his master. If they have ^bpersecuted Me, they will ^cpersecute you also; if they have kept My word, they will keep yours also.

John 15:21 But all these things they will do to you because of My ^aname, because they do ^bnot know Him who sent Me.

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have ^asin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.

John 15:23 He who ^ahates Me hates My Father also.

John 15:24 If I did not do among them the ^aworks which no one else has done, they would not have ^bsin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.

John 15:25 But *it is so* that the word written in their law may be fulfilled, "^aThey hated Me without cause."

John 15:26 But when the ^aComforter comes, whom I will ^bsend to you ^{1c}from the Father, the ^dSpirit of reality, who proceeds from the Father, He will ^etestify concerning Me;

John 15:27 And ^ayou testify also, because from the beginning you have been with Me.

- A. Abiding in the vine is equal to being rooted in the soil, and being rooted in the soil is equal to holding the Head; Christ is the vine in which we abide, the soil in which we are rooted, and the Head whom we hold.
- B. As branches, we absorb the life-juice from the vine; as plants, we absorb the riches of the soil; and as members of the Body of Christ, we absorb the nourishing element from the Head; by absorbing the riches of the Head, the Body grows with the growth of God, with the increase of God as life within us.
- C. Since God gives the growth in this way, we need to take time to absorb Him:
 - 1. Our contact with the Lord should not be rushed; every morning we need to take an adequate amount of time to absorb the Lord; it is best to spend thirty minutes to enjoy Him at the start of each new day.
 - 2. We need to forget our situation, our condition, our failures, and our weaknesses and simply take time to enjoy and absorb the Lord; we need to spend more time in our spirit to adore the Lord, to praise Him, to offer thanks to Him, and to speak to Him freely.
 - 3. As we fellowship with Him in this way, we will absorb His riches, and He will add more of Himself into us so that we may grow with the growth of God.

VII. We grow up into the Head by allowing Christ to increase and to grow in all the inward parts of our being—Eph. 4:15-16:

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

- A. In order to grow in life, we must know, we must use, and we must exercise our mingled spirit—1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; 4:22.
 - 1 Tim 4:7 But the ^{1a}profane and old-womanish ^{2b}myths ³refuse, and ⁴exercise yourself unto ^cgodliness.
 - 2 Tim 1:6 For which cause I remind you to ¹fan into flame the ^agift of God, which is in you through the ^{2b}laying on of my hands.
 - 2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a ^{1a}spirit ²of ^bcowardice, but of ^cpower and of ^dlove and of ^esobermindedness.
 - 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your ^{1a}spirit. ^{2b}Grace be with you.
- B. In order to grow in life, we must feed on the milk and food of the holy Word as the embodiment of Christ, the living Word of God—1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:13-14.
 - 1 Pet 2:2 As ¹newborn ^ababes, long for the ²guileless ^bmilk ³of the word in order that by it you may ^{4c}grow ⁵unto ^dsalvation,
 - Heb 5:13 For everyone who partakes of ¹milk is inexperienced in the ^aword of righteousness, for he is an ^binfant;
 - Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the ^afull-grown, who because of practice have their ¹faculties exercised for discriminating between both ²good and evil.

VIII. As we grow up into the Head in life, our function will come out from the Head for the building up of the Body—Eph. 4:16:

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

- A. When we allow Christ to be the Head in everything and when we grow up into Him in all things, we will be supplied with the riches of His life, receiving something from Him to transfuse into other members of the Body—2 Cor. 3:6, 8; John 7:37-39.
- 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us ^asufficient as ^bministers of a ^cnew covenant, *ministers* not of the ¹letter but of the ^{2d}Spirit; for the ³letter kills, but the ^{4e}Spirit gives life.
- 2 Cor 3:8 How shall the ^{1a}ministry of the ^bSpirit not be more in ²glory?
- John 7:37 Now on the ¹last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone ^athirsts, let him ^bcome to Me and ^cdrink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his ^ainnermost being shall ¹flow ^{2b}rivers of living water.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the ^{1a}Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for *the* Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been ^bglorified.
- B. All the Body causes the growth of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:16:
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.
1. This growth is through every joint of the rich supply—all the particular gifts in the Body of Christ—vv. 11-12.

Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave ¹some as ^aapostles and some as ^bprophets and some as ^cevangelists and some as ²shepherds and ^dteachers,

Eph 4:12 For the ^{1a}perfecting of the saints ²unto the work of the ^{3b}ministry, unto the ^{4c}building up of the ^dBody of Christ,
 2. This growth is through the operation in the measure of each one part—every member in the Body of Christ—vv. 7-8.

Eph 4:7 ¹But to each one of us ^{2a}grace was given according to the ^{3b}measure of the ^cgift of Christ.

Eph 4:8 Therefore *the Scripture* says, "Having ^aascended to the ¹height, He led captive ²those taken captive and gave ^{3b}gifts to men."
- C. The building up of the Body of Christ is in love and by love—1 Cor. 8:1b:
- 1 Cor 8:1b ... ⁴Knowledge ^cpuffs up, but ^dlove ^{5e}builds up.
1. Love is the most excellent way to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ—12:31b—13:13.

1 Cor 12:31b ... And moreover I show to you a ³most excellent way.

1 Cor 13:1 If I speak in the ^atongues of men and of angels but do not have ^blove, I have become ¹sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

1 Cor 13:2 And if I have *the gift of* ^aprophecy and know all ^bmysteries and all ^cknowledge, and if I have all ^dfaith so as to ^eremove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

1 Cor 13:3 And if I ^adole out all my possessions to feed *others*, and if I ¹deliver up my ^bbody ²that I may boast, but do not have love, I profit nothing.

1 Cor 13:4 ^{1a}Love ^bsuffers long. Love is kind; it is not ^cjealous. Love does not ^dbrag *and* is not ^epuffed up;

1 Cor 13:5 It does not behave unbecomingly *and* does not ^aseek its own things; it is not provoked *and* does not take account of evil;

1 Cor 13:6 It does ^anot rejoice because of ¹unrighteousness, but ^brejoices with the ^ctruth;

1 Cor 13:7 It ^{1a}covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Cor 13:8 ^aLove ¹never falls *away*. But whether ^bprophecies, they will be rendered useless; or ^ctongues, they will cease; or ^dknowledge, it will be rendered useless.

1 Cor 13:9 For we ^aknow in part, and we prophesy in part;

1 Cor 13:10 But ¹when that which is ²complete comes, ³that which is in part will be rendered useless.

1 Cor 13:11 ¹When I was a ^{2a}child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a ^bchild, I ³reasoned as a child; ⁴since I have become a man, I have done away with childish things.

1 Cor 13:12 For ¹now we see ²in a ^amirror ³obscurely, but at ⁴that time ^bface to face; now I ^cknow in part, but at that time I will fully ^dknow even as also I was fully known.

1 Cor 13:13 Now there abide ^{1a}faith, ^bhope, ^clove, these three; and the greatest of these is ^dlove.

2. The goal of the book of Ephesians is to bring us into love as God's inner substance (1 John 4:8, 16) so that we may enjoy God as love and enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love, and thereby we may love others as Christ did—Eph. 5:25; 6:24; 1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2.
- 1 John 4:8 He who ^adoes ¹not love has not ^bknown God, because God is ^{2c}love.
- 1 John 4:16 And we know and have ^abelieved the ¹love which God has ²in us. God is ³love, and he who ⁴abides in love ⁵abides in God and ⁶God abides in him.
- Eph 5:25 Husbands, ^{1a}love your wives even ²as Christ also ^bloved the church and gave Himself up for her
- Eph 6:24 ^{1a}Grace be with all those who ^{2b}love our Lord Jesus Christ in ^{3c}incorruptibility.
- Eph 1:4 Even as He ^{1a}chose us in Him ^{2b}before the foundation of the world to be ^{3c}holy and ⁴without blemish ⁵before Him ⁶in ^{7d}love,
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His ^ahome in your ¹hearts through ²faith, that you, being ^{3b}rooted and grounded in ^{4c}love,
- Eph 4:2 With all ^{1a}lowliness and ^bmeekness, with ^clong-suffering, bearing one another in ^dlove,
- Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9c}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.
- Eph 5:2 And ^awalk in ^{1b}love, even as ²Christ also ^cloved ³us and gave Himself up for us, an ⁴offering and a ^dsacrifice to God for a ^{5e}sweet-smelling savor.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

CORRESPONDING TO CHRIST'S HEAVENLY MINISTRY UNDER HIS HEADSHIP

Holding the Head

Christ is the Head, and we are the members. Colossians 2:19 reminds us that we must hold the Head, "out from Whom all the Body, by means of the joints and bands being supplied and knit together, grows with the growth of God." To hold the Head means that there is direct communication between us and Him. There is no separation between Him and all the members. The members correspond to whatever the Head ministers. The result of this correspondence is the growth in life. By holding the Head, there is an inward growth, not an outward move. In this close communication between the Head and the members, all His riches are ministered into the members and all the negative things are swallowed up by the supply of life from the Head.

The way we grow is by holding the Head. Growth does not come about from the study of the Bible or the understanding of doctrine. Such knowledge is not much help to our growth. The Head is the source of life. When we hold Him, that is, keep ourselves intimately connected to Him, His riches and life supply enter into our being and become our growth in life.

Growing Up into the Head

"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, fitted and knit together through every joint of the supply, according to the operation in measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:15-16). These verses go a step further than Colossians 2:19. We are not only to hold the Head, but also to grow up into Him in all things. To hold the Head is close and intimate, but to grow into Him is a deeper and finer correspondence. Words are inadequate to convey what is meant by this growing up into Him, but perhaps some examples may help us to grasp the thought.

In Marriage

Married life was ordained by God and is to "be held in honor among all" (Heb. 13:4). The sisters surely are pleased to have a husband, and the brothers a wife! If you are not yet married, you no doubt are thinking how wonderful it would be. Marriage is surely a wonderful arrangement! Nonetheless, as one who has been married for over fifty years, I must say that married life is not easy. If you are not married, you are not aware of all the troubles that arise. What is the cause of the problems? Mostly it is because your marriage is still not in the Head. You may be willing to grow into the Lord in everything else, but in the matter of your marriage you would retain yourself. Deep within, you may have the intention to keep your marriage outside the Lord. Some sisters suffer much in their married life because of this. You have a reservation, perhaps never expressed in words, about growing into the Lord in your marriage. Thus, in this point you are not corresponding to Him while He is ministering in the heavens.

In Shopping and in Other Weaknesses

Sisters especially seem to like shopping. Thus they often have a problem corresponding to the Lord in this matter. The first thing in the morning they may have a wonderful time praying and enjoying the Lord. But right after breakfast they may pick up a newspaper and find some special bargains advertised. The Lord is forgotten! They must go to the stores right away, or the things they want will be sold out! The One who is in the heavens is also within, however. His word is, "Don't go!" They reply, "Lord, just this one time give me a little liberty!"

Is not this the way you are? In your prayer earlier you were corresponding to Him, but now your desire to go shopping has annulled that corresponding. Now the Lord has no way. He has to suffer, and you will suffer too. If you go shopping this way, you will find it hard to pray afterwards. Two or three days may go by without your being able to pray. For this period of time there is no correspondence on your part to the Lord's heavenly ministry. He is gone, and there is no communication between you and Him during those days.

It is not only the sisters who have such a weakness. I have my weaknesses too. In many things I have grown into the Lord, but in certain other things I also would say, "Lord, all this time I have been loving You. Can I not have just a little rest from loving You? How about giving me a few hours off?" From my own experience I know this is also what happens to you. You do not need to come to talk to me about your weakness. I was once a young man too and had the same kind of weakness. While I was indulging that weakness, I was absent from the Lord, and there was no growth in life.

In Things Great and Small

Sometimes it is in the big things that we find it hard to grow into the Lord; many times, however, it is in the small things. We may think the Lord is not interested in the small things, like how we wear our hair. Whether the matter is big or small, if we do not grow into Him in that thing, our corresponding to Him is arrested. I would say that especially in the small things we must grow into Him. This growth into Him keeps us in direct correspondence to His heavenly ministry under His headship. This ministry requires a very fine correspondence on our part. Then we shall grow.

The Supply from the Head

When we hold the Head and grow up into Him in all things, out from Him will come the life supply to the Body. As we hold Him and grow up into Him, the riches of the Head will flow out through us. I like these two phrases, "into Him" and "out from Him" (see Eph. 4:15-16). There is first the growing into Him; then the life supply will come out of Him. When this is true of us, we are corresponding to the Lord's ministry in the heavens. Then the functions will emerge for the building up of the Body.

GIVING THE LORD A WAY

There is the need for our twofold correspondence to the Lord's heavenly ministry. Among Christians today, at most there seems to be only the move in life for the preaching of the gospel. There is little growth in life for the building up of the Body. We must not neglect either aspect. The Lord needs us to correspond to Him so that He can move in us to bring people to Himself. He also wants our response that we may grow up into Him so that something of Him may come forth to supply and build up the Body.

As we correspond to the Lord's ministry in these two aspects, His will will be fulfilled. If we are short in this corresponding, the Lord has no way to carry out His heavenly ministry. It is crucial for us in the recovery to see this. For the spread of the gospel and for the building up of His Body by the growth in life, the Lord must have our correspondence on earth to what He is ministering in the heavens. We need to pray much for this correspondence. (*The Heavenly Ministry of Christ*, pp. 37-40)

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BODY RESTING IN THE HEAD

The Bible emphatically tells us that Christ is the Head. One day God will head up everything in the universe under Christ. Today the universe has not come under the headship of Christ yet, and everything is in a state of confusion. But one day God will head up everything under the headship of Christ. God ordained that Christ should exercise headship over all things, but today that headship must first be exercised in the church, and then through the church the headship will be exercised over all things. Today Christ is the Head of the church. Eventually, He will be the Head over all things. The church is God's means of enlarging Christ, and this enlargement will go on until He fills the entire universe. The church is "the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23). If the headship of Christ is not established in the church, it cannot be established in the universe.

What do Christ being the Head of the church and the church being the Body of Christ mean? They mean that all authority is in Him. All authority is in Him because all life is in Him. The whole Body is consummated in Him; He is the fountainhead of the life of the Body. The Body has no life of its own. "God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11). Even after eternal

life is given to us, it still rests in His Son. The Son does not part with it; He retains it in Himself. “He who has the Son has the life” (v. 12). This verse does not say, “He who has the life has the life.” We do not possess life as life; only by possessing the Son do we have life. A Christian receives his life from the Lord. Yet this life can never be separated from the Lord. A believer is related not just to life. By being related to this life, a believer is related to the Son of God. This life makes us members of the Body of Christ. This life relationship rules out the possibility of being separated from the Head, because our life is derived from the Head. The flow of life in us continually depends upon our relationship to the Son. As soon as there is any obstruction in our fellowship with Him, the life in us is immediately blocked. He is the Head of the Body, and life can flow freely to us only when He is in full control.

THE MEMBERS’ PLACE BEING TO SUBMIT TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE HEAD

The power of our existence is derived from Christ. This is why we cannot do anything independently. Only the Lord is our Head, and only He has the authority to direct the moves of the members of His Body. In this age of lawlessness, any suggestion of the need of authority is unwelcome; but if we are to understand and enter into the life of the Body, we must know the authority of the Head. My hand can do nothing without direction from the head. The head must command if the members are to move. Christ is the life of the Body, and Christ is also the authority in the Body. All the moves of the members of His Body must be under the direction of the Head. For Christ to be the Head means that He has the authority in the Body. We are not the head, and we do not have the authority. The only thing we should do is submit to the authority of the Lord. If we seek to know the life of the Body, a question will immediately arise: Do we bow to the absolute authority of the Lord? We will be challenged at the outset by the headship of Christ. We cannot say, “But...” We cannot say, “I think...” We can only bow to His sovereignty. We need to realize that if we are going to be members of the Body, we cannot be the Head. We cannot dictate, choose, or even desire. The Bible says that we should follow the Lord. What does it mean to follow the Lord? Following means coming after. The Lord is the One who decides our pathway. We do not have any ground for our own choice. The Body’s only duty toward the Head is obedience and submission without any opinion, idea, or proposal. In the Body of Christ, no individual’s idea or proposal counts; all these have to be cast down. We should only submit to the authority of the Head. We should just listen to His command and do as He says.

An acceptance of Christ as Head involves a repudiation of all other heads. Christ alone is the Head of the Body; no one else can be the head. You cannot be the head, nor can anyone in the church be the head, because there can only be one Head in the Body; there cannot be two heads. Only Christ is the Head. Therefore, all of us have to obey Christ. Today we see many human methods and ordinances abounding in the church. How wrong this is! Human plans and human decisions are against the headship of Christ. If Christ is my Head, then I will not dare to please myself or others; I must seek to please Him alone. “God has made Him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Note that God has not set up Christ as Savior but as Lord. Paul first saw Christ as Lord and then as Savior. When he was apprehended on the road to Damascus, his first question was, “Who are You, *Lord?*” (9:5). Only Christ is the Head in the church; there is no other head. If we desire to live in the Body of Christ, we have to learn to submit to the authority of our Lord Jesus. Anyone who cannot submit, who always expresses his opinions and proposals, and who insists on being the head has never seen the Body. Once a man realizes that he is a member in the Body, there will surely be a feeling of submission in him because submission is a law of the Body.

HOLDING THE HEAD

Paul spoke of “holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God” (Col. 2:19). Since

Christ is the Head of the Body, we have to hold the Head. Holding the Head is acknowledging that only Christ is the Head; it is coming absolutely under His authority. We can be joined to the brothers and sisters only when we hold the Head. The members of the Body are fitted together and able to live the Body life through holding the Head. Our relationship to the Head determines our relationship to the other members. All the questions regarding our relationship with the brothers and sisters can only be solved when we come under the absolute authority of the Lord. Unless we recognize the headship of Christ in the Body, we will never have a perfect fellowship with the other members, because it is our common relationship to Him that causes us to be related to one another. We may look different outwardly, but the Christ within us is the same. This is why we can fellowship with one another and be one with each other. Apart from Christ, we have no means of fellowship. When we do not hold the Head, our fellowship becomes invalid. The basis of our fellowship is our mutual holding of the Head. When we all hold the Head, we will hold to one another, and our relationship with the Body will be proper.

If we hold the Head, we cannot have a special relationship, feeling, or fellowship with any individual or group of individuals. There is no room for our own preferences in the Body. We have no direct communion one with another; it is all through the Head. For instance, when my left hand hurts, my right hand comes to its aid immediately. The right hand does this because both the left hand and the right hand are under the direction of the head. The mutual relationship of the members passes through the Head first. What does it mean to form parties? Forming parties means that a few Christians have a direct relationship with one another and are detached from the authority of the Head. They communicate with each other directly, but their communication has not passed through the Head. They have a special relationship with one another, but their relationship has not passed through the Head.

We must not move in relation to another member except under the direction of the Lord. If He asks us to do something for a fellow member and the fellow member does not appreciate it, we do not need to worry since all of our dealings are with the Head. If we hold the Head, getting all our direction from Him and doing all as unto Him, we do not need to worry about the consequences.

If we hold the Head, we cannot have different interpretations of Scripture. Differences arise when someone is not holding the Head, because He cannot possibly say one thing to one member and something else to another. If differences arise, we must not try to straighten them out by discussion; rather, we should just recognize Christ as the Head. In the church we all must hold the Head, whether it involves the understanding of the truth, the handling of business, or any other matter. Christ is the unique authority in the Body. The place of all the members is to hold the Head and to acknowledge Him as the unique and supreme authority in all things. If we let the cross deal with our natural life, we will find no difficulty in our relationship with the fellow members of the Body. (Watchman Nee, *The Mystery of Christ*, pp. 31-35)