

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2007**

GENERAL SUBJECT: THE BELIEVERS

Message Eleven

**Their Symbols—Vessels of Mercy unto Honor and Glory,
Grains of Wheat, and Branches of the Vine**

Scripture Reading: Rom. 9:21, 23; Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; John 12:24; 15:1, 4-5, 7

I. The believers in Christ are vessels of mercy unto honor and glory; we are containers of Christ as mercy, honor, and glory—Rom. 9:21, 23:

- A. God's purpose in creating man was to make man His vessel, His earthenware container, to contain and be filled with Christ as life for the building up of the Body of Christ as God's great corporate vessel for His expression—Gen. 2:7; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21.
- B. All of Paul's fourteen Epistles can be summed up in two words—*open vessel*:
 1. The degree to which God can dispense Himself into us depends on the degree of our openness; God wants us only to love Him and keep ourselves open to Him—2 Kings 4:1-7; Matt. 5:3; John 1:16; Isa. 57:15; 66:1-2.
 2. Decadence starts from self-complacency; progress starts from hunger and thirst—Deut. 4:25; Luke 1:53; Phil. 1:25; Rev. 3:16-18.
- C. We were created to be vessels of mercy to contain Christ as the God of mercy—Rom. 9:11-13, 16, 20-21, 23; Lam. 3:21-23; Luke 1:78-79:
 1. God's mercy is the most far-reaching of God's attributes, saving us out of our wretched position into a condition that is suitable for His love and grace—Eph. 2:1-4; Heb. 4:16.
 2. Because of God's mercy, we responded to the gospel when others did not respond, we received a word about Christ as life when others refused to receive it, and we took the way of the Lord's recovery when others drew back from taking this way—*Hymns*, #296, stanza 3.
 3. Mercy refers to God's outward doing motivated by our wretched state; compassion refers to His inward affection originating in His loving essence—Rom. 9:15; Matt. 9:36.
 4. We must contact God as the compassionate One every morning so that we may live in the reality of the kingdom in being merciful to others and not judging others—Lam. 3:21-23; Matt. 5:7; 7:1.
- D. We are created to be vessels of honor to contain Christ as the God of honor; vessels of honor are inoculators, those who inoculate others against the decline of the church—2 Tim. 2:20-22; Judg. 9:9; 1 Sam. 2:30:
 1. The inoculator is a teacher, a good minister of Christ Jesus, one who is nourished with the words of life and who exercises his spirit to live Christ in his daily life for the church life—2 Tim. 2:2; 1:13-14; 1 Tim. 4:6-7; 6:20.

2. The inoculator is a soldier, warring against the different teachings of the dissenters to carry out God's economy according to the apostle's ministry and fighting the battle against death, the last enemy of God, by being full of life to reign in life—2 Tim. 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 1:18; Rom. 8:6, 11; 5:17.
 3. The inoculator is an athlete, living the normal church life by fleeing into Christ as our refuge and pursuing Christ as righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 6:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:22.
 4. The inoculator is a farmer, working together with God by an all-fitting life to sow the seed of life into people and water them with the Spirit of life by His healthy words—v. 6; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9; 2 Cor. 6:1a; Luke 8:11; John 7:38; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6.
 5. The inoculator is a workman, cutting straight the word of the truth, unfolding the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion (as in carpentry); there is the need of the word of the truth rightly unfolded to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted believers back to the proper track—2 Tim. 2:15; cf. Acts 26:18; Psa. 119:130, 133.
- E. We are vessels of glory to contain Christ as the God of glory:
1. Glory is God Himself expressed and manifested—Jer. 2:11; Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 Pet. 4:14; Col. 2:9.
 2. We have this treasure, Christ as the God of glory, dwelling within us, the earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7); "this treasure" indwelling us is "the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6), the presence of Christ, "the person of Christ" (2:10).
 3. When we turn our heart to the Lord, we are beholding the Lord Spirit as the presence of Christ in our spirit, and we are "being transformed...from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit"—3:16-18.
 4. To behold the glory of the Lord is to see the Lord ourselves; to reflect the glory of the Lord is to enable others to see Him through us—Isa. 60:1, 5.

II. The believers in Christ are grains of wheat—John 12:24:

- A. The many grains of wheat produced through Christ's death and resurrection are for the formation of the one bread—the Body of Christ; the grains of wheat are crushed, mingled with oil, baked in the oven, and blended together into one loaf, signified by the meal offering—1 Cor. 10:17; Lev. 2:4-5.
- B. The Lord, as a grain of wheat falling into the ground, lost His soul-life through death that He might release the fire of His eternal life to the "many grains" in resurrection; we as the many grains must lose our soul-life through death that we may enjoy and release the fire of the eternal life to others in resurrection—John 12:24-26; Luke 12:49-50; 1 Cor. 15:31, 36; 2 Cor. 4:12.
- C. As grains of wheat falling into the earth to die, our outer man is being broken, consumed, so that our inner man can be renewed day by day—vv. 16, 10-11; Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:23; 5:26.
- D. A Christian who is spiritual for the building up of the Body of Christ must "read" three things every day—he needs to read the Bible, he needs to read his inward sense, and he needs to read his environment and circumstances, which are the people, things, and matters around him—Rom. 8:6; cf. Prov. 16:9.

- E. We may pray and hope that others will change, but the more we pray in this way, the clearer we are that nothing will change; this is the environment that God has created to cause us to be conformed to the image of God's Son and manifest God's grace and power—Rom. 8:28-29; cf. 6:3-4; 1 Kings 7:17, 20-22.
- F. We should cooperate with the operating Spirit and accept the environment which God has arranged for us—Phil. 4:12; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; 1 Cor. 7:24.
- G. We may complain to God, but our complaining may be the best prayer, the most pleasant prayer to God; while we are complaining, God is rejoicing because He is causing all things to work together for good that we may be conformed to the image of His firstborn Son—cf. Psa. 102, title.

III. The believers in Christ are branches of the vine—John 15:1, 4-5:

- A. The vine, which is Christ, with its branches, which are the believers in Christ, is the organism of the Triune God in God's economy to grow with His riches and to express His divine life—vv. 1-5.
- B. We are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing apart from Christ as the vine; thus, we need to abide in Him, to remain, stay, and dwell in Him, not living by what we are or by what we can do but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—14:6a; 2 Cor. 5:4.
- C. To abide in Christ is to abide in His love so that we may love Him and love one another to express the divine life in fruit-bearing—John 15:9-10, 16-17:
 1. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"—13:34-35; cf. 1 John 4:18-19.
 2. If we love the Lord, we will be filled with Him, and whatever fills us within will come out of us; loving the Lord to the uttermost qualifies, perfects, and equips us to speak forth the Lord—John 21:15-17.
- D. To abide in Christ is to keep ourselves in the fellowship with Him daily and hourly, not allowing anything to come between us and Him; the entire church life depends on the divine fellowship, which is the circulating Triune God working, flowing, communicating, transporting, transmitting, and dispensing all that He is into us for our enjoyment—1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14.
- E. In order for the Lord to abide in us, we must let His words abide in us; if we abide in His written Word by coming to Him for life, His instant words will abide in us as spirit and life—John 15:7; 5:39-40; 8:31; 6:63.
- F. As the branches of Christ, the true vine, we need to live Christ, grow Christ, express Christ, and propagate Christ in every respect; this is to "walk worthily of the Lord to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and growing by the full knowledge of God"—Col. 1:10.
- G. Fruit-bearing is the overflow of the riches of the inner life; out of the abundance of the inner life there will be a flow that will reach others, penetrating into their lives, so that they may become remaining fruit for the Father's glorification—John 15:16.