

BEING A BROTHER

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE ONE: THE HIGHEST PLACE ORDAINED BY GOD

The highest place ordained by God for you is to be a brother. This is quite different from our concept. Our concept is that the highest place is to be an apostle, followed by prophet, then evangelist, and so on, according to the sequence given by Paul in Ephesians 4:11. Even for an apostle, however, the highest exercise in his apostleship is for him to be a brother. When referring to his commission, Paul referred to himself as an apostle (as in Ephesians 1:1). This, however, was not his title. The reality of being even an apostle comes out of the exercise of one's place as a brother, not the exercise of some position. Peter wrote of "our dear brother Paul" in his Epistle (2 Peter 3:15), and Paul referred to Apollos, another apostle, as a brother (1 Cor. 16:12).

In the church life there are none besides brothers. And this is the highest status. Any other title among us reveals there is a shortage of truth. It seems, however, quite common to think of certain ones as being higher than others in the church life.

Part of our problem is that we think seniority merits privilege. With seniority we feel there is a certain status. This is the thought of the world. For instance, I have flown so many miles on a particular airline that my flights are often upgraded to first class. Do I not deserve it? We bring this kind of thinking into the church life: "I have attended so many meetings, suffered through so many changes, offered so much, and served faithfully. Surely that earns me something." When you view yourself in this way you become something other than a brother. You become special. This is particularly true of those who serve full-time.

Actually, no one can promote you to any higher position than that of brother. Therefore, never think of anyone as “just a brother.” “Brother” is the highest place to which you can attain in the church life. The Lord desires to see you operating as a brother. What you may desire to see is yourself operating as an apostle (according to your concept). If so, you are at odds with the Lord.

How can it be that there are power struggles in the Lord’s recovery? Because many dear saints have not realized that they can never be placed higher than brother. There is no higher place the Lord can appoint you to in the church life, for He has already placed you as a brother.

There was a talk circulating years back about the flow from God through a line of brothers, and that to be anybody you had to get yourself connected to these brothers. This talk flourished during that time because many saints lacked the realization that there is nothing higher among us than being a brother. So much damage came from the thought that some were in this flow and some were not, some were useful and some were not. Suppose the young people at that time had the realization that the highest the Lord desired for them was for them to be healthy, functioning brothers. If they had been clear on this one matter, then when they were told that they were ‘nobody’ unless they were attached to this ‘coordination,’ they would have replied, “We are brothers. We do not need any other status to be somebody or to be useful.”

I hope I can impress you with this. The highest place to which you can attain in the Lord’s recovery is that of a brother. Satan’s work is to cause us to despise our place as common and low. This is why some are not satisfied with being simply brothers. Too many saints have been stumbled after growing so well due to the thought that there is something further they should have arrived at or gained. We must realize that from the beginning we have been given the highest in being placed as a brother in the church life.

Some years ago a brother suggested that I was at a level where I should exert more influence in the Lord's recovery. The thought was that Brother Lee would honor my fellowship since I had been manifested in serving for already some period of time. To accept this thought, however, would have frustrated me from being a brother. One brother has no special privilege above any other brother. But when one becomes a coworker, it is tempting to think that you are special. Once you become a coworker the temptation to be something beyond a brother is frequently present. Your understanding, however, should be, "I was a brother when I first got saved, and to the end I will still be purely a brother." Brothers, you need to realize that there is no need to make a name or a way for yourself. You may become as spiritual as Paul, but you will still be just a brother. There is nothing higher to which you can climb.

Satan's temptation is to cause you to seek to be special. Satan's work is always to cause you to admire yourself or to abase yourself. He will either flatter you or accuse you. He goads you into thinking you can be more than just a brother, or he condemns you, causing you to feel you are less than a brother. However, regardless of Satan's work, you are a brother. If you are not clear on this, you will eventually have problems and even cause problems.

TO KNOW OUR PLACE AS A BROTHER IS CRUCIAL FOR OUR OPERATION IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Four Statures for Our Operation in the Church Life

For our general understanding we must realize we are brothers, not workers. This is in regards to life. In regards to ministry, we are members and not rulers. In regards to commitment, we are slaves and not lords. In regards to fellowship, we are friends of the Lord, as mentioned in John 15:14-15, and not employees. Our Christian life is focused on these four matters: life, ministry, commitment, and fellowship. We should be in these four statures continually.

Related to these four positive statures are four negative alternatives. Instead of operating as a brother, you could become a worker. Instead of functioning as a member, you might seek to rule over others. Instead of serving as a slave, you could act as a lord. Instead of a walking as a friend of the Lord, you could become an employee.

1. We are Brothers, Not Workers

Of the four statures, nothing is more precious than being a brother. If you were not a brother, you could not be a member, a slave, or a friend of the Lord. We have to learn to be brothers, not workers. Once one becomes a worker, he can no longer seemingly be a brother, for a worker has work in view, while a brother has life in view. The Lord's testimony is a matter of life. The Body is a matter of life. The divine household administration is a matter of life. Since being a brother is related directly to life, it is crucial and primary.

2. We are Members, not Rulers

Besides being brothers in life, we should also be members in our ministry. We all have been committed with different functions. However, we may think some members are higher than others. Thus we feel some members are set as rulers over other members. This thought is not according to the truth. The arm, for instance, may seem to rule the hand, but according to the divine view the relationship is organic, not administrative in an organizational sense.

3. We are Slaves, not Lords

Furthermore, we are slaves and not lords. We are all just the Lord's slaves. In the church life some may seek to lord it over their fellow slaves, or to follow their own will. But a slave has no right to exercise his own will. A slave must focus on his master and take his master's will as his own. How often we ignore this basic fact in the church life! Our place is that of a slave, yet in the church life we often act as if we were lords rather than the Lord's slaves.

4. We are Friends of the Lord, not Employees

Finally, we are the Lord's friends. This is in contrast to being employees. We are those who have become intimate with the Lord. He has brought us into His confidence. Thus we have become His friends, and we have become friends with all those who are intimate with the Lord. We are not here as His employees. An employee is not one who is intimate with the manager or director. Rather, an employee is one who is under obligation. Employees are also those who have their own ideas and opinions as to what should be done, since they are not intimate with their "boss." Since the Lord has revealed to us His divine plan, we have become His friends.

Oftentimes, however, we function as employees under a sense of duty and with our own opinions. This is because we lack adequate fellowship with our intimate Friend who is carrying out God's divine purpose with His us, His dear friends and partners (Heb. 1:9).

CONCLUDING WORD

Our place is that of a brother, a member, a slave, and a friend. The Lord has arranged it this way. What are the frustrating developments that sidetrack us from what the Lord has prepared for us? Firstly, being a worker can prevent you from being a brother. Secondly, being a ruler can prevent you from being a member. Thirdly, being a lord can frustrate you from being a slave. Lastly, being an employee can distract you from being the Lord's friend. Of all of these, you must firstly be impressed with being a brother. Being a worker is the most immediate danger to most of you. Many of you have already begun to develop into workers. If you continue in this way, you will not know what it is to be just a brother, a member, a slave, and a friend of the Lord. May the Lord have mercy on us all regarding this.

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