

CONFRONTING CRISES IN THE FULL-TIME SERVING LIFE

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE TEN: BEING MANIFESTED BY A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL OPERATION

We have shared that manifestation is a very sober, serious matter. On one hand, the Lord desires that we should be manifested. On the other hand, manifestation invites attack from the evil one, even to those who are pure. With those who are not so pure, manifestation can aid the development of the self-life. Now we will consider further matters concerning manifestation.

OUR SPIRITUAL OPERATION IS ACCORDING TO OUR DESIRE TO BE MANIFESTED

Everyone who loves the Lord and who is serious about following the Lord should desire to be manifested. We shouldn't think that this is an unhealthy desire. Paul did say that he who aspires to the oversight desires a good work (1 Timothy 3:1). This is not to desire an office; this is to desire to be manifested as a certain kind of person. Paul didn't say that a brother who desires to be an elder is disqualified because of impurity. On the contrary, Paul promoted such a desire. This is a healthy desire. As a full-time serving one, you should desire to be more useful to the Lord for the profit of the Body.

As long as a brother has this kind of healthy desire, his operation in the church life will increase. For instance, in the beginning his operation might be just to say a strong "amen" in the meetings. This is a kind of manifestation. Later, he may begin to offer some strong prayer. Next, he may develop the ability to prophesy a few words. All of these operations come about because of this brother's desire. Those who pray, speak, preach the gospel, or bear responsibility all have a desire to serve, to be manifested. Our spiritual operation is according to our desire.

OUR SPIRITUAL OPERATION SHOULD NOT GO BEYOND OUR DESIRE

Sometimes a brother's spiritual operation may go beyond his desire. He really doesn't want to be manifested in a certain way, but it is imposed upon him anyway. This can become dangerous. Such a one becomes busy coordinating things, telling others what to do, and bearing responsibility, but his manifestation goes beyond his desire to serve. This should be avoided. If your desire is weak, but you are very operative in the church life, you are in a dangerous situation and need to reconsider your operation.

OUR SPIRITUAL OPERATION SHOULD BE BACKED UP WITH SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

A brother's spiritual operation comes out of his desire. This operation, however, must be backed up by spiritual understanding. When your understanding of spiritual things matches your desire, then your operation is healthy. If you are very operative in the church life and yet weak in spiritual understanding, your operation can be dangerous to yourself and to the church as well.

Brothers who do not possess the spiritual understanding to back up their operation can damage the Body of Christ. They may end up handling their operation in a fleshly, soulish, or natural way. This is why it is significant that Paul did not need anyone to commend him. His commendation was in the saints' conscience. He commended himself to every conscience by the manifestation of the truth (2 Cor. 4:2). Manifestation does not require man's endorsement.

OUR SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING SHOULD BE BACKED UP BY SPIRITUAL EQUIPPING

Our operation should be according to our desire and it must be backed up by spiritual understanding. Spiritual understanding, however, requires spiritual equipping. Our spiritual equipping will decide our level of spiritual understanding. Spiritual equipping involves both life and truth. When you are equipped with life and truth, you will be brought into a spiritual understanding that will in turn bring you into a divine operation.

OUR SPIRITUAL EQUIPPING SHOULD BE BACKED UP BY SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

For any real spiritual understanding, a price has to be paid. The real equipping in life and truth comes out of your growth from spiritual or subjective experiences. You need to see the sequence. Your operation is based upon your spiritual understanding. Your spiritual understanding is based upon your spiritual equipping. Real spiritual equipping must be backed up by the subjective experiences of Christ. Just reading the Bible will not equip you spiritually.

THREE SOURCES OF SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES: THE SPIRIT, THE TRUTH, AND OUR ENVIRONMENT

The subjective experiences that can equip us are of three sources. Firstly, they are of the Spirit. Secondly, they are of the truth that has been constituted into us. Thirdly, they are from the operation of the Lord in our environment. These seem so basic, yet it is in these areas that we are most lacking.

The experience of the Spirit is the most basic of the three sources. Then as we advance in our Christian life we receive revelation from God's word, and that revelation controls us.

God's word does three things. First, God's word nourishes us and attracts us to the Lord. Second, God's word becomes our encouragement. Third, God's word enlightens us, exposing us and breaking us. In this way we become constituted with truth, which becomes the second source of our subjective experiences.

The third source of spiritual experience is God's arrangement in our environment. This is the most difficult of the three for the saints to take. Subjective experiences of Christ come firstly by the Spirit, then by the truth, and eventually by the environment. Many brothers do not see this last matter and therefore they lack the ability to take things from the Lord. Instead they argue about who is right or wrong and blame others for what happens to them.

Most saints either rise up against their environment, or just go along with it. Very few know how to embrace their environment and work together with the Lord in the midst of it. If your perspective on your environment is based on what you lose or what you gain, then you will not be able to serve the Lord properly because you will always be fighting for your own interest. On the other hand, if you become a "jellyfish" and just go along with your environment, then you will also be hindered. You will not appreciate how your environment is a means of blessing. "Going along" is not spiritual. You need to embrace your circumstances, thank the Lord for them, and cooperate with the Lord if you are to gain the subjective experiences of Christ.

If you are equipped in teaching and yet never experience Christ through the Spirit, the truth, and your environment, then the teaching you have will only be doctrine. Doctrine can never give you spiritual understanding. People who possess only doctrine live in dreams and are not practical. We need to read the Bible and to memorize verses, but such labor must be backed up with the subjective experiences of Christ. Of the three means for us to experience Christ, the hardest one for us to learn is how to work with the Lord in our environment.

OUR SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES SHOULD BE BACKED UP BY FRESHNESS OF LIFE

We need the freshness of life to back up our subjective experiences. At any moment in time, it is the freshness of life that determines the reality of our subjective experience of Christ. For instance, if we have had much experience of Christ but we are currently dull to the Lord, these experiences will not be applicable. They will seem distant. At whatever time our spirit becomes fresh, all of these subjective experiences will become available again. When is it that we have a greater ability to stand with the operation, leading, or move of the Spirit? It is when our inner life is so fresh. This freshness can be maintained by prayer, confession, enjoyment of the Word, and re-consecration. When our inner life is fresh, our subjective experiences of Christ are substantiated. These subjective experiences of Christ then substantiate all of our spiritual equipping. Then our spiritual equipping in turn substantiates our spiritual understanding. Then eventually our spiritual understanding substantiates our spiritual operation. Our healthy manifestation depends upon all of these items.

CONCLUSION

In order to be manifested you need to have the desire. Your manifestation, however, should not go beyond your desire. Your desire to be manifested will cause you to have a spiritual operation. Your spiritual operation must be backed up by spiritual understanding, by spiritual equipping, by the subjective experiences of Christ, and by the freshness of life. Your operation and your desire should match each other. Learn to operate according to whatever the Lord puts in your heart as a healthy desire.

Your spiritual operation must also match your spiritual understanding, and your spiritual understanding cannot go beyond your spiritual equipping. Furthermore, your spiritual equipping cannot go beyond your subjective experiences of Christ. Then finally, your subjective experiences of Christ cannot go beyond your freshness of life. The freshness of life is at the root of all these matters. Life must be the base of your spiritual operation. Out of your freshness of life, your experiences are substantiated; out of your experiences, your equipping is substantiated; out of your equipping, your understanding is substantiated; then out of your understanding, you will operate according to your healthy desire for manifestation. If this is the case, your operation will be healthy.

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