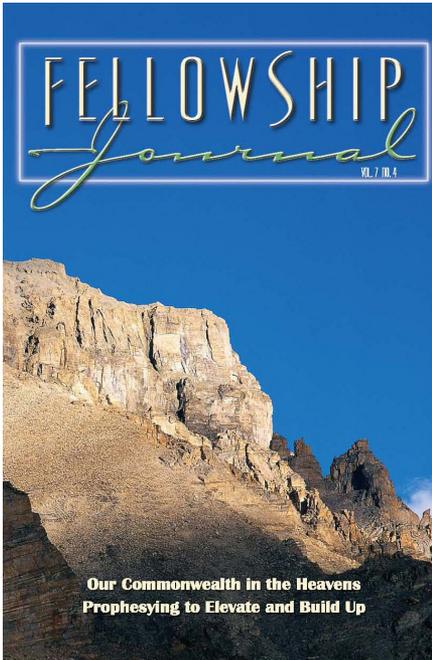


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

VOLUME 7, NO. 4 • JULY 2008



Contents

Philippians:
Weeping Over a Walk,
Rejoicing Over a
Commonwealth

Prophecy For
Building Up

Groves' Letter
to Darby

Published by the Church in Cleveland Literature Service.
3150 Warren Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44111
Telephone: (216) 251 - 8832 • Fax: (216) 476 - 9699

© 2008 The Church in Cleveland Literature Service.
This magazine may be freely downloaded, forwarded,
copied, printed out, and distributed.
It may not be altered in any way, or loaded onto another website.

Available online at: www.MinistryMessages.org
Correspondence: FJ@MinistryMessages.org

CONTENTS

Report From Prophecy Training	3
The Experience of Christ in Philippians: Message 34: Weeping Over a Walk, Rejoicing Over a Commonwealth	5
PROPHECY FOR BUILDING UP	
Message One	12
Message Two	15
Message Three	20
Message Four	24
Message Five	28
Message Six	38
Groves' Letter to Darby	45

Testimony from a Recent Prophecy Training

I recently participated in a prophesying training led by Dave Shields. Its purpose was to teach us how to dig into the Word and find inspiration that would enrich our speaking in the meetings for the benefit of the saints. In phase 1 of this training, we from Metro-Cleveland met once a month for three months in Lorain. Dave also traveled to Dayton, Goshen, Evanston, and Buffalo to conduct this same training in each of those places.

We began laboring together on the book of Galatians. After the first session I continued the labor in my home. I had participated in similar studies before and thought I had a good concept of inductive Bible study, but Dave led the labor in a such a way that I gained a great deal of insight. I think I can also speak for the other brothers attending.

From the very beginning we broke down the chapters into thoughts or paragraphs and labeled the central ideas. This made a world of difference to me. It made it so easy to see the whole chapter and its central teaching. Then we paraphrased each paragraph, and eventually outlined the entire thing. Everyone participated, and we continued until we had near agreement on interpretation. Under Dave's direction, we concerned ourselves not only with the facts and inspiration, but also how this content could be used and presented to the churches in such a way as to edify and build up the saints.

Phase 2 involved a weekend at the Huntington House where all the brothers who could from the various churches came together to labor on Romans 8. Brothers from Lorain, Cleveland, Dayton, Akron, and Goshen were present. This time was for those brothers with a sincere interest in teaching and ministering to the saints, and would result in phase 3 of the training – a mini-conference hosted by the church in Lorain.

We met June 13th at about 7:00 PM at the Huntington House. Due to a severe storm that evening, the power was out and the house was dark. Making the best of things, we praised God and began our fellowship and labor on the porch in darkness. One of the brothers strapped a miner's flashlight to his head. He pointed the light at his Bible, and we began to enjoy the eighth chapter of Romans. We continued until about 10:30 and then retired for the evening.

By morning the power was restored. After breakfast we continued our labor. By the afternoon of the second day we all agreed that the chapter could best be broken down into three sections. We all agreed that for the sake of the conference, an introductory section covering the first seven chapters was also needed. The four sections are as follows:

Background – Romans 1 through 7

The Law of the Spirit of Life – Romans 8:1-15

Expectation of Glory – Romans 8:16-27

The Encouragement of the Inseparable Love of Christ – Romans 8:28-39

Four brothers were available to deliver the fruit of our labor at the mini-conference in Lorain the next weekend. We are looking forward to the opportunity to minister to the saints and become a blessing to the church.

This training will continue and I look forward to more opportunities to labor with the brothers. We hope to give mini-conferences 2 or 3 times a year to those churches that will have us. I would encourage any other brothers who desire to participate in such a labor to join us.

Praise the Lord,

Rich Vetrone

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR: WEEPING OVER A WALK, REJOICING OVER A COMMONWEALTH

For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their stomach, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we even await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself. — *Philippians 3:18-21*

WEEPING OVER A WALK

MANY WALK AS ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST, BEYOND THE BOUNDARY MEASURED TO THEM

In Philippians 3:18, Paul warns the believers of those who walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. There are many who walk so as to pursue Christ, but there are also many who walk in a manner that is in violation of the rule, or boundary, of their measure of Christ. Instead of making the most of their opportunity to experience Christ according to the rule to which they have attained, they do damage by walking beyond their measure.

Paul indicates he has previously warned the believers concerning such brothers, and now he tells them again, even weeping. These brothers may have loved the Lord, but they simply did not care for the matter of boundary.

In 1957 in Taiwan, Brother Lee held a training during which he gave a long message on the matter of laboring within our measure, based on 2 Corinthians 10. At the time I had no idea why he emphasized this, but later I found that it was because so many were overly appreciating T. Austin-Sparks. Brother Lee was simple. The Lord had measured to him a boundary in the Lord's work. There were churches and saints Brother Lee had labored upon and raised up. He cared for the churches he had raised up and co-workers he had trained. That is healthy. Within that boundary the

Lord had measured to him for his labor, however, many began to declare they loved something else, and that brought in damage.

With today's communications, it is very easy for people to extend themselves outside of their boundaries. So many phone calls and emails today are "out of bounds." Instead of walking properly, many walk in the way Paul describes in verse 18, as "enemies of the cross of Christ." Paul told us previously in this chapter that his unique desire was to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be conformed to His death (v. 10). Many, however, seem to have forgotten about the cross of Christ. We must remember that the way of the Lord is the way of the cross. If we take a way that allows us to escape the cross, we cannot truly say we are following the Lord.

A WALK THAT REFUSES THE OPERATION OF THE CROSS

What is the problem with those who walk so freely? It is that they do not agree with the Lord that they should die! This is why they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Instead of allowing themselves to be "crossed out," they seek to be exalted. Many of those who are so strong to shout slogans show no sign of the cross in their lives. They are energetic and active, recruiting others, but with no regard for the eldership or the Lord's testimony. They feel so free to act beyond the boundary the Lord has measured to them! They may call people in other localities in the name of being global. Well, in one sense to be able to communicate with saints globally is a good thing, but if you are wrong in your person, you will introduce others to your sickness across the globe! Some saints are "radioactive" and expose others to "radiation sickness" without even realizing it. Many around them become sick, but they themselves only feel liberated!

I hope many among us do develop so that their labor reaches the globe. Many should take up the burden to go to Africa or China or other such places to pioneer something for the Lord's testimony. Yet you should also remember that if you do so, you must not walk or operate beyond the boundary the Lord has measured to you. If the elders in your locality speak to you about something, you should consider that as something that has been measured to you. If you decide to listen to brothers outside of your locality more than those within your locality, that can cause serious problems. What the Lord has measured to us must regulate our walk and labor.

If we begin to walk outside of what the Lord has measured to us, we walk as those in verse 18. Such people refuse to die. They do not receive what the Lord has arranged for them. Instead, they are enemies of the cross of Christ, for they choose to escape what the Lord has arranged and measured to them. Instead of living unto Christ, they live unto whatever they feel they should do.

HONOR THE WORK OF THE CROSS

As I function within what Christ has measured to me as my boundary, I am responsible to Christ. If someone comes to me and asks what right have I to say what I say to them, I become concerned and even fear for that person. We all answer to Christ and not to any man. If a brother is rebuked by a brother more mature than he is, even his wife must take care not to support any feeling of offense in her husband. We must recognize when the cross is at work, and rather than rebelling, we should simply cleave to the Lord. This is the secret of not becoming an enemy of the cross of Christ.

Quite often things become unreasonable simply because we need to die! The more illogical the situation, the more death it is able to work in us. We find it reasonable to be disciplined when we have done something that deserves discipline, but when we are unfairly treated, are we able to take the cross, or do we fight against it? A great secret in the church life is to enjoy the unreasonable things more than the reasonable things! For instance, something may go wrong right in the middle of an “important” event you have planned in the church life. Are you able to enjoy that?

When I was young, I was once rebuked by an elder to the point of tears. As my tears began to flow, however, he rebuked me for my tears! I didn't even have the right to weep. What kind of “dictator” was that? I would call it the “cross dictator.” If you know how to take such things, you will be blessed and you will grow. Such is the church life!

WALKING AS AN ENEMY OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS TO BE CAUGHT WITH CHRIST PLUS SOMETHING ELSE

The first sign that a person is on the way to becoming a “Judaizer,” or religious zealot, is that he begins to neglect the cross of Christ. He feels, “How can I allow myself to be terminated when I have given my life for this? I cannot let the cross stop me now!” This is how some brothers get caught with something besides Christ Himself, or “Christ plus.” They are not living any longer to Christ alone, but rather to Christ plus something else that has become just as important as Christ to them.

For instance, some brothers feel that they must speak as those who support “the ministry of the age” even though the leading brothers in the locality may decide that no such stress is necessary. (The Bible itself tells us Peter and Paul were both operating at the same time. Peter's epistles and Paul's were written in the same time-frame. Even such a servant as Paul never said he alone was the speaker of the era, and God never told people to listen only to Paul. God used both servants to speak at the same

time.) When brothers try to do something beyond what the Lord has measured to them, they walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. We all need to be uniquely and exclusively caught by Christ rather than by anything extra.

**WHOSE END IS DESTRUCTION,
WHOSE GOD IS THEIR STOMACH,
WHOSE GLORY IS IN THEIR SHAME**

Paul further writes, “Whose end is destruction, whose god is their stomach, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things” (v. 19). Paul says that the end of such brothers is destruction! At every stage of growth there is a corresponding level of judgment. You may be a brother who is mature according to verse 15, and yet still be in danger of destruction. To an unbeliever, destruction would mean to be cast in the lake of fire spoken of in Revelation, but to a believer, it would mean a thousand years of loss while under the Lord’s discipline. There are different levels of destruction depending on your relationship to Christ.

Paul also writes of these people that their god is their stomach. In other words, they are the ones who must be satisfied, so they make themselves their own god. Rather than seeking to satisfy Christ and find satisfaction in Christ, they seek something else they think will satisfy them.

Paul further tells us that the glory they seek is something that is actually shame. Such shame is not the result of one’s conduct, but instead has to do with disfigurement (Greek *aischune*). Sometimes when you see certain ones, you are just embarrassed for them and for the shame that is brought to those associated with them. One person’s behavior may affect many. For instance, I may lose my temper as an old man, but that shame will be to myself alone. If, however, I bring others to boast in something apart from Christ along with me, there is a certain disfigurement due to the fact that many are brought into something besides Christ. The brother who walks outside his boundary may think he has done a wonderful job in affecting so many people, but the truth is that he has damaged them.

People may become very interested in the details of who did what or who was right or who was wrong, but all such things do not help anyone to gain Christ one bit! For instance, if a person is set on speaking in tongues, he feels he has the verses to help him win any argument, but what he should ask is whether or not Christ has been gained. It is the same regarding many teachings. Sadly, too often people care about winning their argument more than they care about the truth itself. We must be pure when it comes to discussing matters of truth; we should not be for our side winning the case just because we are on that side.

The same goes for defending ourselves in certain situations. I am a

human being, so when I hear certain things being said about myself, I certainly feel something. But I have to ask myself, “Is my desire to respond due to some feeling to vindicate myself, or is it due to the need to defend the truth?” If it is for the sake of the truth, all I can do is to have honest fellowship with those in question and then leave them to the Lord and their own conscience. I should not be interested in being seen as being right for my own sake. Once we are in this realm, we are those who set our mind on earthly things.

In many countries there is a two-party system. Matters such as which party wins and so on are earthly matters. The entire earth is preoccupied with this sort of thing. Who won? Who lost? Those obsessed with such things become zealots. They are concerned with who appears to be gaining ground and whether or not their cause is prevailing. Every time we are in this realm, however, we bring ourselves into shame. We don't need to win any case; we need to dispense life and build up the Body of Christ! To do otherwise is to set our mind on earthly things.

A COMMONWEALTH IN THE HEAVENS

Following these two very sober and heavy verses come two very positive and encouraging verses: “For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we even await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself” (vv. 20-21). This is the conclusion of chapter 3 of Philippians. Isn't it wonderful? We have just seen such a gloomy picture of how some walk taking their stomach as their god, caring for earthly things, and mistaking shameful things as being glorious. This is very sad, and it is even more disturbing to read that Paul says there are many in the church life who walk in such a way. Unfortunately, he did not say that there was likewise many who walked in a positive way for our learning! But, brothers and sisters, our commonwealth exists not on earth but in the heavens.

Be encouraged—we are a group of heavenly people! Our existence, life, living, labor, and operation are heavenly. Many may walk in such a way as to cause us to grieve, but our commonwealth remains yet in the heavenlies.

WE ALL SHARE IN THE DIVINE LIFE

A commonwealth refers to a country where all share the wealth together. Britain was a commonwealth that benefited from having many colonies all over the world, but that is an earthly sort of commonwealth. We are

citizens of the heavens. Our commonwealth has to do with a shared association in the divine life.

Due to my disposition, few people like me because I put everything on the table. Therefore I am happy if others even merely tolerate me. But regardless what we feel about one another, we all share an association in life with all those who are in the Lord. I am from China, and this brother is from Puerto Rico, but when we are together we find there is no distance or difference between us. This is not merely because we share common rights as citizens in a political commonwealth. The kingdom of the heavens is very different from earthly kingdoms. In the kingdom of the heavens our responsibility as citizens is to enjoy life! It is a kingdom of life, and within this kingdom all the citizens are related by God's life. If you see someone who is meeting in a denomination, don't make any issues with him; simply enjoy the life you share! To do anything else frustrates this life-relationship that makes us fellow-citizens in this commonwealth.

CHRIST IS THE CONSTITUTION AND CENTER

In any commonwealth there has to be a constitution, and the constitution of our heavenly commonwealth is simply Christ. What do you see in the heavens? Simply Christ. In the heavens there is no other center or object besides Christ, who is the complete Triune God. Without Christ, there is no such thing called "the heavenlies." The heavens are heavenly because Christ is there! Christ is the essence, Christ is the element, and Christ is the substance of the heavenlies. We may be of very different temperaments, but we all share Christ as the essence, element, and substance of the heavenlies. It is with such a Christ that we live the church life. Are we not all very different from one another? We are more than different. And yet are we not all together? We are more than together, for our togetherness is based upon this divine, heavenly life of Christ!

This life is Christ Himself. Anything that lacks Christ as the essence, element, or substance is not something of our heavenly commonwealth. Christ is also the inward content of this commonwealth. The content is Christ. In the church life, we are not interested in anything other than Christ Himself. We do have activities; we may even go on such things as outings together. The purpose of such things, however, must be to bring in Christ as the content. If we end up only with the activity, there is something wrong. If the activity brings us to Christ, then that activity was right. That is the criteria.

For over fifty years I have been living in the church life where I have been able to enjoy and grow in this heavenly commonwealth with all the saints. In fact, for the past fifty years it has been all the marvelous saints

who have so often brought me to Christ! We may fail at times due to our weaknesses, but we are able to turn again to experience Christ as the inward content of this commonwealth.

Who do we have in the church life? Christ! Who do we see in the church life? Christ! Who is the content of our fellowship? Christ! What is contained in the meetings of the church? Christ! On that day when Christ brings in the kingdom of the heavens to this earth, all the teaching will disappear, and only Christ Himself will be seen. Having such a Christ among us is what we should also be experiencing today in the church life as the testimony of the kingdom of the heavens on earth.

CHRIST IS ITS POWER AND IN IT HE IS TESTIFIED

In this very Christ of the heavenly commonwealth we also have the power, the energy, and the operation. Christ is the dynamo of this commonwealth. In the church life, we can never truly be dead, for our commonwealth in the heavens includes Christ as the energizing One. Whenever we are in Christ, we become dynamic; we become burdened. Why? Because Christ is the dynamo in this commonwealth.

Christ also is what is manifested and testified in this commonwealth. Thus what others see will not be merely a group of good people, or even a group of godly people, but what others will see will be a group of people manifesting Christ! When others see you gathering they will say, "Christ is here!" When people contact you, they will contact Christ, for in this commonwealth Christ alone is testified. This commonwealth becomes a testimony of Christ. Oh saints, what a commonwealth is ours! This commonwealth is totally a matter of our association in life with Christ and with each other. Here there is nothing and no one but Christ. Christ is the essence, element, and substance. Christ is the inward content. Christ is the energy. Here Christ is manifested and testified. What is this? This is our heavenly commonwealth.

This commonwealth is a matter of our upward calling. Remember, Paul said, "I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward" (v. 14). We pursue Christ because we are called into this commonwealth. As we pursue Christ, we gain Christ in this commonwealth. We pursue Christ, we experience this commonwealth. We pay the price for Christ, we get the reality of this commonwealth, which is also Christ Himself. Praise the Lord, we can all be saved from walking as enemies of the cross, saved from the shame, and saved from the earthly things, for we are heavenly people in this heavenly commonwealth that has Christ as its everything. Praise the Lord! - *Titus Chu*

PROPHECY FOR BUILDING UP

On January 19th and 20th of this year, Titus Chu shared once more on principles of prophesying, or what is involved in being a prophet. These six messages, drawn from typed notes, cover three outlines. They were spoken to a group gathered at the Ashland Woods Fellowship Center near Sullivan, Ohio. Headings have been supplied.

MESSAGE ONE

Introduction

Ministering requires many things. It is not a matter of being taught to speak, but of having the necessary groundwork to be a speaker.

Americans often seem to think that something can be gained with nothing to back it up. In Chinese culture, however, you never anticipate going beyond what has been laid as groundwork. In many places, there are brothers who are developing already. This kind of training is just to aid those who are already developing by providing a kind of exercise that should help bring about the fruition of that development.

The Lord Must Be With You

When you come to the Word to develop something, you cannot be separated from the Lord, neither should you have the message in view. You can only have Christ in view. If the Lord is not with you, do not speak. Don't even try to work out anything. The first question you must answer is, "How am I with my Christ?"

You Must Be Willing to Pay the Price

You also have to consider your person. In the USA, people think things come cheap. Very often, those who really develop are those who arrive here from other places. Most native-born Americans don't appreciate or lay hold

of what is possible. The American psychology is “Why can’t I get it?” To the Chinese, it is “Why *should* you get it?” Spiritually, you cannot live in dreams. You cannot have something without paying the price for it. What is real is going to have to be developed in you. For this, you have to be the right kind of person. If you don’t pay attention to your daily life, your labor, how you spend your time, your daily spiritual exercise, and your relatedness to the saints, how can you become one who can speak life and building in the church life? Thus, firstly, How is your Christ? And secondly, How are you? There is nothing that can replace your own labor. You can learn all the principles and skills, but if you yourself are wrong, nothing will work. If you yourself are right, however, all these matters we will be speaking about can really help.

Find Out What the Bible Really Says

You must also be proper with the Word. Prophesying does not occur as something separate from the Bible. If you have nothing of the truth from the Word, there is no way the Lord can speak through you. When you come to the Word, you must come to find out what the Bible really says, what the facts are. Only then you will be able to receive inspiration, discover the truth it contains, and experience divine revelation. A brother with ministry is a person who has received revelation from the truth he has received, which in turn is constituted by means of the facts he has discovered and inspiration he has received. In order to minister for the Lord, it is crucial to find what the Bible really says, which is not an easy thing! Many think they know what is in the Bible, but few truly do. What does the Bible really say? When you study the facts, you will begin to experience inspiration. You may notice, for instance, that Paul writes to the churches of Galatia. As you dig more by comparing this to Paul’s other epistles, you will discover something further. You may eventually get inspired to see that the matter of the local church is stressed more in the epistles to younger churches. To those churches that were more mature and solid, it is not something that is stressed as much. Thus, if you want to suggest that the age of the local church is over, you had better be with those who are in a very solid and spiritual situation!

Paul writes to the Galatians that he marveled that they so quickly were drifting away from Christ to another “gospel” (1:6). The fact that Paul speaks of this as something that is happening rather than something that has already happened should provide us with some insight. Paul also says that the person who preaches another gospel should be accursed (1:8-9), even though in another place Paul says we should bless and not curse (Rom. 12:14). Putting all these facts together can yield inspiration. You shouldn’t

be given to inspiration, however, unless you have dug into the facts. People who do this are shallow, because they have not really studied the Bible and therefore they have no depth. A person who reads the Bible with facts in view is the kind of person who can become qualified to minister. If every week you spend some time to study the Word, exercise yourself with regard to your person, and are properly related to the saints, you can become a source of healthy speaking in the church life.

There is a process for becoming such a person in the church life. Just the first step of knowing the facts is more difficult than most realize. For instance, we use the terms God's will, purpose, plan, desire, and economy and administration. What are the differences between these terms? If you spend the time to dig into how these words are used in the Bible, you should be able to gain some insight. For instance, you may discern that God is a God of will who has a desire to accomplish His purpose. In the process, He establishes an administration to carry out His plan. In this administration there are dispensations. In every dispensation He has a particular way of working out His desire. In every dispensation, God has His way of doing things (in reference to the ages of innocence, law, grace, righteousness, etc.). Therefore when mentioning God's economy, you have to know which dispensation you are referring to.

Inspiration Should Follow Facts

First of all, read to find what it is that the Bible really says. Then, based on what you discover, you will experience inspiration. Therefore, focus on the facts first. As you develop through such exercise, many of the things that you are inspired by will positively become a burden to you, and you will desire to share what you have seen with others for the church's sake. Many things you are inspired by will be for your own profit, but many will become something for the church's profit. We speak not simply because we have inspirations; we speak because we realize many things the Lord has inspired us with are also for the church's profit.

Proper Utterance Is Necessary to Release Burden

If someone is inspired and burdened after laboring in the Word but has insufficient utterance, little can come out. A good utterance may be contained in a simple phrase. There was a brother who shared the gospel simply by stressing the phrase "Come home," and people got saved. It was a simple utterance, but it was effective. We need to know how to bring out what we are burdened with by means of adequate utterance.

MESSAGE TWO

Being a spiritually healthy person is the basis for developing as a prophet. It is the spiritual groundwork in your being that will determine the scope of your usefulness. It seems, however, that the hardest thing to have for the one who loves Jesus is Jesus! Even though someone may love the Lord and be doing so much for the Lord and is consecrated to the Lord, it does not mean he truly *has* the Lord in his experience. Those who are simple typically experience Christ much more than those who are ambitious to serve the Lord. Paradoxically, many Christian groups that do well do not stress work or gospel or teaching; they stress simply loving Jesus.

Religion Is a Bigger Threat Than the World

After you are saved, the world can kidnap you, but it is more likely that religion will be what thwarts you. Therefore it is often as many do their best for Christ that they find they are void of Christ! Many places are very much exercised to be in whatever messages have been ministered to them, and yet are void of Christ Himself. If we are not careful, this can easily become our situation. We must be clear that our life is for God Himself. We must know, appreciate, and be absolutely attached to God. Whatever we do must be unto God, yet this is the hardest thing for those who serve the Lord to do. We can hold conferences and minister all kinds of rich messages, but is God truly there? A common saying among us used to be, “We never heard that before!” Did hearing something new to us necessarily bring us to God, however? The base for our ministry must be that we are absolutely with God. Nothing should take us away from being attached to God Himself.

We have been under a certain kind of influence and attack, but we cannot blame that for any “tenseness” we may be experiencing in the church life. If our church life seems “tense,” it is likely because we have become overly focused on how to carry the meetings rightly rather than being focused upon God Himself. Anything we have other than God Himself can unconsciously become a replacement for God. In everything in the church life, we must consider whether God is involved, or whether it is simply an item of our church-life culture. Certain practices cannot be avoided, but to be useful in the Lord’s hand, you must realize whatever you are involved with should never simply be a “thing”; it must be firmly related to Christ Himself. Only a person who exercises himself in this way can become a prophet.

A Prophet Must See God's Desire, Work, and Satisfaction

We must see the great matters of what God's desire, work, and satisfaction are. God's desire is that we would be totally like Him, inwardly and outwardly (Gen. 1:26). In life and appearance, God's desire is that we all would be like Himself. Everything we speak must be according to this principle. What we speak must produce something within those who hear of God and something in their living that expresses God Himself. Merely making an impression on others is not the result we seek. If someone's speaking does not produce God in others, his speaking has not reached the mark. People should not be left with only an impressive message. We don't preach because we enjoy it, but because we are burdened to bring the saints to God and to live according to God. This is to prepare the church as the Bride for God's satisfaction. In the ultimate picture of the Bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, we see God as everything within and without. This realization must control us. If it does, we will never be satisfied merely by giving a good message. Our criteria must be: "Have the saints received and enjoyed God, and do they, through my ministering, live out God more than they did before?"

A Prophet Must Seek to Produce Further Union, Mingling, and Incorporation with Christ in Those Who Hear

God worked out our redemption and salvation. Redemption produced union with Christ in life and salvation produced mingling with Christ in nature. Eventually, an incorporation with God is produced. All your speaking must be according to these three stages! What is generated through your ministering must be of one of these three stages. Union is a matter of life, mingling is a matter of nature, and incorporation is a matter of person. You should preach so others might receive Christ as life and then become more mingled with Christ in nature. The saints' incorporation with the person of Christ should be the end result of our labor.

To minister, you must obviously have Christ as life. You must also, however, have the development of His nature within and union with His person. Some share something attractive and seemingly beneficial, but no further union or mingling or incorporation with Christ is produced! This, however, is a very common condition among Christian congregations. You can be very inspired with something, and feel very burdened about it, but you cannot get away from these three matters: union (of life), mingling (of nature), and incorporation (of person). These are not so cut-and-dry, of course. The matter of incorporation, for instance, involves life and nature, so

these three are not truly separated; instead they are inter-related. Perhaps one message operates to bring about something primarily of a further union with Christ as life, but among some it may produce mingling, and they leave changed, not only charged and enlivened. With others, Christ's person has further taken them over through what was spoken.

How do you know you have ministered well? Has your ministering produced life or the revitalization of life within those who hear? Has it produced something of change due to an increase of Christ's nature within? Has it perhaps even produced something of a further manifestation of the person of Christ within? If this is so, you know your ministering has produced what God is seeking in man.

A Prophet Must Seek to Produce What Brings God Satisfaction

You must see in the Bible what it is that produces God's satisfaction. For instance, we may see man's failure in the fall, but the fall of man also opened the avenue for Christ to carry out His work of redemption. God created, prepared, and then even produced types to display what produces His satisfaction. God created and rested on the seventh day. Then man failed, and God responded by unveiling the way of redemption when He clothed the first couple with the skins of animals for their covering. Then, when His people were rescued from Egypt and produced a testimony in oneness, God filled the tabernacle. Such things provide us with a clear picture. Eventually, Christ was incarnated and the Church was produced to be God's masterpiece. God rested in Genesis and in Revelation. In between these two ends of the Bible are depictions of what produces God's rest. God's work must result in God's satisfaction. The things in the Word that have to do with God's rest and satisfaction are the things that must be considered primary. Everything else is relatively minor. The content of your ministering must be according to these "major" things. Everything we minister has to be according to these matters of God's economy— Christ and the church.

If you want to speak for the Lord to the saints, remember this. Never get away from God or Christ. Never get away from the saints' growth from union to mingling to incorporation. Never get away from God's economy, plan, and operation. You must share Christ as the Lamb of God, and you must share the Church as the Body of Christ. However, as we noted, those who seek to serve the Lord seem to find it very hard to lay hold of these things. Every message you give may be very different from any other message you have given, yet the result must be that the saints have Christ, the Church, growth, the very God, and all that relates to God's work and economy for His satisfaction. Then you are ministering well.

A Prophet Must Be Someone Pursuing Christ, Consecrated to God's Desire, Living for God's Interest, Loving the Saints, and Growing in the Church Life

To be one who can prophesy for the church's and saints' spiritual building up, you must first be a pursuer of Christ, and you also must be someone consecrated to God's desire. Furthermore, you must be a person who lives according to God's interest, loves the saints, and who is growing and developing in the church life.

A prophet is a person who pursues Christ. In other words, to one who is a prophet, every other thing is gone; all else has simply disappeared. Their focus is on Christ, just as a person who pursues after the one he is determined to marry. Such a person doesn't fool around. We have gone through many things recently, but if we are short of anything in the church life, it is that we are short of pursuing Christ, and if we are not in the church life pursuing Christ, then we are in the church life for some other reason.

For many, the reason they are here is because the church life has become their social life. I sympathize, but I cannot agree. The primary reason you are here now should not be because your children's companions are in the church life, for instance. It is not wise to compromise your stand out of concern for your children. It is your strong stand that ultimately helps your children the most. If you play around in the church life and compromise, your kids will not be able to see what is real. The question is: Who holds the first place in your life? What is the focus of your living? This means so much. If your focus is off, nothing works. Some regions, for instance, have many "good quality" people, but nothing is produced because their focus has become something other than Christ Himself.

What we do should be determined by the fact we are focused on Christ. This should determine how we use our resources. I saved two dollars by not buying a Coke in the airport and yet spent considerably more money on one hotel rather than another so that I might have a better chance to rest. Why? Because I was focused on what was most profitable for what God was trying to do through me. You have to live a life according to God's interest.

Furthermore, you must be a person who loves the saints. We may "pass" on the other above criteria, which are somewhat relative, and yet fail when it comes to loving the saints, which can only be answered "I do" or "I don't." This is a crucial matter. God loves all men, and Christ loves the Church. If you do not have such love for mankind in general and the church in particular, you will just be a speaking mouth; there will be no

reality behind what you say. The reality comes from your realization that God loves all mankind and Christ loves the Church. We preach therefore to all men and show love to all the saints.

A Minister to the Saints Must Be Among the Saints

I have not yet seen anyone who does not spend time with the saints and yet can minister well in their presence. If we say we want to be a speaker and yet we cannot declare we are burdened for mankind and love the church, our speaking will be of little value. If a brother is not living among the saints and only comes on the Lord's Day or to the prayer meeting, he should not be a ministering brother. A ministering brother's daily life should be among the saints. We must be for their profit. Whoever doesn't spend time with the saints is disqualified from ministering. You may possess Bible knowledge and spiritual riches and many wonderful experiences, but if you are distant from the saints, your speaking will mean little. Do not think that some institution has degraded us; it is we who degrade ourselves! If those who supposedly serve are not really with those they supposedly are serving, it doesn't take much to bring in troubles. You have to be among the saints, demonstrating your love.

Blend the Body by Putting Yourself with the Saints

God has tempered, or blended, the Body. In this, more honor is given to those who seem to be less honorable. The blending of the Body takes place when those who seem to be more honored go to honor others by spending time with them. How can you be protected or be strengthened or receive guidance or life? From the saints! When you are with the saints, the church is being produced. It doesn't matter how old the church may seem. Do this one thing—spend some time with the saints. Never allow your daily life to become something apart from the saints, for it is largely through them that Christ becomes our protection, guidance, strength, and source.

We should also go to the gatherings of the saints to be a source of life and to kindle the others. You may feel dead, but if you begin to exercise by simply saying "Amen, Lord," life will come forth and you will become a blessing to whomever you are gathered with.

To be able to easily name the saints you are with and who are with you is not a small thing. Our practical time with the saints is a sign that reveals how healthy our spiritual life really is.

MESSAGE THREE

If we care for God's desire, we will live with it in view. It seems failure is unavoidable, however, for we have the tendency to make things complicated. God, however, does not want us to add anything into our lives other than living according to His interest. Those who are young may find this difficult simply because their future still lies before their eyes. Their hope is to grow and develop in the church life.

If I buy a watch and put it in my pocket rather than on my wrist, it indicates I don't really value it. If you treasure something, you appreciate it. The church life is a place for you to grow and develop, but few treasure the church life. In many places, the church life has disappeared, even though the meetings continue. You have to appreciate and treasure the church life, for in it you are able to spiritually grow. If you only take in what is shared in the messages, you will not grow as well as if you really treasure the church life. This growth in the church life is by means of the factors of divine life, divine truth, and divine operation. How do you know you are in the church life? It has much to do with whether you are experiencing these three factors. If not, it will be difficult for you to grow, and you will be devoid of spiritual maturity when compared to those who are really participating in the church life.

The Most Crucial Element for Our Development Is Life

Life becomes the most crucial element for a Christian's growth. When the life-element is missing, the most crucial aspect is missing. When you become old, you smell of decay. When the life-element is strong, however, you have nothing to fear. The divine life is the primary element in the church life. The life generated in the church life is the divine life that is able to regenerate people. Paul only served about one decade, yet look how much he raised up! Watchman Nee became manifested while still a very young man. Such examples should cause us to wonder about our own life. Our experience may be that of defeat and limitation. How is it we might still be able to minister? The answer is the church life! Wherever we go, we must put ourselves into the church life. The best "pot" to preserve your life-element is the church life, and the best soil for the divine life and its accompanying talent to grow is also the church life.

Another Crucial Element for Our Development Is Truth

Secondly there is the matter of truth, which should not be confused with doctrine or teachings. Truth is something of divine revelation which sets

people free from the world and sin. No one can have truth without life, and in life you know truth. Truth and life cannot be separated. Sadly, many of us still do not know how to read the Bible. After everyone shared tonight, however, we received something. One person added one thing and another added something else. No individual was all-inclusive, but when the whole thing was put together, there was something of truth that came forth. This is how it is in the church life.

Operation Comes as We Develop in Life & Truth in the Church Life

Thirdly, there is the matter of operation. Just as in human development, talent becomes manifested alongside growth. In the beginning, for example, to learn a musical instrument is difficult. After a while, a facility develops which I would liken to truth. As the life-sphere is elevated further, alongside life and truth, operation develops. That is similar to when someone is able to stand forth and perform as a musician. I would liken that to operation in the spiritual realm. Operation comes forth when the life-talent and truth develop into a certain scope. If you enrich life with truth, you facilitate the development of spiritual operation. Thus prophesying is not to do a thing, but to do what you as a person who is a prophet does. Therefore if you wish to be a prophet, your divine life needs to be elevated and enriched with truth. When your comparative maturity in life is enriched with some comparative facility in truth, operation issues forth. All this takes place in the church life! Therefore you are in the church life for the growth in life, the enrichment in truth, and the development of your operation. You must treasure this process, and not just meetings or particular incidents.

Many times we treat the church life as a restaurant. At a restaurant, we enjoy the food, but such is not our normal family life. What nourishes you and makes you healthy and satisfies you the most is your family life. You should not take the meetings as though they are a restaurant but rather as your common family life. Until you have such a view, you will not be able to grow well.

The common thought is that a person must go through some kind of training before he can minister. Our realization, however, should be that God has put people together in the church life, and this is His means to best produce those who need to operate within it. The real growth takes place not in trainings, but in the church life! The church life is a profound place that enables us to grow in the divine life and acquire truth so that we might become operative for the building up of the church. Therefore, we must appreciate the church life accordingly. Appreciate it for the treasure it is! If you do not know how to appreciate the church life, it will be difficult for you to develop as you should. God has planned and arranged it for you!

Appreciate Christ, appreciate the church life, appreciate the Bible, and appreciate all the circumstances God measures to you.

Appreciate Christ to the Uttermost

Appreciate Christ to the uttermost. Always learn to say, “Thank You, Lord,” as well as, “I need You,” and “I love You” whether you feel up or down. Learn to firmly attach yourself to Christ, the anointed One to whom we have been firmly attached (2 Cor. 1:21). Nothing must be allowed to defraud us from the enjoyment that is in Christ! When you have Christ, everything is settled from morning to evening. If you are weak, Christ covers you. When you are making progress, Christ leads you and even becomes your pathway. When you have Christ, He becomes everything in every aspect, whether in positive things or negative things.

Appreciate Your Local Church Life

Appreciate your particular church life as well. People like to look at other places, and the grass always appears greener elsewhere. The local church the Lord has placed you in, however, is the best local church for you. You just have to know how to enjoy it!

After I graduated from high school, I considered as to which hall I should attach myself. Many of the young people gathered at a certain hall, but I realized the Lord had placed me in the district where I lived, so I met with those where the Lord had placed me, even though I was the only younger person there. I can testify what a blessing that became both to me and to those I was with. I learned the most by accepting the Lord’s arrangement. In the Lord’s arrangement we are provided with the best opportunities for us to learn and grow.

If we treasure the meetings more than the church life, something precious will be lost. We must learn to spend time with one another. Honor the brothers who serve you, and honor those you serve! Because of you, I grow. I honor you as members of the Body and my brothers and sisters in the divine life. If we all practice this, the church life will become very healthy. Don’t criticize. You may see the problems of those who are older and in authority, but do not talk about it. The same goes with regards to those who are younger. Render all the saints honor, whether they are older or younger. Learn to honor all the saints in the church life in this way. Honor is the secret of the church life even more than your ability to feel love. Only when honor is properly exercised does the church life become adequately healthy. This allows those with us to develop as well as ourselves.

Appreciate the Bible

Furthermore, we must appreciate the Bible. In the divine speaking of the Bible we have the divine life supply, enlightenment, guidance, protection, and the constant opening of a higher and richer spiritual realm for our walk and exercise. I love children; I like to talk to them when I see them. After I see them, however, my thoughts do not remain with them. When it comes to my own grandchildren, however, it is different. When I am with them, something just flows out. Because of that life-attachment, what flows out to them will not be merely inspirational; it will be real. If a boy and girl who are courting have no such element or feeling when they are together, you know that situation will not work out. With the Bible it is the same. If you have no feeling about the Bible when you read it, you know there is something wrong. It should seem that the Bible is speaking to you, and as you are with it you are receiving something precious. You should experience a divine enlightenment, guidance, protection, and the opening of an ever higher and richer spiritual realm. The more you grow, the more the sphere of your interaction with the Word is elevated. Growth is the elevation of sphere. If your sphere has not changed, you have not grown. The Lord will always bless you, but your appreciation should become higher. Brother Lee taught concerning the divine and mystical realm. We must grow in our experience of this realm of the Spirit and resurrection. In this realm, while negative elements may still be noticeable, they cannot touch you, for you are in a different realm. You grow out of being under the influence of such things into the heavenly realm which is in resurrection. Eventually, every part of your walk will become heavenly (even though not perfect, for God in His jealousy would never allow us to experience such a thing in this age).

As You Grow, Your Experience Should Become Elevated

Christians typically grow to a certain point, become settled into a certain sphere, and find themselves unable to advance further. Instead of advancing, they try to enrich their present sphere. The divine speaking comes not only to give you life supply and revelation and guidance and protection. By means of the growth in life enriched with the divine truth, your realm should become elevated continually until you live and behave yourself in the divine, mystical realm with Christ. At such a time you become someone who lives in Spirit. According to 1 Corinthians 15:45, the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection, so the realm of resurrection is a realm of the Spirit.

Appreciate the Hand of God in All Your Circumstances

We must also appreciate the loving hand of God, which measures everything to us in our environment for our growth, transformation, elevation, and greater appreciation of our precious Lord and His economy. Without the church life, you could not so easily experience all this. Also, without the church life, what the Lord measures to you is much more difficult to pass through. In the church life, however, victory can always be experienced. Just bring yourself to the church life! In the presence of the brothers, you realize no difficulty is too hard to bear. Appreciate what God's hand measures to you. Tell the Lord, "Please work on me. I have You, I have the church life, and I have Your Word. I can go through whatever You measure to me because I have the riches of the church life."

MESSAGE FOUR

The desire to serve is extremely precious, but having such a desire does not mean you have the ability to prophesy. Such desire, however, does provide the ground for your development. Furthermore, having talent and charisma does not mean you can function as a prophet, even though such things may be useful and precious before the Lord. Even the ability to speak with riches or the ability to inspire others does not mean one can adequately prophesy.

A Prophet's Speaking Provides Guidance and Results In the Church's Building Up

A prophet's speaking leads and builds up. You may be able to inspire everyone, but to what end? The ability to lecture is also not necessary for prophesying, for the letter kills. T. Austin-Sparks was a spiritual man who helped Witness Lee very much. After Sparks departed from Jessie Penn-Lewis, he labored in many places, but years later he had no place left to minister, for the gatherings he labored among asked him to depart. After he passed away, the primary congregation at Honor Oaks dissolved. This has mystified me. I dare not say he ministered doctrines, for he ministered life and brought those who heard him into an elevated sphere with the Lord. Yet the result of all his teaching seems to have been an abnormal group! He did stress authority and order in the Body, although he rejected the ground of locality. If anyone gives a lecture for teaching's sake, the end result will be that the saints' functioning will be hindered. A prophet must have their elevation in view. He should never minister only because he has something

to share; he should minister only because he has seen something ahead! He has a view for the saints to go forward and be developed further. We must share not only with the saints' development in view but also with their building up in view. A prophet prophesies because the saints need to be elevated and the church needs to be built up. The higher the saints can go and the stronger the building up of the church, the better!

I remember a time when I was asked to speak at Purdue University. As I looked around, I felt it was not worthwhile, since that "Christian" student audience was not interested in hearing anything about Christ. All I could do was to give a message on the prodigal son. (This happened to me on one other occasion, where I did the same, because everyone needs that message, regardless where they are.) When you minister, you and those you speak to must be together. If you give them the wrong thing, you can damage them! If someone had provided physical food to the prodigal son when he was in his wretched state, he would not have gone home to his father! You have to learn to say, "My purpose for ministering is that the saints might grow and develop and that the church might be built up." Knowledge can kill, and if you overly minister in a certain way, the saints can indeed be hurt.

Once, while in a restaurant, I saw a woman praying with her young son. I was impressed, so I went up to her and after greeting her I asked where she met. She told me she met with Christian & Missionary Alliance, but she had never heard of its founder, A.B. Simpson. Those in that group had lost something of the riches he released due to the so-called riches they currently had been receiving! To give messages simply for the sake of giving messages can cause great loss to those who hear.

A Prophet Does Not Speak to Surface Needs, but for Building Up

To focus only on the saints and only speak to their apparent need does not bring them to a higher level. For instance, if the saints are lacking in their love for the Bible, and you help them to read the Bible more, that does not necessarily meet God's need among them. You should not speak merely because the saints have a need; you should speak so the saints might develop and grow. Having this in view, your exercise can bring them into a higher sphere and cause them to be further built up. If you are someone who seeks to do this, you become someone so close to Christ, for He who firmly attaches us together unto Christ and has anointed us is God (2 Cor. 1:21). God has not done this so He can meet what we think our need may be, but to anoint us. It is not to simply see the church's *apparent* needs, but rather that the saints and the church must go higher according to the high vision you as a prophet possess.

A Prophet Must Be Prepared to Be Consumed

The prophet must be prepared to be consumed with the divine commitment. If there is no commitment, there is no prophet! In the world, if people want to succeed or make money, they commit themselves to that goal, and yet it seems if someone wants to serve the Lord, they often play around! Some who study even such a thing as a musical instrument give their lives to it. They sacrifice so much and exercise a high degree of discipline because of their commitment to master that instrument. Why is it that so few who serve the Lord commit themselves to Him in such a way? A prophet must be committed with the divine commitment and prepared to be consumed by it. If the Lord gives you breath, use that breath to serve the Lord!

A Prophet Must Be Prepared to Be Constituted

Commitment comes with constitution. To love fancy things does not mean that you can produce them. If you have no such constitution, you cannot produce that which you may enjoy or admire. If I love to listen to a beautiful violin solo, does that mean I can pick up a violin and play it so beautifully? Yet many do give themselves to such things. How many give themselves in such a way to God? We should be constituted with Christ as life, with the Bible, and with operation according to our level of growth. Each stage of life has its sphere. When you graduate from high school or college, you enter another stage with another level. At every stage we must be constituted. Your constitution is what qualifies you to be consumed.

A Prophet Must Operate in the Principle of Incarnation

Becoming a prophet involves the principle of incarnation. Many who speak place themselves above others. They give the appearance of being someone remote. Incarnation is a crucial matter. In order to save us, God had to incarnate Himself as a man. To bring God to the saints, you must come in the same principle. You must be among them. As much as is possible, be with the saints. Christ as life in us is the top incarnation. He is filled with the divine attributes and with the human virtues that issue from them. Aside from this, there is no way we could be Christians. We so offend the Lord as we carry Him around wherever we elect to go, perhaps even to sinful places. Perhaps we even force Him to watch improper things with us, such as certain movies. Yet He tolerates so much, and continues to live with us. He may object, and we may still refuse, yet He still remains. This principle is

crucial for our life-long serving. The moment the principle of incarnation is absent in your service, your service becomes a sham.

The Word we study must speak to us, enrich us, and become our inspiration. If you serve in the principle of incarnation, you can be with anyone, yet the speaking you have received may sometimes be for the saints, or may be for you alone. When you have Christ in the principle of incarnation, you have the ability to spiritually perceive the saints and speak to them. When the Lord's word is rich in you, you are inspired, and thus your desire is to be with others and minister something to them. The burden you have corresponds to what has been divinely committed to you and is exercised with the consuming of your spirit, soul, and body.

A Prophet Must Be Totally Committed to Christ and the Church

Your ability to minister as a prophet corresponds to the strength of your commitment. No one courts many girls at one time; a man becomes committed to one. If necessary, he will travel thousands of miles due to his commitment. He won't care about how much it drains his bank account, because the bank account's existence has become something for his commitment. We should desire to spend and be spent for Christ and the church.

A Prophet's Operation Is according to His Capacity and the Riches of Christ He Possesses

A prophet can only minister according to the riches he has. You can only serve within the limitation of your capacity.

We spoke of union, mingling, and incorporation. There are also the meanings behind the Biblical terms "in Christ," "abide in Me [Christ] and I[Christ] abide in you," and "Christ formed in you." If you say, "I must have the riches of Christ," then as you are "in Christ" (in union with Christ), you should live in the enjoyment of that union. Every morning you should spend time to enjoy this union you have with Christ. The taste you develop out of your union with Christ has to do with its nature. All children enjoy their mother's cooking, since they grew up with it. To grow up with a certain kind of cooking has to do with life, but to develop a taste for it has to do with mingling. This further causes you to grow into a certain kind of person, which is analogous to incorporation.

Anything that frustrates our relationship with Christ, such as sin, flesh, or the world, we must take care of. Then Christ is further able to abide and

operate in us, which I call “riches.” Eventually Christ is formed in us, which means “for us to live is Christ.” This is to pursue the riches in the experience of life. This is also to gain the divine attributes such as life, light, love, and further attributes such as endurance, boldness, and righteousness. The more you enjoy the Lord, the more the divine attributes will become a part of you and become your riches. This is all a part of pursuing Christ.

As you speak, you must have the Spirit’s anointing, but if you never experienced any mingling, where would be the anointing? If you never had the experience of abiding in Christ, how could you speak in oneness with Christ?

A Prophet Must Seek to Acquire the Divine Attributes

These attributes flow out in human virtues. People should realize you are a person who really loves them, since you are one who enjoys the love of God! Your whole life must be a process of growth in this way. At whatever level of growth you are as a Christian, you must acquire the divine attributes until you are a person saturated with the human virtues that flow from those attributes.

MESSAGE FIVE

The Importance of the Principle of Incarnation

The matter of incarnation is important when it comes to being a prophet, because no matter how great are the things you share, you must be protected from being overly lifted up by what you speak.

If the Lord blesses you a little and you speak well, or if your word has some impact or blesses someone, you can quickly feel that you are higher than others. No matter how great is your experience of Christ as life, how much the saints feel you are a blessing, or how much you know the Word, or are charged or burdened, you must always realize that you are just a brother, and you must live a life among the other saints. Don’t go beyond that. Don’t say, “I am a speaker now.” Once you acquire that attitude, your growth is terminated. The principle of the operation of a New Testament prophet is the principle of incarnation.

A Prophet Can Only Minister According to the Riches He Has

A prophet can only minister according to what riches he possesses. One brother's riches may not be that of others. You can only go as far as the riches you have.

The Example of Watchman Nee

Brother Nee wrote a book when he was young called *The Spiritual Man*. His life-long operation was very much in line with that book. When he came to his later years, he gave a training near FooChow. It is evident through what was shared that he never changed his emphasis. He repeated the points he had shared as a young servant of the Lord, and the anointing was still there. He was so rich that when he ministered, others just felt it was inexhaustible. Why was this man so rich? First, he really loved the Lord. When he first touched the Lord, the Lord told him to give up his girlfriend, so he told her he could no longer marry her. He wrote a hymn at this time about how deep the Lord's love was. Eventually that girl went to Beijing University and got saved. Because the love between them was still there, they married. Some who knew them well said they rarely saw a couple that loved each other as much as Watchman Nee and his wife. But Watchman Nee loved the Lord enough to pay any price.

Watchman Nee was also very deep in the Word. He had a tremendous memory, and he did not waste it on other things. I know others who also have outstanding memories, but none seem to treat their ability as he did. How easily we waste our memory capacity with unnecessary things!

Watchman Nee also really pursued the riches in the truth. He contacted a bookseller in London and had box after box of books shipped to him. He had the ability to pick up a book and tell you exactly what was in it, and could even point to the pages where something could be found. Brother Nee was very much in the riches of those who went before.

Brother Nee also knew how to take things from God's hand. He was rich with Christ; he was rich in life, rich in truth, rich in what those who went before had recovered, and also rich in experience.

Minister What You Have, or Something Just Ahead of What You Have

Brothers, you can never minister beyond what you have. If you are able to minister something once and awhile, and feel it is inspired, don't rely on such experiences. You can minister something ahead of what you have, but you can never minister what you don't have.

When a man first tells a girl he loves her, it is really ahead of where he really is, but as he pursues her, he finds his statements become real. It is the same with your relationship with Christ. You may say, “Christ, I give everything to You.” You can say this, because you don’t know what “everything” means. But the Lord graciously takes it, and gradually shows you what “everything” means. Therefore, you do minister somewhat ahead of your experience, but you cannot minister what you have never touched. A boy cannot go to a girl and say “I love you” with no affection for her at all. Once affection is present, however, it increases.

Brother Nee was rich with Christ, life, the Bible, and the truths recovered by those who went before, and rich in the experience of Christ. Anyone who reads what he ministered, especially in books such as *The Ministry of God’s Word*, cannot but be impressed by how rich Christ must become to us if we wish to serve Him.

A prophet can only minister according to the riches he has. Therefore, focus on Christ, focus on life (that is, the Spirit), focus on the Bible, focus on the riches the Lord has given to the church, and take God’s hand from all angles joyfully as He arranges all things in your life.

A Prophet Must Be a Pursuer of Christ

A prophet needs to become one who pursues riches in the experience of life. He pursues the riches just as the apostle Paul did when he said, “Not that I have attained, but I pursue Christ as Christ has gained me. How Christ obtained me, now I obtain Christ.” Pursuing is a life-long matter. I have been pursuing Christ for fifty-some years. After fifty years in an occupation, a person becomes tired. In regards to loving the Lord, however, you never grow tired. I still like to tell the Lord I love Him, and marvel at how fresh, living, enjoyable, and available He remains.

In order to speak for the Lord, you must be someone who is pursuing the Lord. You can never stop pursuing Christ. Once you feel as though your giving a message has only to do with preparing the message, your ability to function as a New Testament prophet is finished. Once you have the base of pursuing, however, much can develop.

A Prophet Knows How to Enjoy the Riches of the Divine Life and Knows the Signs of Life

A prophet knows how to enjoy and grow in the riches of the divine life with all the riches of the divine attributes. As you enjoy this life, it produces attributes. When you possess these attributes, they produce virtues. It is thus you enjoy life. It is not merely enjoying a good feeling or sensation. It

is the presence of attributes that determines whether or not your enjoyment of life has been genuine.

Do we really know life? When you have life, you are enlightened, strengthened, satisfied, peaceful, and restful. These are signs of life. It can be sensed by us. If you want to know whether or not you are in spirit, just ask yourself, “Am I enlightened, strengthened, satisfied, peaceful, and restful?”

Other signs of life seem opposite to what we may expect. For instance, feeling weak is a sign of life, as is the sense of death. Also, if you are spiritually hungry or tired, it indicates you are alive. If you lose your appetite, it means the life-element within you is weak. When the life-element is strong, there are strong positive signs and there are strong negative signs. When you feel that you are in darkness, it is a sign of life. In the world, everyone is in darkness, but no one knows it! Both enlightening and the sense of darkness are signs of life. Feelings of emptiness and oppressiveness and bitterness are all signs of life. In fact, for every positive sign of life there is a negative sign that is just as much a sign of life.

No matter how much you enjoy some sense of life, it will come and go. What should remain? The divine attributes that are built into you as you followed the sense of life. Why do so many shout, “We are in the flow! We are in the Body! We are one with the ministry,” and yet seem so free to act in a manner that does damage to churches or individual saints? It is because there is a lack of life, for the operation of divine attributes and even of conscience appears to be absent.

The Presence of Divine Attributes Proves the Constitution of Life

How do you know you have the riches of life? It is when you see the divine attributes expressed. If love is strongly with you, would you be able to hurt others? One group invited me to fellowship with them. Suddenly a brother asked the question, “Brother Chu, after you raise up so many brothers, and they turn their back on you, what is your reaction?” I said, “No brother ever offended me, but I feel very grieved because they have the opportunity to grow into a rich ministry, yet because of that compromising, their opportunity is gone.”

The development by which a brother becomes a blessing to the churches takes a very long time. The process of development depends upon the attributes he possesses. Life produces the mingling, which means something of God’s nature becomes a part of you. If God is a God with attributes, then those attributes must become yours. If God does not lie, you cannot lie. If God does not ill-treat His children, you cannot ill-treat a brother or sister. If God gives everything to the church, you have to pay the

price so that the local church can be built up. All this is determined by the attributes you possess.

Being strengthened, enlightened, satisfied, peaceful, and restful are all signs of life. Feeling weak instead of strong, empty instead of satisfied, in darkness instead of enlightened, disquieted instead of peaceful, and restless instead of restful are also signs of life. Feeling hungry is just as precious as having the feeling of being full. When you are full, you are satisfied, but without the sign of being hungry, can you know what it is to feel full? Hunger is a sign of life, physically, that helps you maintain a healthy physical life.

Whenever you enjoy life, it should bring God's attributes into you. You will be firm, strong, loyal, and faithful because Christ is these things. You will walk in the way of the cross and be patient and enduring, for God is such. Are we able to suffer another human being like He endures all of us? Eventually, the maturity of life is demonstrated by the constitution of the divine attributes.

Freedom is an attribute, but looseness is not. We should be so free, yet not loose. We can even be restful, which is similar to being relaxed. If I need to rest, it means I need relaxation. God may say, "I am the God of peace. In Me is restfulness." Thus it is healthy that we would experience relaxation, but it is not proper that we would experience it to the extent we become loose. Instead of becoming loose, we should exercise ourselves unto godliness (1 Tim. 4:7).

With God there is the attribute of working, for the Lord Jesus said, "I work, for My Father is still working" (John 5:17). The more we are saturated with divine life, the more we will surely be burdened. The divine attributes of life are most crucial for the building up of the church life.

When we say someone is rich in life, we basically mean he is rich in attributes. Then the third step is to live out the human virtues that flow out of those divine attributes. Attributes have to do with our person, but what is lived out is virtue.

This is not the same as culture. Brother Lee never walked out of his bedroom without being fully dressed, which included wearing a tie. This may have been something divine, or it may have been something of his disposition. Therefore we cannot make it a law that when we leave our bedroom, we must be fully dressed, even with a tie! I appreciated this and felt it was very godly, but we cannot say it was something divine, although with him it may have been. For sure, if you are this way, you are not loose! God may have been humorous, but in the Bible you never find that God joked around. He was never loose. When life comes, it is defined by attributes. How much life you have is determined by how much God's attributes have been constituted into you.

Divine Attributes Are Displayed in Their Corresponding Virtues

These attributes are expressed through your labor and speaking with human virtues. When you are healthy, you live out a life fully releasing human virtues. A young brother thinks spiritual men must be very special. Perhaps if he sees that a spiritual man eats just as others do, he might be shocked! One sister was surprised that a certain spiritual man drank tea just as others did.

Virtue is expressed and defined in different eras in different ways. I went to John Wesley's residence in England. To my feeling, it seemed that the Lord's presence could still be felt there. Others with me felt the same way. There was not one corner in that home that did not feel godly. Today, however, to live such a way with such furniture and so on would seem peculiar. But everything was very proper. Even today those who know the Lord can tell that the host of that house must surely have been a virtuous person.

A Prophet Treasures the Riches of Divine Truth

A prophet also must be a person who diligently invests himself in the riches of the divine truth. We cannot just say we want to preach. We must love the Bible and be familiar with it, and it should speak easily to us.

We should also love the spiritual riches of those fathers who exercised a rich ministry. One of the greatest was Watchman Nee. The hymns he composed are extremely beautiful, but many of them were drawn from the writings of other spiritual men. He enjoyed the writings of others, and he further developed what had inspired them.

A prophet also treasures the riches of those who can teach him. No prophet is honored in his locality (Matt. 13:57), so those who can teach you may not be that respected, but learn to honor the elders in your local church and the full-timers serving you in your area. Honor those who can teach you.

A Prophet Learns to Apprehend Things Spiritually

A prophet needs to pay a price for the development of his spiritual apprehension. Spiritual apprehension involves knowing spiritual things. Many saints are caught with material things. The reason why a saint can easily be convinced about being in a certain "flow" and so on is that what is often spoken of is physical, and easily seen. Perhaps they may hear someone say, "To meet with us is to be in the Body, and if you are not with us, you are not in the Body." Some saints have reportedly told others that I am not in the Body. I would like to ask them if I am not in the Body, then where am I? There is only one Body. Paul said if someone says they are not in the

Body, they are not because of this not in the Body (1 Cor. 12:15-16)! How then can someone else say I am not in the Body when I don't even agree that I am not? Where am I, if I am not in the Body? Yet if people are not spiritual, it is easy to convince them of such things.

To be spiritual, you must be able to apprehend spiritual things. John was able to discern that it was Jesus on the shore calling to them even when the others could not (John 21). It seems many may have mistreated me, but if I see them as my brothers in the Lord, how can I be offended?

Our Ability to Apprehend Spiritual Things Depends Upon the Purity of Our Heart

Spiritual apprehension is based upon purity of heart. Christians are funny animals. The most simple life is the plant life. The second most complicated is the animal life, and the human life is more complicated yet. The most complicated life, however, is the Christian life, for a Christian has four lives. He has the created life, the sinful life, the self-life, and the life of Christ. To be a sinner with three lives is not so difficult as we often preach it to be. If you don't remind sinners of how empty they are or touch their consciences, they may feel they are very happy!

The physical life tells me I am hungry. The soul life asks, "What is here for me?" The sinful life says "Go commit sin." And the divine life says "Love and pursue God." Before the day of glorification, you continually are a battlefield. I may hope that the sin nature would be taken away, but it will not be totally vanquished until that day. Sometimes it is dormant for a few moments, but too quickly it again rears its head.

Once my daughter took me out to eat at a very nice restaurant on the condition that I would not get mad at the waiters! I felt, "What kind of man am I, that my daughter feels she has to make such a deal with me?" Some may wonder why I can still be so ill-tempered and ask me, "Titus, don't you know how to remain in spirit?" I do, but for some reason I can be very much in spirit until a certain situation arises. I don't think it is victory or failure in this matter that counts; it is your purity toward the Lord that counts. You may goof a lot, but if you continue to love the Lord, that purity will enable you to have spiritual apprehension. Many times things become complicated because we are not pure, but if you are pure, you will see the Lord in whatever happens.

A Prophet Needs a Renewed Mind

When you have a pure heart, you should also have a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). No one with an unrenewed mind can understand

spiritual things. Spiritual apprehension comes from a basic appreciation of the fact that there is such a spiritual reality, and a pure heart to see it, and a renewed mind to apprehend it. This, however, requires that you pay a price. You have to equip yourself. You cannot just claim to be a spiritual man.

A Prophet Seeks to Grow unto Maturity of Life

A prophet is desperate for the maturity of life that he may lay hold of that for which he has been laid hold of by Christ (Phil. 3:12). In other words, it is much easier for the Lord to get you than it is for you to gain the Lord! Has the Lord gained you? Yes. But have you gained the Lord? The Lord says to us, “Now that I have you, it is your turn to gain Me! How much I have gained you, I want you to pay the price to gain Me the same.”

Eventually you have to be desperate for maturity. You must treasure every opportunity to operate. Every time there is a chance to fellowship, preach the gospel, shepherd, or serve in some manner, lay hold of the opportunity. When I came to the USA, I had been in the church life ten years, which was an impressive amount of time to those in this country. I was first with high schoolers, then a children’s meeting teacher, then a coordinator of those who taught the children, then a district leading brother, then a junior elder in a small church, then I labored on a campus, and then with the young people in a city. So by the time I arrived in this country I had served in many different capacities. There is nothing that you can do if you do not pay a price to gain what is necessary for it. Therefore, while you are young, grasp every opportunity to serve.

The Nature of Spiritual Burden

When speaking about burden, Watchman Nee emphasized the meaning of the Hebrew word, *massa*, in his book, *The Ministry of God’s Word*. The Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament translates this word as *rhema*, the instant, spoken word. The Old Testament sense is not found in the New Testament. The basic meaning of this Hebrew word has to do with carrying a burden. The sense is that of a heavy weight loaded upon a person that presses down upon him. This weight, or burden, is due to the revelation (also a definition of *massa*), and makes the receiving one an oracle (which is another definition of *massa*) giving that person utterance (yet another definition of *massa*). So we developed this point from an Old Testament usage of a word, although the reality of this is certainly found in the New Testament.

How do you know you are not burdened? You speak only for the sake

of speaking about a spiritual truth you think the saints ought to know. When I was young, I did this. I was taking the lead in a small locality. Sometimes I read the Bible simply for the sake of giving a good message, but the Lord adjusted me, telling me I was just using them to satisfy my own ego.

If you go through a particular experience, sometimes you want others to know about it. When you speak in this way, you are testifying rather than prophesying. A prophet should always have two things in view: how do I elevate and strengthen the saints, and how do I build up the Body?

Some things are so marvelous, but they can become very frustrating to the church's going on. Someone once told me, "God is a God of blessing. I knew a man who was poor, but he prayed and God blessed him. He bought some land and found oil on that land." My thought was, "Of what value was that? So he could buy a gold coffin?" It seems that whatever you can tell people about, as long as it is not Christ, they will be happy. If there are 100 Christians, 99 will show little interest if you try to speak Christ to them, yet if you try to tell them about how God can bless them, or about spiritual healing, or about some miraculous occurrence, they will gladly hear you. If you want to speak as a prophet with divine burden, however, you have to remember that nothing besides Christ can be allowed to become your focus.

A Healthy Burden Comes From Vision and Revelation

What is a healthy burden? A healthy burden comes from visions and revelation which develop into a commitment. The apostle Paul labored for only ten to twelve years, yet how many saints and churches he raised up! Once anyone compares his labor to Paul's, there is no way for him to boast, no matter who he is. Yet what Paul stressed when he spoke were the visions and revelations he received (Eph. 3:5; Acts 26:19; 2 Cor. 12). Paul was a person filled with visions and revelations. Vision has to do with the initial seeing. Revelation is what you receive in that vision as you begin to realize what is "inside."

Suppose you hear about a country. That is only hearing about something. When you actually arrive in that country, you finally see it. That is comparable to the matter of vision. After living in that country for a time, however, you begin to possess revelation concerning that country. You begin to know that country in detail.

Vision Is What You See, Revelation Is What You Know

Vision is what you see; revelation is what you know. I was once asked on a plane what the United States looked like. I could only point out the window as we landed. After we landed, I am sure he became acquainted

with all the traffic and the difference in crime and so on. But with Christ, there are no traffic jams and there is no crime! First when you see Christ, you are taken with His beauty, but His beauty is really more fully seen as you receive revelation upon revelation regarding His faithfulness, His wisdom, His firmness, and so on. Eventually by means of revelation, Christ and His economy possess our person. Apart from such vision and revelation, you cannot be a suitable prophet, for a prophet can only minister according to the vision and revelation he possesses. The richer your vision and the finer the riches of your revelation, the more effective your prophesying will be.

A Prophet Must Have Divine Attributes, the Present Christ, and the Immediate Speaking of the Word

The experience of divine life results in our gaining the divine attributes and the corresponding human virtues. It took me these fifty years to come to this definition. I can tell you about the signs of life, but it is hard to define life itself. I have been bothered by what I have observed in recent years. Many have been raised up and trained by a certain servant of the Lord. It is shocking how so few care about life. Instead, so many became concerned with activities and what they would be able to accomplish. I came to realize that life is abstract, but the attributes of life are very solid. The attributes are divine, and from these attributes the human virtues are expressed. You must have a vision of life and also revelation of its attributes. Such vision and revelation decide your ability to prophesy for the Lord. When you see something from the Lord, it becomes your commitment.

You must also have a present Christ. Don't have an "old" Christ. You must have today's Christ, just like the Israelites in the wilderness had to gather their manna freshly every day.

Then, you must have the present speaking of the Word. The Word should always be speaking freshly to you. It is not so difficult to prepare something to share for a message, but for you to have the "Christ now" and the up-to-date speaking of the Word is not so easy. We thank the Lord for the gift we have received, and we now should ask that He help us consecrate ourselves according to the vision and revelation we have received. The vision and revelation you have received must become your commitment. Furthermore, you must have the present Christ and whatever the Word is conveying at this very moment. Then, as you are prophesying, your burden is that the saints would be elevated and the church would be built up. You can travel to pioneer new areas with the Lord's interest in view, but wherever you are, you should labor to elevate the saints and to build up the church in each locality.

MESSAGE SIX

We must become the seed through which others may develop. Those who are willing should learn to go from church to church, some ministering, and others supporting. Learn to enlarge and develop yourself by coming out of your small setting. When you travel, you will begin to realize the Lord is doing so much. Don't however, go somewhere simply so that you may preach. Instead, go out for the sake of the churches. After some traveling in this way, you will find you are different. This time together hopefully will facilitate more of such a thing.

I also hope that among us we will be able to maintain a family atmosphere, and that nothing institutional would develop. Instead, I hope we might always be able to fellowship as we have here, while continuing to keep a proper order.

A spiritual burden is a spiritual charge the Lord lays upon us, even as a heavy weight upon our spirit. To be burdened doesn't mean you want to say something; to be burdened means you realize something according to what the Lord has spoken to you, and it is profitable to the church. Until it is discharged or released, you may be unable to eat or sleep well as it lays so heavily upon you. Many who serve the Lord suffer even physically due to such burdens if they are unable to release their burden due to the circumstances not being suitable for its release. Therefore they must pray and watch for the opportunity for their burden to be released.

A Prophet Must Function with the Spirit's Anointing

A burden comes to us as a speaking with anointing, and our ability to receive anointing is something according to our maturity in life.

A Prophet Must Be Burdened for People

Self-Imposed Difficulty in the Gospel

One reason we have been unable to do much with the gospel among typical Americans is due to what we went through beginning around 1984. During these years we were very confined as to what we could or could not do. We were so focused on what was the proper way that we often lost our burden for the church and for people. Thus, we came under the influence of a psychology of defeat which made it very difficult for us to reach out to others. By the Lord's mercy, it appears we made a right decision concerning raising up new churches. The experience in these localities has

shown that the door is still very open for the gospel.

Besides being under a psychology of defeat, we also often unwittingly require others to fit themselves to us rather than going to them as Paul did by becoming “all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:22). This does not mean we partake in the sinful things they may be doing, but it should be that when people contact us they don’t feel like we can’t relate to them. What is taking place must be something they can receive.

***We Must Go to People Where They Are
in the Principle of Incarnation***

Furthermore, we need to go to people. Everyone should do their best to have a meeting in their home. Make available some refreshments. Invite another couple to join you in this. I would spend four or five nights a week for this. Many of our meetings, including the prayer meeting, are “petrified.” Everyone knows exactly what is going to take place. One brother recently went to a city in another country and baptized exactly 100 people in one year. The secret was his availability. Every week he visits eight to twelve homes with just a few in every meeting, but by meeting in this way during the week he is upholding 120 people. Those who exercise in this way really take the way of incarnation. They don’t ask people to come to them, but they go to meet people where they are. Those they meet are not required to conform to any current meetings. Instead, they labor to reach the people according to their ability to take in what they can take in.

Apart from this kind of labor, it is quite likely that our prophesying does not mean much. You must be burdened for people. If you are not, your prophesying is just a show. You must go to people where they are.

The problem is that we ask others to visit our meetings, meaning those people have to take our test. If they like our meeting, they pass, if they do not, they fail. As far as many saints are concerned, things should never change, and that’s all there is to it! Isn’t that foolish? Do not be defeated by the thought that people today just aren’t open. The door is open. But when you exercise in the gospel, do not have a particular format in view. Just go to others with the gospel. Inviting others to fit themselves to our schedule is bureaucratic. The leading brothers should back the saints up when they have a desire to do “new” things to reach others.

A real laborer will go from house to house to be with those who are open. It is too easy to say to others, “If you are ready to fit my requirements, I will come!” The principle of incarnation is that you go to others according to where they are and offer yourself according to what you discern their situation to be. You must have people in view. If you do not have people as your focus, you should not serve. There is no need to hold

onto any of our old cultural habits. For instance, forget about making announcements; instead, contact everyone personally if there is some burden. Learn to open your home. Learn to preach the gospel. Learn to involve the saints and to involve yourself in the church life. Then, your prophesying may mean something.

A Prophet Must Have the Development of the Saints in View

Until you have the development of the saints in view, it doesn't mean that much. We should have a desire to have the church built up.

In our ministering, we must know how to apply the salvation of Christ both judicially and organically. One aspect is for our fellowship, and one is for our growth. For our fellowship, we need to know how to take the blood for our sins and even how to hide under the blood for who we are when it seems impossible for us to change. For our growth in life we need to know how to partake of Christ as life. Anyone who ministers must understand the two sides of God's salvation. The judicial aspect has to do with God handling our faults, while the organic aspect has to do with God supplying the riches of His life for our growth.

Anointing Follows Development

A prophet speaks with God's anointing. The anointing you have as you speak can only match the riches you have. When I was young, I could get the saints excited. But now that I am old, the only "capital" I have is the anointing. I cannot do much to stir people up outwardly anymore, and when I minister my mind may not be clear, but whenever I speak, I do believe there is anointing. I do not try to do great things, but as I speak, the Lord's presence is with me. Anointing is a crucial thing.

The anointing follows your development in the Lord's divine attributes and virtues. A speaker should know how long he can talk according to the anointing. When the anointing is really gone, you should stop your speaking. If there is no anointing, however, you should find the way to bring in the anointing as you speak. When you are young, you should ask the Lord to anoint you as you minister.

A Prophet Does Not Seek 'Success' but Ministers in Love

No one who gives a message should seek success. The speaker should only desire that the Lord would speak. The result is up to the Lord. Once a brother asked me to pray for him as he spoke for the first time in a new place, for if he could conquer the congregation in the first message, he felt

he would have a smoother way among them. Please don't take this view. Just minister to the saints in love. You need to become an attractive person so that when you speak people like to listen to you, but natural charisma is not adequate. It should be that you are a tender and loving person so others may receive from you. Don't condemn others, but rather leave the enlightenment of those who hear you to God. Don't judge.

When I was young I once invited a Taiwan University student to a meeting to hear a message. The brother speaking shared very strongly on sin. The person I brought left because he felt rebuked. There is nothing wrong with rebuking, but you must first bring people to the state that they are ready to be rebuked! In another case, I knew a saint who also felt rebuked, but that person's comment was that the brother really spoke to her heart. In the message there may be judgment, but do not try to exercise judgment yourself. Leave any judgment to the Lord.

A Prophet Teaches and Admonishes, Having the Saints' Perfecting and Full Growth in View

A prophet should not only admonish, but also teach. To admonish is to address a person according to his need, while teaching addresses people according to the Lord's need. We teach because of the Lord's need. For everyone to develop, both their need and the Lord's need must be met. Too often the ministering ones care for the saints and forget the Lord, or they seem to care for the need of the Lord while forgetting the need of the saints. Ten years ago, most of the churches were focused upon teaching rather than admonishing. Admonishing, however, should come first (Col. 1:28). Typically, the person should be cared for first, and then they can be brought to see the Lord's perspective.

The view of our ministering is to bring the saints to be full grown in Christ. Since we are not so full grown ourselves, it seems a bit much, but this is Paul's word. He told us we need to have the saints' full growth in view.

A Prophet Must Find Adequate Utterance to Release His Burden

A healthy burden can only be fully released by means of adequate utterance. The apostle Paul possessed the mystery of the gospel of God, yet he asked the saints to pray for him that he might have the utterance to speak it out, so that he might make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:18-20). Didn't Paul know how to do this? If so, why did he ask the saints to pray for him? It is a great matter to know how to address every situation. Often when he faced a situation it was some-

thing that no one had faced before. Paul addressed people in so many different cultures and backgrounds and environments, and every time his utterance had to be fresh. It was not a matter of what he had, but how he spoke it. To present it the same way in every situation would not have produced what God was after.

To be burdened is to be possessed and to be pressed down by the weight of what the Lord has shown us in our spirit. Utterance is the word given to us by the Lord in wisdom for the relieving of this weight. Without a proper utterance, the speaker cannot release his burden or be relieved of it. Christ came filled with heavenly, divine spiritual burden. His utterance was so sweet. For instance, John 3:16 includes so many great matters, including God, the world, love, the only begotten Son, perishing, and eternal life. In that one statement, the Lord made clear the great mystery in the universe.

John the Baptist spoke to the Jews in a manner they could understand. He said, for instance, "Behold the Lamb of God." The Jews realized this meant Christ was God's Messiah, the Savior, the unique Sacrifice, and the Mediator between God and man. Paul also had many marvelous statements that made God's economy clear. He saw how heavenly we are with Christ in resurrection. What he saw was marvelous. His utterance in Ephesians 1:22 in saying how God gave Christ to be Head over all things to the church means so much! It is to the church! And he went on to say that the church is Christ's organic Body, and as the Body it is the fullness of the One who fills all in all. Such verses would take days to expound, yet they are so apprehendable! When we speak, we should use utterances that make clear to others what God has shown to us and put in us.

If you want to say something for God, it needs to be repeated and developed into many utterances. Jesus said God so loved the world, but He developed this much more. Paul also developed the utterance of the church being Christ's Body into many further utterances. Without suitable utterance, your burden cannot be released, regardless how much you minister.

I have seen brothers with experience continue to preach until they hit upon the utterance that made their burden clear. If you are not certain about how something might be made clear, preach it! A healthy burden is discharged through a sweet, heavenly, precise utterance. If you do not feel you have utterance, just continue to speak, for often the utterance will come out as you minister.

The Signs of a Genuine Local Church

A healthy utterance can simultaneously cut you and build you up. And since the purpose of prophesying is to build up the church, we must be clear about what the local church is.

A Genuine Local Church Lets the Spirit Lead

For any congregation to be the local testimony of Christ's Body, it must first honor the authority of the Holy Spirit. If you are bound by tradition, by other churches, or by some headquarters, the Spirit does not have complete authority. The Spirit must be able to freely lead. The leading ones in every local church should spend a lot of time to pray together to seek after the Lord's leading. Furthermore, if the Spirit leads, it can never be something that is merely an activity.

A Genuine Local Church Takes the Bible as the Standard and a Genuine Local Church Must Stand upon the Ground of Oneness in the Locality

Furthermore, the Bible must be the unique standard, and the local church must stand upon the ground of oneness within the locality. This is the most difficult thing. Many consider us as having taken a divisive stand. We, however, have never changed or shifted. If anyone has deviated from what was originally committed to us, it is not us! One of the primary things for a local church is that those who meet together stand upon the ground of oneness in their locality.

In one place they were considering how they might enlarge their region. They felt they should send a group to this city and that city to circle their territory. This indicated they did not see the local church, for the local church is inclusive.

Some brothers who were considering moving to a certain city would only come if the present leaders stepped down. My fellowship was to simply go as the Lord led them. The Lord would make clear who the leaders should be. There is no need to declare, "If I come, you have to go!" Just in a few days, all the brothers would become clear as to who should be exercising the leadership.

The hardest thing to see is this matter of the local church. Once you see the matter of the ground of oneness, you will prophesy as a brother in that locality. All the churches belong to Christ alone. The brothers are open to receiving all the brothers. The ground of oneness is a great matter. It removes all possibility of exclusiveness. It does open the door to headaches,

for you do have to fellowship with all believers, even if you feel you have no time or heart to do so. We should only care for the saints and the Lord's testimony. We shouldn't care about who did what, or what region we are in. Our commitment is the Lord's testimony. You have to listen to the saints, however, who may be concerned for other things. Through fellowship you may be able to help them, or even ask to be exempted from such "fellowship" for the sake of the service to the church. We should learn to serve in the church in our locality as it stands on the ground of locality, and on the ground of oneness in that locality. Stress the matter of oneness just as you stress the matter of locality.

A Prophet Must Recognize the Order in the Body

As we minister, we should minister according to the order in which the Lord has placed us. Don't rebuke the elders. But remember, the order among you has to be organic. At any given time, no one knows who may operate in what way. When I served in one locality, everyone was twice my age. I ministered among them and brought many of their children to the Lord. I also worked with the older ones, but I never felt I went beyond my place. Many got saved in that neighborhood. One day I was told by one of the older leading ones that there was a need to give a message on the power of the tongue, for there was a lot of gossip going around. I replied that I had never given a message on that matter before, but he replied that he would share the message, even though he was not a brother who normally spoke in the meetings. In that instance, however, he was very anointed and gave a very good message from the book of James. He was the right person to speak at that time. In the church life, remember that the order is quite crucial.

As you minister, do so according to the capacity the Lord has measured to you. I was always ready to do whatever was asked of me by the brothers. Once I was asked to lead the saints in singing, for the singing was struggling. But after a few weeks, the brothers told me that it was enough. They realized that matter could only go so far. It had its value only to that extent. Your exercise in any matter can also only be to a certain extent.

Taken from messages given by Titus Chu at Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, on January 19 and 20, 2008. Not all points are represented.

Anthony Norris Groves

writes

John Nelson Darby

The following letter may be of interest in light of recent events. It was written by Anthony Norris Groves, one who was involved in the Lord's move along with Darby, and who is considered today the father of faith missions. He greatly influenced George Muller, and went for the Lord to India, among other places. Darby was at this time considered by many to be the most prominent leader among the Brethren.

Milford Haven,

March 10th, 1836

My Dear D—,

As the stormy weather threatens a little delay, I am not willing to leave England without a few words in reply to your notes, and a short explanation of some other points that interest me. I have ever regretted having so few opportunities of seeing and conversing with you since my return to England, and thereby explaining many things that might have allowed us to depart on the whole more happily than now, yet I wish you to feel assured that nothing has estranged my heart from you, or lowered my confidence in your being still animated by the same enlarged and generous purposes that once so won and riveted me; and though I feel you have departed from those principles by which you once hoped to have effected them, and are in principle returning to the city from whence you departed, still my soul so reposes in the truth of your heart to God that I feel it needs but a step or two more to advance and you will see all the evils of the systems from which you profess to be separated, to spring up among yourselves. You will not discover this so much from the workings of your own soul, as by the spirit of those who have been nurtured up from the beginning, in the system they are taught to feel the only tolerable one; that not having been led like you, and some of those earliest connected with you, through deep experimental suffering and sorrow, they are little acquainted with the real truth that may exist amidst inconceivable darkness: there will be little pity and little sympathy with such, and your union daily becoming one of doctrine and opinion more than life and love, your government will become — unseen perhaps, and unexpressed, yet — one wherein, overwhelmingly, is felt the authority of men; you will be known more by what you witness against than what you witness for, and practically this will prove that you witness against all but yourselves, as certainly as the Walkerites or Glassites: your Shibboleth may be different, but it will be as real. It has been asserted, as I found from your dear brother W— and others, that I have changed my principles: all I can say is, that as far as I know what those principles were, in which I gloried on first discovering them in the word of God, I now glory in them ten times more since I have experienced their applicability to all the various and perplexing circumstances of the present state of the Church; allowing you to give every individual, and collection of individuals, the standing God gives them,

without identifying yourselves with any of their evils. I ever understood our principle of union to be the possession of the common life or common blood of the family of God (for the life is in the blood); these were our early thoughts, and are my most matured ones. The transition your little bodies have undergone, in no longer standing forth the witnesses for the glorious and simple truth, so much as standing forth witnesses against all that they judge error, have lowered them in my apprehension from heaven to earth in their position of witnesses. What I mean is this, that then, all our thoughts were conversant about how we might ourselves most effectually manifest forth that life we had received by Jesus (knowing that that alone could be as the Shepherd's voice to the living children), and where we might find that life in others; and when we were persuaded we had found it, bidding them, on the Divine claim of this common life, (whether their thoughts on other matters were narrow or enlarged), to come and share with us, in the fellowship of the common Spirit, in the worship of our common head; and as Christ had received them so would we to the glory of God the Father; and further, that we were free, within the limits of the truth, to share with them in part, though we could not in all, their services. In fact, as we received them for the life, we would not reject them for their systems, or refuse to recognize any part of their systems, because we disallowed much. Trusting, that if this inter-communion could be established, to effect all we desire, by being upheld by God in walking in the light, as the Christ-like means of witnessing against any dark that might be in them, according to the rule of the Lord; John 3:19: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, neither will they come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd." A more difficult ministry of witness, than a preaching one of words, or separating one of persons, yet possessing a much more mighty power over the hearts of others, and a much more influential one in blessing; and which, dear brother, I know no heart more ready to acknowledge than your own. The moment the witnessing for the common life as our bond gives place to a witnessing against errors by separation of persons and preaching (errors allowably compatible with the common life), every individual, or society of individuals, first comes before the mind as those who might need witnessing against, and all their conduct and principles have first to be examined and approved before they can be received; and the position which this occupying the seat of judgment will place you in will be this: the most narrow-minded and bigoted will rule, because his conscience cannot and will not give way, and therefore the more enlarged heart must yield. It is into this position, dear D—, I feel some little flocks are fast tending, if they have not already attained it, making light not life the measure of communion. But I am told by our beloved brethren, C. and H., that if I give up this position of witnessing against evil in this peculiar way of separation from the systems in which any measure of it is mixed up, I make our position one of simple unpardonable schism, because we might join some of the many other systems. I cannot be supposed, of course, to know fully their grounds of acting, but I thought I knew yours, at least your original ones. Was not the principle we laid down as to separation from all existing bodies at the outset, this: that we felt ourselves bound to separate from all individuals and systems, so far as they required us to do what our consciences would not allow, or restrained us from doing what our consciences required, and no further? and were we not as free to join and act with any individual, or body of individuals, as they were free not to require us to do what our consciences did not allow, or prevent our doing what they did? and in this freedom did we not feel brethren should not force liberty on those who were bound, nor withhold freedom from those who were free?

Did we not feel constrained to follow the apostolic rule of not judging other men's consciences, as to liberty, by our own; remembering it is written, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; seeing that God hath received" both the one and the other? Now it is one of these two grounds; their preventing me from, or demanding from me, other than the Lord demands, that divides me in a measure from every system; as my own proper duty to God, rather than as witnessing against their evils. As any system is in its provision narrower or wider than the truth, I either stop short, or go beyond its provisions, but I would infinitely rather bear with all their evils, than separate from their good. These were the then principles of our separation and intercommunion; we had resolved never to try to get men to act in uniformity further than they felt in uniformity; neither by frowns, nor smiles; and this for one simple reason, that we saw no authority given us from God thus to act; nor did our experience lead us to feel it the best means at all of promoting their blessing or our common aim of a perfect spiritual uniformity of judgment; whilst to ourselves it afforded a ready outlet to the propensities of the flesh, under the appearance of spiritual authority and zeal for the truth. But in all these matters, we desired that our way might be bright as the light, and our words drop noiselessly as the dew, and if, at the last, they remained "otherwise minded," we would seek of God, that even He should reveal it unto them. There is something at present so like building what you destroyed; as if when weak you can be liberal and large, but when helped with a little strength, the true spirit of sectarianism begins to bud; that being "one of us," has become a stronger bond than oneness in the power of the life of God in the soul. I know it is said (dear Lady Powerscourt told me so), that so long as any terms were kept with the Church of England, by mixing up in any measure with their ministrations, when there was nothing to offend your conscience, they bore your testimony most patiently, but after your entire rejection of them, they pursued you with undeviating resentment, and this was brought to prove that the then position was wrong, and the present right. But all I see in this is, that whilst you occupied the place of only witnessing against those things which the divine life within themselves recognized as evil, and separating from them only so far as they separated from Christ, you established them as judges of themselves, and of themselves they were condemned; and at the same time you conciliated their heavenly affections, by allowing all that really was of the Lord, and sharing in it, though the system itself in which you found these golden grains, you could not away with. But the moment your position and your language implied a perfect separation, alike from the evil and the good, and a rejection of them, in consequence of their system, without discrimination, you no longer had their consciences with you, but they felt that though only a brother in a Father's house, you exercised more than a Father's power, without a Father's heart of mercy, and they, therefore, appealed from you to your common Head, both in behalf of themselves and their systems. There is no truth more established in my own mind than this: that to occupy the position of the maximum of power, in witnessing to the consciences of others, you must stand before their unbiased judgment as evidently wishing to allow in them more than their own consciences allow, rather than less, proving that your heart of love is more alive to find a covering for faults, than your eagle eye of light to discover them. I send you this letter as we were the first to act on these principles, rather than to H— and C, whose faith and love I do so truly desire to follow. They have written to me two very long and kind letters, which I purpose more effectually and fully to answer, by meeting the positions contained in them, in a little tract, which I hope to prepare on the voyage, and finally, to publish.

I particularly regret not meeting you at Bristol, as I had much to say to you relative to Rhenius, and other things connected with India, for my heart would naturally seek sympathy and fellowship with you and those dear brethren with whom I have no dividing thoughts relative to the great bearings of truth, or the truths themselves, in which lie the power and peace of the Gospel, — neither in the objects or principles of ministry do I differ; — my difference with you is only as to the manner in which you maintain your position of witnessing for the good against the evil. I feel no one ever expects me, when an acknowledged visitor in the house of another, to be answerable for the ordering of that house, or as thereby approving it — they would naturally come to the house in which I had control, and where the acts were looked upon as mine, to form such a judgment; and even in such a case, if I was but one among many in the government, no honest mind would make me responsible for faults, against which, in my place and according to my power, I protested; because I submitted to those acts in others, rather than forego a greater good, or incur a greater evil. If it is said man cannot discriminate, nor feel the force of my witness, unless I separate, not by heart and life, but by contiguity of person, altogether from all kinds of false systems, my answer is, that He, whose place it is to judge, and to whom we are called to approve our hearts, can, and to Him, in this matter, I am content to stand or fall.

Some will not have me hold communion with the Scots, because their views are not satisfactory about the Lord's Supper; others with you, because of your views about baptism; others with the Church of England, because of her thoughts about ministry. On my principles, I receive them all; but on the principle of witnessing against evil, I should reject them all. I feel them all, in their several particulars, sinning against the mind and heart of Christ, and letting in, in principle, the most tremendous disorders, and it is not for me to measure the comparative sin of one kind of disobedience against another. I make use of my fellowship in the Spirit, to enjoy the common life together, and witness for that, as an opportunity to set before them those little particulars into which, notwithstanding all their grace and faithfulness, their godliness and honesty — they have fallen. Nor shall I ever feel separation from the good for the sake of the evil, to be my way of witnessing against it, till I see infinitely clearer than I do now, that it is God's. I naturally unite fixedly with those in whom I see and feel most of the life and power of God. But I am as free to visit other churches, where I see much of disorder, as to visit the houses of my friends, though they govern them not as I could wish; and, as I have said, I should feel it equally unreasonable and unkind, for any brother to judge me for it, though I leave him in perfect liberty to judge himself. You must not, however, dear brother, think, from anything I have said, that I shall not write freely and fully to you, relative to things in India, feeling assured in my own heart, that your enlarged and generous spirit, so richly taught of the Lord, will one day burst again those bands which narrower minds than yours have encircled you with, and come forth again, rather anxious to advance all the living members of the living Head into the stature of men, than to be encircled by any little bodies, however numerous, that own you for their founder.

I honour, love, and respect your position in the Church of God; but the deep conviction I have that your spiritual power was incalculably greater when you walked in the midst of the various congregations of the Lord's people, manifesting forth the life and the power of the gospel, than now, is such that I cannot but write the above as a proof of my love and confidence that your mind is above considering who these remarks came from, rather than what truth there may be in them.

Yours very affectionately in the gospel,
(Signed) A. N. Groves.

(found in G.H.Lang's Anthony Norris Groves, pp 172ff, and on www.bruederbewegung.de)