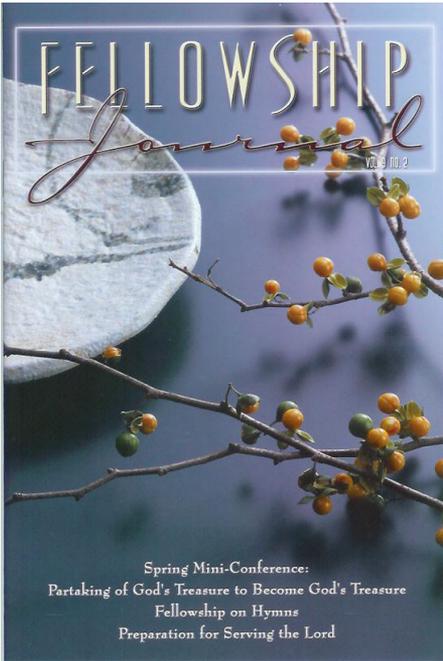


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Correspondence: FJ@MinistryMessages.org

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A Time Like When Else?

Since the apostolic era, when has God had such a situation as today, where saints have taken the stand to meet as churches irregardless of what ministries might be present to support them? The churches in this country stood upheld by the service and ministry of the honored servant whom the Lord had manifestly used on their behalf. After that dear servant went to be with the Lord, however, those “churches” finally had to decide whether they would choose to stand as churches or as something else. Until some matter came as a test, it would be impossible to say whether one gathering that had traditionally referred to itself as the Lord’s testimony of oneness really cared about that stand or whether something else took precedence.

When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to that door he was simply declaring he did not believe that the Roman Catholic Church had the right to sell salvation; a believer could not buy forgiveness. According to the Bible only faith in Christ, he said, was necessary for one’s salvation. This simple act triggered the Reformation because it manifested a truth that others realized needed to be re-established. When Rosa Parks refused to get up for the white man and move to the back of the bus, she also did something that clarified what was already in many and thus her decision to remain as she was, triggered the Civil Rights movement in this country.

When confronted with the One Publication issue, each “church” had to decide whether it would stand as a church or not, or whether it would succumb to institutionalization. After this test was applied, a few who had been meeting for the sake of the Lord’s testimony decided they would indeed stand for the testimony of the oneness of believers in their cities rather than for some world-wide work. (We do not find it ironic that one who encouraged the churches to thus stand after he himself had helped raise them up was one of the Lord’s workers. The work, as Watchman Nee said, was for the churches, not the churches for the work.) The testimony of many of those who chose to thus stand was that they simply chose not to change the stand they already held, while others were awakened to the matter due to the challenge laid down before them.

Perhaps this was the case among the churches Watchman Nee served, for he himself was put out of fellowship by one of them, and he honored that! But what shall we say today? How many other times have there been in the history of the world, when churches stand clearly and consciously against the background of every other possibility, simply declaring themselves to be churches? - *John Berglund*

Spring Mini-Conference

MESSAGE ONE:

OUR EXERCISE WITHIN THE PROCESS BY WHICH GOD OBTAINS US AS HIS TREASURE THROUGH THE STRUGGLE OF THE APOSTLE TO BRING US TO CHRIST AS THE UNIQUE TREASURE OF GOD

THE TREASURE OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

When the wise men found Jesus, they opened their treasure (or treasure box) and brought forth gold, myrrh, and frankincense (Matt. 2:11). These three items signified the treasure God had in Christ as the One who had God's nature (gold), His death (myrrh) and His resurrection (frankincense).

If you read the New Testament carefully, you can discover that this treasure in these three aspects is found in three places. With regard to gold, this treasure is to be most readily found in Colossians 2. The matter of myrrh, however, is mainly found in Matthew 13. And the frankincense, which represents resurrection, is cited in Second Corinthians 4. These three meetings shall primarily cover these three aspects concerning the matter of this treasure.

ARE WE STUMBLING BY THE PROCESS,
OR ARE OUR EYES FIXED ON THE GOAL?

I have been troubled and have been troubling the Lord regarding things that have taken place among us these past years. I see brothers struggle who have spent years faithfully following the Lord. I have asked Him, "Is this Your heart, to cover Your eyes to this? Do You not remember the brothers and sisters and their love for You? And do You not remember how things were when we were so much in the enjoyment, experiencing such a hope? Why have You gradually taken so much of this away from us? It seems You have allowed us to become persons who appear to have so little now." (Because I see how the Lord is working across the globe, I do not grieve for the Lord's work in general, but I am concerned for the

churches in the United States that we have served through all these years.) The Lord asked me in return, however, “Is it for My sake you are concerned, or is it for something else you are concerned? Am I really for the good church life you remember? The instances that you treasure in your memory may have indeed been good, but were they the very thing I am after... or were they only part of the process to gain what I am after?”

The Lord loves and treasures the saints, but the situations we have passed through together--were those times we remember what the Lord Himself has long sought? No matter how wonderful or healthy the process may be, the process and the goal are two things. The Lord would ask all of us, “You have experienced so much, but do you know what it is that I seek? Have you kept My goal in view? Do you care about what I treasure, what satisfies ME? My satisfaction will flow to you as well, but until I arrive at My goal, things you enjoy will come and go, for they are but a part of the process by which I reach My ultimate satisfaction.”

Unless we uniquely treasure what God treasures, we cannot be as restful as God is during the process. Furthermore, if we are not in what God is after, God will not be happy, no matter how happy we may feel. Surely our happiness will be something that comes and goes if it is dependent upon our feelings at some stage of the process, rather than on the fact that God is achieving His goal.

DO WE CARE ABOUT WHAT GOD CARES ABOUT?

Once while visiting a group of believers, one among them told me that theirs would be the only meeting place anywhere set upon a river. My thought was, “You are very happy with this, but does God really care?” I found out later that it didn’t work out, so they built a nice parking lot instead. To my feeling, that was a beautiful parking lot, but God again would ask, “Though you really appreciate it, does such a parking lot have anything to do with what I want?” Our problem is that the Lord is not so interested in the things we want, and we are not so interested in what the Lord wants. Therefore how can we be truly happy? Yet usually we seek the things we think will make us happy, and the Lord often allows us to obtain them. Thus we seem content, but the Lord asks, “You are happy, but how about Me?” We must admit this has often been our case.

This is not so different from many marriages. The wife works to prepare a dinner she knows the husband likes and afterwards he says,

“Thank you, honey!” and goes to watch television, his hunger having been satisfied. The wife would certainly feel, “You are happy, but how about me?” Even in a human marriage both parties have to consider whether the other party is happy, not just whether THEY themselves are happy. If the husband says to the wife, “I am the only one who matters,” then something is wrong! How about our relationship with the Lord? The Lord desires to make us happy. He grants us answers to prayer: strength, peace, blessing and so on. He will do everything for our profit, but what He does for our profit may not really have to do with what is in His own heart. It is part of the process He has allowed, but it is not the treasure the Lord is seeking.

OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHURCH LIFE ONLY HAVE MEANING
WHEN CHRIST IS PRESENT AS THE TREASURE

When a young lady receives a diamond upon her engagement to be married, she mounts her treasure on a golden ring. The setting the diamond is mounted on, however, is not the treasure. If the diamond were to disappear, the ring it was set upon wouldn't have much purpose any longer. It is the same with the church life, yet it seems we may forget that it is the “diamond” (Christ) that gives the church life its value. At such times we seem to spend a lot of time considering how to hold onto the ring, for we have lost sight of why the “ring” exists!

In our Christian life, we should enjoy the blessings we are granted. We should enjoy Christ's leading, His protection, His gracious dealings, blessings, and so on. As we enjoy all these things, however, we should not forget about Christ Himself!

Many times it seems we as Christians enjoy the things of Christ and yet forget about Christ Himself. We are grateful Jesus loved us enough to die for us and that He has saved us and will continue to save us. What blessings He has bestowed upon us! However, is He Himself precious to us? If a person can claim Jesus is the precious One in his or her life, how wonderful that is! (And the sooner a person can say it, the better!) When Christ Himself is the One appreciated among us, then the “ring” has its value, for the “diamond” is in its rightful place.

The Lord has satisfied us, healed us, led us, and protected us all our lives. Why? It was ultimately for us to be with Him. But the problem is that we may cling to all that the Lord has granted to us, and forget the Lord Himself!

PAUL'S STRUGGLE: TO BRING US TO GOD'S TREASURE
IN WHOM ARE HIDDEN ALL TREASURES

The apostle Paul struggled on behalf of the saints for this very reason. He told the Colossian saints, "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and *for* those in Laodicea, even all who have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden." (2:1-3). Among the churches there must always be some who are engaged in such combat so the churches might continue to go on with Christ.

FOR THIS, WE NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED AND COMFORTED

Paul first struggled that the saints' hearts might be encouraged or comforted. That was the first thing Paul fought for. The first thing we should experience as Christians, according to Paul, is comfort! We see problems around us, but if we would touch Christ we will find comfort in the midst of whatever troubles or challenges there may be.

FOR THIS, WE NEED TO BE KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE

Furthermore, Paul labored to produce something more. He labored that the saints would be knit together in love. The element that comforts us as individuals should also become the element that enables the saints to be knit together. As we see one another we are comforted and we are knit together. The love in which we are joined is the top joining element! When we are knit together in love, we become much more than "buddies". In this love many things such as offenses simply disappear. When love is present, what is past can no longer hinder our pursuing Christ in oneness. Some of us have been together for nearly forty years. Wouldn't it seem that eventually we would offend each other to the point we could no longer meet together? Shouldn't it be that we would finally have enough of each other? The Lord has arranged for so many diametrically opposed personalities to be in the church life. Young people don't typically enjoy being with older people, for instance. Yet here we all are, being knit together in love!

Love knits us together. In the comforting of the Lord we experience the ability to love one another. We are confident this love will not dissipate. It will endure.

Besides being comforted and knit together, we are arriving at the full riches of understanding, of the knowledge of the mystery of God, which is Christ. So the first matter, the matter of being encouraged, is for us as individuals; the second, the matter of being knit together, is for us to be together. This in itself, however, is not yet the goal! We are not here just to be together. Our hearts being knit together is ultimately that we might come to the full knowledge of the mystery of God—Christ!

BROUGHT TO THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD: CHRIST

We are to see the most crucial matter in the universe, and that is Christ! People all around us may be captivated by nonsense, but we are to be brought into the very mystery of the universe. Because it is a mystery, there are no words sufficient to describe it. For the cause of us apprehending this mystery, God will do so many things for us to secure our comfort and so that we might be knit together with others in love. Once we have experienced these things, however, we must go on to the final goal of knowing Christ as the mystery of God.

Many Christians are satisfied at being comforted. Some go on to be knit together with other believers in love, but stop there. The Lord, however, needs us to go on to reach the full understanding, the full knowledge of Christ as the mystery of God. There is something hidden in God that is of the highest value in the universe. That treasure hidden in God Himself is Christ. In Christ alone are hidden all the riches of wisdom and knowledge. Christ is the treasure, and in Him are hidden all the riches of wisdom and understanding.

Everyone who enters into the church life discovers how rich and sweet it is to be knit together with others in love. Every such person also knows how wonderful the Lord's encouragement and comfort are. Yet how many ask the Lord, "Why are You doing all this for us?" There is something hidden in God, something not readily grasped, yet it is a treasure that the Lord wants to reveal to us and bring us into. To arrive at this treasure, God has blessed us and encouraged us and comforted us. For this cause He has also given to us the wonderful, sweet church life. Why has God given us such a life inwardly and such a loving situation outwardly? It is for His Son, and it is through His Son.

IN CHRIST AS GOD'S TREASURE ARE HIDDEN
ALL TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Apart from Christ, God would not do anything. All the riches of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ. Apart from Christ there would be no creation and no economy or means for God to do anything. It is in Him that we have been created, have received life, and enjoy all the rich comfort and are in the Body life, for in Him are all riches of wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom is for envisioning the plan and economy, while knowledge is practical know-how required to carry it all out. How good is Christ Jesus! He is our comfort and He is the one who knits us together. Eventually, He thus brings us to Himself. How good He is! He is God's mystery, and with Him is all the wisdom and all the knowledge to carry everything out. Thus He is the means by which God's economy is carried out. He is the One we enjoy and He is the One who makes the church life possible. Because of Christ, God's wisdom and knowledge have become real to us. How wonderful! We may like many things, but God only likes Christ. Apart from Him God has no purpose or economy. Therefore as we love Christ and enjoy Christ, we are brought into God's economy and its day-to-day practical outworking.

We will confront many seemingly discouraging things. Yet as we have Christ, we are comforted and we are being knit together with the saints in the church life. When we have Christ, we are able to see God's economy and the carrying out of God's economy. Such people are able to say, "Hallelujah! This is my life!"

- *Titus Chu, Cleveland, April 3, 2010*

Spring Mini-Conference

**MESSAGE TWO:
BECOMING GOD'S TREASURE:
KNIT TOGETHER UNTO CHRIST AS GOD'S MYSTERY,
THE TREASURE HIDDEN IN THE FIELD
AND
THE PEARL OF GREAT WORTH**

Matthew 2:11 describes how the wise men opened their treasures or treasure box, from which they took gold, frankincense and myrrh. (This is why people often think there were three wise men, even though the number of wise men is never mentioned.) That treasure box contained gold, which denotes God Himself; frankincense, which refers to Christ's resurrection; and myrrh, which points to Christ's death. From their treasure proceeded these three treasures.

**PAUL'S STRUGGLE:
THAT THE SAINTS WOULD BE COMFORTED, KNIT TOGETHER,
AND BROUGHT TO CHRIST, GOD'S TREASURE IN WHOM ARE ALL TREASURES**

BEING KNIT TOGETHER IMPLIES LOSING SOMETHING OF
ONE'S INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

In Colossians 2:2 Paul told the believers that His struggle was for them to be comforted and knit together in love. To be knit together implies to lose one's individual identity. Any piece of yarn that is knit with other pieces of yarn loses its identity as it becomes part of what is being knit. Being knit together also means that each one of us is incomplete in ourselves. Anything I may be strong in or good at becomes of value only as it becomes part of the overall picture. Each piece of yarn possesses something admirable and necessary, but the admirable quality each "part" possesses becomes part of the overall presentation rather than something that stands alone. Paul tells us that Christ is the mystery of God, but he states we first must enjoy Christ as the comforting element in our Christian life. Then, as we are being encouraged in our Christian life, we need to be knit together with other Christians. (In this, we need servants of the Lord such as Paul to struggle on our behalf, as illustrated here in Colossians. Paul fought for those believers as well as for all who had

never seen him, which includes us. His struggle was that our hearts might be comforted and that we might be knit together. Eventually, by this comforting and knitting together we are brought to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding. We have such assurance in the church life! As we are knit together unto all the riches of full assurance of understanding, we are brought to Christ as the mystery of God.

CHRIST AS GOD'S "TREASURE BOX" CONTAINS ALL THE RICHES OF WISDOM
FOR PLANNING GOD'S ECONOMY
AND KNOWLEDGE FOR CARRYING IT OUT

When we are thus finally brought to the full knowledge of Christ as God's mystery, He becomes something very marvelous to us. Our realization focuses on how everything God has done and does is by Christ, and how God does nothing apart from Christ. When we experience such a Christ we possess the "treasure box" from which all the riches or treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God are found. All of God's operation, economy and purpose is in Christ. Both the goal and the means are Christ. Wisdom has to do with God's goal, and knowledge has to do with the means necessary to arrive at the goal.

The Lord is so wise in His economy and prudent in how He carries it out. All the riches of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him for the conceiving and carrying out of God's economy. Whatever we need is found in the "treasure box" of Christ, and whatever God desires and requires is also found in Christ. The Lord has the best directions, the best nutrition, the best way for us in God's will. He is the all-inclusive One! When we have Him, we have everything. If we need "medicine," He is our "medicine." When we need strength, He is our strength. In Him as the treasure box we have whatever it is we need.

Too many come to Christ for something and then forget about Him after they get what they came for. We must realize that it is Christ Himself who we must treasure more than whatever He is able to do for us.

THE MAN HIDING THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD

FINDING AND HIDING

In Matthew 13:44-46 we see how the Lord as wisdom and knowledge is applied. In these verses we see a man who finds a treasure and then hides it again, rejoicing. From the time man fell, God had His treasure. No

one knew God had such a treasure at the time. Satan no doubt was having a victory party, thinking he had triumphed. Yet God had a marvelous treasure hidden away. He hadn't "paid the price" to "buy" yet. It seemed Satan and his minions had the "field". God, however, could laugh, for He had a treasure hidden in that field.

Even so, it is hard for us to rejoice, because we still experience suffering in this age. Sometimes it seems Satan has the upper hand, but don't forget about God's treasure! In the Bible we see that all those God has used have experienced difficulties. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the children of Israel... they all experienced suffering. Sometimes it does look like Satan might be winning, but according to Matthew 13 God has already gained His treasure. If you were to ask God, "Be fair! Think of our experience these past years. There is plenty of reason to be sad. Aren't You bothered?" God would say, "I found My treasure already! The time the price is paid is up to Me. But when you see My treasure, you will realize all the price paid was worth it."

KEEPING THE TREASURE HIDDEN

If all the world were filled with gold, gold would be of little value. Not only would people not be impressed with it, they would be tired of it! How much better to walk on anything other than gold! But since we have so much dirt and copper and many other things, we appreciate gold. The Lord found a treasure hidden in the field (the earth). We may say, "Get it then!" But the Lord would say, "No. I would like to keep it hidden for a few thousand years and let many muddy things happen. Then when I bring it out, it will be appreciated for the treasure it is!" This is why the Lord left His treasure buried in the field so long.

In this parable we can see how precious this "treasure" is to God. Even as Satan was boasting in gaining mankind, the Lord was inwardly so happy about the treasure He had "found". Then, after fallen human beings had tried everything they could, He brought His treasure out. (Human society and civilization developed along the three lines of livelihood, defense, and entertainment, as depicted in Lamech's three sons seen in Genesis 4:19-22. Among all the nations, so much has developed along these three lines. So much has been invented! Look at the computers people have now. Satan moved into homes through televisions and personal computers, and now people can carry Satan around everywhere with them with their iPods and so on. It seems Satan can proclaim,

“I got it!” The Lord only responds, “That makes my treasure more ‘treasurable’.”)

The world Abraham knew was relatively undeveloped. Thus in his day there was not as much to treasure. Today, with all the developments of technology, so much damage can enter into a person’s life. With today’s “wonders” much more has to be put forth to be appreciated, and hence it proves the value of what is appreciated much more. Today, even after all of mankind’s advancements under Satan’s excellent exertions, everyone still must proclaim that when compared to God’s treasure, there still is no comparison.

SELLING ALL AND PURCHASING

The Lord’s selling all is present tense, as is the purchasing. The Lord’s finding and hiding of the treasure, however, are past tense. God needed 4,000 years to prove what really is a treasure. How does a musician know he or she has a good instrument? It is because there are so many bad ones out there to compare it to. If it were not so, how could anyone say they had a “good” one? Recently someone accidentally left a valuable instrument somewhere and it was picked up by someone who certainly did not realize its value. What is sad about this is not only that the musician can no longer play that instrument, but also that whoever found it most likely has no appreciation of its worth. It may just be sitting in a garage somewhere!

THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD OF THE WORLD IS THE CHURCH

All that has happened throughout history while the treasure was “buried” serves as a backdrop by which the treasure might be more fully marveled at. Finally, when the fullness of the times came the Lord said, “Now is the time. I will sell all that I have and I will buy this field.” This treasure is the church.

Even at the time mankind fell, God saw the church hidden in the field. Satan was trapped in the field for 4,000 years not realizing one day Christ would come to reap that field! He hid it, and eventually sold all He had to buy it. We can see from this that God has the ability to endure long periods of time to gain what He desires. Eventually, however, He forsook the heavens and came down to become a man. He even forsook a noble human life to become a humble carpenter. He was eventually judged by

the man He made, even by those who had shouted “Hosanna!” to Him when He first came. He sold everything, divested Himself of whatever belonged to His being God outwardly and became the “Son of Man”. He eventually spent His blood on the cross. He went to Hades. He departed from all the honor and glory, and forsook everything to pay the price to gain that treasure, which is the church.

Do you think that we deserve it? Would you call us a treasure? Do you feel that you are worthy of Christ dying for you? Why would Jesus pour out His blood for us? We are less than nothing; in fact, it seems we are nothing but problem-producers. By no means are we worth it, yet for some reason the more God looks at us, the more He sees us as His treasure in His wisdom, and through His work. He never wanted us to be deserving or qualified in ourselves. This is why there is a second parable.

THE MERCHANT SEEKING PRECIOUS PEARLS

In the first parable in these verses we are the treasure in the field. In the next, the kingdom of the heavens is likened to a merchant, meaning there is an exchange. It is not a matter of donation or gift; there is a deal involved. The Lord is the merchant seeking valuable pearls. How can the Lord bear the reality of the church? How can we bear the reality of the church? The treasure is composed with many, many pearls.

THE LORD IS SEEKING INDIVIDUALS WHO WOULD BECOME PRECIOUS PEARLS FOR THE SAKE OF HIS TREASURE, THE CHURCH

A genuine pearl is created by a small piece of irritating sand which is covered over year after year by what the oyster secretes around it. The Lord is seeking many such pearls, but it seems such pearls are very hard to come by! Therefore the one who seeks the pearls rejoices when he finds even one.

Even here this particular merchant, the Lord Jesus, is seeking precious pearls. The more pearls He can find, the stronger the church life becomes. The pearls are the overcomers, the pillars in the church, those who are fighting for the Lord’s interest. They have begun to bear something before the Lord for the church life. The Lord is seeking such “fine pearls”.

PEARLS VARY IN VALUE
ACCORDING TO THE PROCESS THEY HAVE UNDERGONE

In the Lord's sight, everyone is a pearl. Among all the pearls, some have gone through more and thus have become relatively more precious. We should all seek to hide in the wounded Christ. This is how He can find you precious. The Lord paid the price for us by dying on the cross, and we have to counter by responding appropriately. Too many say, "Thank You, Lord, for dying for me. Now I am saved and will go to heaven," and then they go away. Such persons do not acknowledge the price the Lord paid and "counter it" with their consecration. The Lord is seeking those who place a proper evaluation on what the Lord has done by saving them and placing them in the church life. Anyone who soberly weighs what the Lord has paid counter by hiding in the Lord's wounded side. They give up their freedom and allow that "oyster" to become their boss. They trust themselves to the Lord as their owner, and they give themselves to continually allow the Lord to "secrete" Himself over them.

ALL THE CREDIT AND GLORY GOES TO CHRIST, WHO HAS DONE ALL

In the parable of the Lord's finding the pearl of great price all the verbs are in the past tense. He sold all and bought it. This is quite romantic. We may feel we are fighting so hard and undergoing so much, but to the Lord it is all a "done deal". I have loved the Lord from 1954 until now, fifty-six years. I may say, "Thank You, Lord, I have been following you for these years," yet the Lord would say, "No, I found you and have worked on you since long before you were born. When I paid the price on the cross, everything contained in My knowledge for your following Me was already accomplished."

We would think the first part would be in the past tense, and the second part should be present tense, for He died for us in the past and He is working upon us in the present. We feel we are pursuing Him now, but to the Lord it was something known and accomplished long ago. Unless He had paid that price, we would have no experience today. After the Lord died for the church and "bought the land," every part of His work is according to what He has already accomplished. By means of what He has accomplished He does all these marvelous things that we are experiencing today.

- Titus Chu, Cleveland, April 3, 2010

Spring Mini-Conference

MESSAGE THREE: THE HIDDEN TREASURE AND ITS PEARLS AND KNOWING THE SHINING IN THE FACE OF CHRIST

The gold, frankincense and myrrh offered out of their treasure by the wise men typify Christ Himself as God, as the economy of God and as God's practicality in God's economy. In Colossians 2:2-3 we are told that in Christ as the "treasure box" are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (denoting God's plan, economy and work) and knowledge (denoting God's operations). In Matthew 13:44-46 He is God's myrrh. Eventually, He is the frankincense, as seen in 2 Corinthians 4:6.

INDIVIDUALS AND SITUATIONS MAY CHANGE, BUT THE WONDERFUL CHRIST REMAINS IN CONTROL

In Colossians 2:2-3 Paul struggles to guide us from looking at what is taking place during the operation to focus on the Operating One.

The USA is a strong country, yet it hasn't always had the best leaders. Regardless how good its leaders are or have been, however, we as Americans can always trust our Constitution. In the same way, although situations may discourage us as things are progressing in God's economy, we can trust Christ as the "Constitution" in the universe. So as long as we can say we follow Christ, we love Christ and are one with Christ, there is no problem. We may not be able to always appreciate or understand God's doing, but we should always be able to trust in God Himself. There are times when you may feel things are terrible, but even times such as those may turn out to appear wonderful afterwards. However, are we able to separate God Himself from God's doing? We must recognize that there is a Person behind all the things that are taking place in this universe, and this Person is working out His plan.

The mystery of God is Christ. God loves, exalts, displays, testifies, and cares about Christ. To God, Christ is the unique treasure, and in application there are many aspects to Christ as this treasure. In Him, for instance, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In the riches of wisdom hidden in Christ, God established His economy, what He desires. In the riches of knowledge hidden in Christ, He carries it out.

I have been saved for 57 years, but for the first year and a half after my salvation I only cared for my own fun. I was saved in January 1953, but not until the end of September of 1954 did I really begin to mean business. It was then that I gave my life to the Lord, and I have never regretted it. I can testify that He has never made one mistake with respect to my life. In the process of going through different things I may have wondered at what was happening, but due to the riches of knowledge in Christ, everything always turned out to be exactly what I needed. This knowledge, however, is not for us to have experiences; this knowledge is for us to realize God's economy. In His economy God gains the church as His treasure with all the precious pearls as depicted in Matthew 13. What is represented by these pearls of great value? The treasure hidden in the field is the church, whereas the pearls are the over-coming believers.

THE REASON THE LORD KEPT THE CHURCH HIDDEN SO LONG

GOD USED THE SITUATION TO MANIFEST THE CHURCH AS HIS MASTERPIECE

In the satanic world the church lay hidden for thousands of years; the Lord would not display it until the treasure could be fully appreciated. He has allowed every kind of circumstance to be applied and has hidden His treasure in a manner that would allow it to be manifested in full. Now, after such a complete time of testing, everyone can appreciate the treasure according to its true worth.

USING THE SITUATION TO EXPOSE AND DESTROY SATAN

Thus whatever we read of in the 39 books of the Old Testament was written just to show us that the church is truly the unique treasure of God. Among all the persons in the Old Testament, nothing succeeds in exhibiting who God truly is! Everything is a failure. This is why He hid the treasure, and eventually one day for joy sells everything He has and buys it. When Christ paid the price for the church through His death and received it in His resurrection, He destroyed the head of the serpent, Satan. In resurrection Christ overcame the satanic world. That is why we can be here today testifying that we are the treasure of God! Christ as the treasure (or treasure box) has become everything to us—sustaining us, leading us, encouraging us, and even becoming the very progress of our Christian life. The more He as the treasure dispenses Himself into us, the more we become God's treasure as those organically one with Him.

FOR THE CHURCH TO BECOME GOD'S TREASURE,
WE MUST BECOME PEARLS OF GREAT WORTH

After the parable of the man finding the hidden treasure, however, the Lord reveals something more. He says, "The kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls." His reference to the kingdom stresses that this is a matter regarding the church, and for the sake of the church the Lord seeks beautiful pearls. How sweet this is!

Do we consider ourselves beautiful? We should. We are all beautiful to some degree as pearls. For the sake of His treasure the church, He wants us to become pearls of great worth.

THE ORGANIC PROCESS PRODUCING THE PEARL'S PRECIOUSNESS

The kind of beauty the Lord seeks is not the kind some people attempt when they apply external make-up. After one washing, all such beauty can be gone! The Lord desires that our beauty would be organic. The Lord wants us to be beautiful pearls, meaning that we would display the strength and beauty of Christ. He desires that we as pearls would be beautiful with Christ!

Pearls that are perfectly round are not considered so precious, because such pearls have a large false sphere at their core and only have a thin layer of pearl. The amount of time it takes to produce such a pearl is relatively brief, even though the result appears in some ways better than the genuine article! Some young people appear very spiritual, for they know how to behave spiritually. They can use their voice a certain way with a certain vocabulary and even walk a certain way. The genuine pearls, however, are not perfect. Instead, they will always bear evidence of some defect. If we were so perfect, then based on what would the Lord need to pay a price for us and work with us? In the end, all our perfection will be based on Christ, not ourselves! Even after all these years I realize I have not finished my course yet. My deep realization is that there is not one thing that I have done apart from Christ that is of value. All that is worthy, including my love for the Lord and my seeking after Him, has been due to Him! As the "oyster" secretes the element of the pearl around us, the result is not something that hides the fact we were not perfect to begin with! Therefore the "irregular" shape is the mark of a genuine pearl. Yet, when all the pearls with all their irregularities are placed together, they form the eternal perfection of the New Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!

If we were all perfectly round like ping-pong balls, what would be the value of that? Such is the “cultured” pearl, not the organically-produced pearl. The truly precious pearl is not produced by something great that starts it off, such as some marvelous talent or ability. Instead, the truly precious pearls are produced as they acknowledge their need for Christ and participate in who Christ is, in spite of (and because of) their defects! We may desire perfection, but whatever we can do for the Lord out of own ability actually detracts from our value in the Lord’s eyes. What does He value? He values the fact that we follow Him, even though we seem so defective. In fact, our “irregular” appearance is what proves the work is organic and something of life! It is thus not something of religion, but of life.

Why are people so critical when they see that someone is not as perfect as they thought they should be? In the Lord’s eyes, we become beautiful even as we lose our outward beauty. This kind of beauty the Lord is seeking is a matter of constitution; it is not something outward. We must experience layer upon layer of the secretion of the divine life. Everyone who is hopeless is thus most hopeful, for it is the hopeless ones who hide themselves in Christ!

If we were all so perfect and walked and spoke so properly so that no one could find any flaw with us, wouldn’t we be a hopeless bunch? We would be something factory-produced like ping-pong balls rather than the kind of precious pearls the Lord is seeking. He will pay the price for every single such pearl. The Lord has already paid the price. When the Lord found one pearl of great value (and we each can be such a pearl to the Lord) He went and sold everything for that pearl, which indicates He has paid the price already. With regard to the church, it is present tense, (He goes and sells); but when it comes to each individual pearl, the Lord has paid the price already (He went and sold). He has accomplished salvation for us; He sold everything He had and bought each one of us.

Now that He has purchased us, He hopes we might respond to Him. The treasure He obtained once for all; the pearls He obtains one by one. What an honor! We are totally disqualified and misshapen. As those who seem so unworthy, we surely must love the Lord; and as we tell Him we love Him, He adds Himself to us, making us precious. In this way we become His satisfaction, His treasure.

Our Christian life must be filled with this divine dispensing. There will always be the part that is sand, but the shape that is produced eventually is something out of the Lord’s organic work. Now, how much we should appre-

ciate the saints and the church, knowing that our imperfections play such a part in our perfecting. On the one hand, everyone is perfect, yet on the other hand we are totally imperfect. In many ways we are “oddly shaped”. Some things may even be very dark. But because of our imperfections, weaknesses, and failure, we hide ourselves in the Lord and continue looking to Him for His supply. It is through this very process that we become the beautiful pearls He seeks.

**WE HAVE THIS TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS:
ILLUMINATING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD
FOR THE SHINING OF THE FACE OF CHRIST**

In Second Corinthians we read, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). When the Lord shines in our hearts, the light comes with the knowledge of the glory of God. Yet God doesn’t simply want us to have the knowledge of His glory in some general sense. All the things we know and enjoy must be focused on the face of Jesus Christ! The light that has shone out of darkness has shined in our hearts for the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Light without knowledge has no value, and any knowledge that doesn’t illuminate the face of Christ is vanity; it only puffs up (1 Cor 8:1).

We may experience something and think it is a miracle from the Lord, but if it has not resulted in the illumination of the glory of God in the face of Christ, then that so-called miracle had no value. There is no way to explain with human words what is in God, so it is a mystery. The unveiling of God’s mystery is far greater than all the “miracles” the Lord does for us. He may allow us certain wonderful things that boost our own status in our own eyes and in the eyes of others. The Lord gives us light, and even the knowledge of the glory of God... but if the result isn’t the face of Jesus, then all God has done has not achieved its goal.

When the face of Jesus shines within us that is the treasure, and it is a treasure that is in earthen vessels that the excellency might be of God and not of us (2 Cor. 4:7). We are odd and earthen vessels, but we must remember that within us is the living Christ! The face of Christ is the living treasure in the earthen vessels. When the face of Christ is absent, the treasure seems to become just something we talk about. During these past 20 hours, however, has not Christ become more alive in our experience?

WHEN WE HAVE THE FACE OF CHRIST,
NO DISTRESS SHALL BE ABLE TO UTTERLY SHUT UP OUR WAY

Many seem to have experienced something recently that has been discouraging. When we gather together and greet one another and experience something together, some light comes in, and some knowledge comes in, and we even touch something of glory. But if we are not led to Christ Himself, everything eventually just becomes talk. With Christ, however, the treasure really begins to operate!

Paul wrote, “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body” (vv. 8-10). Not only are we troubled from without, but we are troubled within. So, we may think, “I shall look up to the heavens.” But even then, Paul says we experience persecution. Therefore we may think “I shall simply lie on the floor then,” but we find trouble there as well. It seems the Lord allows us to be troubled from six angles. But even in such times when it seems there is no way, the Lord is still so much with us! We may even lay on the floor and think it is all over. Many times I have laid on my bed feeling like it is all over. You cannot get up, but, even though you are cast down... you find you are still here! You are not destroyed. You are still serving the Lord!

There was a time when nothing was right, yet I am still here! What a treasure! When you have the face of Christ, you realize nothing can really bother us. Christ is not only the unique treasure box of God, but He is also the treasure in us. When we really see His face, there is not one thing that can bother us.

WHEN WE HAVE THE FACE OF CHRIST, DEATH IN US PRODUCES LIFE

Paul said that what marked him was the death of Christ. There can be so much difficulty, yet when we have the face of Jesus as we bear the death of Christ, others see the life of Christ. As we struggle thus through our circumstances, others see Christ!

We are even delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, yet life comes out. This may be difficult for those who are too young to understand, but as we experience the treasure within us, there is no problem to go through any difficulty. In fact, difficulties will cause life to come forth. We should be willing to experience death in the Lord so that the life of Christ might be manifested through us.

- Titus Chu, Cleveland, April 4, 2010

On Hymns

TREASURE HYMNS,
KNOWING THEY PROVIDE SPIRITUAL MILK FOR YOUR GROWTH

Hymns contain the cream from the revelations received and lessons experienced by many spiritual saints who have preceded us.

A certain hymn might contain the cream of a hymn-writer's life-long experience, or it may represent the cream of a certain stage of his or her life, or it may even be the summation of his or her Christian experience. Enjoying a hymn can be just like reading a biography. When you read a hymn by a person such as A. B. Simpson, Madame Guyon or Watchman Nee, you get some sense of what that person has been through. In other cases when you sing a hymn of a particular writer, you are able to apprehend the characteristic riches of that person's ministry.

Don't say a certain hymn is too deep to get into. That is a foolish thought, for such hymns often represent the cream of a saints' life-long ministry. A hymn may indeed contain something very high, but it is presented in a compact and poetic manner so that it may be as milk for you to take in.

A great many spiritual songs have been written throughout the ages, but only those that have the most value stand the test of time. Therefore be careful about being caught with contemporary songs, for time is the best servant of the Lord. Many things that are fashionable or contemporary possess little value, comparatively speaking. The problem is, however, that young people like what is fashionable and contemporary. The majority of contemporary songs will not stand the test of time, however. Those that endure, endure because they are the real thing.

The song you like, therefore, may not be the one that is right for you, for the hymns that help you grow are the hymns that take time. Of course, there are also songs that are not appreciated at the time they are written, and come to be more appreciated with the passage of time.

Hymns have various functions. Most hymns contain inspirations and beautiful melodies, but are colored by emotion. Many such hymns are written purposely to stir the singers up or to elevate the mood. When such a hymn latches onto someone, it has the potential of jeopardizing the growth of that person. If someone abides in a particular hymn for a number of years, those years will be characterized by little growth. Why? Because that person has been caught by the mood that particular hymn produces. Such a hymn doesn't give growth but only makes one happy or leaves one feeling excited. You must escape such songs if you desire to grow. (Such hymns can and should, however, be used for the sake of the young people.)

In our new hymnal we have a category entitled "Joyful Songs for Beginners". By categorizing these songs in this way we let people know these are songs that should only be helpful to us for a couple of years after salvation. Even older saints can enjoy such basic songs, but we all should realize they are not the songs we ultimately should abide in. From time to time, for instance, we all may enjoy a good gospel song for its freshness and buoyancy. Still, we should not live on such songs; we all must continue on and advance to something higher. Enjoy the basic songs, but do not stop with them!

Try to sing hymns with new believers that foster in them a love for the Lord. Some hymns are sweet and tender and bring the seeker into the living presence of the Lord. Such songs may be sung on nearly any occasion. If you know how to sing such songs together, you know that you and those with you are enjoying something spiritual.

Many hymns are able to encourage and sustain the Lord's lovers on their spiritual journey, but they do not elevate their spiritual experience. After singing such hymns you may feel uplifted, but nothing further is produced. These are among the better hymns of Christianity. They cause people to enjoy the Lord's presence and bring comfort, but do not bring people to another level in their pursuit of Christ. We should not just use hymns for our enjoyment; we should use them for our advancement.

Certain hymns match or characterize certain stages or aspects of Christian experience. If you are in a joyful time in your life, there is a hymn that matches such a stage. If you are enduring some kind of spiritual hardship, there is a hymn that corresponds to that. The hymns should not be so general in your experience; there should be some hymns that match where you are and that are special to you. Every hymn may have its value, but

there should be some you particularly find helpful according to what you are presently experiencing. Young couples like joyful hymns before they are married because they are happy. If you expect them to sing a sorrowful song, it simply will not work! Yet as they experience troubles in their relationship, there are hymns that relate to that as well!

As you pass through various matters in the Christian life, learn to appreciate the hymns that speak to those matters. If you have lost income, sing a hymn that emphasizes how God is able to supply us in every situation, and even tells us not to be afraid to let go of what little we have. No matter what situation we are in, there is a hymn that relates. Whatever situation we have been through, someone else has been there before us, learned something from it, and has written a hymn that can help others going through that same thing.

Some saints have gotten away from the hymns in favor of contemporary songs, but we should not overly react to this. We have to learn how to appreciate whatever others are enjoying of the Lord. If we want to learn the truth, however, we should get into the hymns, for they have the ability to equip us for every circumstance of the Christian life and bring us to Christ.

EIGHT KINDS OF EXPERIENCES HYMNS CAN HELP BRING US TO

Hymns can help us search out the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:10). This is somewhat beyond many of our young people now, so they do not seek to serve the Lord. Most instead seem rather happy with where they are. (Americans as a group are typically happy with where they are. Still, Americans are an advancing people. The riches in any field of endeavor are matched with one's culture, and Americans come out on top in every field.)

Christians should never live in a narrow, reactive manner. To live in a way that always reacts to what others are doing indicates something is wrong. Either you should see what the Lord is doing and live for that, in which case you cannot go back; or you should join in with whatever others are doing to enjoy Christ. Neither of these options leaves room for criticism. We should be firm for what the Lord has committed to us, yet we must also be broad. If our attitude is such, why should we get caught up in reacting to what others are doing?

We should not be happiness oriented, but Christ oriented. It is true that young people need happiness, therefore we should do things that help them to be joyful. If we do not do such things with them, what is it we expect from them? They do not understand life yet. Those who serve young people, however, must be clear that singing songs that make the young people happy is only part of a process and is for that certain stage.

Some hymns are able to help you receive visions and revelations concerning Christ and His church. Both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee have many hymns in this category.

Many hymns will also help you discover the secrets to denying the self.

There are other hymns that have to do with keeping ourselves under the leading and breaking of God's governmental hand. Many of us are still very perfect and whole. You have no idea how the Lord might form you into something totally different, yet with the same element.

Many hymns have to do with laying hold of God's promises.

Some hymns help us to partake of God's full salvation.

Some hymns even unveil the full union and communion unto incorporation with Christ.

Some hymns constrain us to press on after Christ alone. We may think, "I love the Lord," but God would say, "These are the things that should be your life." Most of the best songs are able to meet our need in one or more of the above categories. Songs such as these are able to greatly aid us to progress further in our Christian life. The best hymns are those that help us make some kind of progress in one of the eight categories I mention here. In these matters we all need to go on further.

Some hymns are doctrinal and are best used only on certain occasions. When you preach a certain message or get into a certain truth, they may help. Usually such hymns are not inspiring, though. To enjoy a poem is more difficult than enjoying a novel, because to enjoy a poem you have to be watchful to what the poet is expressing. If you know how to enjoy hymns, however, your spiritual life will be healthy.

Hymns are the best means to bring a lover of Jesus to the Lord's presence. Therefore I recommend that you spend some time in the hymns every day. Why do we often begin a meeting by singing hymns? Because a good hymn can help usher us into the Lord's presence. If everyone is already in the Lord's presence when the meeting begins, there is no need to sing, for we are already prepared to enter into the burden.

A hymn can confirm the validity and healthiness of one's spiritual experience. If you have experienced something and yet it is not to be found in any hymn, you should fellowship with others about that particular experience, for it is quite possibly not real. If you have experienced something genuine of the Lord, seek out the hymns that speak to that experience, for in so doing you can strengthen your apprehension of that experience.

Many hymns are the best prayers for speaking out what is in the heart of the Lord's seekers. Sometimes you don't have the words to pray out what is within you, but there are hymns that can grant you the utterance you seek. For instance, "O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer" is a very good prayer. When you enjoy such hymns you are often actually offering deep prayers to the Lord.

Hymns are the best means to bring the Lord's seekers into the reality of truth. How can the truth be so real to us? There are hymns that encapsulate something of the truth you are enjoying. Such hymns help the truth become more real to us.

There is always a hymn able to match the seeker's present situation and experience. As one grows, the kind of hymns he enjoys advances. We need to advance in our enjoyment of the hymns. The hymns we enjoy indicate something about our spiritual desire and maturity.

The ability to apply the right hymn at the right time can really help the saints as they are gathered together.

We possess a very wonderful resource in the hymns. Those who desire to serve the Lord must familiarize themselves with the hymns in order to meet their own spiritual need and to supply others with the riches they contain. By singing the hymns we also find that our sense of the Lord becomes more sensitive and tender. - *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods Fellowship Center near Sullivan, Ohio, January 16, 2010*

On Hymns, Growth and Serving

“You sing a [rich] hymn, you sing through it, but nothing or not much “sparks” in you. You admire what is in it, yet for some reason you feel it is very remote to you. One of the key reasons could be that you are not used to these kind of hymns. Many of the hymns or songs you enjoy— not that they are bad—for some reason they “dormant” you (I know it is not a verb, but using it as a verb expresses my thought better than saying they “make you dormant”). ... In other words, there is a potential to grow and there is a place to grow and everything points to growth, but a certain element is preventing the growth. You know what this element is? That music. That music causes you to lose the ability to come to the deeper things. You know what is the difference between our hymnal and the songs of worship that Christianity has? Most Christianity “hymns of worship,” while very good, focus on worshipping a heavenly God or how the heavenly God comforts us or meets our need: how He saved us, leads us and so on...there is very little direct connection between Christ and us together emphasized. So we tried very hard to gather the hymns that reveal Christ with us in the way that produces the organic relatedness, and thus in turn enable us to grow and develop. You are here trying to serve, and didn’t realize that to serve means to die, that your entire person and future must be given to Christ.”

From Message 2 of Titus Chu with the Working Saints Training,
January 15, 2010 at Ashland Woods Fellowship Center, Sullivan OH.

(Note: This hymn by R.A. Miller provides the text for what follows:)

1. I have a Friend, whose faithful love
Is more than all the world to me:
'Tis higher than the heights above,
And deeper than the soundless sea;
So old, so new,
So strong, so true;
Before the earth received its frame,
He loved me—Blessed be His name!

2. He held the highest place above,
Adored by all the sons of flame,
Yet such His self-denying love,
He laid aside His crown and came
To seek the lost,
And at the cost
Of heavenly rank and earthly fame
He sought me—Blessed be His name!

3. It was a lonely path He trod,
From every human soul apart;
Known only to Himself and God
Was all the grief that filled His heart,
Yet from the track
He turned not back,
Till where I lay in want and shame,
He found me—Blessed be His name!

4. Then dawned at last that day of dread,
When desolate, yet undismayed,
With wearied frame and thorn-crowned head,
He, God-forsaken, man-betrayed,
Was then made sin
On Calvary,
And, dying there in grief and shame,
He saved me—Blessed be His name!

5. Long as I live my song shall tell
The wonders of His dying love;
And when at last I go to dwell
With Him His sovereign grace to prove,
My joy shall be
His face to see,
And bowing there with loud acclaim
I'll praise Him—Blessed be His name!

Fellowship on the Life of Service

(The following was spoken to saints who have decided to pursue the Lord together for the sake of the service of the Lord. - Editor)

AS THE LORD'S, SO THE SERVANT'S LIFE SHALL BE

This song (seen on the previous page) will describe your life as well, if you want to serve. If you desire to become truly profitable to the churches and the saints, remember that your pathway will be as the Lord's was. A servant should not expect to be above His master.

The path that the Lord trod was lonely, and so shall yours be. Eventually, no one is going to be able to understand you. What you experience will be known only to yourself and to God. Grief is not something that only the Lord will have known. His pathway will be our pathway. Yet from this track you must learn not to turn back until you have finished its course. Thus this is a very powerful hymn. If you have thought of this hymn as something only the Lord experienced, then you have missed a large part of its application. When you begin to realize that it speaks to your life as well, your whole being will become sober. The Christian life is not something that is limited to excitement and happiness. The walk that follows Christ will demand our entire being.

“Then dawned at last that day of dread, when desolate, yet undismayed; with wearied frame and thorn-crowned head He, God-forsaken, man-betrayed...” You will have this experience, although it may be something spiritual rather than physical. Eventually who will be your enemies? Those you serve. The saints and churches you serve are going to put you

on the cross. You may question, “How can this be?” I would ask you, however, how can this *not* be? The Lord took it, why should you not take it? The Lord served, and who remained with Him? No one. As you serve, in the end who will be with you? No one. By the Lord’s mercy it may not go that far, but the principle stands. You must be prepared for what a serving one must bear in his service to God.

Eventually the portrait delivered to us is that the Lord died for us in grief and shame. By this the Lord became our Savior. When we are totally finished and come to our end, that is the time we become a blessing to the church and to the saints. Eventually, we shall see the Lord and be able to praise Him fully in that day. This is our rest.

When I was young in the Lord, I liked this hymn. I sang it purely in appreciation of Christ. Eventually when I began to follow Him, however, I realized that this hymn was not only talking about Christ’s experience; it was also talking about those who chose to serve Him. When I heard those who had served for many years refer to the third verse of this hymn as relating to their experience, I thought they were being overly dramatic, but over the years I have found that what this hymn speaks of has also become my own experience.

I have often experienced discouragement and even have felt that I was finished and there was no way to go on; yet the Lord always opened up a little something so that I might realize that He is still in charge, and that He is still building up His church and working out His will. That we suffer as we do may seem hard to believe at times, yet it is very real.

In the beginning when we consider whether we should serve the Lord or not, we must understand that our life will be very different from others. To serve the Lord is not to come together and pursue a little and learn a little from each other so that we might be able to serve among the churches. If this is your understanding your efforts will not take you very far and quickly you will feel discouraged. When you try to minister, you feel like complaining, “Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” But if you from the beginning can say, “I am not playing with you Lord. My life is Yours. You can take complete possession of me. I am going to follow You according to You and not according to me,” then you will be surprised at how romantic your life will become.

Of course if something is romantic, there must be discouragement as well as encouragement. If the girl says yes the first time the boy asks her, then where is the romance? Serving the Lord is very much the same. One day the Lord seems so happy with us, but then we go through another cycle and find the Lord seems to treat us differently. That indicates we have advanced. In the beginning, when we are young, the Lord grants us rich blessing for our encouragement. If the Lord only brings you blessing, however, that means the Lord is babying you. When the discouragement comes, it indicates you have passed out of the initial stage. At such a time you also begin to realize that following the Lord is very different from other things. It is only by undergoing such experiences, however, that you break through and are brought to another level of service. The riches you possess find their application through such experiences.

THE NEED FOR VESSELS IN THESE DAYS

The churches today are not that prevailing because many among us have been babied for the past forty years. We went through a long period where we were excited for the next meeting or conference to come. The value of the truth we received was very high, but even though we have gone through probably more training than any other Christian group, few have grown as they should have. So many have enjoyed the rich ministry of truth, and after years of such enjoyment so many should today be mature, strong, exercised, and possessing spiritual impact... yet little actually stayed with many of those who passed through it all. That is why you young people must now come in to serve, because many of the older ones have been so babied they hardly know how to walk anymore!

We must wonder how we as a group could have become so discouraged. The feeling in some of the meetings seems to match the feeling of the present economy. Although the attendants can tell you they have heard literally thousands of messages from Brother Lee, very little life-element seems to remain. Some are bitter, but they cannot drop the church life because they grew up in it. They will tell you, "I have been with this society for thirty years, and my friends and relatives are all here. Where would I go if I were to leave?" But if a group of Christians who are pursuing the Lord becomes merely a social community, how sad that is!

We could leave the churches to themselves and see what would come of it, but unless proper vessels were present, even though some sort of revival might arise it could not last. The New Testament principle is that

God's operation takes place through proper vessels. If the Lord cannot find such vessels, He cannot do much. In the New Testament era, God is much more confined by man.

VESSELS VERSUS INSTRUMENTS

This is why we are having this time of training...so that the Lord might have further means to raise up such vessels.

In the Old Testament man was treated as an instrument, but in the New Testament man is used as a vessel. In the Old Testament the Spirit descended upon someone regardless what kind of person that person was. Consider the judges! The Lord used Samson as an instrument but He never tried to use Samson as a vessel.

A musical instrument, for example, is something that is used by someone (who is actually the vessel). A sister had her instrument stolen. But the good thing is that the musician has not been stolen!

In the Old Testament God selected someone and then sent His Spirit upon that person and that person became operative. But what king, prophet, priest or judge was able to do something that lasted? Beside the lines produced through Abraham and David, very little can be found that lasted. Once a person no longer had the Spirit, the thing was over. In the process, of course, there was much blessing. All that was left, however, was some record of what had happened. When someone in the Old Testament died, his work was over. When Paul died, however, it was not over, because he was a chosen vessel and not merely a chosen instrument.

- *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods Fellowship Center near Sullivan, Ohio, January 15, 2010*