

**THE LIVING AND EXERCISE OF GOD-MEN
FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF
THE GOAL OF GOD'S ECONOMY TO GAIN
HIS TESTIMONY IN THE CHURCH**

By Titus Chu

**MESSAGE ONE
GAINING HIS TESTIMONY THROUGH THE CHURCH
AS THE GOAL OF GOD'S ECONOMY**

Some terms have become such a part of our language that we feel that if someone uses them, they must be one of us! However, when we use these terms, do we really realize what we are talking about?

GOD'S ECONOMY

First of all, what is God's economy? This is the anglicized form of the New Testament Greek word *oikonomia* ("house-law"), referring to God's household administration, which is a matter of dispensing. If it were only a matter of administration, though, it may seem dead and legal. However, the word *nomos* (law), which is involved in *oikonomia*, comes from *nome*, which means "pasture." *Nome* is used in John 10:9, which says, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture." It is a matter of nourishing, not of dead administration! Therefore, how much you are involved in God's economy is not a matter of position or seniority, but a matter of how much life you dispense to others.

When we talk about God's economy, we should be in the reality of it. It is like talking about Jesus - if we have received Him, we talk about Him differently than a nominal Christian does. In the same way, when we talk about God's economy, we must not be in it "nominally," but rather touching its reality. It must not be simply a slogan or a term to us. We should fully know that God

has a purpose; that His purpose is accomplished through His economy; that in this economy God has a house, a household, and a household administration; that this administration is a matter of life; and that in this house we must be saturated with life through the reality of this dispensing.

Thus, regarding God's economy, there are three kinds of "believers. The first kind is simply not in it. They do not experience its reality. Because they are but nominal believers, God's economy is not their experience. The second kind of believer is thoroughly in. He is always experiencing the dispensing of this life. His life is totally taken over by Christ. He has no more future, for he is focused on Christ alone. Thus, he is all the time living in the reality of God's economy. However, most of us belong to the third category: those who know of God's economy, who have seen something of it, and who desire to be in it. We may shout about God's economy, but after the meeting, when the football game is on, we may forget about it for a few hours. Or we may become occupied with thinking about our future. For whatever reason, we forget that life must flow in and out of us. When we get to a meeting and touch the reality of God's economy, we remember again that we need to be in it! We all must realize that God gains His purpose only through this economy.

THE CONTROLLING VISION

However, God's desire is not that you would enjoy Him in this way only as an individual. He doesn't want anyone to be a wanderer, going from place to place. He desires you to be with some others as His household in your locality.

This is the controlling vision of the Bible. The Word of God may present many teachings, events, practices, and so on, but it has only one focus. It is just like a father raising children. He may provide something for their exercise, study, and comfort, and do things to make them presentable, but these things are not his focus. His focus is that each child would grow up to become a

solid human being with a testimony. He may provide toys, but he is controlled by a vision. The eternal economy of God is the controlling vision of the Bible. Everything is based upon God's dispensing of life to His chosen and redeemed people.

FOCUSED ON THE CHURCH

The focus of God's economy is His church. When you look at all the saints gathered here, you see so many people from such different backgrounds together expressing God as His testimony. This is precious in His eyes. When He sees the church, He says, "I died for you."

The church also bears God as its content in its nature and essence. The essence of God is spirit, and the nature of God is love. When we talk about the church as the household of God, we must be in spirit, or else there is no essence of the household. We also must love one another, or else we lose the nature of God's household.

What do you see in the church? Only God. If you see anything else, be careful, for that could be something dangerous. When you come to a proper local church, you should see no one but Christ, for the church belongs to Him, is of Him, is possessed by Him, and even bears Him as the content.

Paul lived unto Christ, gained Christ, pursued Christ, lived Christ, and sought to exhibit no one but Christ. Since he was such a person, he was willing to be consumed for the profit of the church. If he had a dollar, it was for the church. His living and existence were absolutely for Christ and the church. We should treasure the church and love it as Paul did, for the church is the issue of God's economy. When we talk about God's economy, we must realize that it is focused upon the church. Since Christ loved and treasured the church, giving Himself up for it, so will we. Everything we have is for the testimony of the Lord.

THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING GOD

As the house of living God, the church is not dead, but alive. It is His dwelling place, where He can be at rest. It is His family, composed of the many sons of God and the many brothers of Christ to be His expression. As children grow, they become more and more an expression of their parents. God desires a family, and this is why He hates division. Never make any issue that might cause division or hurt the life relationship among Christ's brothers and among God's children. Taking sides only adds fuel to such matters. You may debate and argue, just as in an earthly family, yet the arguments should be temporary, while the life and love remain. It should not matter how often you disagree; the secret in practicing the church life is to allow love to prevail.

Because the church is the house of the living God, we must experience the living God subjectively. If in the church life we do not experience the living Christ, then we do not have the reality of the church life. The church life is not a matter of knowing the right things or saying the right things, but of moving together in, by, and with Christ.

After entering into the church life, you need to grow. How can you know that you have grown? When the Lord has become more precious to you, when you have come to know and love Him more, when you have gained more knowledge of the Bible and the truth, and when you have committed yourself to Him more, not only to be shepherded, but also to care for others, that is growth. Day by day, the Lord becomes more marvelous to you. Your growth gives the Lord rest, for as you grow, He makes His home in your heart.

THE PILLAR AND BASE OF THE TRUTH

The church is also the pillar and base of the truth, or the reality. The church upholds the divine reality. The truth refers to all the real things in the New Testament. Jesus said He was the truth (John 14:6), the reality. Witness Lee states, “The truth here refers to the real things revealed in the New Testament concerning Christ and the church according to God’s New Testament economy” (1 Tim. 3:15, fn. 5). Truth focuses on only two things: Christ and the church. The day you met Jesus, all the doctrines and terms, such as “Savior,” that you had heard about Him became reality to you. Now if someone comes to you and tries to tell you that Jesus is not real, you surely will not stand for it. Why? Because Christ is no longer theoretical or objective to you, but He is now real and subjective to you.

Furthermore, the more you enjoy Christ, the more you enjoy God, for Christ is the mystery of God. Christ always leads you to God Himself. In the same manner, when you are in the church, you are brought to Christ, for the church is the mystery of Christ. Who brought you to Christ? It was some member of His Body, the church. Every member of Christ’s Body is unique, but each has Christ. The church unveils the mystery of Christ, for when you see the saints, you see Christ. Only Christ could save each one, be life to each one, and put them all together in the church. In the church, you see Christ.

As the pillar and base of the truth, the church stands firm against heresy and degradation. The Lord has delivered to us something called “the faith,” sometimes referred to as “the common faith.” It includes matters such as Christ’s being both human and divine, His death with its accomplishments, His resurrection, and soon. What kinds of things might damage the church as the pillar of the truth? Paul warned Timothy of some who preached that the resurrection had already taken place, overthrowing the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:18). Such a teaching overthrew the faith. This was touching the common faith, which we must fight for.

Other things, however, though they might be considered truths, are not items of the common faith - matters such as the way to conduct the Lord's table or how people should be baptized, for example. In matters of the common faith we must be absolute, but in other matters we must allow freedom, or else division will result.

In China there was a woman who was declared to be Christ in His second coming. Her name was "Lightning out of the East." Hundreds of thousands were drawn after her. Such a thing, however, was against the common faith. The Mormons preach another Bible. This is also something to be rejected.

In contrast, the local churches should have a high standard of truth for the shining out of the divine light. The Lord said that the truth would set us free (John 8:32). In his footnote, Witness Lee writes, "The truth is not the so-called truth of doctrine but the reality of the divine things, which is the Lord Himself....This verse says that 'the truth shall set you free.' This proves that the Son, the Lord Himself, is the truth" (John 8:32, fn. 1). So when we say to focus on truth, it means to focus on Christ. How can we help others? It is with Christ, not with doctrine.

The messages in this series
were given in a conference hosted by
the church in Chicago in the spring of 2005.

This article is available online at
MinistryMessages.org

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