

THE REALITY OF THE DIVINE AND MYSTICAL REALM

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE FOUR: TREASURE THE LORD'S TESTIMONY

In treasuring the Lord's testimony in your locality, there are four things that require careful attention. First, you must treasure the leadership in your locality. There should be healthy leadership in every local church. In fact, the health of the leadership will decide the health of the church. Second you should treasure your assets in the church life: the Spirit, the Word, the saints, and your local church. This is hard to learn. Parents always treasure their children. No matter how successful or wealthy the parents are, they know that their real assets are their second and third generations. In the same way, you must see these four items as your most valuable assets. Third, you must treasure your operation and the operation of all the saints. Finally, you must treasure the local church that practically bears the Lord's testimony in life. The local churches are the expression of the Body of Christ. The local churches you should treasure the most are first the church you are in and then the other churches in nearby localities. It is easy to treasure the saints in Beijing and fail to appreciate the dear saints nearby, because Beijing is on the other side of the world. We must learn to value those who are close to us.

TREASURE THE LEADERSHIP

Very few saints understand how crucial the leadership in a local church is. Actually, the leadership of that locality determines the condition of the church life there. For example, the epistles to the churches in Asia in Revelation 2 and 3 are addressed to the messengers of the seven churches. If the messengers can receive the Lord's speaking, then the whole church can receive the Lord's speaking. The leading ones are divinely committed.

Many may wonder how some brothers came into leadership roles in the church life. I appointed some as elders, and others were manifested through their operation. I always used to consult Brother Lee when appointing elders in various churches. However, the leadership is altogether a matter of divine commitment. All of the leaders in the churches have received a divine commitment from the Lord.

This divine commitment is always in plurality. There cannot be only one leader. It may sometimes seem to be a frustration to have several taking the lead, because one brother may boycott another's plan or idea. Actually, the coordination of the leading brothers is sweet. Plurality is also a great protection to those in the leadership. Those in the leadership must seek the interest of the church in the presence of the Lord. When those divinely committed by the Lord come into His presence, they are always freshly charged.

If you are not freshly charged, you are not a leader, and are not qualified to be a leader. If you are freshly charged, your leadership may produce a big "mess," but you are still a leader. If you are not charged, why not let others who are charged take the lead? I am not suggesting that any leaders be "fired," but I exhort you all to receive a fresh charge in the Lord's presence. As a leader you should always have a strong feeling about the need of the saints, the condition of the church, and what is best for the interest of the church. You should feel that what the Lord has shown you in the Bible is just what the saints need. You may make mistakes, but if you are freshly charged you are already doing well.

As a leader who is freshly charged, you must pursue the Lord's riches. You must enrich yourself so that you can feed and nourish the saints. Your condition, your riches, your experiences, and your exercise will decide what the church life looks like in your locality. If you are charged, then the saints will have direction. If you are vital, then the saints will have life. You must be committed to feed the saints according to their timely need.

When I look at the faces of the saints, I can tell if the leaders are doing a good job. The condition of the church is determined by the condition and exercise of the leaders.

The leading ones must be shepherds. Don't be lazy and make only decision only once a year. Your job is to shepherd the saints. When I was in Inner Mongolia I saw a shepherd caring for a big flock. I was very impressed. The shepherd was restful, so the whole flock was restful. This shepherd knew how to start the flock and how to stop them by working with the head sheep. At a certain time he got all the sheep up and brought them to a place where they could eat. When the sheep came into that area, they all became very restful. That is a picture of the church life. The saints must be restful, and they must be brought to where the food is. The leading ones must be shepherds, neither dominating the saints nor intimidated by them. They should lead them to rest, to nourishment, and to development.

The nourishment the saints require is always according to a timely need. When a Chinese family immigrates to this country, you can't give them cheese to eat right away. It is too hard for them to take. So you introduce them to American food by first serving them fried chicken. Later you can give them some bacon for breakfast, and eventually a little steak. After they have become accustomed to all this, you can introduce them to a mild variety of cheese. If you give them spicy Cajun food or a strong cheese at the beginning, they will never want to try American food again. In the church life we have so much food to offer. We have *Twelve Baskets Full*, the *Life Lessons*, books such as *The Glorious Church*, and books that unveil the high truths to us such as *The Divine and Mystical Realm*. All of these riches meet the need of saints at different levels. The leading ones must feed the saints according to their need.

The leading ones also have to be good patterns. They have to live in the midst of the saints every day. Great apostles like Peter, during the great revival in Jerusalem, walked in the midst of the saints. Spend more time among the saints, especially with the weaker ones. The leading ones must set themselves as a pattern in loving the Lord, in ministering, and in prophesying. If they are not a pattern in loving the saints, working to develop some brothers, and opening their homes, the saints will not listen to them. If they only give directions but are not a pattern, the saints will not respond. They must live daily in the midst of the saints, pouring out their lives for the saints.

TREASURE THE ASSETS

Secondly, we must treasure our assets. What assets do we have? Our assets are firstly the Spirit, then the Word, the saints, and finally our local church. You must treasure and enjoy these things. I treasure my granddaughter. My feeling is that I want to see her at any opportunity! I want to talk to her. When I talk to her and she smiles, I am so happy! Even before she speaks, I enjoy her very much. In the same way, we should treasure what we already have and never depart from these four things.

We must learn to really treasure our spirits. When we treasure our spirits by declaring, “Oh Lord, Amen, Hallelujah,” our problems suddenly don’t matter. The life-giving Spirit who dispenses the Triune God into us is our treasure. In every meeting we should exercise our spirits.

We also must treasure the divine Word, the Bible. We used to be very strong in these two things: treasuring the Spirit and the Bible. But for some reason we have put the Bible aside. I doubt that many of us are in the Bible. We must treasure the Spirit and the Word. The reality of everything we learn comes from these two things. Each of us should say to the others, “Let’s get together every day to read the Bible and exercise our spirits.”

Often we don't treasure our spirit, and we are short of the word. So we must take special care in exercising to pray-read in our church life. We should pray-read privately, in groups, and when the whole church comes together. We also should treasure the unveiled truth: the materials from conferences, trainings, and spiritual books.

The leading ones must also learn to treasure all the saints in the church life. Do you treasure the saints in the way you talk about them? Or do you consider them your enemy whenever they don't agree with you? If you consider the saints as your enemies, you will have no way to go on properly. You should learn that in the church life, all the saints are so precious. It may be hard to like certain brothers, but you should love all the saints. If you don't know how to treasure the saints, then it is easy to be bothered by the brothers and sisters. You must develop the appreciating ability. All the saints are precious in a certain way, even if they have limitations. We should learn to simply appreciate who they are. Paul exhorted us to take note of the things that are virtuous. Some saints are young and energetic, but messy. Can you love them? Many other saints are sober and weighty, but they seem unmovable. Can you love them? Can you enjoy those who are clearly gifted as well as those who are not manifested?

The weaker ones should be appreciated, loved, and shown mercy. We should assure them that Christ in them is not weak but powerful! Second Corinthians 13:3 says that Christ is "not weak unto you, but powerful in you." Christ was put on the cross in weakness, but now He is alive in power!

We must help the saints to know how powerful Christ is in them. Once when I was young, I experienced a period of weakness in which I began to miss the church meetings. One day an older brother who was an uneducated soldier visited me. He traveled a long way across town to see me and deliver a simple message. He said, "Go to the meetings." That is all he said, but that word began to grow in me. When I began to experience the power of Christ in me, that visitation came back to me again and again.

Finally, we must treasure the local church as the expression of the Body of Christ. Today Satan's strategy is to destroy the local churches. Through so many years Brother Lee fought, struggled, and used every means to show us the mystical Body of Christ expressed in the local churches. In Hymn #1107 he wrote:

*There is one Body in this universe,
And we express it here on earth;
We stand as one in each locality
For all to see, for all to see.*

This is the glorious commitment we have received, but often we downgrade the importance of the local churches. We must realize that the local churches are the practicality of the Body. If we hear anyone speaking disdainfully of the local churches, we should say, "No, without the local churches there is no expression of the Body of Christ. Without the local churches the Body is airy and intangible."

BE WISE IN OPERATIONS

As we operate in the local church life, we find that the expression of the rich blessing is manifested first through our households. Your house should be a base of blessing to the church. Don't be a mere Sunday morning church-goer; your home is for the church life. Until the Lord gains our homes, the church life has no expression. The church life is expressed in our homes. If some are not married and thus have no household, how should they function? Until they should get married, they should take the initiative to invite themselves to as many meals with the saints as they can. Our homes should be a base for blessing the church life and a place for the saints to come and be loved.

Invite a few young brothers for a dinner of meat loaf and carrot cake. Tell them to invite their friends. Perhaps they will bring a friend along who is an atheist. Then as you are serving them meat loaf, you can ask, “Do you mind if we pray before we eat?” Don’t pray, “Lord, this atheist is going straight to hell!” Instead, ask the Lord to bless him in his schoolwork, job, and family. Even atheists like to be blessed. Then simply enjoy each other’s presence at the table. Have some coffee together and share simple testimonies. Pretty soon your house will be a blessed household. Make it a practice to open your home weekly to the saints, the elders, and your neighbors. If in this whole region there are three hundred households operating like this, I assure you there will be a revival among us, because open homes are the source of a loving church life.

It is best if our homes do not operate on their own, but as part of a cluster of nearby homes. In this setting, those with a strong desire to serve can be manifested. In a group of homes operating together organically, the serving ones can shepherd and nourish the saints. A brother may present you a problem or a question you can’t handle, but you can tell him, “Let me bring you to brother So-and-so, and we will all pray together for this matter.” In the church life there should be such clusters of homes.

We also must treasure the church gatherings. The church life should have clear, rich ministering in every meeting, especially in the Lord’s Day meeting. I know some insist that we should only speak three minutes each. I don’t want to argue, but the saints need to be fed. The saints need to be nourished by your ministering. So you must gather together locally to consider the best way to minister to the saints to supply them with food and nourishment. Your ministry sets the direction and the future of the church life in your locality. However, don’t occupy all the time in the meeting. Encourage all the saints to prophesy. Use your time in the meetings wisely.

We also treasure the common faith in the church life. Some localities serve grape juice in the Lord's Table. Other localities serve wine. Who is right? It doesn't matter. Neither wine nor grape juice is part of our common faith (the things we believe that cannot be violated). If we argue over practices such as drinking from one cup, or pouring from the one cup into many individual cups, we may be divisive. Such things are not the common faith, so we must be very flexible. But if you say that Jesus isn't God, then we will resist strongly. We will never give up or compromise our faith that Jesus is God Himself. But the practical matters, such as what materials a local church is using or what book the saints are reading, are not the common faith. We may fellowship regarding these matters, but we shouldn't make them issues.

In the church life we should also treasure the riches of the ministries of our brothers Nee and Lee. We should use them to educate the saints. The saints need to be educated with their perfecting in view. We must operate to perfect the saints in such matters as how to enjoy the hymns, how to touch the Lord's presence, how to function by prophesying, and so on. If you are in a small local church without a rich ministry, then come together with other nearby churches and hold classes together for the saints. Then all the saints will be able to receive something as well as blend with saints from nearby localities. You could even plan to go away for an entire weekend together. After a few days of fellowshiping and perfecting like this, you will go home a "new" church! I myself have a burden to carry out a time to perfect saints who have some ministering ability and desire to learn how to be an able minister. This kind of perfecting is very useful. Perhaps one brother wants to help train all those who want to learn the new way. Another brother could hold classes for all the saints who want to understand the high peak of the divine revelation. Yet another could help saints learn to appreciate Christ and the church. This kind of education can help the saints experience more Christ!

Finally, we should treasure those who directly serve us and treasure the nearby churches. We should all appreciate the manifested brothers, and realize that that there will always be good and evil reports swirling about them. This is their portion. We must learn to pay attention to the brothers with us who are pouring out their lives for us. We must treasure those who serve among us and treasure the churches nearby. It is healthy for Cincinnati to treasure Louisville and Dayton. It is healthy for Cleveland to treasure Mansfield. The churches near to you are your strength. We shouldn't compete with neighboring churches to see who is growing more. Even in a broader way, for Chicago to treasure Cleveland and Minneapolis is normal, because the Lord has governmentally arranged for us to be near one another to be His testimony in an area. We all must appreciate and thank the Lord for His sovereignty in this matter.

This article is available online at
MinistryMessages.org

© 2005 Titus Chu