

SECRETS OF SURVIVAL IN THE SERVING LIFE

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE EIGHT: THE NECESSITY OF A PROPER HUMANITY FOR OUR LIFE-RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SAINTS

You may not realize how crucial your humanity is to your own spiritual growth. Your humanity is the root, the foundation, of your spiritual pursuing. Why are you unable to bear any remaining fruit? Why do you not come to the Word? Why would you neglect to exercise your spirit? The greatest limitation to your growth in life usually has to do with your humanity. Not many brothers realize this, therefore not many brothers know how to raise up others with a proper humanity in view.

Let me give you an illustration. A brother moved to another locality and then complained to the elders there about how he had been mistreated by brothers in his previous church. The elders erred by listening to this brother. If they knew there was a problem they should have just called the elders in that other church and fellowshipped with them about it instead of standing with this brother in his grievance. They did not have his humanity in view. They should have encouraged him to have a new beginning. There was no need to listen to what was past. If there was an offense remaining, he should have just fellowshiped with the offending brother. By permitting him to air his grievances, however, these brothers allowed him to damage himself. If, however, they had not given this brother the opening, he may have been preserved. This is to have another's humanity in view.

To live a life with a proper humanity means you live according to that aspect of your humanity created by God. As a human being you have a fallen aspect and you have a God-created aspect. One part is out of God's creation, and one part is out of Adam's fall. From what part, for instance, does self-vindication or gossip come from? Surely from the fallen part. I do not believe Adam practiced these things before he fell. What is it to exercise a proper humanity? It is to cultivate the God-created part of you and to deny the fallen part. Learn to care for the God-created humanity, both in yourself and in those you care for.

Suppose I am a brother under your care and you find out that firstly, I smoke; secondly, I dance; and thirdly, I drink. Are you going to labor with such a hopeless slave of the devil? If the Lord burdens you, you should, for no matter how fallen that person is, there is still the God-created part. If you only view people as good or evil, that indicates that your own humanity has problems. You yourself have a fallen part, don't you? Yet every person, no matter how evil or fallen he may seem, has a God-created humanity. This is the part you have to labor with. Learn to ignore the fallen part. Suppose this one smokes in your presence while reading the Bible with you. Considering where he is at, isn't this to be expected? (He just hasn't learned how to conceal things yet as we in the church life have.) Everyone is good and everyone is also bad. Before we are transfigured there will always be something causing us to fall. But if we fall there will also be something causing us to recover and go on.

Pay attention to the God-created part of those you are laboring with. Then, when you exercise with their humanity in view, you must also exercise godliness. To exercise godliness means that you allow the divine life to be lived out through your humanity. When you are with the saints, you should exercise to be godly, not loose.

EXERCISE GENUINE CARE WITHOUT HYPOCRISY

How can you exercise godliness towards the saints? Firstly, your care towards them must be genuine, without hypocrisy. Sometimes because we want to gain others we become hypocritical without realizing it. We tell them we love them or that we pray for them, but only the Lord knows whether we really do. The Lord cannot honor that labor because our love to the saints is not genuine. You have treated them as objects for your own development or for the development of the church life. Even if you are able to gain people this way, it will only result in some kind of “ministry;” it cannot build the church. The church is built by those who love the saints. When such brothers speak, there is no hypocrisy. They speak what is in their heart, and, if it is not profitable, they do not speak. To speak something beyond what you really feel, that is hypocrisy.

Without a proper humanity, one can never be useful in the Lord’s service. We should be careful not to allow hypocrisy to develop in our serving. It is, however, within every one of us. Sometimes we may exercise it without even realizing it. May the Lord enlighten us.

BE NEITHER TOO HIGH NOR COMMON

Secondly, we should not be with others in a way that is too high, neither should we be with them in a way that is common. Some brothers give others the feeling that they are superior. They give the feeling that they know things others with them don’t know yet. Unconsciously they give the impression that they are “old pros.” If you give others this feeling, those you contact just won’t love you, for you seem too far beyond them. Every time you go to them, they feel as if they have been brought before the principal. If this is the case, is there any hope that he will be able to grow? He will just want to get away from you.

However, you should not allow yourself to become common around those you care for. You shouldn't joke just because the one you are with jokes. You shouldn't just talk about what he talks about. Learn not to be common. Others should learn that there are certain things which just cannot go through you. They will respect you for this. Yet you should be very approachable; one whom they know they can come to in any situation. They should feel free to speak with you about anything, and yet know that you yourself are outside of what is common or low.

This is a hard lesson for us to learn. We tend towards one extreme or the other. We either become "high," giving others the feeling that we are above them, or we become common, behaving or speaking just as they, failing to live out God's divine nature, which is expressed in godliness. Learn to be neither high nor common; learn to be godly.

BE INTIMATE WITH THEM WITHOUT BECOMING LOOSE

Third, learn to be intimate without becoming loose. It is hard to be intimate with someone without allowing some looseness to creep in. On the other hand, if you are cold and aloof, it is difficult for the Lord to use you. Everyone who has a cold personality has one of two psychological problems. They either secretly despise others or they despise themselves. They are self-exalting or they are self-abasing persons. These are the reasons why certain people cannot become intimate with others. The self-exalting person looks upon everyone else as inferior. No one else can do something as well as he. They esteem no one else as capable as they are. Because of this, they are unable to look upon another person as worthy of their concern. The self-abasing person, on the other hand, is always afraid of doing or saying the wrong thing, therefore he seeks to protect himself. He feels inferior, so he is always trying to defend himself around others. Both of these problems are serious, for they prevent one from developing the ability to become intimate with others. If you have one of these problems, you cannot truly honor others, therefore you have no ability to become close to others.

If you are unable to honor what another person has, how can you ever raise that person up? If you have a little brother, only able to hold a bottle to feed himself, are you able to appreciate that, or would you think, "How stupid that is. I know how to use chopsticks"? That child could never grow up under your care. To the real parent, every stage of development is cherished and becomes a source of encouragement. They honor their children by appreciating what each child has. Spiritually, you should honor each saint in the same way. It may be that in the future you will be coming to conferences given by someone you are caring for today. They may grow beyond you, so you shouldn't despise them just because of where they are today. Honor them, realizing that God is operating for their growth.

Do not despise others, neither overly abase yourself. Just be sincere and honor the brothers. This is necessary if you are to develop intimacy with others. Intimacy comes when you are able to present yourself as who you are, with godliness. People should not feel uncomfortable around you. They should feel that you are approachable and that you are open and genuine. As you are learning to be intimate with others, however, don't become loose. You shouldn't say, "I just am who I am, and let me tell you, I just love to watch old movies on TV." You can be with brothers in a very intimate and genuine way without having to talk about such things. Don't boast of your weaknesses. It is not hypocrisy to restrict yourself in your speaking. Hypocrisy means to speak what is not genuine. It does not mean that you restrict yourself from speaking unnecessary or foolish things.

Many times I have seen the two extremes of coldness and looseness in the behavior of brothers. The self-abasing or self-exalting ones become very lonely in the church life. Those that are loose become friends with everyone (at least with the fleshly element), but wherever they are there is no life-imparting, only distraction. A loose person is someone who exercises no godliness in his personality. He allows his flesh to be fully expressed. Looseness, however, is with every one of us.

Most of us are either unapproachable or too loose. If we are with the saints in such a way, after some time the saints we are with will become dead and we will become dead. All the life will leak away. Learn to be godly so that others are enabled to receive and experience life.

LEARN TO BE WITH OTHERS AS THEY ARE

Fourth, you should learn to be with any kind of person. Just as Paul, we need to adjust ourselves to the persons we are with. With the Jews he was as a Jew, to the Greeks he came as a Greek. He became as the one he came to. He did this, yet he did not become low in whatever way they were low. When we are with people, sometimes we don't know what we should respond to or what we should not respond to. We should exercise to be with those that we care for according to who they are, while at the same time keeping ourselves separate from the base things.

SHOW MERCY AND LOVE WILLINGLY

Fifth, you have to be able to show mercy and love with willingness. There should be no feeling that your help is given grudgingly, or that you feel inconvenienced by others' needs or concerns. If you have to see someone at midnight, you should have the willingness and readiness to do so. To be able to show mercy and love to one another in the church life is crucial, because we all need one another's covering and care. When we become so low, we need mercy from others. When we are very weak, we need others' love. Mercy says, "I don't care where you are at, I am with you." Love says, "I understand where you are, and I stand with you." All the stronger ones in the church life must learn to show mercy.

This does not mean that we should encourage weakness. Do not say, “You went drinking last night? That’s alright. If you go again, the Lord still won’t condemn you.” That is not showing mercy; that is standing with Satan. If a brother comes to you and reveals that he gave in to drinking the previous night, you should share with him how the blood of Jesus is able to cleanse away his sin and how God is operating within him. Stand with him. This is to show mercy. And, if he falls again, show mercy again. Because you are burdened and concerned for him, you won’t become disgusted. You just have to show more mercy. Don’t demand, “Why haven’t you grown out of this yet?” No one can predict how long spiritual development takes in any particular saint. A weak brother may struggle near the bottom for years, and then suddenly come out of it and advance much faster than you! You must have the sight of God; don’t evaluate a person based upon how he appears today.

Besides showing mercy, you have to learn to show love. To show love means that you exercise concern. When another brother is in hardship, frustrations, or weakness, you have to know how to show your love. Once I was weeping due to a nearly unbearable situation. Another brother was with me. He was younger in the Lord, actually rather new in the church life, and I was an elder. He just put his hand on me and said, “Brother, the Lord is with you.” Just by that simple display of love, I felt strengthened. I cannot forget that incident. In the process of our going through things there should be brothers who will not analyze, lecture, or merely seek a solution for us. They will just show their love. The church life cannot go on without this.

We must learn to show love in the church life, and we must do so readily, willingly. If others sense that you feel they are imposing upon you or your time, they will not come to you again, for they will feel you don’t really care about them.

APPRECIATE THEM, REALIZING THEY ARE YOUR STRENGTH AND PROTECTION

Sixth, appreciate those you care for, realizing that they are your strength and protection. Don't think that the elders alone are your protection. They are the strength and protection of the church. Those you care for, however, are your personal strength and protection. I am careful about my walk and my exercise largely because of those I am caring for. Don't think of the young ones as those who owe you a debt. You owe them just as much. If it weren't for all of you, I am afraid I may sleep in more and become careless with my time. We are strengthened by caring for people. It is easy to become loose if you are not caring for anyone. If you are not caring for anyone, your Christian life becomes somewhat meaningless.

Why do some brothers become discouraged after being in the church life for so many years? Because in the process of growth they have not learned to care for people. If from the beginning they had developed the habit of always laboring with four or five others, would they be weak or discouraged today? In principle, all discouragement comes from being isolated. They just haven't learned to bear others on their shoulders. Those you care for are your strength and protection. When you exercise a proper humanity with others, this causes you to render them the honor due them. May the Lord enlighten us in these things concerning our relationship with the saints.

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