

SECRETS OF SURVIVAL IN THE SERVING LIFE

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE TEN: HONORING GOD'S ADMINISTRATION AND HIS ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENT

For all who desire to survive in the way of attaining, there are four pillars which can never be neglected. They are seen in First Timothy 1:1-2. The first pillar is our relationship to the apostle. This matter is related to God's New Testament ministry. Today it means to be proper with Brother Lee's burden and with Brother Lee's riches. The New Testament ministry is going on all the time, and we must exercise to be one with it.

The second pillar is God our Savior. God being our Savior indicates two things. First, it indicates that God saves us by bringing us into His divine economy. In other words, lay hold of God in His economy. Second, this indicates that we are growing with the growth of God. His saving us is by growing within us.

Thirdly, there is the pillar of Christ Jesus our hope. Christ becomes our hope because He is daily operating to infuse His divine life into our person. This very divine life infused into us is the reality of hope. Our hope is not that when Christ comes our problems will be over. The Christ we accumulate today becomes our eternal portion of glory. This is our hope. Today we all need to be investing with this hope in view.

The fourth pillar is the genuine life relationship with the brothers and sisters in the church life. We have covered this crucial matter in depth in the foregoing messages.

HONORING GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

Let us come now to chapter two of First Timothy. In this section of the Word the matter of honoring God's divine administration is revealed. This matter is as crucial to your survival in serving as the previous matters. You can be weak and survive, and you can be beat and survive, but the moment you dishonor God's divine administration or question God's divine arrangement in the church life, your survival will be seriously endangered.

Two Lines in God's Administration

According to Paul's letter to Timothy, God's divine administration is quite simple. There are two lines. There is the line of human government, and the line of God's government in the church. We will only consider the church line in these messages. In God's divine administration there are three kinds of "Offices." There are the apostles, there are the elders, and there are the deacons or deaconesses. This is God's divine administration. Paul, in his writing to Timothy, stresses these three. For the church life to be healthy we must learn to honor the apostles, honor the elders, and honor the deacons. If we do not know how to relate ourselves to them properly, we will not be healthy.

Difficulty Honoring God's Administration Due to Individuality and Familiarity

In our nature we hate administrative arrangement, for we like to be "free lancers." However, if we desire to attain to the highest the Lord has for us, we must never allow ourselves to have a problem with the apostles, the elders or the deacons. To avoid having a problem with the apostles is not too difficult, for they generally are far from us and, besides this, they really possess spiritual capital. Thus, it is easy for us to submit to an apostle.

It is also seemingly easy to submit to the elders, for the elders are the leaders in the Lord's recovery. However, the church life is an intimate life where no one can hide.

In a company, people may be able to maintain a mask and appear to be friendly, capable, kind and virtuous. Yet in the church life, how many can succeed in maintaining such a mask? After one testimony we all are exposed. You were such a Madame Guyon or Brother Lawrence until you stood up. Then the people realized that "Madame Guyon" doesn't even know her spirit. You felt you were Darby Jr. until, while you were giving a message, you quoted the wrong verse and then weren't able to locate the correct one. I got tired of trying to wear such a mask. Eventually I threw it away. Before the saints we have to trust that the saints will love us even though they know who we are.

You cannot succeed in being hypocritical in the church life, for you will be unable to eventually hide who you are. In the church life everyone is on display; everyone knows everything about everyone. This kind of intimacy can cause problems. We realize that the leading ones are not the saints of the Catholic Church; they are just brothers in the Lord's recovery. Yet the Lord has placed them as elders and deacons in the church. This is God's administration, but it seems easy for us to question it. However, if you do not know how to honor God's divine administration, it will be difficult for you to survive.

The Closer You Are to God's Administration the Easier It is to Have Problems

It is easy to have problems with the elders, and it is even easier to have problems with the deacons. When we have problems with them, we are actually cutting off our life-line. We cut ourselves off from the blessing of the Lord. To you it may be, "I don't agree with the elders in this thing," yet in reality it is, "I want to be cut off from my life supply in the church life and commit suicide." When you say, "I cannot agree with the coordinating brothers on this matter," you are actually saying, "I am cutting myself off from the life supply of these brothers."

There was a very gifted brother in Taiwan who appreciated T. Austin-Sparks above every other servant of the Lord. Increasingly he devalued and even criticized Brother Lee. His condition grew very serious. Brother Lee, when he heard of this brother's situation, commented that if this brother were in Honor Oak (where Brother Austin-Sparks resided), his statements would be just the reverse. No matter how spiritual a man is, eventually you can find something about him which does not fit your concept.

Difficulty Honoring God's Administration Due to Lack of Life and Light

You cannot allow yourself to have problems with the apostles who minister to you, with the elders in your locality, or with the deacons and deaconesses who serve you. If you have problems, it indicates that you are not in life or in light. The reason you are dissatisfied is not because the brothers are improper. (No one is adequate to serve the Lord anyway!) The reason you are dissatisfied is because you are not in life or light, and therefore you want to make your opinion an issue. This is somewhat related to American culture. American culture encourages you to be what you are and to say what you think. In some ways this is better than the Chinese culture, which encourages you to be who you aren't and say what you don't think. We carry our culture with us into the church life. Therefore, when the elders announce that there will be work on the hall, we react with "Oh, not again. We have been working on this hall for two years already!" if this is your reaction, you are just on the verge of cutting yourself off from your life-line. Check with yourself: Are you in life? Are you in light?

HONORING GOD'S ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENT

Honoring Who We Are and What God Has Committed to Us

Besides learning to honor God's divine administration, you also must learn to honor His divine administrative arrangement. That is, you must learn to honor what has been given to you as one who is growing into your part in God's administration. We not only may not know how to honor the apostles, elders and deacons; we also may not know how to honor what we have. You may appreciate what *has* developed in the church life, but you may not appreciate what *is* developing. The divine arrangement in the church life produces the apostles, elders and deacons. Therefore, in this arrangement there are the apostles-to-be, the elders-to-be and the deacons-to-be. If you are one questioning the elders, would you know how to treasure who you are in God's administrative arrangement? If you question the serving ones, would you know how to treasure your own service? At most you would treasure something in your hand that you want to do. However, we need to treasure and honor what we are becoming in God's divine administrative arrangement.

As you are in the church life you must learn how to survive. First, you have to be aware of the four pillars. Then you must learn how to honor God's divine administration. Out of this you learn to honor the apostles, elders and deacons. But this is still somewhat superficial. You must further learn to honor the future apostles, the future elders and the future deacons. Who are they? They are you. You are the future apostles, the future elders and the future deacons. God's administration requires spiritual reality to back it up, so it requires that you grow.

Do not consider that others are qualified to be the future apostles, elders and deacons, but not you; this is to miss the principle of survival. The principle of survival is to say, "I don't know who I am, but I am under God's divine administrative arrangement. In this arrangement I do have something committed to me.

I may not yet know what my part is, but I do not treat it lightly.” The sisters ‘ as well as the brothers need to realize this. Even if you feel you are too old to develop into a deaconess, you may still bear the responsibility of intercession. You must honor this just as you honor the elders and the deacons.

We Need To Respect Ourselves In God’s Administrative Arrangement

Just as you shouldn’t think more highly of yourself than you ought, you also must not abase yourself beyond what you ought. There is a brother who abases himself even as he is sharing. In the middle of his speaking he often says, “Oh, forget about it.” Within me I think, “How can you forget about it? That is your burden!” Do we realize that there is a certain stand that all of us must take? We all must learn to honor ourselves according to what the Lord has determined for us. The elders should respect their place in the church life and the deacons should respect their place in the church life. The apostles shouldn’t abase themselves; they should learn to exercise with buoyancy as apostles. Brothers, not only should we respect them; they also should respect themselves. But even more, the apostles-to-be, the elders-to-be, the deacons-to-be, and so on, should not despise what God is working in them as those in His administrative arrangement.

The Danger of Dropping What the Lord Has Committed to Us and Becoming Merely Managers of Church Affairs

Many times an elder in a local church gradually drops what the Lord has committed to him to become merely a manager of the church. In a sense, a manager and an elder are very much the same. “Elder” speaks of the person, and “manager” refers to what the person does. If we lose sight of God’s divine administration and His divine administrative arrangement, it is likely we will get beat.

An elder may eventually say, “Well, I played the pipe, but you wouldn’t dance. I shared that you should love the Lord, but you don’t, and I shared how you need to stir up your spirit, and you’re still dead. So forget about it. I’ll just manage affairs.”

What is a manager? A manager is one who is good at arranging things. If someone needs to be married, he can conduct the meeting. He can arrange when the meetings should be. He can arrange who should share in what meeting. Any person with some experience and ability can do this. This, however, should not be the elder’s primary function.

For some reason it is easy for us to lose respect for what God has committed to us. It is easy for us to become merely donors, donating our time, money and skills. But as an elder, deacon or even as an apostle, if you have no respect to yourself or to your place, how can the Lord honor your service? In some older churches the elders have become the managers, getting things done. It caused me to wonder how much was of natural ability, and how much was of divine constitution. How can natural ability have any value in spiritual things?

We need to honor the apostles, the elders, and the deacons. We also need to learn to honor what we are as those developing in His divine administration. If there is increase and many churches are raised up, many of you should eventually become leading ones in different localities. At that time, will you carry the leadership as a project, or will you carry it by your person? For this to develop, you must have the real appreciation for what the Lord has committed to you in His divine administrative arrangement. To honor the Lord’s commitment is to pray, “Thank you, Lord, you have committed me with something that is Yours. I dare not be light, I dare not be loose, and I dare not be away from my spirit. Especially, Lord, I dare not do things out of my natural ability. I pray I might always consider the things of the church according to Your view.”

It is too easy for us to become managers and run spiritual things like a company. Not many brothers realize how crucial it is to be in spirit and according to truth. We should have a high view of our commitment. As an elder, your realization should be that you need to guard your person and your exercise.

The fate and the future of those you are serving depends upon your faithfulness. Whether the saints grow to their fullest extent, and whether or not your church will become a proper testimony is based upon how you fight, how you labor, and how you give yourselves to the Lord.

Recently I visited a locality and called one of the elders. The brother told me that they hadn't come together for awhile, and that when a decision was needed, they just called each other. Within, I was very concerned. That church was in trouble. The saints were committing themselves to brothers who didn't respect what the Lord had given them. Paul made this matter very clear. He honored his apostleship and ministry. His realization was that if he did not honor it, the church would suffer loss. I told this brother whom I called that he needed to get together with the other brothers as often as possible. Otherwise, I told him, the church he was caring for had no hope.

**We Need A High Realization of Both Ourselves
and All the Saints in Light of
His Divine Administrative Arrangement**

We all need to be so clear regarding God's administration and His administrative arrangement, realizing God has committed to us something in His divine administration. You need to honor and respect this. You have been committed with something of the Lord, and you must honor it. Are you victorious? No. Are you a professional "goofer?" Perhaps. Yet you are precious. Furthermore, as you serve, you must realize that you are raising up the future apostles, elders, and deacons and deaconesses. These are crucial realizations for our survival and growth in the church life.

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