

SECRETS OF SURVIVAL IN THE SERVING LIFE

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE FOURTEEN: THE CHURCH, THE CHURCHES, AND THE WORK (1)

If we desire to survive to attain what the Lord has for us, we must have a clear understanding of the church, the churches, the work, and their relationship to each other.

HAVING THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN VIEW

The first thing we must have in view when touching these great matters is the Lord's testimony. If you are in the church, the churches, or the work without having the Lord's testimony in view, you have missed the church, the churches, and the work. God is not after a single local church, a group of churches, or a particular work. He is after His testimony. However, it is easy for us to become occupied with our locality and its needs without having the Lord's testimony in view.

Two Keys: Be Spiritually Burdened According to Our Revelation and Be Spiritually Exercised According to Our Burden

There are two keys for us to learn in this matter. First, We need to be all the time spiritually burdened according to the revelation we have received. Second, We need to be spiritually exercised according to that spiritual burden which comes out of revelation. If our exercise is not according to this kind of spiritual burden, we may gain new members, build new halls, and so on, but what is produced will only be a good evangelical church, it will not be something in the Lord's recovery.

We all have received some revelation of what God is doing on the earth. We have seen Christ and the Church. We realize how crucial is the matter of life and building. We see the need for spiritual growth and the practical church life. These things are our basic commitment. This is why we are here in the church life. If we desire the church, the churches, and the work to develop properly, these things must become our spiritual burden.

Spiritual Burden and Spiritual Leading

To know spiritual things and to be spiritually burdened are two different things. It is easy to find saints who know what God's economy is, but it is very difficult find some who are spiritually burdened about it. To be spiritually burdened is not a light thing. We use the word "burden" in a light way. We say we are burdened for the gospel or for young people. Actually, many such "burdens" are not spiritual. We may be led to preach the gospel, but without a spiritual burden according to the revelation we have received, what is the difference between our preaching and that of so many Christian groups? Many Christian groups are burdened for the gospel. They may even put us to shame with their zeal and success.

Our burden should not be preaching the gospel, helping the saints, or even raising up churches. Our burden should be the revelation we have received. Our burden should only be God's divine economy. Then, many leadings should come forth out of such a burden. I am burdened for my son. This doesn't mean that I just hug him and say, "I am burdened for you." As I am burdened for him I am concerned about every meal he eats. I have his health in view. I care for his education. My providing for his health, lodging, and education all come out of my burden. I do not, however, say that my son is for one of these. I wouldn't tell him, "Son, you must study until the day you die." In whatever stage he is in I provide according to his need. In the church it should be the same.

What we usually call “burdens” are actually leadings. When we are “burdened” with the campus or brotherly love, for instance, we seem to lose our overall vision. Those burdened for the campus become no different from Campus Crusade. They become occupied with new ones and lose sight of the church. Eventually I would like to spend more time with those who are going to become full-time to tell them how to give up the Lord’s blessing. Those in Christianity are unable to go on just because they hold on to what little blessing they receive. If you are never able to give up what the Lord has put in your hands, you will never be able to receive a higher blessing. Brothers can testify for me that I am not confined by any blessing. I am happy that I have experienced so much blessing through the years, but I have never allowed blessing to confine me. In a sense, blessing doesn’t mean much to me. The recovery is everything. Do you realize the difference? You reason that a little blessing indicates you are in God’s economy. You don’t realize that the blessing is for God’s economy. This is not an easy lesson for you to learn.

You must be spiritually burdened according to the revelation of the Lord’s desire. This is to have the Lord’s testimony in view. Besides this burden I do not have any other burden. In a sense, it is not my church, the campus gospel, or the young people that I am burdened for. My burden is for the Lord’s recovery. Because of this burden, however, I do seek the Lord’s leading that this burden may be carried out. I am always burdened, not with things, but with the Lord’s recovery, God’s eternal purpose, and His new testament economy. While I have this high burden, I am seeking the Lord’s leading that it may be realized. To remain freshly burdened with the unique revelation is a secret for your survival.

A person who is burdened before the Lord in this way will seek out and experience the Lord’s leading. Out of His leading will come a spiritual exercise. Don’t pick up a way or a method to carry out the Lord’s leading. Whenever anything becomes a “way,” in principle, there is no need of spiritual exercise. That is not to say that a way cannot produce something; it can add people to the church who do not know the Lord’s recovery.

I can show you many “ways” to preach the gospel. I believe I could bring ten to the Lord’s table within a short period of time, but would such an increase profit the church as the Lord’s testimony -- would these new ones be those who can fight for what the Lord desires? This should be the burden which drives us to the Lord and guides everything we do. Our exercise must be regulated by our vision concerning the Lord’s testimony.

When you are before the Lord, He may lead you to go to the campus, to speak in the meetings, or to spend time with certain saints. Be clear that even such genuine leadings are not your unique burden. Also be clear that anything you do while laboring under the Lord’s leading can become a way if it is not a spiritual exercise.

Once you lose these principles, your exercise will only tire you out. Once you become tired you are in danger of questioning what you are doing and why you are doing it. This is why I fear movements among us. When those involved find that the movement is only temporary, they will be in danger of entertaining questions concerning the recovery itself.

HAVING THE SAINTS’ PERFECTING IN VIEW

Besides having the testimony in view, we should also have the saints’ perfecting in view. With regard to the saints’ perfecting we will consider three aspects: their buoyancy, their usefulness, and their richness in truth and experience.

Having Their Buoyancy in View

Actually, we are not for buoyancy; we are for life. Buoyancy, however, is a strong sign of life. The more buoyant you are, the easier it is for you to be effective in the church life. Conversely, when you lose your buoyancy you become quite limited and lose your effectiveness. This does not mean that you have no value in the church life, but your profitability in the church life is decreased once you become someone who is merely faithful.

Two Reasons Why We May Not Be Buoyant

There are two common reasons why certain brothers or sisters in the church life lack buoyancy. One reason is that their heart has become occupied with something other than the Lord, and in this sense they are no longer pursuing the Lord nor caring for their spirit. Their heart is no longer geared to the recovery, to the Lord, or to life. A brother or sister who is engaged sometimes experiences this, for their heart is occupied and unintentionally they lose their buoyancy in the church life, for temporarily something has come in to replace the Lord in their heart. After marriage they usually are able to recover their buoyancy. (This is more true of brothers, since they tend to be more distracted before the marriage, while the hearts of sisters get more occupied afterwards.) The second reason a person may not be buoyant is that he hasn't found his place of exercise in the church life. You have to help such a one find his proper manifestation in the church life.

If we lose our buoyancy, we should consider ourselves in light of these two possibilities. If we have a problem with Christ; with His recovery; or with life, we should repent and return. If this is not the cause, then we should consider whether we have found our proper place in the church life. Perhaps you should preach the gospel more or spend more time with some saints to see if you can find your place. You might even fellowship with the elders concerning this matter, asking them if you are manifested properly there. We should consider the matter of buoyancy when we have our own or another's perfection in view.

Having Their Usefulness in View

Besides their buoyancy, we should consider the saints' usefulness according to their exercise. We should realize that usefulness to the Lord is not a light thing. If He can gain even a few useful ones, He can accomplish much. When we consider church history, we can really see how much the Lord was able to do with even when He had only a few who had made themselves

useful to him. The reason so few are useful today is because there has not been the adequate perfecting. Every saint should be perfected to become useful. For this reason we should look to the Lord how to care for the saints' perfecting.

Usefulness Primarily Having to Do with One's Person

Usefulness is not mainly due to one's ability or knowledge; it has primarily to do with one's person. The hardest aspect of our labor with regard to others' perfecting has to do with their person. I have given many conferences on many continents, but I have forgotten about them. What I remember is how I struggled for certain brothers. This is what should consume us. It is not difficult for me to give messages. Wouldn't it be easy then to develop a "ministry" and gather a congregation? The real thing, however, is to labor for a brother's perfecting. Many times I regret that I do not have a greater capacity to struggle on behalf of more saints in this way. If a person cannot learn to care for himself and others in this way, I don't believe he has any way to be useful in the church, the churches, or the work.

We have heard how Sister M.E. Barber wrote to D.M. Panton regarding Watchman Nee and Faithful Luke. She cared for their person. I'm afraid we wouldn't even have considered their desire to find out about spiritual books worth worrying about. But Miss Barber took the risk in writing such a letter, urging Brother Panton not to respond further to their inquiries. That was taking a risk, because she didn't know what would result. But every time you are attempting to perfect someone, you must take risks.

Usefulness Also Involves One's Ability

Don't be satisfied when the saints are merely experiencing a kind of buoyancy; that can come and go. You must be concerned with the constitution of their person. Then you should also consider how to develop their ability, for their usefulness is also based upon their ability, not only upon their person. Still, we should be more concerned about a brother's person than his ability.

Having Their Riches of Truth and Experience in View

When considering the saints' perfection we should also pay attention to how rich they are in the truth and in experience. Some brothers may be rich in truth, but they lack spiritual experience. Others may be rich in experience, but they may be lacking in truth. This kind of perfecting could be carried out in mutuality. I believe in the future it may not be one brother we look to for the carrying out of the ministry; it may be that the riches will come out collectively. One brother with more experience may have an insight from the Word, for example, but it may require the fellowship and labor of others who are familiar with the Word for its substantiation and confirmation.

When you have some truth but lack the experience of life to back it up, your truth can become merely doctrinal knowledge. In such a person's hands, the divine truths become common things. On the other hand, when you have some experience of Christ and yet lack the truth to substantiate it, you become cornered by that experience. Those who are caught in this way remain the same year after year, for they are unable to leave that experience and go on with the Lord. We must labor to perfect the saints in both truth and experience that they may go on with the Lord for the sake of His recovery.

HAVING THE LORD'S RECOVERY IN VIEW

The third major thing we should have in view with regard to the church, the churches and the work is the Lord's recovery. You have to treasure the recovery more than your region. In the same manner, you should treasure the region more than your group of churches, and you should treasure the churches in your area more than your local church. Thus, you should help one church with the nearby churches in view, help the nearby churches with the region in view, and help the region with the Lord's recovery of the earth in view. This sounds simple, but it is not easy. While in the sight of God a local church is precious, you have to realize that in comparison to the entire recovery it is not as high to God

as you hold it. Even our region in itself means little to God. God only has one recovery. If a church or group of churches is built up without this recovery in view, it is a sect. We should never lift up our church, the churches, or our work.

We should care only for God's one recovery on the earth. We need to have God's testimony, the saints' perfecting, and the Lord's recovery in view when we are involved with our church, the churches, or the work. The testimony concerns God's economy. Perfecting concerns the saints. The recovery relates to the Lord's move on the earth today. These are high things. May the Lord have mercy, because what will trap you the most will be these matters. It is easy when you are in the church to forget about the churches. When you are laboring among a group of churches, it is easy to forget the larger region. Once you labor within a region, it is easy to neglect the recovery. This is because everybody likes to be king. Therefore, we need the Lord's mercy and faithful dealing.

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