

# **THE SISTERS, THE BLESSING OF A LOCAL CHURCH LIFE**

**By Titus Chu**

## **MESSAGE ONE: THE SISTERS: THE CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF A BLESSED CHURCH LIFE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The subject of this series of messages is “The Sisters, the Blessing of a Local Church Life.” Sisters, do you realize that you are such a blessing? Probably this subject provokes all sorts of responses among you. Young sisters who hear this will say, “Amen! We can do it. We will be that virtuous sister. Praise the Lord!” But sisters who have been in the church life for a long time will respond, “Does this mean me? Can I still be a blessing? Oh Lord, thank You! You are telling me that I am not so old after all.” Your response is based on how long you have been in the church life. Older sisters might think, “Now we have been in the church life for many years. How can we be a blessing to the local church life? Actually, how can we be a blessing to anything at all? We cannot even be a blessing to ourselves.” But sisters, you still need to realize and remember who you are. You are the blessing of a local church life. No matter how long you have been in the church life, you should say to yourself, “Who am I? I’m a blessing! I’m a blessing to my local church!”

Sisters are the crucial element of a blessed church life. You might ask, “If sisters are so crucial, then what about the other saints? Aren’t they also crucial?” For example, what about the brothers? They are also the crucial element of a blessed church life. What about the older saints, and the younger saints? These saints are also the crucial element of a blessed church life. Every local church is the manifestation of the organic Body of Christ. In this organic Body of Christ every member is a blessing.

Whether you are a brother or a sister, an old one or a young one, a strong one or a limited one, you are the crucial element of a blessed church life. When you look at your physical body you realize that every member of your body is a blessing. Your eyes, your ears, your hands, and every part of you is a blessing. But each member of your body is a blessing in its own way. In the organic Body of Christ, manifested in local churches, every saint is a blessing to the church. You might say, “This is just political. Everyone is a blessing, and everyone is crucial. So to say that sisters are the crucial element of a blessed church life isn’t true.” But no, it is true! Sisters, your portion is unique and special. Brothers are blessings, but they are blessings in their way. Sisters are also blessings, and they are blessings in their way. There is no possible way a sister’s portion can be replaced. No brother can do a sister’s work. No brother can function as a sister. The sisters have their own particular portion, which makes them the crucial element of a blessed church life.

## **THE DIVINE BLESSINGS AND THE SISTERS**

### **Eve’s Weaknesses Brought in the Fall of Man**

This first point under “The Divine Blessings and the Sisters” may surprise us, because it doesn’t seem at all related to blessing. It was Eve’s weaknesses that brought in the fall of man. By giving in to the serpent’s temptation and eating the fruit from the forbidden tree, Eve caused man to fall. Of course Adam also ate of the fruit, but it is likely that without Eve’s influence Adam would not have fallen. At the beginning of human history man came into such trouble because of a dear sister. Adam was in trouble because Eve was in trouble. Man’s entire history was affected in such a terrible way, and we can do nothing about it.

However, God made both Adam and Eve coats of skin, which typify redemption. That means in eternity we will see Eve among all of God’s redeemed people. What would you say to Eve? You might say, “Eve, without you we wouldn’t have been in so much trouble. Even God Himself would not have had to go

through so much trouble to save us. Eve, don't you know that you are the source of all the problems in the human race?" Do you know how Eve would answer? She would say, "Look at the New Jerusalem. Look at the throne by the river of life. Look at the tree of life. Look at all of God's work. Look at your own transformation. You tell me I made such a terrible mistake. But without my mistake, how could you have all this?" Then you would have to reply, "Eve, I really appreciate you. I don't like it that you got into trouble, but I'm still thankful. If you didn't get into trouble, and Adam just ate from the tree of life and took in the divine life, I would never have experienced so much. I would never have known God, or His love, or His operating economy in such a way. It's because of your weakness that I truly know God's love. I know how the Lord Jesus had to die for me. I know what it was like to be fallen, and I know what it was like to be saved. I have experienced the whole process of God's organic salvation. I know transformation, sanctification, glorification, and conformation. I know all of these riches. Eve, I'm thankful. Because of your mistake, I'm blessed."

Sisters, on one hand you must realize that the entire human race was brought into a fallen condition because of Eve's weaknesses. But you must also realize that because of Eve, God's love, God's wisdom, God's economy, God's operation, and God's very person all were revealed to become our experience. Do you realize that sisters are so powerful, even when they make mistakes? When a brother makes a mistake, it can often be settled easily. But when a sister makes a mistake, it seems very hard to undo. Yet Eve could testify this to us that the mistakes of the sisters can turn into the blessings of the Body. Sisters, how often do you feel that you have 'goofed'? It's possible you might say, "Many times." But do you realize that God always uses your mistakes? He uses them to bring blessings to the church life. Of course, you shouldn't say, "If that is the case, I will abide in my weaknesses and cause problems." No, that is not healthy. But you should learn from Eve that even your mistakes can be turned by God into a blessing.

## **The Faithfulness, Submission, and Diligence of Noah's Wife Caused the Family to Experience the Full Salvation According to God's Economy**

At the beginning of the Bible there is almost no mention of sisters. For instance, with Abel, with Seth, and with Enoch there is no mention of sisters. Eventually we come to Noah, and again there is no mention of sisters. We never learn anything about Noah's wife, but the Bible does mention one fact: the ark contained eight members of Noah's household. This means the ark contained Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their three daughters-in-law. These eight members of Noah's household all came into the ark and were saved from the flood. Yet before the flood came, how long did it take to build the ark? It took at least 100 years. Furthermore, Noah built the ark far away from any ocean or sea. People must have thought that he was a mental case. Perhaps for the first few years he told people, "I am building this ark because God has spoken to me. One day judgment is coming." Surely they all laughed at him. For a few years this might be endurable, but eventually it would become unbearable. After five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years, and so on, how could Noah continue to build the ark in the middle of nowhere, with people mocking him for wasting his life? But Noah was faithful to build the ark. While Noah built the ark, who suffered the most? It was his poor wife. Noah's wife did not receive the revelation from God about the ark. She only knew that Noah saw something, and that she had to follow him. Yet her role was so significant. Her faithfulness, submission, and diligence caused the entire family to experience the full salvation according to God's economy.

How many wives could handle this situation? Perhaps Noah was originally wealthy, and squandered all of his resources on building the ark. Suppose you marry a husband who is a millionaire, and then he sees a vision and decides to serve the Lord. Every year he invests all of his time and money into his serving, and there seems to be nothing to show for it. Every year he brings in nothing, and yet he keeps draining all of his resources. Year after year goes by, and people are now mocking

him. Could we submit to such a husband? Yet Noah's wife could handle this. If we were Noah's wife we would say to him, "I never wanted to marry a mental case. What happened to you? You say you received a vision. But what kind of vision is this? You waste all our money and build a huge boat, and there's no water. This whole thing is terrible." If the flood came after ten or twenty years, it would be bearable. But after one hundred years? We don't even live one hundred years anymore. Every morning Noah went to work on the ark. He even had to repair any wood that had rotted after so long a time. He spent all of his life working on the ark, and meanwhile his wife was there being so kind and patient. But eventually the ark was built, and the family experienced God's full salvation.

Full salvation can only be experienced because of the dear sisters. And it requires the exercise of patience. In the church life the first lesson a sister has to learn is to live with the impossible. The church life is an impossible life. Your husband, if he is committed to the church life, has committed himself to an impossibility. Perhaps your husband labors day and night, and you are there as his dear wife. At the end of the year you might ask him, "How many people have you preached the gospel to?" He says, "Not too many. At least a hundred." Then you ask, "How many people got saved?" He says, "Not too many. Maybe ten or fifteen." "How many got baptized?" "Not too many. Maybe three or five." "How many came into the church life this year?" "Zero. But we don't look at today. We hope for tomorrow." This might cause you to be frustrated or disappointed. But do you realize that your husband is building the ark? It may take many years for something to be produced. It took Noah more than one hundred.

Surely this process is hard on the wife. The husband can say, "God has spoken to me! I have the divine calling! Praise the Lord! I will serve Him with everything!" Perhaps he would even say, as Watchman Nee once said, "Either I will be martyred, or I will be raptured." What kind of life is this? The wife would argue with her husband, "If you are raptured, then who am I going to rely on? If you are martyred, how can I live on this

earth? You are not so human. I am human. You shouldn't say these kinds of things." But sisters, a husband that can say, "Either I will be martyred, or I will be raptured," is the best husband. A husband who can declare, "My whole life and my whole person belong to Jesus Christ!" is a good husband, a trustworthy husband, and a husband that really loves you. For you to stand with such a husband requires faithfulness, submission, and diligence. Then you and your husband together will be able to enter into God's full salvation.

### **The Submission of Sarah Enabled Abraham to Sojourn on this Earth According to God's Calling.**

In our experience of God's full salvation, life becomes a sojourn on the earth. The submission of Sarah enabled Abraham to sojourn on this earth according to God's calling. We might not appreciate Sarah. For example, when God told Sarah she would bear a son, she laughed. Sarah was the one who caused Abraham to conceive a son with Hagar. Worse than that, she was responsible for casting out Hagar and Ishmael. She forced Abraham to cast them out because of her own jealousy. Doesn't Sarah seem to be a cruel person? But look at how the Bible speaks of her. The Bible says that she called Abraham, "my lord." This is interesting, because it shows that God sees people differently than we do. We may look at a sister and say, "No good." But God sees something very good. Sarah laughed at God's promise, she caused her husband to go to Hagar, and then she forced Hagar and Ishmael to be cast out. It seems that she has no humanity. But God appreciated her. Sisters, from the beginning you should learn to have this ability. When you have a problem with another sister, learn to say, "I don't like her, but God loves her. I don't appreciate her, but God appreciates her. I'm bothered with her, but God is delighted with her." This is the principle of Sarah. Then out of Sarah's submission, by calling Abraham "my lord," Abraham was able to sojourn on this earth according to God's calling.

### **The Willingness of Rebekah Enabled Isaac to Enjoy His Father's Full Provision and His Mother's Tent**

The most peculiar sister in the whole Bible is Rebekah. She was biased and manipulative. Physically she was beautiful, but her behavior was very ugly. She encouraged her son (Jacob) to deceive her husband, and she caused her sons to fight with one another. She manipulated her sons and her husband in order to get what she wanted. When Esau was angry and was going to kill Jacob, Rebekah said to Jacob, "You had better go away. Why should I lose two sons in one day?" This shows that she was still manipulating. Until then she didn't even care about Esau. All of a sudden Esau became her son again. Would we like such a sister? Rebekah has so many limitations and peculiarities. However, look at how Rebekah behaved earlier when Abraham's servant first came looking for a wife for Isaac. When the servant found Rebekah she instantly said, "I will go." She quickly decided to marry Isaac. This is such a sweet portion of the Bible! Rebekah was so decisive, and so one with God. Eventually she came to Isaac, married him, and went with him into his mother's tent. This means that Rebekah enabled Isaac to enjoy his father's full provision in his mother's tent, that is, in grace.

Rebekah shows us that every sister has something to be appreciated, and whatever is to be appreciated will become a real blessing to the Lord. We should not consider sisters to be in only one of two possible categories: "perfect" or "failure." The Lord appreciates sisters differently than we do. No sister is perfect, and no sister is a failure. The Lord put us all together in the church life, and all of us are different. Every sister has problems and limitations, but they should not cause us so much concern. We should remember that every sister has something to be appreciated which can become the source of God's blessing. Even Rebekah, such a peculiar and manipulative sister, had something to be appreciated which became a blessing.

### **Even Though the Work of the Spirit is on Individuals, Jacob and his Wives Generated God's Testimony**

The next four sisters are much worse than Rebekah. It is hard to believe that the nation of Israel, God's holy nation, came from Jacob and his four wives. Not one of Jacob's wives had any dignity. They were constantly jealous and competing with one another. Yet out of such sisters, God produced a nation. This is surprising. We would argue with God, "How could you use these four women? Rachel and Leah are terrible, and so are their maids!" But God would say, "You are foolish. Only by these four sisters can My testimony be produced. I transformed Jacob by using his household. I raised up My testimony through Jacob and his wives." The Lord would remind us of this in the church life. Why does the Lord allow sisters in the church life who seem to cause problems? Because He wants to produce His testimony.

### **The Lord Was Able to Have a Called Race for His Testimony Through the Mother of Moses**

Unlike Jacob's wives, Moses' mother seems perfect. It is difficult to find anything wrong with her. After generating His testimony, the Lord was able to have a called race for His testimony through the mother of Moses. It was through his mother that Moses was kept alive, which allowed him to be used by God for the sake of His called people.

### **Boaz was Able to Establish a Proper Testimony Through Ruth's faithful Submission, Seeking, and Laboring**

In the entire Bible it is difficult to find a sweeter sister than Ruth. Ruth is the most pure, the most submissive, the most seeking, and yet the most diligent sister in the Bible. Through her faithful submission, seeking, and laboring eventually she married Boaz, and he was able to establish a proper testimony. All of these sisters we have covered so far show us that for us to go on with the Lord, for us to grow, and for us to be the Lord's testimony, we need all kinds of sisters.



### **Israel, the Lord's Testimony, was Able to be Saved Through Esther's Risking of Her Own Life**

In the church life we should have pure sisters like Ruth, and we should also have sacrificing ones such as Esther. Esther was so bold, and declared "If I should die, I will die for the sake of the Israelites, God's kingdom and God's testimony. What the Lord is after must be first." This is marvelous. Israel, the Lord's testimony, was able to be saved through Esther risking her own life.

### **From these Examples We See that Every Aspect of the Lord's Work is Related to the Sisters**

These key sisters in the Old Testament show us all the aspects of the church life. In the church life we must experience a full salvation. In the church life we must sojourn on this earth. In the church life we must enjoy the Father's full provision. In the church life we must abide in grace. In the church life we must generate God's testimony. In the church life we must become a called race. In the church life we establish a proper testimony. And even when there are problems, in the church life we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the Lord's testimony.

### **THE DIVINE BLESSINGS AND THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN OF PROVERBS 31**

The remainder of this message and the next three messages are all based on a booklet entitled "The Virtuous Woman." This booklet is based on Proverbs 31:10-31. The "virtuous woman" can also be translated the "woman of worth." The sisters from the Old Testament that we have mentioned can all be considered women of worth. They are valuable to the Lord and to His testimony. They are not perfect, yet they are valuable. We should not worry about the fact that we are not perfect, and we should not get discouraged. We should even allow the church life to

manifest our imperfections. When we are alone in our room praying or reading the Bible we may feel that we are the most marvelous sister on earth. But in the church life we get exposed. We find out, “I am not so perfect. I still have a lot to learn, and a lot to receive.” It is in the church life that we can become a woman of worth who is valuable to the Lord. Now we will consider the virtues of the woman of worth, as described in Proverbs 31, who becomes such a blessing to the Lord and to His testimony.

### **The Virtuous Woman is Produced by the Work of the Triune God**

*Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price  
is far above rubies.  
— Proverbs 31:10*

The price of a virtuous woman is “far above rubies.” This means that the virtuous woman is produced by the work of the Triune God. The booklet, “The Virtuous Woman” covers this point in detail:

*The portion concerning the virtuous woman begins with an introduction: ‘Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.’“ Actually, every husband should say, “Praise the Lord, I found one! My wife is a virtuous woman.” An elder in a local church who is wise will look at all the sisters and say, “Praise the Lord! The Lord has given us so many women of worth. They are just like rubies.*

*In Hebrew, the word for ‘price’ means ‘worth, value, i.e. that which is of merit according to a standard, and so considered precious.’ The Hebrew word for ‘ruby’ is ‘paniyn.’ ‘Paniyn’ comes from the Hebrew word ‘pen,’ which means the corner of a house. One Bible dictionary indicates that the real significance of*

*the Hebrew word 'paniyn' is unclear. Both the Revised Standard Version and the Old Testament Recovery Version translate 'paniyn' as 'jewel,' which may refer to any kind of precious stone. The footnote in the Recovery Version shows that the same Hebrew word can also be translated as 'coral.' ... Therefore, this Hebrew word may primarily be translated as 'ruby' and 'coral.' Spiritually speaking, a ruby signifies the transformation of the Spirit, a coral signifies the growth in life, and 'pen' (corner) signifies the connecting function in a local church.*

For a virtuous woman to have a price “far above rubies” is a profound matter. The Hebrew word for “ruby” has three possible meanings. It not only designates a precious stone, but is also related to coral, and to the corner of a house. We already know that a virtuous woman is like a precious stone, because she has experienced the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. But how is a virtuous woman like coral? Coral is something that grows in the sea, yet it is attached to the ground under the sea. In the Bible the sea signifies death. A virtuous woman is like coral, having the ability to overcome all the power of death by being attached to Christ.

A virtuous woman is able to grow in life even when surrounded by death waters. It seems that the church life is filled with death waters, including all sorts of difficulties. But coral grows in the death waters. Outwardly the environment may be difficult, even impossible. But the virtuous woman survives and is still growing. The Lord looks at her and says, “She is a ruby.” She is a precious stone, and she is a living coral. Furthermore, she is the corner of a house. She joins two walls together. In the church life the brothers are like walls. They are the ones who stand. And the sisters are the corners, connecting the walls and keeping the church life together. In speaking of such a sister, the Lord would say, “Here is a virtuous woman, a woman of worth. Her value is far above rubies. She is a precious stone, going through the

process of transformation. She is a coral, growing in life and overcoming death. And she is a corner of the church life, keeping the church together. That is why she is so valuable to Me.” This shows us how precious it is to be a sister in the church life.

**The Virtuous Woman is  
Trusted by Her Husband in His Heart**

*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in  
her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She  
will do him good and not evil all the days of her  
life.*

— *Proverbs 31:11-12*

The virtuous woman is trusted by her husband in his heart. “Husband” in this verse can also indicate the leading ones in the church life. First, a husband can say, “I have such a wonderful wife. She has so much love and care. In my heart I fully trust in her.” Then a leading one can also say, “I am restful. In the local church in which I serve, there are a number of sisters who are women of worth. They pray for the saints. They labor for the church life. In my heart I know I can trust in them.” The virtuous woman is a blessing both to her family and to the church life. Sisters, you should realize how important and precious you are! Praise the Lord for the value of a virtuous woman!

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