

## **WHAT A PROPHET MUST SEE**

**By Titus Chu**

### **GOD WORKS THROUGH SPEAKING**

*On April 28, 2005, a number of brothers from across the Great Lakes area gathered in response to the great need for prophets to be raised up among us. Every locality, if it is to function properly for the building up of the Body of Christ, must have some who can function as prophets! This was the burden of this time with brother Titus. Every locality must have some who can be perfected to be prophets in these days!*

Every time the Lord has desired to do something, He has done so by speaking. To bring about His creation, He spoke. After man fell, to take care of the situation, He also spoke. Generation after generation and age after age, the Lord has operated through speaking. This is a principle. The Lord works by speaking; thus He needs those who can work together with Him in this way.

### **FRUSTRATIONS TO PROPHEYSYING**

I feel sorry that for so long a time we have discouraged the saints from learning to speak, and have instead stressed on such things as “the three-minute prophecy.” Because of this shortage we have become weak, for we have cut off the potential for the Lord’s speaking among us in the churches. Furthermore, speaking seems to have become something limited only to a privileged few. This is serious, for it introduces hierarchy among us. In other words, if certain brothers do not speak, then no one can, and after they do, everyone has to follow what they have said. I strongly disagree with this psychology. I have not heard that the “speaking brothers” themselves ever promoted such a thing, therefore I hope they would give me the freedom to say that what is commonly practiced has become something that is not found in the Bible.

In the New Testament church life, there was no such thing as brothers being limited to speaking briefly by way of testimony in the meetings. Instead, what is revealed in 1 Corinthians 14 is that there are a group of prophets who are able to prophesy “one by one.” The prevailing attitude discourages such functioning, and encourages instead only short testimonies. Such a practice, however, is not in the Bible!

### **MANY AMONG US CAN OPERATE AS PROPHETS**

In spite of our weakened situation, a good number of “typical Americans” can still be found meeting among the churches in this area. I am Chinese; my logic and my background limit my ability to operate among those who grew up in America. Real Americans are the best ones to reach other Americans. For this reason, I encourage you who are Americans to treasure yourself and appreciate your being here.

I am thankful that the Lord has raised up around seventy local churches in this area. I believe this number will soon reach one hundred if we know how to labor properly. The Lord has preserved many brothers who came in among us in the 1970’s. I no longer have the ability to labor as I did then, but the Lord does not grow old; He is still fresh. One thing I did not have to deal with when I labored as a young brother, however, was a history. Today, whenever the saints try to initiate something, they must consider this and that, and thus often eventually do nothing. A paralysis seems to have set in among us. Therefore I strongly say to you brothers - appreciate yourselves; appreciate the local church you are in; appreciate the Lord’s recovery; and appreciate the Lord’s move among you. Even if the number meeting as the church in your locality is small, your testimony can be very healthy!

## **THE VISION OF THE PROPHETS DETERMINES THEIR FUNCTION**

Prophets are the spiritual strength of a local church. The vision of the prophets will determine how their local church will go on. Don't think that this is a light thing, for it is very easy to deviate from what has been committed to us by the Lord. Therefore, if you wish to exercise as a prophet in your local church, the first thing I would say to you is that you must be a spiritual person who is under a controlling vision. For this, you must be a spiritual man, for your vision cannot be kept by any other means. You cannot by your natural strength guard such a vision. If your vision is not clear, sooner or later the church or churches you serve will become something "other." Your vision is the controlling element for your life-long operation.

## **THE VISION AND REALIZATION NECESSARY TO PROPERLY FUNCTION AS A PROPHET**

### **Christ as the centrality of God's Economy**

What constitutes our vision? Our vision is of God's economy, and the first matter in God's economy is Christ. It is a shame for anyone who loves Jesus to stress on anything else other than Christ.

Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God for us to lay hold of. Whether or not something is taught or practiced among us, Christ Himself must be the measure. Christ, as the embodiment of the Triune God for us to lay hold of, is the One we must pursue. A prophet must therefore be a pursuing person. If you desire to operate as a prophet in your locality, you must pursue to lay hold, experience, and live out Christ. Christ must be your focus. When we are together, we should talk about Christ. If, in our church life, the element of Christ is absent, the reality of the church is absent.

I have visited denominations and observed how well they are able to hold dinners and orchestrate other events, but where is the content of Christ? In the church life, the only one we should focus upon is Christ. If something other than Christ becomes an issue in the church life, we should realize that we are off. This holds true for both our personal life and our corporate life.

### **The Church is the Body of Christ**

The church as the Body of Christ is the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22). This reveals that the church is totally an organic matter. We are here as the Body, but we are not the totality of the Body. Anything such as the Body that is real and yet abstract is difficult to apply. In China, for instance, the term “the people” is often used, and surely this group of one billion people passed through something together. There is such a people, but still the term is abstract in the absence of any way to ascertain what is really the case among them, as with a vote or a survey. Even so, the communists claimed they represented the will of “the people” when they oppressed and punished those who did not go along with them. The accused had no way to argue back, even though each of them was also one of “the people”! Around sixty million of “the people” eventually died under that regime. We should realize that we need to exercise care when using a term that is both real and abstract.

The Body is real, yet when taken beyond the local level, it becomes something abstract. The church is truly the Body of Christ. Yet Paul also said that the church in Corinth was the Body of Christ (). Therefore every local church is a miniature “type” of the Body of Christ. Therefore we must be very careful when we use the term “the feeling of the Body.” I have heard it said, “Why don’t you fellowship with the Body?” Be careful, for this can only be applied locally, because who can practically be recognized as representing “the Body” once you go beyond the level of the locality?

### **Christ is the Person of His Body**

We all are members of the Body of Christ. Therefore we must operate according to the person of the Body of Christ. When you see a body, you see a person, not the body separately. You don't really address my body when you talk to me, you address the person within my body; it is the person of the body that is crucial. Furthermore, the person and the body cannot be separated. When my body comes, I come. If one day we speak of the Body of Christ without stressing upon Christ as the person of the Body, we are making a very foolish mistake. Thus I am troubled when I hear some brothers say, "Why don't you fellowship with the Body?" If some claim to represent the Body, they replace Christ! The Body has one Head and one person - the exalted, pneumatic Christ.

### **The Life of the Body of Christ is the Processed Triune God**

Christ is the person of the Body of Christ. What then is the life of the Body? The life of the Body is the processed Triune God as the Life-giving Spirit dispensed in the divine and mystical realm. The Body of Christ is itself a realm, being divine and mystical. In the Body there is a constant dispensing and infusing of life from Christ as the Life-giving Spirit. Even within our physical body, every cell is replaced every few years. If you knew me seven years ago, and said, "Nice to see you again," I could technically say, "But you don't! All that was me then has disappeared! What you now see now is new!" The Body is always fresh and new, for Christ as the Life-giving Spirit is always infusing and dispensing His life into it. Every member of the Body should be involved in this process. In order to participate in this being made new physically, I must eat and exercise. It is the same in the Body of Christ.

### **As His Living Members, We Should Have an Operation in Christ's Body through the Operation of His Word**

As those who hold to Christ as the person of the Body and experience the processed Triune God dispensed as the life of the Body, we should begin to have an operation in Christ's Body. This divine operation issues out from the enthroned Christ in His headship and lordship through His feeding, nourishing, strengthening, life-giving *rhema* according to His eternal, purposeful, economical *logos*. (Not only does He feed and nourish us; He also speaks to us instantly according to His constant word. For example, one who becomes an engineer does so by continually taking in the "instant word" of his classes according to the "constant word" of the body of engineering knowledge. In the church life, there must continually be such instant speaking according to the constant word of God's economy and purpose.) There is no word that God speaks to us that is for the speaking itself; every word that God speaks is for the accomplishment of His economy and purpose.

God governmentally works with all the members of the Body to produce His riches in the Body. In this one Body, God only has one word, the *logos*, which is simply His economy. With this Body there is also an instant word that is spoken through many, many saints. All the instant speakings together generate the Lord's testimony. The Lord spoke through His apostles, and then through those who followed after them. Some of their speaking became the "building blocks," while other speakings simply met some timely need. Regardless, it is *rhema* when it is spoken, and this instantaneous *rhema* corresponds to the *logos*, the constant word.

I needed to encourage someone close to me, so to achieve this objective, I contemplated what would be the appropriate utterance to bring about this encouragement. My "*logos*" regarding this person is that he would achieve a certain joyful and completed state. My desire for this never changes, so it is my purpose.

My intention is that he would achieve this fulfillment. Thus, in addition to all I have already spoken, I realize I need to speak something further to insure he achieves what I hold in view concerning him. In the local church life there should always be such continuous speaking to bring about what is in the *logos* of God.

### **God Speaks Through the Gifts to Develop the Gifts**

God also works with all the saints by speaking to them through the gifts, so every saint who is such a gift or who is becoming one is very crucial. As you prophesy, the saints are able to possess the *rhema* word and be brought into the *logos* word, and even are strengthened to experience what the Lord has arranged for them for their development into such gifts themselves. We must learn to take everything from the Lord, whether logical or unreasonable. Eventually, you have to be able to say, "Lord, I realize that not only there is feeding, nourishing, strengthening, instant speaking and constant speaking - even more, You arrange all things in such a way that continually surprises me." As a Christian, you must realize there is no such thing as being lucky, unlucky, fortunate, or unfortunate. No. Everything that takes place in our lives comes to us from the governmental hand of the Lord.

### **The Body is a Grand Matter**

The Body has experienced a constant organic growth, and also experiences an instant organic growth. This is an inclusive enlargement! If you were to really see the Body of Christ, you could realize this. Quickly in the beginning, the church in Jerusalem grew from seventy to a number of thousands over a few years. This produced a constant growth that spread out to many cities. Even in this one hour, do you realize how the Body has grown? Some have been added into the Body in Africa, in Asia, in America, in Europe... you must have this kind of realization, or else your realization is peculiar.

It is difficult take a definitive “snapshot” of the Body, for it is continually growing. In a local church you may not see this, but certainly in its universal aspect, the Body has been constantly enlarging, for it has never ceased to grow since it began. This is the increase of Christ! Even should numbers seem to shrink, no member can ever be lost once gained. Therefore, the Body can only be added to. Everyone who is saved becomes a part of Christ’s increase in the Body.

### **The Body Receives only what is of Christ**

In the Body, there can be no other element other than Christ. Anything else will be rejected or exposed as unfitting. If you add a piece of artificial bone to a growing child, in a year it will no longer fit, for the body of that child is growing! Whatever brings about the growth of the Body must be of Christ, and the Body is always organically growing. Anything that is not organically related to the growth of the Body is not of the Body.

### **The Local Church Includes All the Believers in a Locality**

Besides seeing Christ and the Body, we must also see that a local church is the expression of the Body within a locality, possessing only Christ as her riches, life, and content. Every local church is “mini-type” of the Body, for through the local church the Body is expressed. A local church stands on the ground of locality, which is the ground of oneness. How many saints are in the church in Toledo? We cannot answer with certainty, for every born-again believer currently within Toledo is a member of the church in Toledo. We cannot refuse any believer in Toledo, for if we do, we do not stand upon the ground of oneness. We cannot be selective concerning those who believe: not according to age, culture, language, doctrinal differences, or whatever. There cannot be a Chinese church, or an American church or a young people’s church, for the church is the church. It is just that simple.



If we wish to practice the local church life, we must be inclusive. We receive everyone who believes. And if you do not believe, we preach the gospel to you. We are not selective. Your inclusiveness determines whether or not you are a real local church. Brother Lee's statement when he first came to the United States was "the more inclusive, the better." Other believers should not feel we are peculiar. Even if a clergyman should walk into our meeting, we should welcome him.

### **The Local church is an Expression of the Body of Christ**

The local church is a new creation, with no element of the world. As the expression of the Body of Christ, the local church is heavenly. You may have to use elements of the world (such as chairs!) but such things cannot be considered as a part of the church.

### **The Practices of a Local Church Must Be Centered on Christ**

The practices of the local church should be Christ-oriented, Christ-infusing, Christ-testifying, and ultimately Christ-magnifying. Through your prophesying within your local church, people should see Christ. Such a church must receive everything that is scriptural and spiritual. If the Bible says it, we should receive it. For instance, we should even receive someone who speaks in tongues, even though we may hold Paul's view of the practice, that it does more harm than good when practiced publicly.

I once visited a Three-Self congregation in China. I met with a few of them, and they invited me to their Saturday morning prayer-meeting. I expected just a few saints to be present, but what I found were nearly four hundred, or one-fourth of the congregation, kneeling there, praying silently to the Lord. Everything was so godly.

Some may consider them not to be in the same “league” with the churches taking the way of what we call the Lord’s recovery, but can any church among us boast of such a weekly time of prayer? Transportation there is not convenient, yet they pay the price to come and kneel down together. When inclusiveness is practiced, you are very open to watch how the Lord is moving, realizing we do not have everything. If we are inclusive, we are able to receive from others. Sometimes we declare the Lord is with us, yet we must also admit that the Lord is with others also. Shall we not receive from such?

### **Those Practicing the Local Church Lay Hold on the common faith**

The local church also lays hold on the common faith, which concerns who God is in His Person and what He has and will accomplish in Christ. For this we stand firm. We also refuse those who are fornicators, idol worshippers, and those who intentionally create division. We should realize, however, that one who goes into a temple is not necessarily an idolater. We do not refuse someone who is merely overtaken by weakness, but someone who becomes such a person, such as one who is a fornicator, which is grounds for separation and refusal.

### **Because the Local Church Holds the Living Christ, We Are Not for Anything of Routine**

In the churches, we should beware of anything that may replace Christ. Thus, first of all, we must beware of a routine church life, for routine can easily replace Christ. Sometimes the saints automatically go to meetings on certain nights. This is not struggling to gain Christ! Secondly, we must beware of a religious living that replaces the operation of fresh divine infusing and speaking. It is not how many meetings you attend or how much time you spend with the saints, but rather how much fresh, divine infusing there is. It should never be that you walk out of a meeting having received nothing of Christ!

At the Lord's table, you should have the Lord's presence. Afterwards, if there is someone who speaks, it must be with fresh, divine speaking and infusing and operation; there must be something fresh from the Lord. You must ask the Lord to use you for this. Third, beware lest position or place replace organic manifestation. You may coordinate an event, yet you should not count that as something much before the Lord, nor should you simply desire to be an elder for the sake of having a greater function. Some feel it is pointless to be in the church life if they cannot gain some such place in the church life. The reason they feel this way is because they aimed at it from the beginning. Those who seek a place or position in the church life will not find it possible to have much organic manifestation. We need to be spiritual to the point that we only care for the organic manifestation that is a profit to the Lord for His testimony.

We cannot stress on anything other than Christ We must also be wary of stressing any person, teaching, ministry, method of work, or way of practice, for to do so will replace Christ. I have heard some say, "The ministry today is higher than the ministry of Witness Lee!" and others proclaim, "Today is the age of Brother So-and-So." When the young ones feel they have to make such statements, things are off. Where is Christ? Is not Christ the answer to everything? We should desire that in our meetings only Christ is exalted! Yet still some insist on things such as stressing a certain person or teaching, or a method of work. Haven't we been damaged enough by such things already? Many localities were doing well until an emphasis on a certain practice took away most of what was left of the saints' initiative and morale.

### **The Bible is our Unique Standard**

We also must be wary lest any slogan or spiritual declaration replace the Bible as our unique standard. In one place hangs a banner that says, “We must abide in the up-to-date speaking of the ministry.” I asked a brother to give me one verse from the Bible that backed this statement up. Even those in the denominations have some verses from the Bible they can point to to back them up! Those who posted these banners could not say it was based on anything in the Word, even though many among them were both brilliant and very capable. Oh, how religion can blind people! We are Christians. As Christians, we believe and practice what is found in the Bible.

### **The Work Must Not Lose Sight of Its Object: to Raise Up the churches as the Testimony of Christ**

Let us also take heed lest the work replace the testimony. God has called us to be a testimony, yet it seems that on this earth there is no group quite like us; so able to focus all those within it upon the work. A brother who was serving the young people once said, “Those who served in the past never had such great numbers attending as we do now!” I do not say this is right or wrong; but we should never compromise the truth for the sake of work. After all, was it not a great number who urged Pilate to crucify Christ? As those who seek to be prophets for the building up of the churches, your desire should be not to do a great work, but to raise up your local church to be a strong testimony of Christ. Anyone who cares for work will eventually be caught with divisiveness.

### THE GREAT NEED TODAY

Today what the Lord has divinely committed to the churches must be upheld by the operation of the prophets. This is the reason for this time. Every local church needs speaking. Without adequate speaking, a local church cannot be strong. Some took what Brother Lee said about three-minute prophesying very legally, and because of it, prophets have not been developed among the churches, and the churches have suffered from the lack of supply. Yet Brother Lee told me emphatically, "Titus, I am not at all against the prophet speaking in the church meetings. The problem is that we do not have enough prophets!" It is true that for someone to come up to speak without life, light, utterance or impact is to waste everyone's time. To my understanding, Brother Lee encouraged three-minute speaking to develop prophets. His word, however, has been taken to the point that in some places, whoever spoke longer became sinful! Without the oracle of the Lord, however, the church goes nowhere. Every local church should be directly under the headship of the Lord, yet many seemingly have lost that ability.

The Lord needs prophets to transmit what He has for His people. It is the prophets who "blow the trumpet" in the local churches (1 Cor. 14:8). When the prophets are prevailing, the entire church becomes prevailing. When the prophets become common, the whole church becomes common. The condition of the prophets determine the condition of the church. The church life needs joyful prophets these days; we have enough in the way of teaching. Be real with the saints. If you are a person in joy, the church life will become joyful, and if you are rich in truth, the church where you are will pursue the truth. If you are growing properly, the local church where you are will also advance. If I have not been advancing, will not the saints who need your speaking be hindered from advancing as they should? A local church should be a congregation of pursuers. A church will never deviate from God's economy if the prophets lay hold on the commitment according to the divine vision.

May the Lord raise up such prophets among us in these days!

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