

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN AND HOW WE SHOULD OPERATE

By Titus Chu

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN

Let me just speak to you in a very simple way. I would like to give you a view of what the Lord has given to us, and how the Lord desires us to operate. This is very simple, and once you have heard it, you may say, “Oh, I know all of that!” Yet for some reason we are short of the reality of these things.

We Have Been Given the Lord Himself

Firstly, the Lord has given us Himself. We have the Lord Himself. No one would disagree with that, right? The moment you were saved, what did you receive? Whom did you receive? You received the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing more and nothing less. If we deviate from “we are only for the Lord Jesus Christ, we are only for this Savior, and we are only for loving Him,” then we know something is wrong with us. We should know that the day we were saved, we were saved by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. And the day the Lord will come back, we all will see Him. At that time, all our successes will not mean anything. All our “medals” will not mean anything. The only thing that will matter when we see Him is how much Christ we have gained throughout our life. I am pretty sure that when we see the Lord Jesus, some of us will experience much more joy, much more honor, and much more glory compared with others. Do you know why? Because throughout their lives, some were endeavoring to gain Him and only Him. So you realize with the Christian life there is nothing but the Lord Himself. Then all the other things we have received develop based on this fact.

The Lord is Christ

When we see the Lord, we need to see at least three aspects: the Lord is Christ, the Lord is life, and the Lord is Spirit. Brothers, do you realize whenever you talk about the Lord, these three things are involved? Who is the Lord? The first aspect is that He is the Christ. In other words, He is the anointed One in carrying out God's economy. Whenever you say, "Oh Christ," do you realize that it does not merely denote a person, it denotes a person with divine heavenly commitment? For example, when you say "George W. Bush," that indicates a person. When you say "President Bush," that indicates a person with a commitment. He has a job with a commitment, and he needs to fulfill that commitment. We need to see that the Lord has a commitment. The Lord is "the Christ," which means He is fulfilling the divine heavenly commitment.

You know brothers, when we say "Lord Jesus Christ," we are indicating three things: He is the Lord, He is Jesus, and He is Christ. The title "Lord" shows His place. He is the King of Kings, He is the Lord of Lords, He has dominion over the universe and over everything. The name "Jesus" means that He is God with man. He is the very God who has become our Savior. Then "the Christ" means that He is carrying us according to God's economy. Christ means the anointed one. The point I am making here is that we have been given the Lord. The Lord is the Lord Christ, which means that He is carrying out and fulfilling His economy.

The Lord is Life

Now, in order for Him to fulfill His economy, He is our life. This is the second aspect of who our Lord is. Christ is our life. Colossians 3:4 tells us, "When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory." Our eventual appearing with Him in glory is a matter of life. So brothers, you need Christ. You need life.

The Lord is Spirit

Then the third aspect is the Spirit, which is the reality of life and substantiates life. Let me illustrate in this way. Americans like bloody meat and we call that “juicy steak.” When I first came to the United States, I couldn’t believe that when I would slice my meat, “blood” would come out. I was amazed that people would really eat this. How could that be? Until one day I tried it, and I realized, “Oh, it tastes so good, better than Chinese food.” What is that juice? I’ll call that “Spirit.” As the juice substantiates the flavor of the meat, the Spirit substantiates the life. Without eating the meat, the “food” cannot be experienced by us. But when you take it in, it becomes your enjoyment, your strength, and your source of energy, and it causes you to be different. What is that? That is the Spirit. The Spirit is life digested. When we say we need to give ourselves to something, what we give ourselves to is Christ. When we say we need to enjoy something, what we enjoy is life. When we say we need to substantiate something, that is the Spirit.

Let me give you an illustration. Physically, when we are working very hard, if we do not eat properly we will begin to feel chilly, weak, and even sick. It doesn’t mean we do not have life, but we are short of the vitality of life. Spiritually it is the same. If you do not stand one with the Lord for His purpose, if you are not taking in Christ as life, if you are not enjoying the juice of life which is the life-giving Spirit, then you will feel cold, chilly, and without strength. You will feel almost that you are spiritually sick.

We Have Been Given the Word

All of this that we have shared so far is what is given to us when we received the Lord. But furthermore, we have also received the Word. The Lord has given us the Bible. Don't you appreciate it? You should appreciate it. Now that you are saved, you have the Bible as God's word to you. Recently when some brothers visited Uganda they took along Bibles to distribute. What they discovered amazed us all. The people in Uganda were so desperate and so hungry for the Bible that they were grasping for a copy of their own as the brothers were handing them out. But here in the United States we don't have a problem to own a copy of the Bible. Our problem is that we have a Bible, but never read it. In fact, we may have many copies of the Bible, but the problem is that we don't read them. I tell you, brothers, if we don't read the Bible, something is wrong.

The Lord has given us His speaking. It is not something ethereal. It is real. It is something for us to enjoy. What is that? The Bible. The Bible is our food. The Bible is our strength. The Bible is our inspiration. The Bible is our regulation. The Bible is our living. The Bible helps us to walk on the healthy pathway. Once you have the word in this way, then when you walk into the meeting you will become such a life supply. If many saints throughout many homes are enjoying the word in such a rich way, then how rich will all our meetings become!

The word is interesting. Without the word, everything becomes dry. With the word, there is substance. Without the word, we merely talk about spiritual things. With the word, when we talk about spiritual things, we have the reality and the enjoyment of the spiritual things. The word gives us inspiration. The word gives us subjective sensational experiences. That's why in our meetings we may have so much praise offered according to the verses we have read. Even a small group of saints who are in the word can have an effect on a larger meeting. Anyway, brothers, treasure the Word.

God has given us the Lord who is Christ, life, and Spirit. And God has given us the Word for our inspiration, for our subjective experience, and for our leading, guiding and regulating. Praise the Lord for this!

We Have Been Given the Saints

Then more than this, the third item the Lord has given us is many saints. Sometimes I feel that the Lord has been very generous by giving us all the things we have fellowshiped so far to meet our needs. I wonder, do we appreciate them adequately? And even more, the Lord has given us many, many dear saints. Yet sometimes when I see very young brothers, I wonder, “Are the other saints too old for you?” But for some reason, the young saints like the older saints. It’s interesting. No matter what their age, the brothers just love to be with other brothers. The Lord has given us the saints. As long as we don’t make divisive issues, then every brother is lovely. Actually, every time we meet a Christian, that one is lovely. It is when we make an issue that there is a difficulty.

For instance, suppose you see a person and ask, “Are you a Christian?” He says, “Yes.” Then you might ask, “Do you love the Lord?” Again, he says, “Yes.” Oh, then your spirit is just happy. Then he might ask, “Where do you meet? I am a Pentecostal. Do you speak in tongues?” Already you feel awkward, but you may answer, “No, I don’t.” Then he might reply, “Oh, you’ve got to speak in tongues.” All of sudden, a wall has risen up. Why? Because an issue was made. The issue can be big, or it can be small. Right? You might say, “I am so young. I don’t like to be with the older ones.” Then the older ones might say, “I am so old. I don’t like to be with younger ones.” These are all issues.

In practicality, we have to be one with one another in order to express the oneness of Christ in reality. Think about it. Sometimes the Lord is very humorous. Do you know why? The Lord often puts two very different brothers together. For instance, one brother may be “sweetly firm.” The other may be “firmly sweet.” One smiles first, but he is very firm. What he wants is what he wants. He is sweetly firm. And the other brother at first appears to be very firm, but eventually people find that he is very sweet. When people first see him, they may think he is very tough until they really get to know him, and then they find that he is such a sweet person. The Lord has put the sweetly firm and the firmly sweet together, and asks, “My children, can you love one another?” It is interesting. The Lord gives us all kinds of different people, and then says, “I would like to build you brothers and sisters together as My corporate testimony in localities. This is My Body.”

We Have Been Given the Environment

Now in addition to these three items given to us, we should add one more. The Lord has also given us the environment. Do you realize, with Christians there is nothing called “unlucky.” With Christians, we can only say, “The Lord has His government.” For instance, I love Cleveland. But because of my allergies, one thing I dislike is the trees. If Cleveland were a desert, how good that would be. Look at my eyes, all red. But the Lord would say, “I like to put you in Cleveland.” Do you realize that nothing happening to you is lucky, and nothing happening to you is unlucky? Nothing happens to you that should cause you to say, “Oh, the Lord loves me so much.” And nothing happens to you that should cause you to say, “Oh Lord, why do You hate me?” The Lord never hates you. The Lord always measures the best to you. So eventually such matters as where you buy a house, who will be with you in the same district, how the meetings are, you have to learn that these are according to a governmentally arranged environment. No complaints. The Lord has given to us the environment.

HOW THE LORD DESIRES US TO OPERATE

Before we continue we need to remember, what are the things we received? Number one, the Lord, who is Christ, life, and Spirit. Number two, the Bible. Number three, the saints. Number four, the environment. This is what the Lord has given to every Christian. But even further, the Lord has brought us into a kind of living for us to exercise. What is this living? Number one, the Lord wants us to have the church life.

We All Must Have the Church Life

However, the church life is very hard to define. When I use the term “church life,” I have one kind of understanding. And when you use this term, you have your understanding. Whatever the definition is, we have to know there is the church life. Many terms have this difficulty. For example, the word “freedom.” Everyone has his definition of “freedom.” To some Americans, freedom means having the right to burn the American flag. But to other Americans, this is very offensive, and freedom to them would be having the right to sue the flag-burner. They each are exercising their freedoms, but the understanding is different. But whatever that is, freedom is still there.

In the Church Life We All Enjoy the Meetings

So now, what is the church life? I don't know how you define it, but remember that as long as you are a Christian, you must have a church life. Each local church will have the church life based on who their constituents are, based on their environment, and with the freedom for every member to enjoy their church life. Praise the Lord. Yet in enjoying the church life, we should not be flying in the air all the time. We must be very practical. With whom are we meeting to have the Lord's table? Treasure them and enjoy that meeting, because that is your church life. In the church life, we need the meetings.

***In the Church Life
We All Must Function***

In addition to the meetings, we also need the functioning. What does function mean? It means to fulfill your portion. The more we practice speaking, the more of what we speak will become our own riches. By exercising in life, functioning with truth, and functioning to encourage the saints, we will be functioning in a way that will give us the highest spiritual constitution. For instance, when you read the Bible, does a particular verse touch you? Then you should function: “Hi brother, let me tell you, this week I was reading a verse, and that verse was so good! It said, ‘Brothers, love one another,’ but I forget where it was. I just love this verse. ‘Brothers, we should love one another.’” That’s very good functioning. And by having shared that, you yourself were educated. So you may pray, “Lord, from now on I want to love all the brothers and sisters. I want all the brothers and sisters to love me. I want to have a church life focused with love.” You see, functioning is very helpful. So you need the meetings, and you need the functioning.

***In the Church Life
We All Must Have the Serving Life***

Then in the church life, you need the exercise of the serving life. Serve, don’t be a guest. I’d like to ask you a very interesting question. Are you a guest or are you a member? Let me tell you the difference. A member is a serving one. Those who arranged the chairs are serving ones. Those who merely sat on the chairs are guests. Those who prepared the snacks this morning are serving ones. Those who merely ate them are the guests. But we hope all the “guests” can also become “hosts.” Do I make sense? On the one hand every guest is to be honored. Yet to be an honorable guest can only last for a while. Eventually you must become a serving one. Even the new ones many times want to participate by bringing food to the love feast, or helping in the practical serving. By bringing something to the meeting they are partaking of the serving life in the church life. This causes a real sweetness in the church life.

We All Must Experience the Growth in Life

Then we should also have the aspect of growing in life. In the church life you need to grow. You can't just be in the church life year after year, year after year, and always remain the same. You need to be different. Suppose someone 20 years old was still only as big as the day they were born. Wouldn't the whole church be very worried? In the human life, a person grows in stature, grows in knowledge, and grows in human experience. Spiritual things are exactly the same. You need to grow. Don't just say, "I am in the church life, and everything is fine." Yes, as long as you are in the church life, in a sense you are protected. But the church life "protects" you for you to grow in life. If you are in the church life year after year, you should be growing, and this growing is related to the Spirit, to the Word, and to being with the saints. When I am in my spirit, then I have the life element for my growth. When I am in the Word, then I have the riches for my growth. When I am with the saints, I have the environment for my growth. Now I can grow in a healthy way.

We All Must Be Perfected

Along with our growth, we all need the aspect of being perfected. We may not appreciate the importance of being perfected, but actually if we want to grow properly we need to be perfected. For example, when I first came to this country in the early 1960's, there were very few Chinese here at that time. In general, there was a stereotype that all Chinese were uneducated laborers, or maybe owned a restaurant or a laundromat. It was very common for people to greet them with, "Hey, Charlie, where's your laundromat?" Even though this was insulting, eventually more and more Chinese came to this country and got a good education, even becoming highly educated. After some years it was no longer, "Hey, Charlie," but became, "Sir, are you a doctor?" or, "Are you a professor?"

Throughout Chinese history, there must have been many talented people who could have been doctors, professors, or engineers. But how many actually developed? Nearly none. The potential was always there, but it did not get developed or perfected. Yet in the last 40 years, so many Chinese have been “perfected” in this country that the high potential is able to be realized. With our spiritual potential it is the same. We all have genuine potential, but it needs to be developed. We need the spiritual perfecting in the local churches. May the Lord have mercy.

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