

Church Conference in Oklahoma City

February 11-13, 2022

Further Word
on Life and Service
for the Building Up
of the Body of Christ

Name _____

FURTHER WORD ON LIFE AND SERVICE FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Message One

The Judgment Seat of Christ Being a Major Factor for Our Living and Service

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 3:13-15; Rom. 14:10b, 12; Matt. 25:19;
Heb. 10:37; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Rev. 22:12

I. We will all be judged at the judgment seat of Christ—the judgment seat of God:

- A. Five judgments are revealed in the New Testament:
 - 1. The Lord Jesus being judged on the cross by God as our Substitute.
 - 2. As the house of God, the believers being judged by God in the church age—1 Pet. 4:17.
 - 3. The believers being judged at the judgment seat of Christ at His coming back.
 - 4. The living being judged at Christ's throne of glory before the millennium—Matt. 25:31-46.
 - 5. The dead unbelievers being judged by Christ at the great white throne after the millennium—Rev. 20:11-15.
- B. This truth has been almost completely hidden from the saints over the centuries:
 - 1. This judgment has nothing to do with a believer's salvation—cf. John 10:28-29.
 - 2. The Lord will judge the believers' living before the Lord and their work for Him after they have been saved—what they have practiced "whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).
 - 3. After the rapture and in the air, this judgment will happen; it will determine a believer's destiny in the millennial kingdom—Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19; Matt. 16:27; Luke 14:14.
 - 4. We will stand before Christ to give an account of our living and work; it will be a reckoning.
 - 5. We will be examined by the Lord, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and manifest the counsels of the heart that praise may be to each one from God—1 Cor. 4:5.
 - 6. How we need God's family judgment today for correction and transformation!—1 Pet. 4:17.
- C. Many Christians claim that as long as they are saved there will be no problem in the future judgment:
 - 1. We need to pay close attention to 1 Corinthians 3:13-15:
 - a. A Christian can "suffer loss" in verse 15 if his work (during this life) is burned.
 - b. This is not the loss of salvation, because Paul says of the man whose work is burned that "he himself shall be saved."
 - c. But he will be saved "as through fire;" some sort of punishment will not be pleasant.
 - d. We must be careful and faithful, for when the Lord returns He will require of us a full account of our living and work—Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15.
 - e. He may say, "I gave you a certain gift. What have you done for me? What have you accomplished for Me since you were saved? What kind of building work have you done? Have you built with wood, hay, and stubble, or with gold, silver, and precious stones?" (*Life-Study of Romans*, p. 339)
 - 2. If our work remains, we shall receive a positive reward--the blessings of eternal life.
 - 3. To be saved is one thing; to receive a positive reward from the Lord for your work is another thing; and to suffer loss for your improper work is still another thing.

4. This is very serious, and we should not be light or loose about it.
- D. We need to be those living under the light of the judgment seat, loving the Lord's appearing, and eventually receiving a crown of righteousness from the righteous Judge—2 Tim. 4:7-8.

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Message Two

Additional Word on Being Watchful in Life

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:32-44; Rev. 14:1, 4, 16; Exo. 23:19; Eph. 5:14-20

II. Our being watchful in life is for our maturity and for our early rapture:

- A. The picture in Exodus 23:19 illustrates this:
 - 1. The “firstfruits” of the good land were to be offered in the temple—cf. Rev. 14:1-4.
 - 2. Firstfruits ripen (mature) earlier than the rest of the crop; they are picked first.
- B. The saints who mature earlier will be raptured first:
 - 1. Crops in a field do not ripen at the same time; a small minority ripens early.
 - 2. The majority of the saints (ripening later) will be raptured only to the air (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-17), not to the heavens; they will be the “harvest.”
 - 3. The first fruits of Rev. 14 are the wise virgins of Matt. 25:
 - a. They are one with, and belong to, the Lamb and the Father – v. 1.
 - b. They are pure, single and undefiled – full of Christ – vv. 4-5.
 - c. There is no lie in their mouth—they have a bridled tongue.
 - d. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes—they are under authority.
- C. The 10 virgins in Matthew 25 represent the majority, those who have died, when the Lord returns; the 2 men and women of Matthew 24 represent those believers who are alive when He comes:
 - 1. The number 12 signifies the totality of God’s redeemed ones.
 - 2. Signs of the Lord’s return to the living ones are Israel as the fig tree and a similarity to the days of Noah with the worldly people.
 - 3. Matthew 24:32-44 indicates that the Lord will take some believers while they are working in the field and at the mill; it does not say that they are off somewhere preaching and praying.
 - 4. We need to do our jobs, watch, and be ready because the Lord will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour -- v. 43.
 - 5. We should be ready in life as the householder in verse 43, and as the virgins in Matt. 25:13, being filled with the Holy Spirit in the midst of doing the things we must do for our living.
- D. An application in Ephesians 5:14-20 (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:6):
 - 1. We need to be vitalized and to wake up! — v. 14.
 - 2. We need to walk wisely, redeeming the time in in these increasingly evil days — vv. 15-16.
 - 3. We need to understand the Lord’s will with increasing truth and vision — v. 17.
 - 4. We need to be filled in spirit, using our mouth to speak and give thanks (a cycle) — vv. 18-20.
 - 5. We need to pay the price (“buy”) today (before it is too late) to gain oil in our vessel, mature in life, and be transformed in our soul.

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Message Three

Additional Word on Being Faithful in Service

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:45-51; Lk. 19:11-27; 1Tim. 4:6, 16; 2 Tim. 4:1-8

III Our being faithful in service is for receiving a kingdom reward:

- A. Whether we are faithful in service is based entirely on our maturity:
 - 1. Note the order of the parables in Matthew 24 and 25—life is first.
 - 2. By growing to maturity in life today, we have the opportunity to be faithful in service.
 - 3. We must be virgins in life before we can be faithful slaves in service, and there will be no opportunity to trade with our talents after we die.
 - 4. Maturity is a condition for entering into the kingdom and receiving a reward; faithfulness is related to the content of the reward we receive — cf. Lk. 19:11-27.
 - 5. Using our spiritual gifts in service is by the indwelling Spirit; in order to do well in service, we must grow well in life.
- B. Matthew 24:45-51 shows that to be faithful is to supply people at any time according to their need by exercising the gifts that we have received:
 - 1. The faithful slave ministers the Word of God and Christ as the life supply (“food”) to the saints in the church.
 - 2. This supply may be by visitation, material riches, prayer, etc.
 - 3. The evil slave (v. 48) is a saved one (cf. “my master” and “fellow slaves” in vv. 48-49), but he mistreats (“beats”) his fellow believers.
 - 4. This ‘beating’ is to criticize, judge, and be dissatisfied with others.
 - 5. When we see a fellow believer with a weakness, we should not criticize but only give food according to our gift from the Lord.
 - 6. A person who genuinely serves the Lord is not critical of his fellow believers.
 - 7. Faithfulness involves supply and unfaithfulness involves criticism.
 - 8. Some kind of result should not be our focus; our focus should be to faithfully supply.
- C. An illustration in Paul’s writings to Timothy:
 - 1. Timothy needed to be “nourished” in life so that he could minister Christ in service to others—1 Tim. 4:6.
 - 2. He needed to faithfully exercise his spiritual gift — v. 14.
 - 3. His continuing in “these things” for the long run would be a salvation to both him and to those who were hearing him — v. 16.
 - 4. Under the light of the Lord’s appearing, he needed to “be ready” in every season to minister the Word and fully accomplish his ministry (service) — 2 Tim. 4: 2, 5).
 - 5. Paul himself was a faithful, supplying slave who was expecting to receive a crown of righteousness at the judgment seat of Christ for his faithful service — v. 8.
 - 6. May we, as those who also love the Lord’s appearing, be His faithful, supplying slaves today.

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Message Four

Our Fallen Disposition Greatly Affecting Our Life and Service

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:21-26; Phil. 3:10; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6; Matt. 19:25-26

IV. Our disposition is the real enemy of our growth in the divine life and service in the Body:

- A. "Disposition" refers to our soul life, self, old "I", naturalness — i.e., what we are by birth; we may be quick or slow, neat/messy, heroic/non-heroic, talkative/quiet, etc.
- B. We may start our Christian life growing well, but we may eventually stop growing due to a particular, peculiar aspect of our disposition:
 - 1. Initially, we deal with the world, weak points, and sin.
 - 2. But this "peculiar trait" holds us back from progressing in our growth.
 - 3. This trait also has caused many of our sufferings.
- C. We have to be warned regarding our disposition and learn to deal with it.
- D. Our soul life is embodied in the self which is expressed through the mind, the opinion:
 - 1. This can be seen in Peter's quick, heroic reaction in Matt. 16:21-26.
 - 2. There we see that Satan is in our opinion (v. 23); our opinion comes from our self, that is, from our disposition.
- E. In the Lord's work (our service), in the church life, in the spiritual life, the greatest damaging factor is our opinion.
- F. The criticism and judging ('beating') of the unfaithful slave in Matt. 24:49 no doubt issued out of his opinion regarding the fellow slave.
- G. Ambition (related to the self), seeking for promotion, can creep into the Lord's work:
 - 1. Ambition is hidden within us; it is an element of the satanic nature within, as seen in Isa. 14:12-14.
 - 2. Being ambitious and opinionated often join together to cause turmoil; these nullify our usefulness and ability to coordinate, and cause us to be easily offended.
- H. So, we need to deal with our disposition for the sake of our growth in life and service in the Body for the building up of the Body of Christ:
 - 1. We need the scriptural basis, with a strong realization (vision), that we (including our self, our disposition) have been crucified with Christ — Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6.
 - 2. Based on this, we need to oppose/deny/reject our self, continually living under the cross.
 - 3. When we do this, the "Me" in Matt. 16:24 becomes the "Him" in Phil. 3:10; that is, the Spirit comes to supply the resurrection power to conform us to the death of Christ.
 - a. In Matt. 24:24, the Lord says "let him deny himself."
 - b. When we take the initiative to deny our self, the Spirit will simultaneously come in (see footnote 2 for Romans 8:13).
 - 4. Dealing with our disposition is easier when we are young.
 - 5. But for the older ones, is this impossible? No! "With God all things are possible" — Matt. 19:25-26.

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Message Five

The Vital Groups and Our Life and Service for the Building Up of the Body

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:42-47; Matt. 18:19-20; John 12:1-3; Acts 20:20

- V The vital groups are a proper setting for our growth in life and perfecting in service:**
- A. A personal testimony; and is today much different?
 - B. The recovery today needing vitality:
 - 1. "Vitality" is not only to be living, but also to be active.
 - 2. The needed vitality will issue in longed-for increase, shepherding, and building up.
 - C. Some bothering symptoms of lacking vitality today are: unattractive meetings, being late to meetings, empty front-row seats, gaps in the meetings, and a low morale.
 - D. In his last twelve years, Brother Lee progressed along to find the Biblical way to have the vital church life; he found:
 - 1. We should not only have a high vision, but a strong practice in the recovery.
 - 2. As vitalized persons, our emphasis is moving from the hall to the home, from big to small.
 - 3. The normality and necessity of begetting, nourishing, perfecting, and prophesying for building up.
 - 4. The best setting for this being the vital groups.
 - 5. This will not be easily grasped and practiced.
 - E. A vital group:
 - 1. Is a small, blended group, not a collection of individuals.
 - 2. Has three characteristics:
 - a. A *purpose*—the increase, perfecting, and building up of the church.
 - b. A *nature*—spiritual, that is, daily filled with the Holy Spirit within and without.
 - c. A *condition*—loving one another in oneness and with one accord.
 - 3. Regarding life, a vital group is living; regarding service, it is active!
 - F. All of this is not cheap; there is a price to pay — thorough confessing, dealing with the Lord, fresh consecration, being revived every morning, living an overcoming daily life, being willing to be grouped by the Spirit, 'praying much and praying more,' being willing to fellowship and blend in love and oneness, and being accountable to the Lord:
 - 1. Paying such a price, we will be full of life and perfected for service.
 - 2. Such a vital group becomes a vessel for the Lord to continue to do today what He did while He was on the earth.
 - 3. The reward will be the kingdom.
 - G. In the vital groups we will realize the actuality, practicality, and reality of the building up of the Body of Christ:
 - 1. Will you be an overcomer? In the vital groups, we will no doubt be produced as the overcomers.
 - 2. The overcomers being equated to the vital groups.

3. Exercising our spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13), let us all endeavor for this while it is still called "today" (Heb. 3:13)!

Further Reading

Message One:

Truth Lessons, Level Four, Vol. 4, pp. 49-58

Life-Study of Romans, pp. 336-341

Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932-1949, Vol. 4, pp. 529-553

Message Two:

Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1955, Vol. 2, pp. 473-483, 485-489

Life-Study of Matthew, pp. 733-741, 748-755

Message Three:

Life-Study of Matthew, pp. 741-743, 757-774

Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set One, Vol. 15, pp. 297-302, 337-351

Message Four:

The Experience and Growth in Life, pp. 139-168

Message Five:

Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, pp. 15-16, 50-52, 86-89, 229-232, 253

Practical Points Concerning Blending, pp. 15-17, 34, 44-47