

LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH

(Friday—Afternoon Session)

Message Six

A Good Minister of Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 4:6-8, 15-16; Ezek. 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:6; S. S. 4:11

I. First Timothy 4:6 says, “If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed”:

- A. A good minister of Christ is one who serves people with Christ, ministering Christ as Savior, life, life supply, and every positive thing to people.
- B. If we would minister Christ to others, we ourselves must be nourished; a good minister of Christ does not merely teach others about Christ but ministers Christ into others as food—Matt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1-4; John 6:57, 63.
- C. We need to lay before the saints the things with which we have been nourished by the Lord through the ministry; we need to present the saints with the riches, the groceries, the Lord has shown us from the Word; let us first be nourished ourselves and then minister this nourishment to all the people of God.
- D. We need to minister the riches of Christ as spiritual food to others that they may be nourished and grow in life; the word of God is likened to milk and solid food, which are for nourishment—Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 2:2; 1 Pet. 2:2:
 - 1. The words of the faith are the words of the full gospel concerning God's New Testament economy.
 - 2. The words of the good teaching are the sweet words that contain and convey the riches of Christ to nourish, edify, and strengthen His believers.
- E. As members of the one Body of Christ, we should aspire to be good ministers of Christ who “speak the same thing” (1 Cor. 1:10) “with one accord” and “with one mouth” (Rom. 15:6):
 - 1. “We have to learn the high peaks of God's present revelation and learn to speak these things...I would encourage all of us to pick up this high commission: to go out with...God's up-to-date vision to move with God for His high peaks of the divine revelation that will consummate His eternal economy”—*The Triune God's Revelation and His Move*, p. 98.
 - 2. The saints who have been raised up by the Lord's up-to-date ministry have a taste for this ministry, and this taste is the controlling factor in the Lord's recovery; those who have been raised up by this ministry will reject a taste that is contrary to it; this means that if you speak something contrary to the taste of the Lord's recovery, your speaking will be rejected, and you will suffer loss—cf. Psa. 34:8; 1 Pet. 2:3.

II. A good minister of Christ sacrifices himself and puts himself aside in order to keep the absoluteness of the truth; the truth cannot be entrusted to a person who walks according to his feelings; a man must stand on the side of the truth to oppose himself:

- A. The condition of an individual has nothing to do with God's truth; what you are personally cannot affect what God's truth is, because the truth is like an immovable pillar—1 Tim. 3:15.

- B. Some people lower down the truth a little when they are wrong, and they lift up the truth a little when they are right; this means that they are like elevators, and the truth goes up and down with them; only those who have dealt with themselves are able to maintain the truth.
- C. If we can take the truth as the unique standard, and we have the courage to admit that we are wrong, new light will come to us; if we do not sacrifice the light, the light will uplift us; blessed are those who can go along with the truth.
- D. On the one hand, a man cannot preach the truth unless he has the experience; on the other hand, a person has to know that the truth has nothing to do with him; if a man is brought to a point that he can no longer withstand God's word, if he does not sacrifice the word, and if he finds the word condemning him, he will receive the light; this is the secret to receiving revelation.

III. A good minister of Christ, as a good steward of the varied grace of God, speaks oracles of God for the glorification of God, the expression of God (1 Pet. 4:10-11; Eph. 1:6); he does not seek his own glory to express himself (1 Thes. 2:6; John 5:41, 44) but continually exercises his spirit to reject the self, not preaching himself but exalting Christ as Lord and considering himself as a slave to serve the believers (2 Cor. 4:5; Lev. 14:9 and footnote 1; 1 Cor. 10:31; Isa. 43:7).

IV. A good minister of Christ ministers life and serves the saints according to the principle of the tree of life, not the principle of the tree of right and wrong (Gen. 2:9; John 10:10b; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:10-12; 1 John 5:12, 16a); in his ministry he keeps the following principle and rule of conduct according to Paul's pattern in facing the problems in the church in Corinth—"We should concentrate on Him [Christ], not on any persons, things, or matters other than Him. We should focus on Him as our unique center appointed by God, that all the problems among the believers may be solved" (footnote 2 on 1 Cor. 1:9).

V. A good minister of Christ helps the saints to think the "one thing": the *one thing* in Philippians refers to the subjective knowledge, experience, and enjoyment of Christ; the *one thing* is the pursuing of Christ to gain Him, lay hold of Him, and possess Him—1:20-21; 2:2, 5; 3:7-14; 4:13.

VI. A good minister of Christ is like the Lord's loving seeker described in Song of Songs 4:11—"Your lips drip fresh honey, my bride; / Honey and milk are under your tongue"—cf. Exo. 3:8:

- A. Honey is sweet, and it restores the weak and stricken ones (Psa. 119:103); milk feeds the immature ones (1 Pet. 2:2).
- B. The sweetness of honey and the nourishing milk under the tongue of the Lord's loving seeker indicate that she has stored up the riches of the Lord as her spiritual food; she has stored so many riches within her that food seems to be under her tongue, and she can dispense this food to the needy ones at any time—Psa. 119:11; Col. 3:16.
- C. Her indwelling treasure of the Lord's sweet and nourishing words is not produced overnight; it comes from a long period of gathering, inward activity, and careful storage; this is the unique possession of one who is taught by God with the healthy words of the healthy teaching of God's economy—1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3.

VII. The revelations that the prophets received were the burdens that they received; without burden, there is no ministry of the word, no prophesying, for the building up of the church—Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 15:1; Zech. 12:1; Mal. 1:1; Acts 6:4; 1 Cor. 14:4b:

- A. Our burden is to release God's revelation to man, and God's revelation is released through the words of revelation that God gives to us—2:11-16.
- B. When we minister the word of God, our concern must be whether we have God's speaking, not the topic of our speaking; in order to have God's speaking, the one who ministers the word must have a burden—Mal. 2:7; S. S. 8:13-14; Eph. 5:26-27.
- C. Those who minister the word must bear people's condition before God, sense their condition, and know what God wants to speak—Exo. 28:29-30.
- D. The greatest problem in the ministry of the word is not having a burden from the Lord; without a burden, all our activity will be dead and ineffective; with a burden, we will be living and flourishing:
 - 1. Having a burden deals with us the most; if there is a burden, the self decreases and is dealt with, because there are things that our burden will not allow us to do, and there are areas that will require our being dealt with before we can release our burden.
 - 2. If we serve according to obligation instead of serving with a burden, such service will cause us to lose the Lord's presence—Mal. 3:14; Deut. 4:25.
 - 3. Whenever our service becomes a matter of fulfilling an obligation, our service has already degraded.

VIII. In order to be a good minister of Christ, we must aspire to have the following organic characteristics:

- A. We must love the Lord to the uttermost to be filled with Him and overflow Him into others with the resurrected Christ as our authority—Psa. 18:1; 91:14; 97:10; 116:1-2; 119:140; John 21:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 4:16, 19; Num. 17:1-10; Matt. 19:26.
- B. We must maintain our victory in Christ by having a revived living and a labor in shepherding—Rev. 3:18-22; Hosea 6:1-3; Rom. 6:4; 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-4.
- C. We must abide in the fellowship with the Lord daily and hourly—1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14.
- D. We must be praying persons—Col. 4:2; Gen. 4:26; Lam. 3:55-56; Rom. 10:12-13.
- E. We must enjoy the Lord in the Word early in the morning to have a new start of each day—Psa. 119:147-148.
- F. We must walk by and according to our spirit, which is mingled with the divine Spirit—Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- G. We must live Christ for His magnification by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ—Phil. 1:19.
- H. We must build up a habit of speaking Christ to all kinds of people daily in season and out of season—Acts 5:42; 8:4; 2 Tim. 4:2.
 - I. We must be ones who deal with our sins thoroughly—1 John 1:7, 9; Psa. 51:1-9, 17.
 - J. We must be filled with the essential Spirit inwardly and with the economical Spirit outwardly—Acts 13:52; Eph. 5:18; Acts 4:31, 8; 13:9.
- K. We must accumulate the experiences of Christ (Phil. 3:8-10, 12-14) and keep a rich storage of the Lord's word (Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:11, 15; John 8:31; 15:7; 1 John 2:14).

IX. Whenever we minister God's word, the primary thing is for us to exercise our spirit; a good minister of Christ builds up a habit of exercising his spirit unto godliness to live Christ in his daily life—1 Tim. 4:6-8, 15-16; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 12:11; John 4:23-24:

- A. We saved ones have the capital to live the Christian life and the church life; this capital is our God-given spirit—2 Tim. 1:6-7; 4:22.

- B. Godliness, a living that is the expression of God, is the issue of the divine dispensing for the divine economy, and this dispensing depends on the exercise of our spirit to live Christ in our daily life for the corporate manifestation of God in the church life—1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:15-16; 4:7-8; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; *Hymns*, #493, stanza 5.
- C. The word *exercise* implies forcing; if we Christians want to be strong and want to grow in the Lord, we must force ourselves to use our spirit until we build up a strong habit of exercising our spirit—1 Tim. 4:7.
- D. We must exercise our spirit to employ and enjoy the entire blessed Trinity by praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping ourselves in the love of God, and awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ in the day of His victorious appearing so that we may become the totality of the eternal life, the New Jerusalem—Jude 19-21.