

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

Taking the Lead to Prophecy for the Building Up of the Church as the Organic Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Deut. 18:15; Num. 11:29b; 1 Cor. 14:1, 3-6, 12, 19, 31

I. “A Prophet will Jehovah your God raise up for you from your midst, from among your brothers;...you shall listen to Him”—Deut. 18:15:

- A. A prophet is not mainly one who predicts the future but one who speaks for another, as Aaron spoke for Moses—Exo. 7:1-2.
- B. Acts 3:22 applies Deuteronomy 18:15-19 to Christ, who is God incarnated to be a man, indicating that Christ is the Prophet promised by God to His people, the children of Israel, to speak forth God and to prophesy many things concerning God’s economy.
- C. That the Prophet was to be from among their brothers indicates that Christ as the coming Prophet would be human as well as divine—Deut. 18:15a.
- D. God would raise up this Prophet through the incarnation of Christ to speak the word of God—John 1:45; 3:34; 7:16-17; 8:18; Heb. 1:2a:
 1. To speak God’s word, that is, to prophesy, is to dispense God, to speak God forth into others; this is what the Lord Jesus did as the Prophet raised up by God—1 Cor. 14:1, 3-5, 24-25, 31.
 2. The Lord Jesus lived a life of speaking God, a life of expressing God for His glory—John 7:16:
 - a. Instead of speaking His own words, He spoke God—12:49-50; 14:10.
 - b. When He spoke God’s word, God was expressed through His speaking; God came forth from Him through His words—1:18.

II. “Oh that all Jehovah’s people were prophets!”—Num. 11:29b:

- A. Moses desired that all the people of Israel would be prophets, those who spoke for God.
- B. This word was a great prophecy uttered by Moses; it was promoted by Paul and is fulfilled in God’s New Testament economy—1 Cor. 14:24, 31.
- C. Three things characterize a prophet: a history before God, an inward burden, and divinely given words that express and interpret that burden.

III. “He who prophesies builds up the church”—v. 4b:

- A. Prophesying is for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; 14:1, 3-4, 12; Eph. 4:16:
 1. The central and divine thought of the Scriptures is that God is seeking a divine building as the mingling of Himself with humanity—a living composition of persons redeemed by and mingled with Himself—Exo. 25:8:
 - a. God’s intention is to have a group of people built up as a spiritual building to express Him and to represent Him—Gen. 1:26; Eph. 2:21-22.
 - b. Whatever God is doing today—in preaching the gospel, edifying the

- saints, or establishing churches—is part of His building work; these activities are part of God’s main work, the work of building—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:16.
2. Prophesying builds up the church—1 Cor. 14:1, 12:
 - a. Prophesying is not for the building up of a congregation, an organization, which is a façade.
 - b. Everyone prophesying builds up the church as the organic Body of Christ—vv. 12, 31; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:16.
- B. We need to help the saints to arrive at the goal of the practice of the church life according to the God-ordained way—prophesying in the district meetings for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 14:1, 3-5, 12, 31:
1. All the believers have the capacity to prophesy; this capacity is in the divine life, which the believers possess and enjoy and which needs to increase within them so that this capacity may be developed—v. 31; John 3:15.
 2. When the saints prophesy in the district meetings, supplying Christ to others, the riches in the Body of Christ are expressed—Eph. 3:8; 4:12, 16.
- C. We should speak with the three constituting elements of prophesying:
1. A knowledge of the Word of God—the human element of learning—2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ezek. 3:1-4.
 2. The instant inspiration of the Holy Spirit—the divine element of inspiration—1 Cor. 14:32, 37a.
 3. A vision concerning God’s interest and economy, the church as the Body of Christ, the local churches, the world, the individual saints, and ourselves—the view through the enlightening of the divine light—Eph. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 2:11-12.
- D. The ability to prophesy, the greatest of all gifts, is produced through the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ revealed in 1 Corinthians—1:2b, 9, 24, 30; 5:7-8; 10:3-4; 15:45b:
1. The enjoyment of Christ first issues in the growth in life to produce materials for the building up of the church—3:6, 9-14.
 2. The enjoyment of Christ also issues in the development of gifts for functioning to build up the Body of Christ, prophesying being the excelling gift—14:1, 3-4, 12.
 3. The highest development of the gifts as an issue of the enjoyment of Christ is to prophesy—to speak for Christ, to speak forth Christ, and to speak Christ into others, supplying them with Christ by ministering, dispensing, Christ into them—vv. 19, 31.
- E. Like the apostle Paul, we should minister Christ by prophesying with clear and plain words—vv. 6, 19, 23-24, 31:
1. Paul determined not to know anything but Christ, his preaching was not with persuasive words but in demonstration of the Spirit, and he spoke in revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching—2:1-2, 4; 14:6.
 2. Paul functioned in the way of ministering Christ to others by speaking in clear and plain words with the demonstration of the Spirit—2:4; 14:19.

3. When we come together in a meeting, we should speak something for Christ and of Christ with the strong exercise of our spirit.
4. In prophesying for the building up of the church, we need spiritual words; these words come from God's Spirit of life—Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 12:8:
 - a. The Spirit of life will give us the words, the utterance, and the boldness to prophesy—2:11-13.
 - b. When we depend on Him, we can prophesy for the Lord unto the building up of the Body of Christ—14:31; Eph. 4:12, 16.
5. Prophesying is the highest expression of the Christian life; in order to prophesy for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ, we need:
 - a. To love the Lord, have fellowship with Him, and be one with Him—Mark 12:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; 6:17.
 - b. To be saturated and constituted with the Lord's word—Col. 3:16.
 - c. To walk according to the Spirit, receiving instant inspiration—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25.
 - d. To have a heavenly, divine view—the view of God—to know Christ and the church—Eph. 1:17; 3:5.
 - e. To speak with revelation, using fresh expressions and utterance—1 Cor. 2:11-13.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PROPHESYING FOR THE PRACTICAL BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Prophesying is for the practical building up of the church (14:3-5, 12, 26), the organic Body of Christ. Prophesying is not for the building up of a congregation, an organization. The way of one man speaking and the rest listening is the old way. The way of Christianity is to build a congregation, an organization, which is a facade. Everyone prophesying builds up a body—the Body of Christ, an organism. This organism can only be built up in the organic way by practicing 1 Corinthians 14:26 through the perfecting of the saints by the four gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-16. (*Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, p. 16)

EVERYONE PROPHESYING IN THE DISTRICT MEETING

The preaching of the gospel, the home meetings, and the group meetings are all conducted during the week. On the Lord's Day, we should bring the new ones to the district meetings. A church can be divided into a few districts. The best number for the district meeting is around fifty. When we gain some new ones through the gospel, we should nourish and establish them in the home meetings. We should also care for them and perfect them in the group meetings. In this way, when they come to the church meetings, every one of them will be able to prophesy.

In order for the saints to prophesy, they need to enjoy the Lord's word every day and be filled with the Lord's word. Every district can select its own portion of Scripture. Every week the saints can go through one chapter, and they can divide the chapter into six sections. Every morning the saints can read one section and pick out two verses for pray-reading. If we want to have an overcoming church life, we need to live this life of morning revival. For this reason, we must help the brothers and sisters to live this life of revival and overcoming every day. Every morning we need to have some enjoyment, and every morning we need to soak ourselves in the Lord's word and be filled and saturated by the Lord's word. After six days, we will surely have a rich reaping. By the weekend, we can compile our inspirations into a composition for prophesying. On the Lord's Day, we can bring this composition to the meeting.

We should not read or recite it, but should speak out with our spirit what we have prepared. This is to prophesy.

In a meeting with fifty saints, at least half of them should be prepared beforehand. Everyone should be limited to three minutes of speaking, and everyone should take turns speaking. There should not be any prearranged order, but the speaking should be done in a spontaneous way. This kind of speaking in the district meeting will be very rich. We can prophesy this way week after week for fifty-two weeks in a year. The supply of the Lord's word will then be rich among us. When everyone is supplied and edified, the problems and difficulties of the saints will be solved spontaneously through the supply of the rich word, and the church will be built up. This is the way that the Lord has shown us today.

The Lord's recovery today is the recovery of the saints in the building up of the Body of Christ. For this reason, there is the need for every saint to be able to prophesy, so that the church can be built up in a genuine way. (*The Riches and Fullness of Christ and the Advanced Recovery of the Lord Today*, pp. 67-68)

PROPHESYING PRODUCED BY ENJOYING CHRIST

First Corinthians reveals the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ. We need to enjoy Christ every day according to what is revealed of Him in 1 Corinthians.

What we enjoy will have an issue. The enjoyment of Christ firstly issues in the growth in life to produce materials for the building up of the church (3:6, 9-14). The precious materials produced from the growth in life are signified by gold, silver, and precious stones. Our hope is that all of us will be transformed into the precious materials for God's building by enjoying Christ. First Corinthians 12 tells us that Christ is drinkable. Today we are drinking of Him, the one Spirit. He is our spiritual drink and our spiritual food. We need to be the enjoying people who enjoy Christ all day long and every day. This enjoyment spontaneously issues in the growth in life. We grow in life by enjoying Him, that is, by eating Him and drinking Him, partaking of Him.

The enjoyment of Christ also issues in the development of gifts for functioning to build up the Body of Christ, prophesying being the excelling gift (1 Cor. 14:1, 12, 39a). To build up anything you need firstly the materials and secondly the skill, the functioning. Thus, the enjoyment of Christ issues not only in the growth in life but also in the development of gifts for functioning. This development is covered in chapters twelve through fourteen of 1 Corinthians. In these three chapters, Paul gives a clear view of the development of spiritual gifts for functioning to build up the Body of Christ. Dispensing Christ by speaking Him, prophesying, is the top development of the gifts as an issue of enjoying Him. I can testify that I am still under development. All of us are growing and being developed. We are not being developed to speak in tongues or to perform miraculous things. We are being developed to prophesy, not in the sense of predicting but in the sense of speaking for the Lord.

God in His New Testament economy is after a building. Where is the building today among us? We need to forget everything and go on according to the desire of God's heart to build up the Body of Christ. First Corinthians is a book of enjoying Christ, but what is the reason for us to enjoy Christ, and what is the issue of enjoying Christ? The enjoyment of Christ is for our growth in life to produce precious materials for God's building. Our enjoyment of Christ is also for developing our gifts to speak for Christ to build up the Body of Christ organically. The unique need among us today is that we would learn to speak for the Lord. We must have something of the Lord to speak for the building up of the church. The top development of the gifts as an issue of the enjoyment of Christ is to prophesy, to speak for the Lord, to speak forth the Lord, to speak the Lord into people, ministering Christ, dispensing

Christ, into people. When we are full of the enjoyment of Christ, we can share with others the Christ that we have enjoyed.

As we enjoy Christ, spontaneously we are growing in life to produce ourselves as precious materials and to develop what we have received from the Head as a gift. Little children receive certain talents by birth, but they need the development of these talents. These talents are developed by the children being fed. A child's eating helps him to grow, and his growth develops his function. First Corinthians tells us that the top development and the top function for the building up of the Body of Christ is speaking for the Lord, prophesying. We need to prophesy, not in the sense of predicting but in the sense of speaking Christ in an exhibiting way. Let us come to the meeting to exhibit Christ. We need to enjoy Christ that we may be developed in our spiritual function to speak the Christ that we have enjoyed and experienced in order to exhibit Him in the meeting for the building up of the Body organically. This is further light that I did not see in the past. I saw that the enjoyment of Christ issues in our growth in life. But I did not see so clearly that the enjoyment of Christ also issues in our being developed in our gift and function. (*Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, pp. 7-10)

The Enjoyment of Christ Developing Our Gifts by the Growth in Life

The enjoyment of Christ not only solves our problems and issues in the growth in life, but it also develops our gifts by the growth in life (1 Cor. 12:1-11). The word *gifts* may be considered as a synonym for the word *talents*. By our physical birth, all of us have received some talents. We have the talent to see, to hear, to speak, to walk, and to think and understand. We have received these talents by our birth, but all of these talents need to be developed. They are developed by the growth of our physical body. As a little child grows, all of his talents, or gifts, will be developed. The more a child grows, the more he can function in seeing, hearing, speaking, and other things. It is the same in our spiritual life. The initial gifts were given to the believers at their spiritual birth (1:7). The divine life and the divine Spirit were the two main gifts we received at our spiritual birth. Each one who has been regenerated has received these two great gifts. Within the divine life there are many talents, gifts, which need development. We have to enjoy Christ so that we may grow. As we grow, the gifts that we received by our spiritual birth are developed.

If our enjoyment of Christ is real and without problems, the spontaneous result will be the development of our gifts. A brother who has been saved for ten years may claim that he has been enjoying Christ every day. After ten years, however, we cannot see him functioning by speaking something concerning the Lord and for the Lord. After ten years, he still comes to the church meetings to sit and be silent. He may feel that to speak in the meetings is not his business but the business of other brothers. This means that his enjoyment of Christ has some problems. As a child eats every day, his talents should be developed by his growth in his physical life. If he eats much without such development, there are some problems. It is the same with our spiritual life. We should not be deceived. If we are enjoying Christ, there should be the development of the gifts by the growth in life. The initial gifts need to be developed by the believers' seeking (indicated by "earnestly desire" in 12:31a) through the growth in life. To desire something earnestly means that you are seeking after something.

THE EXCELLING GIFT PRODUCED IN THE GROWTH IN LIFE THROUGH THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

Prophesying for the Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ

The excelling gift produced in the growth in life through the enjoyment of Christ is prophesying (14:12). First Corinthians 14 stresses that the top gift, the gift that excels all the other

gifts, developed by our enjoyment of Christ is prophesying. Prophesying in chapter fourteen does not mean predicting. This is proven by verse 3 which according to the Greek says, “He who prophesies speaks to men building up and encouragement and consolation.” If a brother is speaking building up, encouragement, and consolation to others, this proves that his prophesying is not predicting. To prophesy in 1 Corinthians 14 is to speak for the Lord, speak forth the Lord, and speak the Lord into others, ministering (dispensing) the Lord to others (14:3-5). As proper, growing believers whose spiritual gifts are being developed, we must speak the Lord into others every day. If we practice this every day, we will all have something to share when we come together for fellowship. This will be the fulfillment of 1 Corinthians 14:26—whenever we come together, each one has.

Speaking for the Lord, speaking forth the Lord, and speaking the Lord into others is for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ...To build up the organic Body of Christ, all of us need to speak...All the members need to speak for the Body of Christ to be built up...To build every part of the Body of Christ, we all need to rise up to speak for the Lord.

Our church meetings should be a feast of the riches of Christ. When we are invited to a feast, we do not partake of only one dish. A feast is full of many different kinds of food. Some Chinese feasts are composed of twenty-four courses of food. If we had many kinds of dishes in a meeting, how wonderful that would be! None of us would get bored of such a meeting. Our meetings need to be feasts full of enjoyment.

A meeting in which all the saints are speaking for the Lord is full of nourishing, cherishing, adjusting, and correcting...Because many portions are presented in the meeting, many things can be touched. In such a meeting, the saints get corrected without anyone knowing. Furthermore, the saints get built up, supplied, furnished, and equipped. This is why the Apostle Paul had the burden to stress prophesying. (*The Excelling Gift for the Building Up of the Church*, pp. 12-15)