

Pennsylvania Blending Conference, June 2023

Living a Life of Laboring

Message One: Laboring upon the Word of Truth

- I. The Christian life is a life of laboring.
 - A. The divine principle in the Bible is that man needs to work with God by human labor in coordination with His divine labor.
 - B. When man labors in coordination with God's labor, God has the basis to send the rain, signifying His Spirit of life, to mingle with man, the dust of the earth, to produce life (footnote 1 of Gen. 2:5).
- II. The children of Israel, as the greatest type of the church, learned to labor once they entered into the promised land of Canaan.
 - A. Before the children of Israel entered into the good land, they ate manna in the wilderness. When they entered into the good land, the manna ceased, and they began to labor on the good land (Joshua 5:12 and footnote 1).
 - B. We need to enter into Christ as the good land, take possession of our allotted portion of Christ, and labor on Him.
 - C. To labor on Christ as the good land is not a matter of miracles but of ordinary, normal, daily experiences.
- III. There are four aspects of our labor; we need to labor upon the Word of truth, upon Christ as life, upon the church, and upon the gospel of God. The truth brings us life; life produces the church; and the church is responsible for the preaching of the gospel.
- IV. We need first to labor on the truth.
 - A. Truth is God revealed and realized. Truth is God Himself as reality.
 - B. Truth is actually a person, Christ the Son, according to John 8:32 and 36.
 - C. In the midst of darkness and falsehood, only Christ is the one reality of all.
 - D. The truth is the content of the Bible, and the truth is the reality conveyed in the doctrines.
 - E. We must labor in order to come to the full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:15).
 1. All the truths are in the Bible (John 17:17); there is not one truth that is not in the Bible.
 2. Although all the truths are in the Bible, through man's foolishness, unfaithfulness, negligence, and disobedience, many of the truths were lost and hidden from man.
 3. The truths as revealed in the Scriptures have been lost, missed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught throughout the ages; hence, there is the need of the Lord's recovery.
 4. The Lord began to release certain truths and caused them to be revealed once more during particular periods of time. These freshly revealed truths are not God's new inventions but are man's new discoveries.
 5. In the last centuries many truths have been released little by little through the careful study of the Bible by many lovers of the Lord.
 6. The goal of the Lord's recovery is to recover the reality, life, livingness, strength, power, and impact of the matters revealed in the Scriptures.
 - F. We must labor in order to have the full assurance of understanding (Col. 2:2).
 1. The church is the pillar and base of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).
 2. The truth is our stand, our position, our authority, and our power.
 3. All the brothers and sisters should respect, treasure, and appreciate the truth and pay the price to enter into the understanding and experience of the truth.

4. It is especially important to know the truth in an age of degradation. The books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and 2 and 3 John, written during the degradation of the church, do not stress life as 1 John does, but instead emphasize the truth.
 5. Most Christians are ignorant of the revelation in the Bible regarding God's economy to dispense Himself into man.
- G. We must labor upon the truth in order to have the experience and enjoyment of Christ as our life supply.
1. We need to read and study the Bible daily.
 2. We first receive the doctrines.
 3. Through God's enlightening the doctrines become truth and the shining of the divine light in us. Then this light becomes life to us.
 4. To labor on the Word is to exercise our spirit to pray-read, to muse, to contact the Lord, and to touch the Spirit in the Word.
 5. To labor on the Word is to study the Word with a spirit of prayer, with a heart to seek the Lord, and with a willingness to obey the Word. Our labor on the Word should not be merely an intellectual exercise, but a pursuit of the divine life.
 6. We need to be those who love the Lord and spend much time in His word to be constituted with the truth.
 7. To be constituted with the truth is a matter of receiving the truth into us, and it is also a matter of allowing the truth to replace everything that is not the truth.
 8. The more we are constituted with the truth, the more the truth will be expressed through us.
- V. The way to labor upon the Word:
- A. Read the Bible in a daily, consistent manner. If you want to know the Bible, you have to read it. The more you read it, the more you will know it.
 1. Be diligent to read the Bible and allow the Word of God to dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). This is the way to have a rich and full experience of Christ.
 2. Continue in the cycle: the more we read the Bible, the more we will love it, and the more we love it, the more we will read it. This is the way to grow in our experience of Christ and in our understanding of God's eternal purpose.
 - B. Read and study the footnotes in the Recovery Version and the Life-studies.
 1. The truth is nowhere but in the Bible, yet the Bible needs an opener.
 2. The Recovery Version with all the footnotes and the Life-study messages are invaluable in opening the Bible and its truths to us.
 3. The help we receive from the Recovery Version footnotes and the Life-studies is not to replace the Bible but to bring us into the Bible.
- VI. We must get into the truths and allow these truths to be constituted into our being; the solid truth ministered to the saints can build up the church:
- A. What kind of church we build up depends on what kind of truth we teach; there is a desperate need of the living truth to produce the church, to help the church exist, and to build up the church (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - B. When what we read becomes truth in our being, this is a nourishment to us and this nourishment remains forever; the only way for the truth to get into us is through our understanding.
 - C. If the truth gets into our memory, it becomes a constant and long-term nourishment; we then have an accumulation of the truth and will know how to present the truth to others to make them solid in the truth and constituted with the truth.
 - D. We should endeavor to use our time to learn the truth, to know the truth, to speak the truth, to experience Christ through the truth, and to minister Christ as the truth to people by the Spirit.

Message Two: Laboring upon Christ as Life

- I. Our need to know the Lord's recovery in life
 - A. The life of God is an unlimited life that is powerful, holy, bright, loving, and righteous. It is different than the fragile and sinful life of man.
 - B. Since the life of God is the eternal life, the life of Christ is also the eternal life. Christ is the Lord of life and also life itself (John 1:4; 1 John 5:11-12).
 - C. God's intention was that man would receive Him as life, enjoy this life, and grow to be transformed by life unto maturity for His expression (John 10:10, 1:12; Rom. 5:10b; Col. 3:4a).
 - D. Many believers have been distracted from the experience of Christ as life and have been occupied with things other than life, such as teachings, ethics, and rituals.
 - E. Many Christians have not seen life or known life; they live and work without a realization of life, and do not minister life.
 - F. The Lord's recovery is absolutely a recovery of life in order to bring us back to the Triune God to possess, experience, and enjoy Him as life.
 - G. Although in the local churches we have seen something concerning life, there have been periods in our history when we deviated from life. We forgot what we were doing for a time and missed the mark. It is possible for us to be misled concerning life, because life is deep, abstract, and mysterious.
 - H. The New Testament revelation concerning life is that the Triune God becomes one with His chosen and redeemed people, and that they become His embodiment.
 - I. If we see the revelation in the Bible concerning life, we will know what the Lord's recovery is; it is not any kind of work, movement, activity, teaching, or practice, but a living of the life that is the Triune God.
- II. Taking the constricted way that leads to life
 - A. Christianity is degraded because of the lack of truth and the shortage of life.
 - B. The Lord Himself is the truth and the life (John 14:6). Truth and life are the Lord Himself in two aspects: the truth is an outward definition and explanation of God, and life is the inward and intrinsic content of God.
 - C. The Bible is a book of life. All experienced Christians confess that it is difficult to enjoy Christ as life without coming to the Bible and understanding the truths contained in it. All the truths in the Bible are food for our spiritual life since in truth, life is concealed (John 6:63, 68).
 - D. The loss of truth and life has resulted in many human methods and worldly organizations. These are not what the Lord wants. The Lord wants His church to know Him as the truth and to receive and enjoy Him as life.
 - E. We are not for doctrine in letters, but for the recovery of the experience of Christ as life. We must learn to enjoy Christ and experience Him as life in a subjective way.
 - F. We are able to enjoy and experience Christ because He is now the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). Christ as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) in whom we believe dwells in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). We can experience Him because we are joined to Him as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17).
 - G. We should realize that only the experience of life can fulfill the desire of God's heart. We should pursue Christ as life (Col. 3:4a) and experience Him through the various stages of life in our relationship with Him. Let us take the constricted way that leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14).
- III. Cooperating with the Lord's work of recovery by being in life
 - A. Sometimes our condition does not match the living One (Rev. 1:18). We have three particular enemies today – deadness, lukewarmness, and barrenness (Rev. 3:1, 16; John

15:2a, 6a). We must look to the Lord for Him to vitalize us and make us living, burning, and fruitful.

- B. Today the Lord is working to bring in a new revival among us through His resurrection life that the church life would be up to His standard (Hosea 6:2a). Only resurrection is the source and element of revival.
- C. The Lord's work begins with us on a personal basis as we enter into a fellowship with Him that is personal, private, intimate, affectionate, and spiritual.
- D. We can cooperate with the Lord to be revived by opening our entire being to the Lord, not covering anything up, since he who covers his transgressions will not prosper (Prov. 28:13a).
- E. It is good to live a daily life of confession by setting some time aside to open to the Lord in the light to be convicted of our failures, shortcomings, sins, and wrongdoings. Then as we make a deep, thorough, and genuine confession, we will receive God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). He will create in us a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us (Psa. 51:10). This will issue in the sweet flow of life.
- F. Following our confession, we can consecrate ourselves to the Lord, and offer ourselves afresh to Him as a living sacrifice that is holy and well pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1).
- G. The hymns can be a help to us in our fellowship with the Lord. We can speak to the Lord along with the hymn writers to say, "I love my Master, I will not go out free" and to ask the Lord to "take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee" (Hymns 463 and 445).
- H. Through our fellowship with the Lord, our daily confession, and our consecration to Him, we will be supplied in life to be living, burning, and fruitful.
- I. Then the Lord will lead us through the cross and by the Spirit to experience Him through the stages of life, so we can grow unto maturity for the sake of the testimony of the Body of Christ.

Message Three: Laboring to Build Up the Church

- I. The work of the recovery of the church
 - A. When we speak of the recovery of the church, we mean that something was there originally, that it became lost or damaged, and that now there is the need to bring that thing back to its original state.
 - B. Concerning the church, our vision should be governed not by the present situation nor by traditional practice but by God's original intention and standard.
 - C. In the Old Testament, the recovery of the church is typified by the return of the children of Israel from their captivity.
 - D. In the New Testament, the recovery of the church is fully revealed even though the word recovery is not used. The call for the church to be recovered from the divisive and apostate ground with its deviation from the truth is expressed mainly in the later epistles.
 - E. The recovery brings us back to God's economy which is in faith. The recovery also brings us back to the church, the Body of Christ, the corporate Christ, including both the universal and local aspects of the church, and to the unique ground of oneness.
 - F. The Lord's recovery is rescuing us from the clergy-laity system by recovering the function of all the members of the Body of Christ. The Lord desires every member of His Body to be a functioning member.
 - G. All the saints need to grow, be perfected, and learn to function.
- II. Laboring to build up the organic structure of the church life
 - A. The first level of this structure is the individual member. When Brother Lee gave the training on the vital groups, he said that a vital group starts with one saint.
 - 1. Paul's word of admonishing and teaching in Colossians 1:28 is to present every man full-grown in Christ. If a member would rise up to be revived, living, active, and vital, the whole church would be vitalized.
 - 2. "Each one part" needs to become living, functioning, and normal members in the Body of Christ, serving the Lord and building up the church (Eph. 4:16).
 - B. The second level of this divine structure is the building up of companions.
 - 1. Song of Songs 1:4 says, "Draw me; we will run after you." The *we* are the ones who become companions. The vital group starts with one, but this one finds another saint and they become vital companions as a vital unit.
 - 2. The concept of the twos and threes is found frequently in the Bible.
 - 3. The application of the twos and threes in Matthew 18 is to pursue the Lord's presence, to pray in harmony, and to care for people.
 - C. The third level is the small group. Usually, a home is the setting for a small group; this implies that the number of saints in the group is not big. The Lord chose only twelve disciples.
 - 1. A small group should be living, active, and caring for people. Through the small groups new ones can enter into the church life, and dormant saints can be recovered.
 - 2. The emphasis of a small group is not on the meeting, but on the group life in which the group, like a family, lives and does things together.
 - D. Finally, the fourth level in the organic structure of the church life is the church or a district of the church.
 - 1. Practicing the church life in districts began when Brother Lee promoted the prophesying meeting to replace the practice of one man speaking.
 - 2. In order for more saints to be able to prophesy on the Lord's day, according to

1 Corinthians 14, the number of saints was reduced in each district.

3. A district, in practice, functions like a little church in terms of service, meetings, and coordination.
4. The Lord fed the multitude of five thousand people by having them sit in groups by hundreds and by fifties (Mark 6:40).

III Laboring to build up four areas of functioning in the church life:

- A. Building up these four areas is equivalent to building up a local church.
- B. The first thing to build up is the preaching of the gospel. We need to build up a church that proclaims the gospel for the Lord's increase.
 1. Paul praised the Thessalonians saying "... from you the word of the Lord has sounded out..." (1 Thess. 1:8a).
 2. Paul's encouragement from the Philippians was because of their joining, supporting, and fellowshiping with Paul unto the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:4-5).
 3. The church should be outward-facing, not introverted. The church's commission is to preach the gospel.
 4. For the church to be people-centered; we should go out and contact people with the word of the gospel.
- C. The second thing to build up in the church life is shepherding.
 1. To shepherd means to cherish, feed and to nourish; it also includes teaching and perfecting according to Ephesians 4:11-12.
 2. Young people and students need shepherding. We need to shepherd the weak ones, backslidden ones, ones on the periphery of the church life, and ones who have lost heart or have been sidetracked or distracted.
 3. The list of people who need care and shepherding is endless. We must budget and schedule our time to shepherd people on a constant and regular basis.
 4. We all should build up a shepherding spirit and heart.
- D. The third area we must build up is our meetings, our meeting life.
 1. We are the church, the ekklesia, the assembly of the called-out ones. As a gathering people, our meeting life is very important.
 2. The topmost meeting is the Lord's table, which should be rich in praise and exercise as we remember the Lord and worship the Father.
 3. The prophesying meeting should be full of content, rich, and attractive, so the saints would be consoled, encouraged, comforted, and edified.
 4. We also should build up our individual prayer life and the corporate prayer ministry.
 5. The meetings express the Christ we experience in our daily living.
- E. The fourth area we need to build up is the services of the church.
 1. The spiritual services are for caring for all the saints, from children to seniors. Levitical services take care of the many practical affairs.
 2. We should not serve in an individualistic manner but learn how to coordinate with the Lord and with one another as we care for many practical matters.
 3. The revival in Chefoo in 1942-43 issued from the services of all the saints.
 4. The God-ordained way is to bring forth the organic function of every member so that no one is idle; rather all are living, active and serving.

Message Four: Laboring upon the Gospel of God

- I. Our responsibility is to preach the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 28:19, 24:14; 2 Tim. 4:2a).
 - A. The truth brings us life, life produces the church, and the church is responsible for the preaching of the gospel.
 - B. The complete and full gospel is not superficial and poor but includes all the aspects of judicial redemption and organic salvation.
 - C. The book of Romans shows us that although people are sinners, through the preaching of the gospel they can become sons of God and members of the Body of Christ for His expression in the local churches.
 - D. Our gospel is the purest, highest, and most complete gospel; it includes all the truths in the Bible and is what the whole earth needs today.
 - E. We should bear the burden to diligently study the truth so we can fulfill our commission to actively proclaim the gospel and teach the truth.
- II. Our commission is to spread the divine truths contained in the word.
 - A. We can cooperate with the interceding Christ on the throne in our prayer for others.
 - B. We can also cooperate with the heavenly Minister and coordinate with the members of the Body to minister Christ to others in our preaching of the gospel.
 - C. The Lord's charge to us is to go and disciple all the nations, teaching them. We can share the riches regarding the Triune God, God's economy, the wonderful process of the Triune God, Christ's redemption, God's salvation in life, all the aspects of the church, and the New Jerusalem (Matt. 28:19).
 - D. If we spread these truths, we will be the faithful and prudent slaves who give food to the Lord's people at the proper time (Matt. 24:45).
- III. Our labor to preach the gospel:
 - A. In order to preach the high gospel we must be equipped with the knowledge of the truth, otherwise we will run out of words to speak.
 - B. Before we go out to speak, we must pray. In Acts 6:4 the apostles said, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word."
 - C. When we preach the gospel, we need to have faith and boldness to speak God's word to people.
 - D. Like Cornelius, we can open our homes and invite our relatives and intimate friends to hear the gospel (Acts 10:24-27).
 - E. We can go to the college campuses and high schools to reach many students with the gospel.
 - F. Parents and serving saints can pick up the burden to share the gospel with the children and young people.
 - G. We need to go to all those around us to announce the glad tidings.
- IV. Areas to labor upon, develop and build up in our personal life and in our church life:
 - A. Having the spirit of the gospel and a heart for people
 1. Brother Nee said, "Only a few people are raised up every ten to twenty years in the history of the church who have the gift of the gospel. But everyone who loves the Lord can and should have the spirit of preaching the gospel."
 2. Brother Lee said, "If we have ability to carry on a work but lack an intimate concern, our work will be fruitless....Eloquence, gift, and power can never touch people as deeply as your concern for them."
 3. If we don't love men, if we don't consider them precious, we cannot be their servant (cf. Mark 10:45).

4. We need to put the highest value on a human life, whatever race, color, nationality, ethnicity, condition, or class. We need to love, value, and treasure people.
 5. We need to be interested in people, not just in our own affairs. If we are self-absorbed, we will not have the time, energy or room in our hearts for others (Phil. 2:20-21).
 6. We also need to have compassion for people. The Lord Jesus had compassion on a man with leprosy, on the two blind men, on the woman with a dead son, and on the one beaten half dead and left by the roadside.
- B. Reaching out and contacting people is sometimes the hardest thing to do.
- C. Cultivating an atmosphere of love in the church life is necessary.
1. We can build up a habit of sharing the gospel and the word, giving our testimony, and leading people to Christ.
 2. In our meetings people can sense our burden for them. We need a warm atmosphere of love in order for people to be led to Christ.
- D. We need to build up healthy habits to regularly bear fruit.
1. It is good to pray for fruit by petitioning God with names.
 2. It is good to set aside a certain amount of time every week to share the gospel and teach the truth to seekers.
- E. As a community, we should build up a culture in the church that is in the word, that shares the word with others, and that enjoys Christ.

References:

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