THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND GOD'S DISPENSING FOR GOD'S ECONOMY

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

Cooperating with the Lord to Carry Out His Economy by Being His Faithful Stewards Who Minister the Word with a Burden from the Lord and Who Coordinate with One Another in One Accord

EM *Hymns*: 910

Scripture Reading: Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 15:1; Zech. 12:1; Mal. 1:1; Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4; 1 Cor. 14:4b

Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the kings of Judah:

Isa 2:1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

Isa 13:1 The burden concerning Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw:

Isa 15:1 The burden concerning Moab: Indeed in a night it is devastated

Zech 12:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah concerning Israel. Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him,

Mal 1:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel through Malachi.

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.

1 Cor 14:4b … but he who prophesies builds up the church.

I. God's eternal economy, which is God's plan, is His household economy, His household administration; God's dispensing, God's distributing, is the process and means whereby He accomplishes His economy; for this reason God's dispensing is for God's economy—1 Tim. 1:3-4 and footnote 3 on verse 4:

1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's [3]economy, which is in faith.

note 3 The Greek word means household law, implying distribution (the base of this word is of the same origin as that for pasture in John 10:9, implying a distribution of the pasture to the flock) . It denotes a household management, a household administration, a household government, and, derivatively, a dispensation, a plan, or an economy for administration (distribution) ; hence, it is also a household economy. God's economy in faith is His household economy, His household administration (cf. note 10**1** in Eph. 1; Eph. 3:9) , which is to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen people that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church (3:15) , the Body of Christ. The apostle's ministry was centered on this economy of God (Col. 1:25; 1 Cor. 9:17) , whereas the different teachings of the dissenting ones were used by God's enemy to distract His people from this economy. In the administration and shepherding of a local church, this divine economy must be made fully clear to the saints.

In the first chapter of this book the apostle Paul presented God's economy in opposition to different teachings. God's economy is in faith (v. 4) , whereas the different teachings are based on the principle of the law and centered on the law (vv. 7-10) . Hence, faith is versus the law, as dealt with in Gal. 3 (vv. 2, 5, 23-25) . Any teaching that is based on the principle of the law and centered on the law is unhealthy (v. 10) . Only God's economy, which is in faith, in opposition to the teachings that are based on the principle of the law and centered

on the law, is healthy and can make it possible for people to believe on Christ unto eternal life (v. 16) and to thus participate in God's eternal plan, God's economy, which is in faith. This is the gospel of glory with which the blessed God entrusted the apostle Paul (v. 11) . If anyone thrusts away such faith and a good conscience, regarding the faith he becomes shipwrecked on a deep sea (v. 19) ..

A. Christ is the center, circumference, element, sphere, means, goal, and aim of God's economy; in fact, all the contents of God's eternal economy are simply Christ—Matt. 17:5; Luke 24:44.

Matt 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!

Luke 24:44 And He said to them, These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled.

B. Unless we know God's economy, we will not understand the Bible; the central subject of the Bible is the economy of God, and the entire Bible is concerned with the economy of God—Luke 24:45; Job 10:13; cf. Eph. 3:9.

Luke 24:45 Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures;

Job 10:13 But You have hidden these things in Your heart; / I know that this is with You:

Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

C. God's economy is to dispense Himself into our being that our being may be constituted with His being; this can be accomplished only by God dispensing Himself into us as the divine life—vv. 16-17a; John 10:10; 14:6a; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.

Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,

Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, …

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.

John 14:6a Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; …

1 Cor 15:45b … the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

II. In order to carry out His economy, God must have faithful stewards, dispensers, who dispense the divine life supply to God's children—Luke 12:42; Titus 1:7:

Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and prudent steward, whom the master will set over his service to give them their portion of food at the proper time?

Titus 1:7 For the overseer must be unreprovable as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a striker, not greedy for base gain;

A. The Greek word for *steward* is of the same root as the word for *economy* in 1 Timothy 1:4 and Ephesians 1:10.

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Eph 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

B. We must all be good and faithful stewards of God's economy, those who enjoy Christ and minister Christ to dispense Christ as the varied grace of God to supply the saints as the

household of God—1 Cor. 4:1-2; Eph. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:10; Eph. 2:19.

1 Cor 4:1 A man should account us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
1 Cor 4:2 Here, furthermore, it is sought in stewards that one be found faithful.
Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
1 Pet 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
Eph 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

C. Day by day a marvelous transmission should be taking place; God is supplying the Spirit of grace bountifully, and we should be receiving and dispensing the Spirit of grace continually—John 1:16; Heb. 10:29b; Gal. 3:2-5; Eph. 3:2; 4:29.

John 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
Heb 10:29b … who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace?
Gal 3:2 This only I wish to learn from you, Did you receive the Spirit out of the works of law or out of the hearing of faith?
Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
Gal 3:4 Have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?
Gal 3:5 He therefore who bountifully supplies to you the Spirit and does works of power among you, does He do it out of the works of law or out of the hearing of faith?
Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.

D. The Christian living is the living of grace, the experience of grace, so that we may carry out our stewardship of grace, the dispensing of grace—3:1-2; 2 Cor. 12:7-9.

E. We need to be channels of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of grace, those who minister, who dispense, the word of God's grace to the saints for their growth in life and for their enjoyment of Christ—Acts 6:4; 20:32; 2 Cor. 3:6; Phil. 1:19-25; Heb. 10:29b; 1 John 5:16.

Eph 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles-
Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
2 Cor 12:7 And because of the transcendence of the revelations, in order that I might not be exceedingly lifted up, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, that he might buffet me, in order that I might not be exceedingly lifted up.
2 Cor 12:8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.
2 Cor 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.
Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.
Acts 20:32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.
2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
Phil 1:22 But if I am to live in the flesh, if this to me is fruit for my work, then I do not know what I will choose.

Phil 1:23 But I am constrained between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better;
Phil 1:24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.
Phil 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,
Heb 10:29b … who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace?
1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

III. We must minister the word with a burden from the Lord:

A. An open spirit to God is the condition for receiving burdens from God; we must learn to receive burdens and release burdens through prayer in our intimate fellowship with the Lord—Luke 1:53; Psa. 27:4; Isa. 59:16; Col. 4:2:

Luke 1:53 The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.
Psa 27:4 One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple.
Isa 59:16 And He saw that there was no man, / And He was appalled that there was no intercessor. / Therefore His arm accomplished salvation for Him, / And His righteousness sustained Him.
Col 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,

1. Prayer and work are inseparable; without prayer there is no work—Jer. 33:2-3; Isa. 62:6-7; Acts 6:4.

Jer 33:2 Thus says Jehovah who does it, Jehovah who formed it to establish it-Jehovah is His name -
Jer 33:3 Call unto Me, and I will answer you and tell you great and hidden things, which you do not know.
Isa 62:6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, / I have appointed watchmen; / All day and all night / They will never keep silent. / You who remind Jehovah, / Do not be dumb;
Isa 62:7 And do not give Him quiet / Until He establishes / And until He makes Jerusalem / A praise in the earth.
Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.

2. If God gives us a prayer burden, He wants it to be uttered; burdens are released only through utterance—Mark 7:29; Heb. 5:7.

Mark 7:29 And He said to her, Because of this word, go. The demon has gone out of your daughter.
Heb 5:7 This One, in the days of His flesh, having offered up both petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death and having been heard because of His piety,

3. If we cannot pray aloud in our homes, let us find a place where we can utter our burden as the Lord did; we should pray audibly even if it means praying in a low voice; God wants our burdens to be articulated—Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; Psa. 4:1; 5:1-3; 77:1; 102:1; 116:1; 142:1; S. S. 2:14.

Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed.
Luke 6:12 And in these days He went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.
Psa 4:1 When I call out, answer me, / O God of my righteousness; / Make room for me when I am in straits; / Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.
Psa 5:1 To my words give ear, O Jehovah; / Consider my moaning.
Psa 5:2 Give heed to the sound of my cry, / My King and my God; / For to You do I pray.
Psa 5:3 O Jehovah, in the morning / You will hear my voice; / In the morning I will set forth my words in order to You, / And I will watch.

Psa 77:1 My voice calls out to God, and I will cry out; / My voice calls out to God, and He will give ear to me.
Psa 102:1 O Jehovah, hear my prayer; / And let my cry come unto You.
Psa 116:1 I love Jehovah because He hears / My voice, my supplications,
Psa 142:1 With my voice I cry to Jehovah; / With my voice I make my supplication to Jehovah.
S. S. 2:14 My dove, in the clefts of the rock, / In the covert of the precipice, Let me see your countenance, / Let me hear your voice; / For your voice is sweet, / And your countenance is lovely.

B. 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:

Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the kings of Judah:
Isa 2:1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:
Isa 13:1 The burden concerning Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw:
Isa 15:1 The burden concerning Moab: Indeed in a night it is devastated
Zech 12:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah concerning Israel. Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him,
Mal 1:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel through Malachi.
Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.
1 Cor 14:4b …but he who prophesies builds up the church.

1. 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.

1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.
1 Cor 2:12 But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God;
1 Cor 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words.
1 Cor 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.
1 Cor 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
1 Cor 2:16 For who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

2. 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.

Mal 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the mes-senger of Jehovah of hosts.

3. 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.

Exo 28:29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually.
Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.

C. The greatest problem in the administration of the church and in the ministry of the word is not having a burden from the Lord:

1. Without a burden, all our activity will be dead and ineffective; with a burden, we will be living and flourishing.

2. 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.
3. If we serve according to obligation instead of serving with a burden, such service will cause us to lose the Lord's presence—cf. Mal. 3:14; Deut. 4:25.

Mal 3:14 You say, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge and have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?

Deut 4:25 When you have brought forth children and grandchildren and have languished in the land, and you have spoiled yourselves by making an idol, the form of anything, and have done that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah your God so as to anger Him;

4. Whenever our service becomes a matter of fulfilling an obligation, our service has already degraded.

IV. We must coordinate with one another in one accord—Acts 1:14; 2:46:

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

A. The greatest indication that we see the Body is that we cannot be independent; Paul's reference to Sosthenes in 1 Corinthians 1:1 shows that he had a consciousness of the Body and a spirit of coordination.

1 Cor 1:1 Paul, a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Sosthenes the brother,

B. Because we do not have the consciousness that we need others and that others need us for our coordination in the Body, few among us have the spirit of a learner and the spirit of needing help—Matt. 5:3:

Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

1. Coordination means that we cannot do anything without one another.
2. To feel that we do not need one another and that we do not need to fellowship is the greatest form of pride; it is the most offensive thing to the Lord and to the Body.
3. If we lack coordination with others, we will always criticize what they do.

C. God's blessing is based on our one accord, being in harmony in spirit with one another, having real coordination, and having genuine oneness—Acts 1:14:

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

1. When we minister the word, fellowship, and pray, we should not criticize others; in particular, when we pray with others, we should avoid praying in a contradictory manner.
2. We must absolutely avoid criticizing others in the ministry of the word; criticizing others shows that we are narrow, and this will lead to division.
3. We always need to have an attitude of respect, cooperation, and coordination with others; we should serve others according to our portion and honor the portion of others, because both portions have been entrusted to us by the Lord; everyone should have the humility to not regard his portion more highly than another person's portion—Phil. 2:3-4.

Phil 2:3 Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves;

Phil 2:4 Not regarding each his own virtues, but each the virtues of others also.

4. The brothers need to learn the lesson of being broken, accommodating others, and respecting others' function; only in this way can we preserve the consciousness of the Body and produce the building among us.

5. We should all be of one soul to pray for, supply, and support whoever is speaking a message; if those who serve the Lord are continually disagreeing instead of being in one accord, the enemy, the saints, and even the children will know it.
6. We should not give the saints the impression that our speaking is higher than that of others; instead, the saints should have the impression that our speaking is in harmony with the speaking of others.
7. When a brother speaks, some may be critical and say in their heart, "I know this already"; this kind of spirit is destructive to God's work.
8. Because the faithful saints are observing us, we must be careful not to do anything or say anything that stirs up their concern for us and for the Lord's recovery—1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 12:18; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7-8.

1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

2 Cor 12:18 I entreated Titus and sent with him the brother. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not walk in the same spirit? In the same steps?

1 Tim 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Titus 2:7 Concerning all things presenting yourself as a pattern of good works: in your teaching showing incorruption, gravity,

Titus 2:8 Healthy speech that cannot be condemned, that he who opposes may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

9. Pride invites destruction, but humility brings in blessing—Prov. 16:18; 1 Pet. 5:5.

Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, / And a haughty spirit before a fall.

1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

10. A reason for the lack of building among the serving ones is that they are short of love for one another:
    a. The Lord's word to us and His prayer for us were to love one another—John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I have loved you.

John 15:17 These things I command you that you may love one another.

    b. There should be an extraordinary love among the serving ones; such love for one another comes from our oneness with the Lord.
    c. The elders and co-workers should shepherd one another and love one another to be a model of the Body life—21:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:22.

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

1 Pet 1:22 Since you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned brotherly love, love one another from a pure heart fervently,

D. We need to be blended together by praying in one accord with the exercise and release of our spirit—Matt. 18:19; Acts 1:14; *Hymns,* #846:

Matt 18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Hymns, #846

1 Oh, may my spirit flow, Oh, may it flow!
Now I beseech Thee, Lord Oh, may it flow!
My past I would forsake, The iron walls would break,
My spirit free would make; Oh, may it flow!

2 Oh, may my spirit flow, Oh, may it flow!
Now I implore Thee, Lord, Oh, may it flow!
No more self-satisfied, No more in self-bound pride,
No more my spirit tied; Oh, may it flow!

3 Oh, may my spirit flow, Oh, may it flow!
For this I plead with Thee, Oh, may it flow!
High-minded not to be, Pride shall not prison me,
I'd flow unceasingly, In spirit flow.

4 Oh, may my spirit flow, Oh, may it flow!
For this I seek Thee, Lord, Oh, may it flow!
No more to isolate, Nor self to perfect make,
My spirit nought abate, Deeply to flow.

5 Oh, may my spirit flow, Oh, may it flow!
I ask Thee, gracious Lord, Oh, may it flow!
My trust in self o'erthrow, Down from self's throne I'll go,
That living water flow In spirit, Lord.

6 Oh, may my spirit flow, Oh, may it flow!
Answer my prayer, dear Lord, Oh, may it flow!
Not just commune with Thee, I long to builded be,
Mingle with others free In spirit, Lord.

1. We should pray as a corporate body, not individualistically.
2. On the one hand, we should pray in such a way that the next one who prays can continue our prayer; on the other hand, we also should listen to others' prayers, enter into their prayers, and follow their prayers.
3. We should pray short prayers of petition and supplication to the Lord instead of long prayers that are full of explaining to the Lord and full of giving the Lord descriptions and instructions.
4. A long prayer always kills the prayer meeting; it indicates that you care only for yourself and for your feeling, not for others and not for the atmosphere and flow of the Spirit in the meeting.

V. To serve in coordination with one another in the church is to overcome the degradation of the church by the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God through eating Christ as the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the feast for the finalization of God's eternal economy—Rev. 4:5; 5:6; 2:7, 17; 3:20-21; Zech. 4:11-14:

Rev 4:5 And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

Rev 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.
Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.
Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.
Zech 4:11 Then I answered and said to him, What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?
Zech 4:12 And I answered a second time and said to him, What are the two olive branches that are by the side of the two golden spouts, which empty the gold from themselves?
Zech 4:13 And he spoke to me, saying, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, sir.
Zech 4:14 And he said, These are the two sons of oil, who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

A. To serve in coordination with one another in the church is to enjoy Christ as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; "for he who serves Christ in this is well pleasing to God and approved by men"—Rom. 14:17-18.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
Rom 14:18 For he who serves Christ in this is well pleasing to God and approved by men.

B. To serve in coordination with one another in the church is to shepherd people according to God—1 Pet. 5:1-6.

1 Pet 5:1 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed:
1 Pet 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;
1 Pet 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.
1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
1 Pet 5:6 Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time,

C. To serve in coordination with one another in the church is to be a cheerful giver—2 Cor. 9:7; Acts 20:35.

2 Cor 9:7 Each one as he has purposed in his heart, not out of sorrow or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.
Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

D. To serve in coordination with one another in the church is to build the church by living a prophesying life to overflow with the flowing Triune God for the constituting of the church as the fullness of God—John 4:14b; 7:38-39; 1 Cor. 14:4b, 26; Eph. 3:19.

John 4:14b … but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.
John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
1 Cor 14:4b … but he who prophesies builds up the church.
1 Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.
Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PAUL'S DESIRE TO BE WITH CHRIST

Philippians 1:23 says, "But I am constrained between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better." When Paul wrote these words, he was in bonds suffering mistreatment. Under those circumstances we would expect him to long to be with Christ. Any believer in Paul's situation would have the same desire.

We have indicated that to be with Christ is a matter of degree, not of place. No doubt, Paul was with Christ in prison. The fact that he was already with Christ indicates that being with Christ is not a matter of place. But although Paul was with Christ to a certain degree, he desired to be with Him in a higher degree. Paul knew that as a result of physical death he would be with Christ to a greater extent than in his earthly life. For this reason he could desire to depart and to be with Christ, regarding this as far better.

REMAINING FOR THE SAINTS' PROGRESS AND JOY

In verse 24 Paul continues, "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." The words *your sake* mean for the sake of the church. The apostle's consideration was not selfish but was for the sake of the saints. He was absolutely occupied by the Lord with the church. Paul realized that the churches needed more of the ministry of Christ. For their sake he would remain in order to minister Christ to them.

Paul was a person full of Christ. When he spoke, he spoke Christ. When he lived, he lived with Christ. When he worked, he worked with Christ and ministered Christ to the churches. For the sake of the church, he was willing to remain in the flesh that he might minister Christ to the saints.

Verse 25 says, "And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith." *The faith* here refers to what the saints believe in (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:7); *progress,* to the growth in life; and *joy,* to the enjoyment of Christ. Paul was willing to remain for the sake of the saints' progress and joy of the faith.

It is possible to be a Christian for years without having any progress or joy, without growing in life and without enjoying the Lord. We need both the growth in life and the enjoyment of Christ. I have known some saints who have been faithful to stay in the Lord's recovery. But with them there have been little growth in life and little enjoyment of Christ. As a result, they have had little progress and little joy. How about you? What can you say about your progress and your joy? Oh, we need the progress and the enjoyment!

Whether Paul was in prison or out of prison, he was a strong factor of the saints' progress and joy. Because of him the churches could have the growth in life and could be filled with the enjoyment of Christ. This should also be true of us today. All the elders in the local churches should be factors of the saints' growth in life and of their enjoyment of Christ. But whether or not the elders are such factors of progress and joy depends on whether or not they magnify Christ by living Him. If the elders live Christ, He will surely be magnified in them. Then the elders will become factors to enable the saints to grow in life and enjoy the Lord.

BOASTING IN CHRIST IN PAUL

In Philippians 1:26 Paul says, "That your boast may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my coming again to you." This verse is not easy to understand. What does *boast* refer to? The Greek word has a threefold meaning: "boasting," "rejoicing," and "glorying." When we boast, we are glorying, and when we are glorying, we are rejoicing. Here Paul says that the saints' "boast may abound in Christ Jesus in me." It may be better to place *in me* before *in Christ Jesus,* since this arrangement corresponds more closely to Paul's thought. Here Paul is saying that the believers may boast, rejoice, glory in Paul in Christ. Their boast in Paul must be in Christ. It is rather easy to boast in Christ, but it is not so easy to boast in someone in Christ. However, what does this mean? The King James Version says,

"Rejoicing…in Jesus Christ for me." This rendering may be logical, but it is not accurate according to the Greek. The Greek does not say "for me"; it clearly says "in me." Paul was not saying that the Philippians boasted in Christ for him or because of him. He was saying that they boasted in Christ in him.

In this difficult verse lies a deep secret concerning the experience of Christ. If we would experience Christ, we, the believers, must be able to boast, rejoice, and glory not only in Christ Himself but also in someone in Christ. It was necessary for the saints in Philippi to boast in the apostle Paul in Christ. This boasting is related to the crucial fact that what we receive of Christ is not received directly in Christ but is received from the Head through other members of the Body. Hence, we receive spiritual blessing from the Head through another member. No doubt, Paul was a very important member of the Body. If he had been lost to the Body, the Body would have been deprived of a very important means of spiritual blessing.

Our physical body illustrates how members can be a means of supply to the Body. The arm, for example, is such a means of supply for the fingers. Apart from the arm as a means, the fingers cannot receive any supply from the head. As an important member of the Body of Christ, Paul was such a means of supply between us and the Head. If we did not have him, we would lack an important channel of supply.

None of us can boast, rejoice, and glory directly in the Head. Rather, we need to boast in Christ in and through a certain channel of supply. In verse 26 Paul says, "That your boast may abound in Christ Jesus in me." The words *in me* include the meaning of "through me" but are not limited to this meaning. During the time of Paul's imprisonment, Gentile believers, like those in Philippi, were boasting in Paul. Their boasting, rejoicing, glorying, was not in the Judaistic preachers; it was in the apostle Paul. They could boast in Paul because he magnified Christ and lived Christ to the uttermost. Because Paul lived Christ and magnified Him in this way, he could transfuse Christ into the saints and minister Christ to all the churches. Therefore, the saints had reason to boast in such an apostle. If Paul had died prematurely, their boasting in him would have been cut short. But as long as Paul continued to live, they were able to boast in him in Christ. Hence, in verses 25 and 26 Paul says that he was confident that he would remain and continue with the saints for their progress and joy of the faith so that their boast could abound in Christ Jesus in him through his coming again to them.

CHANNELS FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

In these verses we see the very crucial point that in the Body life there is the urgent need of certain ones to function as channels of supply. We need members like Paul. When such members die, the transfusion of Christ is in a very real sense interrupted. But as long as such ones are with us, the transfusion continues unabated, and we can boast in them in Christ. The leading ones in all the local churches should be such channels, such means of supply.

It should matter to the church whether we live or die. Our living should matter greatly to the saints. But whether or not this is so depends on the degree to which we live Christ, minister Christ, and infuse others with Christ. I am sorry to say that, with respect to infusing Christ into the church, there are certain leading ones about whom it makes little difference whether they live or die. But with others their continuing with us or their being taken from us in death makes a great difference. I think of the example of a brother very dear to us, Eugene Gruhler, Sr. He surely was a means of supply to the Body. From the depths of my heart, I can say that his going to be with the Lord was a loss to us in the church life. It made a difference to us whether this brother remained or went to be with the Lord. The same should be true of every one of us. It should matter to the church whether we live or die. But this depends on our living Christ, magnifying Christ, ministering Christ, and transfusing Christ from the depths of our being into that of the saints. If we experience Christ and enjoy Him in this way, it will make a difference to the church whether we remain or go to be with the Lord.

We have seen that we cannot boast directly in Christ as the Head. Rather, there need to be some members to function as channels through which others may enjoy Christ and grow in life. There is an

urgent need for such means of supply. Even if there are only one or two in a particular country, many others will receive the supply of Christ. Because Paul was this kind of member, he chose to remain and continue with the saints for their progress and their joy in the faith so that they could glory in him in Christ. If the saints are to experience Christ, there is the need for someone to serve as such a channel. In certain countries there is no way for people to experience Christ because there is not even one person in that country who truly lives Christ and magnifies Him. As a result, the believers there have no way to enjoy Christ. There is a great need for people like Paul. When Paul was alive, many could experience Christ and have the progress and joy in the faith. (*Life-study of Philippians,* pp. 60-64)

PROBLEMS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The First Problem—Not Having a Burden

The greatest problem in the administration of the church and the ministry of the word is not having a burden or, we can say, not receiving a burden or not paying attention to a burden. It is possible for elders to administrate the church without a burden. Those who minister the word may also do so without a burden. The discharge of our burden when we minister the word does not depend on how well we speak. If our only desire is to speak well in order to touch people, our speaking will be without a burden. Likewise, an ability to administrate the church does not discharge one's burden. It is not a matter of how well we can administrate but whether our administration is effective and can touch people.

For example, when people come to a meeting, there may be the need to release the word. We must seek the Lord concerning what we speak and concerning the issue of our speaking. It is not a matter of how well we speak, the logistics of our presentation, or whether the saints are touched; rather, it is a matter of what will be produced in the saints. If some are not yet saved, we should receive a burden to bear their souls by the Lord's grace in order to sow the seed of salvation into them when we release the word. Our burden is salvation, not the release of a dynamic word. If they are saved but do not love the Lord, our burden should be for them to love the Lord. If they love the Lord but are not willing to give themselves to the Lord and receive His dealing, our burden should be for them to willingly give themselves to the Lord and be dealt with by Him. This is the ministry of the word with a burden.

Otherwise, our Lord's Day message meeting may easily fall into the condition of the so-called Sunday service. Every week someone is assigned to release a message in order to maintain the meeting. After the meeting, everyone goes home, eats lunch, rests, and returns in the evening for the bread-breaking meeting. This is a Sunday service. In this situation those who minister the word must receive a burden. We need to know the condition of those who come to listen to a message. They might not have any feeling concerning their own condition, but we need to be clear and full of feeling concerning their condition. They may be able to sit and listen peacefully week after week, but we cannot speak peacefully week after week. We need to receive the burden to "disturb" and "trouble" them so that even if they come to the meeting peacefully, they will be inwardly disturbed when they leave.

If we are not concerned that our speaking does not produce any effect in those who listen, we do not have a burden. This situation indicates that those who speak and those who listen are in a routine. This is the condition of degraded Christianity where the congregation routinely listens to the pastor, and the pastor routinely preaches to the congregation year after year. This should not be our practice. The ministry of the word should enlighten those who hear. When we minister the word every Lord's Day, we should "trouble" people to the extent that they have no peace. This is what it means to have a burden.

If the listeners are lukewarm, even though they may listen peacefully, those who minister the word should not be at peace. They should go before the Lord, and let Him take away their peace, even to the point of losing sleep and not eating until they receive a burden from the Lord. Then their speaking will enable the Holy Spirit to work in the listeners. Only this kind of speaking is the speaking of God. Brothers who minister the word must have a burden, not merely doctrines, logic, and examples. Ministering the word in this way is intolerable; it is an offense to God, and it is a sin in His eyes.

Receiving the Burden to Speak God's Word in the Ministry of the Word

In Isaiah 13:1 the Chinese Union Version says that the prophets received inspiration when they spoke for God. The Hebrew word for *inspiration,* however, means "burden." Man needs to receive a burden. We cannot neglect this responsibility and think that God has not given us a burden. The Epistles of Paul clearly show that he received burdens. When someone in the church in Corinth committed the sin of fornication, Paul did not simply condemn the sin or stop praying for the one who sinned. He received a burden from God to bear a responsibility and commission for the church (1 Cor. 5:1-13). Paul did not preach doctrines in his Epistles; instead, he was burdened to fellowship concerning certain matters, so he was able to touch people's feelings.

There is a danger that the ministry of the word in the church in Taipei may become the same as the preaching of sermons in Sunday services. When we minister the word of God, our concern should 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. People may have a negative reaction or be stirred up when they hear a message that is spoken with a burden, but they cannot deny that it is God's speaking. This kind of message can help people and solve their problems. A message that sounds nice but is void of God's speaking cannot touch people, turn them inwardly, or satisfy those who are hungry and thirsty, because they are not the words that God wants to speak even if they are from the Bible.

Therefore, speaking should not be easy or cheap. We cannot speak simply because we have prepared a message. One who ministers the word should bear people's condition before God. He bears the responsibility of knowing their needs. He needs to sense their condition and know what God wants to speak. The help we have received from training cannot replace the burden that is within us. The danger is that the burden has been replaced so that we are short of revelation and spiritual burden.

Being Desperate for People's Situation to Preach the Effective Word

Fifty-two weeks a year there is a message meeting in the church in Taipei on the Lord's Day. Do the brothers who minister the word fast and pray before ministering the word? Of course, there is no regulation that requires the brothers to fast and pray, as this would be useless. The brothers need to understand that bearing the word of God is equal to bearing the souls of man. The saints come to the meetings week after week to listen to our speaking, so we must bear them. If there is no change in them after three months, we should not be at peace. This can be compared to a merchant who is unable to sleep peacefully when he has no business for two weeks and who is unable to eat when there is no profit after three months. He will be full of sorrow and concern.

Many brothers and sisters with businesses come to me. Although they simply sit without opening their mouths, I can sense the heavy burden within them and realize that they have encountered difficulties in their business. Are the brothers who speak sorrowful for the souls who have not changed in three months? A store owner who has no customers would be unable to continue working, considering everything to be fine. He would consider the situation and find a way to change the situation. How can those who minister the word continue as usual when there is no profit? We should not consider that it is sufficient merely to speak from the podium week after week.

When Brother Nee began his work in Foochow, he fasted and prayed every Saturday for the gospel meeting on the Lord's Day. He considered before the Lord what to speak and how to speak. He considered what word the sinners needed to hear. Since he fasted and prayed with a heavy burden, his words were always very effective and were later published as messages. Many who are used by the Lord bear a burden in their ministry of the word. When Peace Wang was young, she had a successful revival work. She always knelt before the Lord and spent a long period of time weeping and grieving for sinners. Therefore, when she stood up to speak, her words were always living and operative.

Serving with a Burden Causing the Self to Be Dealt With

Children will never be successful in their studies if they study only for their tests. If they have a

burden, their studying will change. A brother may give a message merely out of obligation, because it is his turn to speak. However, giving messages is not a matter of obligation but of burden. We may speak for half a year, but those who listen might not receive anything, and our speaking will be in vain. If we have a burden, our messages will not be ineffective. Our messages should "trouble" people so that they have no peace, and they are stirred up to love and serve the Lord. In this situation, our being will be touched by God. There is no need for the self to be dealt with if we give messages that are out of obligation. However, in giving a message out of a burden, our self must be dealt with.

Working from nine to six as an employee is a matter of obligation and does not require any dealing. However, we would work differently if we had our own business. Our laziness would be dealt with because we would rise earlier to work. The attitude of a waiter or clerk toward customers might not need to be dealt with. However, a person who owns his shop will adjust himself in order not to offend his customers. Instead of being dealt with, some brothers seem to have more problems because they serve out of obligation, not burden. If there is a burden, our self decreases and is dealt with. It will not increase, 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. Hence, having a burden deals with us the most.

A young man who is not burdened with a family can be carefree in his living. However, after he is married and has children, he will know the meaning of being diligent and disciplined. A child can spend his parents' money freely without self-control. But when he is older and lives on his own, his spending is budgeted. He will be more careful when he goes shopping. Spending his parents' money was one thing, but spending his own money is a burden. It seems as if the brothers in the churches serve according to obligation as employees in a company. They do not seem to have much burden. Such service is dangerous and will cause us to lose the Lord's presence.

The Second Problem—Lacking a Feeling for Coordination

Another problem among us is that although the serving ones are capable, they do not have a feeling for coordination in their spirit when they come together to serve. It seems as if everyone is able to serve without others. Consequently, few among us have the spirit of a learner and the spirit of needing help. Those who truly coordinate in spirit should have a strong feeling that they cannot do anything without the help and coordination of others. Our present coordination is one of formality. We do our part without needing anyone else. We may not argue, but there is not much interdependence in spirit. This shows that our spirit of service is improper.

This is the situation of those who work with the young people and the children. The coordination is formal; everyone does what he should do when it is his turn. This is cooperation, not coordination. Coordination means that we cannot do anything without one another. There is a sense that we need others and that others need us. Those who work with young people should be like this; all the service of the church should also be like this. It is normal when the deacons and elders mutually need one another, and the saints feel that they cannot do anything without the elders and deacons.

Today we have rules and arrangements. The elders do things pertaining to elders, and the deacons do things pertaining to deacons. Everyone works when it is his turn. However, we do not have a deep feeling that we cannot go on without the elders and deacons in our service. Some brothers not only lack a sense of the need for the elders and deacons, but they even think that elders and deacons are unnecessary. This is dangerous.

Having the Greatest Form of Pride

Those who live in the workers' home are bright and capable. They seem to be independent and do not need others. This is very dangerous because it is the greatest form of pride. If four brothers are living in the workers' home, they should depend on one another, and others should sense their dependence on one another. Sadly, this is not the atmosphere among us. For example, if it is my turn to preach the gospel, I will either do everything or do nothing. From the human perspective this may be

considered to be coordination, but this coordination is according to regulation and arrangement. There is no sense of needing others in spirit. Some may think that coordination is unnecessary and troublesome and that it is better to not coordinate.

Those who do not need to coordinate are dry, lack blessing, and are useless. The fact that we are clever, capable, and do not need one another's help is a great danger. This is a sad and pitiful situation. The fearful thing is that this situation is hidden and not very apparent. This situation can be compared to leprosy. If it is manifested, it is easier to deal with it.

This shows that we lack the fellowship of the Body. When we come together, we seldom have thorough fellowship. For example, when saints from other cities visit Taipei, we sit together for a meeting. After the meeting, however, we all go our separate ways without fellowshipping. This was not our situation during our first six years in Taiwan. In those years, whenever we had a conference, we came together and had much fellowship. Now we are all capable, brilliant, and knowledgeable. We do not need one another; we do not need to fellowship. This is the greatest form of pride. It is the most offensive thing to the Lord and to the Body. We should humbly minister to others and restrict our cleverness through coordination.

Needing Fellowship and Coordination in the Body and in Life

If we lose the principle of coordination and dependence in the Body, we will not be strong in our administration of the church and ministry of the word. Once we lose this principle, we will not have much blessing. Our coordination should not become mechanical, and we should not work only when it is our turn. We should have the feeling that we cannot do anything without others, that we truly need one another. If we come together and assign work, with each doing only his own work, our situation is similar to the division of labor in a civic organization or a large institution. This lack of the flavor of coordination among the members of the Body must be dealt with.

What does it mean to see the Body? The greatest indication that we see the Body is that we cannot be independent. We feel that we need the Body, that we need the brothers and sisters. Presently, however, our coordination can be compared to work in an organization. It seems that we are moving like a machine and that we lack the sense of the fellowship of life.

The Lack of Coordination Producing Criticism

If we lack coordination with others, we will always criticize what they do. Even if we do not express it, we are filled with criticism, and we disapprove of what others do. Such people are narrow and pitiful. In our service we should not expect others to be like us, nor should we expect to be like others. However, because we lack coordination in our service and do not rely and mutually depend on one another, we often step on others. We either do not walk, or we step on others when we do walk. We either do not work, or we do the job of others. We either are not concerned, or we criticize the work of others. When a certain matter is in others' hands, we are not able to do anything, but when an opportunity comes to us, we do it according to our way and discard the help of others. Although this condition is not apparent among us, it will be in our future, because we are not willing to submit to others. This is a foolish way.

Not Requiring Others to Be the Same as We, but Respecting What Others Do

We should not require others to be the same as we are in everything. We should not discuss the way others give messages, visit people, or live. Even if we are not pleased with the way others live, we cannot set standards for others, nor are we qualified to judge others. Only the Lord is the criterion and the Judge. We need to learn to respect what others do. When we speak of being zealous, we should respect others' quietness; when we speak of being calm and joined to the Lord, we should not criticize those who are busy. If everyone is the same as we are, there will not be the Body. There would be only one member. This is not the church. If everyone is like us, there would be only we ourselves and not the church. The church is composed of many kinds of people. This can be compared to the human body

having different members. The hands look like hands, the feet look like feet, the ears look like ears, and the eyes look like eyes. Even the member who seems to be the most uncomely is necessary in the Body.

Hence, we should learn not to step on others. When it is our turn to work, we should not criticize what others have done. It is a blessing to respect the work of others and to add our work to theirs. We should be positive when we speak with others, not negative. It is unwise to say that others are wrong. As long as these negative factors exist among us, the administration of the church will have problems, and the ministry of the word will not be strong. Many saints from different places serve together in the church. They have different dispositions and family backgrounds, and they also have different spiritual backgrounds and training. Therefore, we cannot expect everyone to be like we are. We need to learn not to step on others. When we take a step, we should not step on others. We should especially avoid stepping on others when we minister the word.

For example, when speaking about prayer, we should not criticize those who speak about meditation, because the saints may need both. We should simply speak positively about prayer without criticizing others' speaking concerning meditation. When we serve together, we must absolutely avoid criticizing others in the ministry of the word. Some may speak about prayer and others about meditating; some may speak of being zealous and others of being in the Holy of Holies. These are not heretical teachings; they are merely different in emphasis. Criticizing others shows that we are narrow, and this will lead to division. If this is the way we work, there will be no building among us; on the contrary, there will be destruction.

We should simply labor positively and learn to receive help from others. We should realize that no one can do our part. Even the apostle Paul could not do what we can do. However, we also need to admit that we cannot replace others. Every person has his own function. When we minister the word, fellowship, and pray, we should not criticize others. In particular, when we pray with others, we should avoid praying in a contradictory manner.

Preserving the Consciousness of the Body and Being Built Up in Our Service

The brothers need to learn the lesson of being broken, accommodating others, and respecting others' function. Our Lord is great, and His work has many aspects. Thus, we must be faithful to what the Lord has entrusted us with and learn to work in coordination with others, respecting what they do. Unless they speak heresy, we should not interfere, intervene, or criticize. Only in this way can we preserve the consciousness of the Body and produce the building among us.

The seeds of these problems are sown among us and have already produced some negative situations. Since we are serving the Lord together in His work and sharing this work together, we must rise up to utterly condemn such situations. These matters are intimately related to us and will manifest how much we have been dealt with before the Lord and the lessons of life we have learned. If we have grown in life, been broken, and learned some lessons, we will be saved in all these matters. When the elders suggested studying the Gospel of John and the responsible brother for the home meeting said that it was too long, insisting that the elders accept his way, the feeling of coordination was weakened. Once the feeling of coordination is weakened, we cannot expect the building of the Body to be strong.

If this brother continues to oppose the proposals of the elders, the brothers and sisters in his meeting will eventually rise up to oppose him, because he took the lead to oppose others and give his opinions. If he continues in this way, how can he lead the brothers and sisters in his home meeting to have a strong service in coordination and a good building? We all need to learn a serious lesson. In the coordination of the Body, everyone needs to function and respect what others do. We should not criticize others but should join their labor so that the Body of Christ can be supplied, not damaged. In this way the feeling of coordination in the Body will be sweet, and the building up of the Body will be strong. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1957,* vol. 2, "The Administration of the Church and the Ministry of the Word," pp. 233-246)