

Message Three

The Need for All Our Service to Be Initiated by God

Scripture Reading: Num. 18:1; Rom. 11:36; 2 Sam. 7:1-3, 5, 11-14a; Job 38:2; 42:6; Acts 22:8, 10

- I. All our work and service in the church must be initiated by God and must be according to His desire; otherwise, we will commit the iniquity of the sanctuary in our service to God—Num. 18:1; Rom. 11:36:**
 - A. Anything that is initiated or started by man, regardless of how much it is for God, is a religious activity devoid of the presence of Christ.
 - B. A man may have no thought of God and no heart to serve God, but God comes to him, prompting and touching him, revealing Himself to him, giving him a command, a calling, and a leading, so that he receives something of God and cannot help but take action—Jer. 1:4-10, 17-19; Dan. 11:32.
- II. Abel offered sacrifices by faith according to God's revelation; his offering of a sacrifice came in response to God's word—Heb. 11:4; Gen. 3:21; 4:1-5; Rom. 10:17:**
 - A. After Adam's fall, God showed man redemption through the shedding of the blood of a sacrifice; because Abel heard, saw, and understood this, he offered a sacrifice according to God's instruction and ordination—Gen. 3:21; Heb. 9:22.
 - B. Cain served God from himself according to his own will and opinion; he offered the fruit of the ground to God, and this offering was entirely a religious activity—Gen. 4:3.
 - C. A religious activity is any service or worship that does not originate from God's revelation, command, and leading; the activities of one who serves God must originate absolutely from God, not from man.
- III. Noah served God according to God's command; even the measurements and methods of building the ark were not according to Noah's imagination but to God's determination—6:14—7:5; Heb. 11:7.**
- IV. Abraham served God according to God's appearing—Acts 7:2-4; Gen. 12:1-4, 7-8; 13:14-18; 15:1; Heb. 11:8-10.**
- V. Moses served God according to God's instruction for the deliverance of the children of Israel and for the building of the tabernacle according to God's pattern—Exo. 3:10, 14-15; 25:9, 40; 40:16-17, 34-35; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5.**
- VI. David feared God, cooperated with God, and let God work—Acts 13:36a:**
 - A. David was zealous to build a temple for God (2 Sam. 7:1-3), but God rejected David's good intention; God sent Nathan the prophet to David to ask, "Is it you who will build Me a house for Me to dwell in?"—v. 5.
 - B. Our heart to serve God is acceptable, but our decision to do something for Him is not acceptable; God said, "Is it you...?"; God does not want us to decide anything on His behalf.
 - C. We should love God and wait for His command; we should seek His will and wait for His revelation; just as the slave in the Old Testament loved his master and allowed his ear to be bored through with an awl to hear the word of his master, we must focus on waiting for our Master's command—Exo. 21:6; 2 Tim. 2:21b.
 - D. Because David feared God, he did not react to Nathan; rather, he stopped; the act of stopping the building of the temple is a great matter.

- E. Sister M. E. Barber said, “Whoever cannot stop working for the sake of God cannot work for the sake of God.”
- F. David’s stopping established a twofold testimony in the universe: first, all the work in the universe should come from God, not from man; second, all that matters is what God does for man, not what man does for God.
- G. David wanted to build a temple for God, but God said that He would build David a house, from which a kingdom would come forth—2 Sam. 7:11-14a.
- H. Even after God spoke this word to David, he fell twice—the son as the builder and the site for the temple both came out of David’s being forgiven of his sins:
 - 1. First, he murdered Uriah and usurped his wife Bathsheba; after David sinned, he bore a son, Solomon, who would be the builder of God’s temple—11:2-17, 26-27.
 - 2. Second, he numbered the children of Israel, showing his hidden pride by putting his faith in numbers of warriors rather than in God; after David was chastised for numbering the people, he offered sacrifices on a piece of land, as instructed by God, which later became the site for the building of the temple—24:1-10, 18-25; 1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Chron. 3:1.
- I. We must learn deep within that God wants only our cooperation; He does not need us to do anything for Him; we must stop all our opinions, decisions, and ideas; we need to let Him speak, let Him come in, and let Him command—Matt. 17:5.

VII. Paul served God according to the vision that he saw at his vanquishing conversion:

- A. Paul’s first question to the Lord was, “Who are You, Lord?”—this is related to Paul’s living, which was a quest to know Christ—Acts 22:8; Phil. 3:10a.
- B. Paul’s second question to the Lord was, “What shall I do, Lord?”—this is related to Paul’s service, which was purely initiated by God; blessed is he who asks this question!—Acts 22:10; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 2:12-14.
- C. We should all ask the Lord, “What shall I do?” rather than telling Him, “This is what I will do.”

VIII. The basic principle in our service is that everything must be initiated by God:

- A. All those who serve God must see a principle from these examples: God’s work needs man’s cooperation, but it does not require man’s initiation; we should listen to Him unreservedly.
- B. The book of Job reveals that the unique prerequisite to receiving God’s revelation is to stop our speaking, our opinion, our view, and our self:
 - 1. The book of Job tells us that God’s counsel is darkened by man’s words (38:2); a person’s opinion is expressed in his word, and his word represents his opinion.
 - 2. The Lord said, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself” (Matt. 16:24); when Job said, “I abhor myself” (Job 42:6), he was referring to his opinions, views, and ideas.
- C. Service from man has man’s natural enjoyment, preference, and flavor; service from God enables man to worship the Lord and advance even when facing difficulties; service from God enables man to not be anxious or quarrelsome.
- D. Although all our service is initiated by God, we must learn to bear responsibility and be absolutely faithful before the Lord; we need to rely on the Lord, carrying out our service by being joined to the Lord and being in fellowship with Him—1 Cor. 4:1-2; 7:25.
- E. This kind of service builds up the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem, and it prepares us to serve Him in and for eternity—Eph. 4:11-12; Rev. 22:3.