

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND THE WORK

Message Eight

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Being a Proper Person in the Church, the Ministry, and the Work

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:17a; 4:16; Matt. 16:24; Rom. 12:4-5

I. The principle in God's work is to gain persons and by gaining them to have a way to go on to carry out His economy—Acts 9:15; 13:1-2:

- A. The right priority is not for us to work for God but for God to work Himself into us—Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13.
- B. God's unique work is to work Himself in Christ into His chosen people, making Himself one with them for the Body of Christ—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17a; 4:16.
- C. It is not that we work for the Lord but that He works on us; therefore, we should not be merely the Lord's workers but the Lord's work—2:10.
- D. In the church the most important thing is the person; the importance of the person far exceeds that of the work—2 Tim. 2:20-22:
 - 1. What we are is more important than what we do.
 - 2. We cannot serve God beyond what we are as a person.
 - 3. The kind of person we are determines the kind of fruit we produce—Matt. 7:17-18.
- E. If our person is wrong, we may build up something by what we do but tear down more by what we are.

II. If we have seen the Body, we will conduct ourselves in the church, the ministry, and the work in a way that is without ambition, without self-boasting, without making comparisons, and without blaming others for their mistakes—Rom. 12:4-6a; 1 Cor. 12:12-27:

- A. We should not attempt to show off and boast concerning our work.
- B. We should not take credit for our success, and we should not be reluctant to give up our work.
- C. We should never consider that we are doing something more excellent than others.
- D. In doing the Lord's work, we know only to labor, to die and be resurrected daily, and to live and walk in the Spirit—15:10, 31, 45b, 58; 16:10; 6:17.

III. In the church, the ministry, and the work, we must beware of pride—Prov. 16:18; 1 Tim. 3:6; 6:3-4:

- A. When a person is proud, he follows Satan, and consequently he will be judged with Satan to suffer the judgment prepared by God for him—3:6.
- B. Rivalry in the Lord's work is a sign of ambition and pride—Phil. 1:15-17; James 3:16.
- C. Caring for our prestige and neglecting others' dignity are a sign of pride.
- D. Referring to our capacity, success, perfection, and virtue is a form of pride.
- E. If we desire to live the life of the Body of Christ, we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think—Rom. 12:3.

- F. Pride means blindness and darkness—John 9:39-41.
- G. If we do not cooperate with the Lord to deal with ambition, pride, and self-justification, and if we are not conformed to the death of Christ, the outcome among us will be division—Phil. 3:10.

IV. In the Lord's recovery we must avoid the following divisive factors:

- A. Intending to do an extra work in the unique work of the Lord's recovery.
- B. Regarding a particular region as our territory and keeping it separate from the unique work in the Lord's recovery for His universal Body.
- C. Not having our work mingled with others' work—1 Cor. 1:12; cf. Acts 15:2, 4; 21:17-20a.
- D. Having the hidden expectation of being a prominent figure in the Lord's work.
- E. Neglecting the keeping of the one accord in the Lord's recovery—cf. 1:14.

V. We must be right in following others; that is, we should be careful in following any co-worker whom we appreciate and to whom we are attracted—1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2 Tim. 3:10; Heb. 13:7:

- A. The one whom we follow should be a person loving the Lord, living for the Lord, and renouncing his self, natural life, preference, and ambition.
- B. The one whom we follow must hold the complete revelation of the entire Holy Scriptures without any twisting or deforming—2 Tim. 2:15.

VI. In carrying out God's New Testament ministry, we need to apply the fivefold standard established by the Lord Jesus in His ministry:

- A. Not doing anything out from the self—John 5:19.
- B. Not doing our own work—4:34; 17:4.
- C. Not speaking our own word—14:10, 24.
- D. Not doing anything by our own will—5:30.
- E. Not seeking our own glory—7:18.

VII. With us, as with the Lord Jesus, there should be no distinction between life, work, and move—Mark 1:14-45:

- A. The Lord worked everywhere and all the time because His life, His work, and His move were all the same; He lived His work, His ministry.
- B. Just as the Lord's life was His work, so our living as Christians should be our working—Phil. 1:20-22a.

VIII. The hindrance to seeing the vision of the Body and to practicing the Body is the self—Col. 1:18; 2:18-20, 23; 3:15:

- A. The Body is versus the self, and the self is the enemy of the Body.
- B. When we have the self, we do not have the Body; when we have the Body, we do not have the self—Matt. 16:18, 24.
- C. We should deny ourselves and identify ourselves with the Body; if we do this, the life we live will fully be the Body life, and the Lord will gain the expression of His Body—v. 24; 1 Cor. 12:27; Col. 1:18; 3:15.

IX. A person who touches God's heart and is an overcomer in the eyes of God is one who is living in the Body and practicing the Body life—Rom. 12:4-5:

- A. Such a person is not spiritual individually and is not overcoming individually; rather, he understands clearly that he is a member of the Body—v. 5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 15, 20, 25.
- B. The most important thing is whether or not we are living in the Body.
- C. Our being in the Body will have eternal value in the sight of God.