

## THE WILL OF GOD

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

### **Taking the Lord's Yoke (the Father's Will) upon Us and Learning from Him to Find Rest for Our Souls**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26, 31; 2:1-2; Matt. 11:28-30;  
Exo. 31:12-17; Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 15:1

- I. **“Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”—Matt. 11:28-30:**
- A. To toil here refers not only to the toil of striving to keep the commandments of the law and religious regulations but also to the toil of struggling to be successful in any work; whoever toils thus is always heavily burdened.
  - B. After the Lord extolled the Father, acknowledging the Father's way and declaring the divine economy (vv. 25-27), He called this kind of people to come to Him for rest.
  - C. Rest refers not only to being set free from the toil and burden under the law or religion or under any work or responsibility, but also to perfect peace and full satisfaction.
  - D. To take the Lord's yoke is to take the will of the Father; it is not to be regulated or controlled by any obligation of the law or religion or to be enslaved by any work, but to be constrained by the will of the Father.
  - E. The Lord lived such a life, caring for nothing but the will of His Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38); He submitted Himself fully to the Father's will (Matt. 26:39-46); hence, He asks us to learn from Him:
    - 1. The believers copy the Lord in their spirit by taking His yoke—God's will—and toiling for God's economy according to His model—11:29a; 1 Pet. 2:21.
    - 2. The Lord, who was submissive and obedient to the Father throughout His life, has given us His life of submission and obedience—Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 5:7-9.
    - 3. Christ was the first God-man, and we are the many God-men; we have to learn of Him in His absolute submission to God and His uttermost satisfaction with God.
    - 4. God is doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ that we may be able to do His will (13:20-21); God operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).
  - F. To be meek, or gentle, means not to resist opposition, and to be lowly means not to have self-esteem; throughout all the opposition the Lord was meek, and throughout all the rejection He was lowly in heart.
  - G. He submitted Himself fully to the will of His Father, not wanting to do anything for Himself or expecting to gain something for Himself; hence, regardless of the situation He had rest in His heart; He was fully satisfied with the Father's will.

- H. The rest that we find by taking the Lord's yoke and learning from Him is for our souls; it is an inward rest; it is not anything merely outward in nature.
- I. We learn from the Lord according to His example, not by our natural life but by Him as our life in resurrection—Eph. 4:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:21.
- J. The Lord's yoke is the Father's will, and His burden is the work of carrying out the Father's will; such a yoke is easy, not bitter, and such a burden is light, not heavy.
- K. The Greek word for *easy* means "fit for use"; hence, good, kind, mild, gentle, easy, pleasant—in contrast to hard, harsh, sharp, bitter.
- L. If we take the Lord's yoke (the Father's will) upon us and learn from Him, we will find rest for our souls; the yoke of God's economy is like this; everything in God's economy is not a heavy burden but an enjoyment.

**II. In Exodus 31:12-17, after a long record concerning the building up of God's dwelling place, there is a repetition of the commandment to keep the Sabbath; according to Colossians 2:16-17, Christ is the reality of the Sabbath rest; He is our completion, rest, quietness, and full satisfaction—Heb. 4:7-9; Isa. 30:15a:**

- A. The fact that the insertion concerning the Sabbath follows the charge for the building work of the tabernacle indicates that the Lord was telling the builders, the workers, to learn how to rest with Him as they worked for Him.
- B. If we only know how to work for the Lord but do not know how to rest with Him, we are acting contrary to the divine principle:
  - 1. God rested on the seventh day because He had finished His work and was satisfied; God's glory was manifested because man had His image, and His authority was about to be exercised for the subduing of His enemy, Satan; as long as man expresses God and deals with God's enemy, God is satisfied and can rest—Gen. 1:26, 31; 2:1-2.
  - 2. Later, the seventh day was commemorated as the Sabbath (Exo. 20:8-11); God's seventh day was man's first day.
  - 3. God had prepared everything for man's enjoyment; after man was created, he did not join in God's work; he entered into God's rest.
  - 4. Man was created not to work first but to be satisfied with God and rest with God (cf. Matt. 11:28-30); the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).
- C. Exodus 31:17 says, "In six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed":
  - 1. The Sabbath was not only a rest to God but also a refreshment to Him.
  - 2. God rested after His work of creation was completed; He looked upon His handiwork, at the heavens, the earth, and all the living things, especially at man, and said, "Very good!" (Gen. 1:31).
  - 3. God was refreshed with man; God created man in His own image with a spirit so that man could have fellowship with Him; man, therefore, was God's refreshment—v. 26; 2:7; cf. John 4:31-34.
  - 4. God was a "bachelor" before He created mankind (cf. Gen. 2:18, 22); He wanted man to receive Him, love Him, be filled with Him, and express Him to become His wife (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25); in eternity future God will have a wife, the New Jerusalem, which is called the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9-10).

5. Man was like a refreshing drink to quench God's thirst and satisfy Him; when God ended His work and began to rest, He had man as His companion.
  6. To God, the seventh day was a day of rest and refreshment; however, to man, God's companion, the day of rest and refreshment was the first day; man's first day was a day of enjoyment.
- D. It is a divine principle that God does not ask us to work until we have had enjoyment; after a full enjoyment with Him and of Him, we may work together with Him:
1. If we do not know how to have enjoyment with God, how to enjoy God Himself, and how to be filled with God, we will not know how to work with Him and be one with Him in His divine work; man enjoys what God has accomplished in His work.
  2. On the day of Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Spirit, which means that they were filled with the enjoyment of the Lord; because they were filled with the Spirit, others thought that they were drunk with wine—Acts 2:4a, 12-13.
  3. Actually, they were filled with the enjoyment of the heavenly wine; only after they were filled with this enjoyment did they begin to work with God in oneness with Him; Pentecost was the first day of the eighth week; therefore, concerning the day of Pentecost, we see the principle of the first day.
  4. With God it is a matter of working and resting; with man it is a matter of resting and working.
- E. In doing God's divine work to build the church, typified by the work to build the tabernacle, we must bear a sign to indicate that we are God's people and that we need Him; then we will be able to work not only for God but also with God by being one with God; He will be our strength to work and our energy to labor:
1. We are God's people, and we should bear a sign that we need Him to be our enjoyment, strength, energy, and everything so that we may be able to work for Him to honor and glorify Him.
  2. The Sabbath means that before we work for God, we need to enjoy God and be filled with Him; Peter preached the gospel by the infilling God, the infilling Spirit; therefore, Peter had a sign that he was God's co-worker, and his gospel preaching was an honor and glory to God—v. 14.
  3. As God's people, we must bear a sign that we rest with God, enjoy God, and are filled up with God first, and then we work with the very One who fills us; furthermore, we not only work with God but also work as those who are one with God.
  4. In our speaking to God's people, we must always seek to bear a sign that our Lord is our strength, our energy, and our everything for ministering the word—2 Cor. 13:3; Acts 6:4.
- F. Keeping the Sabbath is also an eternal agreement, or covenant, that assures God that we will be one with Him by first enjoying Him and being filled with Him and then by working for Him, with Him, and in oneness with Him—Exo. 31:16:
1. It is a serious matter to work for the Lord by ourselves without taking Him in and enjoying Him by drinking and eating Him—cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; John 6:57.

2. As Peter was speaking on the day of Pentecost, he was inwardly partaking of Jesus, drinking and eating Him.
- G. The Sabbath is also a matter of sanctification (Exo. 31:13); when we enjoy the Lord and then work with Him, for Him, and by being one with Him, spontaneously we are sanctified, separated unto God from everything that is common and saturated with God to replace everything that is fleshly and natural.
- H. In the church life we may do many things without first enjoying the Lord and without serving the Lord by being one with the Lord; that kind of service results in spiritual death and the loss of the fellowship in the Body (vv. 14-15).
- I. Everything related to God's dwelling place leads us to one matter—to the Sabbath with its rest and refreshment of the Lord; in the church life we are in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle leads us to rest, to the enjoyment of God's purpose and of what He has done!

**III. The Lord's yoke (the Father's will) is easy, and His burden (the work to carry out the Father's will) is light; we must always serve 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.
- 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:
  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.
  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.
  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.
- 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. Deut. 4:25.
  4. Whenever our service becomes a matter of fulfilling an obligation, our service has already degraded—Mal. 3:14 and footnote 1.
  5. The building work of the tabernacle and all its furniture (typifying the work of the Lord to build up the church) should begin with the enjoyment of God and continue in intervals with the refreshment by enjoying God; this will indicate that we do not work for God by our own strength but by the enjoyment of Him and by being one with Him; this is to keep the principle of the Sabbath with Christ as the inner rest in our spirit.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### 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***

We have a good order in our service, but we are lacking in burden. Having a burden means that we have a goal that we must reach. If we have not reached our goal or are unable to produce the expected result, we should be concerned. If we are able to serve, even though there is no result, we do not have a burden. This attitude indicates a lack of burden. Our speaking should never fall into this. Hence, the brothers who minister the word must bear a heavy burden before the Lord, having no peace to rest or eat and even troubling others so that they also have no peace. This can be compared to the city of Jerusalem having no peace when the Lord Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1-18). Those who speak for the Lord must have a feeling to trouble the saints to the point that they have no peace inwardly. When they have no peace, we can have peace. The saints cannot love the world and love the Lord. They must not be lukewarm. Those who serve the Lord need to have this kind of burden.

Many serve as employees in a big company. They work a fixed number of hours every day and simply do the tasks that are assigned to them. They do not make big mistakes and are not concerned whether the company makes a profit. They are employees without a burden; they serve without a burden. If we make no profit on the first day of our business, we should be concerned about our livelihood. If the serving brothers, whether they serve in the children's work or the young people's work, have this kind of consciousness, they will succeed. Complaining that we fail because we are weak shows that we lack a burden. Every serving one must be burdened to the extent that he feels responsible if the work does not succeed. He should be like a businessman who thinks of his business even in his sleep.

### ***Discerning between the Service of Responsibility and the Service of Burden***

The elders in all the churches must come before the Lord to receive a burden and to see if all the home meetings in their localities are satisfactory. We must have a concern for the condition of the meetings. Are they strong or weak, living or dead, rich or poor? We cannot remain unchanged. Perhaps those responsible for the home meetings are at peace, but the elders should not be at peace. The elders should coordinate together and not act individually. They should bear a corporate burden to completely change the condition of the home meetings. They need to pray for the saints, even with tears, and seek the Lord for the proper words to speak to them. Then they should speak in the meetings according to their burden until the saints become uneasy within and are not content with their present situation.

Such a speaking by the elders is not according to arrangement but according to burden. The elders should have a burden; they should not merely bear responsibility. As elders, we should not simply fellowship and discuss the condition of the different home meetings, visit them, and give an evaluation report at the next elders' meeting. There is no burden in such a practice; it will be ineffective and not result in any profit. If we have a company with many employees, its yearly earnings will not be influenced by discussions, reports, and evaluations. These do not carry out the burden. If we have a real burden, we will set a goal for our yearly profit, work toward this goal, and be determined to reach it.

Both in the administration of the church and in the ministry of the word, the brothers are commendable in their bearing of responsibility. However, they lack a burden. Without a burden, all our activity will be dead and ineffective; with a burden, we will be living and flourishing. Such an outcome is not related to our method but to our person.

### ***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, we will see that our messages are 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.

### ***Everyone Receiving a Burden and Serving the Lord according to Burden***

Everyone who serves the Lord must receive a burden and have a burden. This also applies to the sisters even though they are not involved in the church administration or in giving messages. If the sisters fellowship together and visit people simply because it is time to do so, they are doing so out of obligation. The sisters should seek to know the result of their fellowship and visitation. They should know the condition of the sisters under their care. They should not say, “As long as the Lord works in them, they will be all right, but if the Lord does not work in them, there is nothing we can do.” We must receive a genuine burden.

Even though many sisters have the desire to serve the Lord, few have risen up to serve the Lord lately. The brothers, however, continue to serve as usual. We should sense that the situation with the sisters is not right and receive the burden to stir them up. We also need to study the result of our gospel preaching. We should consider why many remain unsaved even though there are so many sinners. Some brothers should rise up to receive the burden to preach the gospel until someone is saved. We must have a burden.



The problem is that we are gradually leaning toward responsibility in our service; we lack a burden. Since our prayers are mostly without burden, our prayer meetings are ineffective. If someone is saved when we preach the gospel, we thank and praise the Lord. If no one is saved, we are at peace. When we give messages, we are at peace even if there is no effect. The same applies to the administration of the church and visiting the brothers and sisters; we are at peace even if there is no result. Since this is our condition, our prayer is a prayer of obligation, not a prayer with burden. If we pray with a burden, our prayer meeting will be different. Some brothers and sisters will weep bitterly and mourn in prayer, feeling that they cannot go on in the same way. They will feel that the gospel preaching, the administration of the church, and the condition of their meeting are unsatisfactory. This kind of prayer is out of a burden.

Some say that it is easy to lose their burden after a period of time. However, those who have been shown mercy receive burdens continually. It is a serious problem if our burden disappears after we have worked for some time. However, a Christian can continue to work out of obligation even though he has no burden, because his conscience will bother him if he stops working. Whenever our service becomes a matter of fulfilling an obligation, our service has already degraded. Genuine service is not a matter of obligation but a matter of burden; burden always goes beyond obligation.

### **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 fellowshiping. 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.

### ***Not Insisting on Our Own Way***

The elders once felt that a certain group meeting should study the Gospel of John. One of the responsible brothers in that meeting, however, felt that John was too long and wanted to study 1 Thessalonians instead. He felt this would help those who did not normally read the Bible. Since he insisted, the elders eventually agreed with him even though his burden for 1 Thessalonians was not proper. This brother did not have a proper burden. He simply thought that the saints would be afraid of a book with twenty-one chapters, and he allowed his opinion to trample the feeling of the other brothers. Unless this brother was truly burdened for 1 Thessalonians, he should not have presented it in the service. We should not do things that we have no burden for, and we should not abandon things for which we are burdened; we must serve according to burden. To do otherwise violates a spiritual principle. This responsible brother had not learned the lesson in spiritual matters, and he was inexperienced in the way he conducted himself. If our fellowship is a matter of spiritual burden, there should be no problem with proposing a change, and we should not criticize the burden. However, if we simply want to change others' ways, we should not do this.

We need to respect the ways of the ones with whom we serve. Even though the elders will not force a group to study a certain book or speak certain things, we should not casually change what they commit to us. Strictly speaking, it is all right to study either John or 1 Thessalonians; it does not matter which book is studied. It is possible to minister to the brothers and sisters through 1 Thessalonians and through the Gospel of John. In our service we should always avoid changing the ways of others.

We should realize that when we change others' ways, they might not accept it, because they feel that it is inappropriate, and if they accept our change, there is not a sweet feeling. Because of this kind of problem, our service in the administration of the church and the ministry of the word is not strong. Even in the world, when people work together, it is not easy to change one another's ways. If we truly have a skill, it will be manifested if we work according to their way. If we have spiritual content, we can minister to the saints through 1 Thessalonians and through the Gospel of John. No matter the book, we should be able to minister the spiritual content. What we should fear is not having spiritual content to minister to people; however, if we have spiritual content, we will be able to minister and develop any book of the Bible. Therefore, changing the way others do things indicates that we have not learned many spiritual lessons. It also indicates that we are inexperienced in the way we conduct ourselves.

Some brothers lead the saints to serve fervently, hoping that they can spend more time to learn to fellowship with the Lord and to know the indwelling Spirit. We should not change their practice. We should even praise them, saying that it is good to love the Lord and be fervent. However, our praise should not be insincere. It should positively supplement their labor. We always need to have an attitude of respect, cooperation, and coordination with others. We should serve according to our portion and honor the portion of others, because both portions have been entrusted by the Lord. Everyone should have the humility to not regard his portion higher than another person's. We should take care of others' feelings. Unless they speak heresy and create problems for the work and the church, we should always respect them, be accommodating toward them, and receive help from them.

May the Lord grant us grace to see that this is a matter of life that involves being broken and being humble. Those who can reach a goal without forcing others to take their way are truly humble. As those who love the Lord, we desire to live for Him and build up the church. These goals are right, but there are many ways to reach these goals. For example, preaching the gospel with a brother is a good goal that can be done according to his way or according to our way. We receive the blessing when we do not force others to do things our way. If we have spiritual content, we can minister his way, and if he has spiritual content, he can minister our way. Both ways are acceptable; it is not necessary to adhere to a certain way.

### ***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)