

THE WILL OF GOD

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

Meeting to Know and Do the Will of God

Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:21; 12:50; 18:20; Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:12; 1 Cor. 14:26; Heb. 10:25

- I. To meet is to know and do the will of God; our goal, our purpose, on earth is to do the will of the Father, and we do this by coming to the meetings of the church—Heb. 10:25.**
- II. We need to realize that besides our inner life with the Lord, nothing is as crucial, important, and profitable as the church meetings—1 Cor. 14:23-26:**
 - A. As indicated by the Greek word *ekklesia*, the church—the dwelling place of God—is a meeting or an assembly of the called-out ones—Matt. 18:17-20:
 1. The church is a gathering of the believers, a meeting of a collective people.
 2. When God's called-out ones meet together, this is the church—Acts 2:42; 8:1.
 3. Our Father has predestinated us to meet together; coming to the meetings is God's will—Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 14:26.
 - B. The Christian life is a meeting life—Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 14:23-26:
 1. Much of the grace that we receive is in the meetings, and much of the work that the Lord does is also in the meetings—Acts 4:33; 13:1-2.
 2. Since the Christian life is a meeting life and much of the Lord's work is carried out through the meetings, we should regard the meetings as being of great importance—Heb. 10:25.
- III. In the meetings God makes His will known to us—Psa. 73:16-17:**
 - A. Doing God's will depends on knowing His will—John 7:17.
 - B. In our meetings there are many wonderful things underneath the surface, one of which is knowing God's will.
 - C. When the psalmist went into the sanctuary of God, he was able to know God's will—Psa. 73:16-17:
 1. God's sanctuary, His habitation, is in our spirit and in the church—Eph. 2:22; 1 Tim. 3:15.
 2. In order to go into the sanctuary of God, we need to turn to our spirit and go to the meetings of the church.
 3. Once we are in the sanctuary—in the spirit and in the meetings of the church—we receive another view, a particular perception, of our situation—Psa. 73:16-20.
 4. God's way is made known in the sanctuary of God—v. 17:
 - a. In our spirit and in the meetings we receive divine revelation—Rev. 1:10; Eph. 1:17-18.
 - b. When we exercise our spirit and attend the meetings of the church, God's way becomes clear to us—Psa. 73:17.

IV. Since the will of God is in Christ, concentrated in Christ, and for Christ, and Christ is everything in the will of God, we do God's will through exhibiting Christ in the meetings—Col. 1:9, 15-18, 12; 3:4, 11; 1 Cor. 14:26:

- A. The will of God for us is that we would experience and enjoy the all-inclusive Christ and live Him as our life—Col. 1:9, 15-18; 3:4, 11.
- B. Our meetings are to exhibit Christ, so when we come to a meeting, we need to bring with us the Christ whom we have enjoyed—1 Cor. 14:26.
- C. The proper church life depends upon the church meetings where all the saints exhibit Christ with His unsearchable riches—Eph. 3:8.
- D. The goal of our meeting is to exhibit Christ, and the Christian meeting is an exhibition of our Christian daily life—1 Cor. 14:26; cf. Deut. 12:5-7, 13-14.
- E. We exhibit Christ in the meetings by offering to God Christ as the reality of the offerings, enjoying Christ together with God—Heb. 10:8-10, 25; 13:20-21.
- F. We need to function in the meetings to exhibit Christ—Col. 1:12; 1 Cor. 14:26:
 - 1. Due to the influence of Christianity, many believers do not bear responsibility in the meetings.
 - 2. The concept that we may attend a meeting but are not responsible for the meeting is a fundamental error; it is a ploy of Satan to render the members of the Body of Christ useless so that they do not function.
- G. As Christians, we are members of Christ, and our most important service is to meet—12:4-11, 14-27; Heb. 10:25:
 - 1. The church meetings are the best opportunity to exhibit Christ—Col. 3:11.
 - 2. As Christians, we are commissioned to exhibit Christ in the meetings and thus do the will of God—Matt. 7:21; 16:18; Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:12.
 - 3. “The Father we would glorify, / Exalting Christ the Son, thereby / The meeting's purpose satisfy / That we exhibit Christ” (*Hymns*, #864, stanza 8).

V. Since the Father's eternal will and the desire of His heart are to build up the church as the Body of Christ, we do His will by functioning in the meetings according to the scriptural way to meet for the building up of the Body—Matt. 7:21; 12:50; Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 14:26:

- A. The meetings of the believers should always be linked to God's New Testament economy; we should come to the meetings with a vision of the divine economy, and what we speak in the meetings should focus on the economy of God—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 3:9; 1 Cor. 14:26.
- B. The recovery according to the Lord's mind is to bring His believers out of the clergy-laity system and to replace this system with the scriptural way to meet and to serve for the building up of the Body of Christ—v. 26; Eph. 4:12, 16.
- C. The Lord desires to recover the church meetings in mutuality with all functioning for the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 14:4b, 24a, 26, 31:
 - 1. When we come to the church meetings, we should have something of the Lord to share with others—v. 26.
 - 2. Before coming to a meeting, we should prepare ourselves for the meeting with something from the Lord or of the Lord, either through our experience of Him or through our enjoyment of His word and fellowship with Him in prayer.

3. We must labor on Christ, our good land, so that we may reap some produce of His riches to bring to the church meeting and offer—Col. 1:12; Eph. 3:8.
 4. Thus, the meeting will be an exhibition of His riches and will be a mutual enjoyment of Christ shared with all the attendants before God and with God for the building up of the saints and the church—1 Cor. 14:26.
 5. Whatever we do in the church meeting must be for the building up of the saints and the church—vv. 3-5, 12.
- D. In the practice of the scriptural way to meet and to serve, we emphasize prophesying—the excelling gift for the building up of the church—vv. 1, 4b, 24-25, 31:
1. The significance of prophesying in 1 Corinthians 14 is to speak for the Lord, to speak forth the Lord, and even to speak the Lord, to minister, to dispense, the Lord, into others; in the sense of the divine dispensing, the entire Bible consummates in all prophesying—vv. 3, 24-25, 31.
 2. Prophesying, speaking for God and speaking forth God with God as the content, ministers God to the hearers and brings them to God—v. 25.
 3. God desires that each of the believers prophesy, that is, speak for Him and speak Him forth—vv. 1b, 31; cf. Num. 11:29.
 4. The characteristic of prophesying is to minister Christ for the organic building up of the church as the Body of Christ; prophesying is the particular gift for the building up of the church—1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 24, 26.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ASSEMBLING TOGETHER OF THE BELIEVERS THEMSELVES

Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.” The apostle Paul wrote the book of Hebrews to encourage the hesitating, backslidden Hebrew believers to go forward within the veil and to go outside the camp (6:19; 13:13). To go “outside the camp” was to go outside of the old Jewish religion, and to enter “within the veil” was to enter into the Holy of Holies, where Christ is.

We must realize that our proper meeting is the Holy of Holies. To be gathered together in a proper way is to meet in the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies is wherever the Lord Jesus is. The Lord is dwelling in the heavens (Rom. 8:34). The Lord is also dwelling in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22), which is the Holy of Holies (Heb. 4:12, 16; see footnote 4:16¹, Recovery Version). Since the Lord is in the third heaven today, the third heaven is the Holy of Holies (9:12; cf. v. 24). Since He is now in our spirit, our spirit is the Holy of Holies. Because the Lord Jesus is in our meeting whenever we meet together, our meeting is also the Holy of Holies (10:22, 25). For the Hebrew believers to forsake their Christian meeting was for them to forsake the Holy of Holies and go back to their religious camp.

The book of Exodus shows us that after the children of Israel worshipped the golden calf (32:8), they became a camp. They had the Lord in name, but in reality they worshipped something else and hence became a religious camp among whom it was impossible to have the Lord’s presence. Moses knew that God, according to His holiness, would no longer stay among the people, for the camp had become idolatrous. Therefore, Moses took his tent, which formerly had been in the camp, and pitched it outside the camp. This tent then became the tent of God, the tent of meeting (33:7). If the people would not go out of the camp but would remain in it,

they would not have the presence of the Lord. The presence of the Lord was no longer in the camp but in the tent (v. 9).

When the Lord Jesus was on this earth, there was a separation between the Jewish religionists, the camp, and the Lord Himself, the real tabernacle (John 1:14; 2:19, 21). The Lord Jesus was the very embodiment of God, and the real Holy of Holies was wherever He was. Outside of and around Christ, there was a religious organization, an old religion, a camp, which did not have God's Holy of Holies. In that religious organization of Judaism, God was not there. At the time the Lord Jesus walked upon this earth, the proper worship was always held in the temple according to the rituals ordained by God. Yet we must ask ourselves who the Lord Jesus is. Actually, He is the very God, the One whom the children of Israel worshipped in their temple.

One day Jesus entered into the house in Bethany (12:1-11). He was in that home, yet the Jewish priests still worshipped God in the temple in Jerusalem. During that time, where was God? Was He in the Holy of Holies within the temple at Jerusalem or in the small home at Bethany? No doubt, He was in the small home in Bethany. Because God was in that home in Bethany, that home became the very Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies in the temple was forsaken by God because it had become a part of the camp (Matt. 23:38—24:2). At that time, if anyone desired to worship God, they had to forsake the temple and go to that little home in Bethany. That little home was the Holy of Holies.

The principle is the same today. In order to worship God, you have to go outside of the camp of religion and enter within the veil to enjoy Christ in the Holy of Holies. The Lord Jesus as God is not in the old, religious, human organization, which is just a camp. In Hebrews Paul charged the hesitating, wandering, backsliding Hebrew believers to forget about their old religion, old temple, and old ritualistic worship and to go forth outside the camp to enter into the Holy of Holies to enjoy Christ (6:19; 10:22; 13:13). This Holy of Holies is the proper Christian meeting.

The Holy of Holies in Hebrews denotes three things: the third heaven, our spirit, and the Christian meeting. Whenever we come together properly, our gathering is the Holy of Holies. Of the three, which do you prefer, the third heaven, our spirit, or the Christian meeting? The heavens are difficult to reach, and we are often unable to remain in our spirit all day long, day and night. But according to my Christian experience, the meetings keep me in the Lord, in His Holy of Holies. I do not enjoy the Lord's presence elsewhere as much as I do in the meetings. It is enjoyable to be in our spirit, but the meeting as the Holy of Holies is much better and higher.

After some of us attend a ten-day training or a conference, and we are returning to our localities, we may feel that we are in the outer court and not in the Holy of Holies. We may long for the time when we can gather together again. This experience illustrates the reason Paul urged the Hebrew believers not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. If they forsook their assembling together, it meant that they went back to their old religion, their former camp. Thus, Paul charged them to go outside the camp and to enter within the veil. To enter within the veil includes three things: to enter into the heavenly Holy of Holies; to enter into our spirit, which is linked to the heavenly Holy of Holies; and to enter into the Christian meeting. The Christian meeting is the best because it nourishes, strengthens, edifies, and enlightens us, becoming a great spiritual benefit to us. The meetings are wonderful.

The meeting in the New Testament is referred to as a gathering (Matt. 18:20) and an assembly (Heb. 10:25). The assembling together of the believers, the meetings, should not be in the nature of fulfilling mixed purposes. Frequently, in Christianity the meetings are not pure in their purpose. The meetings of the believers should be purely in the nature of carrying

out God's New Testament economy. If we were to hold a meeting that is not pure and that has a mixed purpose, it would be difficult to have the Lord's presence. The proper Christian meeting must be pure in its purpose. The essence, the nature, of the meeting must be purely to carry out God's New Testament economy.

God's New Testament economy is to get a people through Christ to be the church so that God may have a corporate expression in His fatherhood. Every Christian meeting must be pure in nature to carry out this economy of God so that God may express Himself as a great Father in all His children. To have a meeting with such a motive and purpose is really pure.

TO HAVE THE FULL MUTUALITY

In Speaking

The Christian meetings should be full of mutuality in speaking (Eph. 5:19). To fill the Christian meetings with mutuality is not very easy, but to have the mutuality is wonderful. Whether we come together with fifty, one hundred, or one hundred fifty, everyone should function. This creates a mutuality that fills up the entire meeting. One speaks for one minute, another speaks for half a minute, another speaks for five minutes, someone may speak for eight minutes, and someone else may speak for ten minutes. By this practice of everyone speaking according to their measure, we all would produce a meeting that is full of mutuality.

I hope that we would improve, grow, and advance to a condition where many would speak. Some would speak for forty seconds, others for four minutes, and another for thirty minutes. We not only need the short speaking; we also need some longer speaking. There may be a meeting in which many speak in a short way and one would speak in a new, living, refreshing, and high way for perhaps forty minutes. This would be wonderful. The first chapter of Luke illustrates this. In this chapter there are three different kinds of speaking. The record of Elizabeth's speaking is the shortest (vv. 42-45). Mary, the mother of Jesus, spoke for a longer time (vv. 46-55). Finally, Zachariah, full of experiences, spoke the longest (vv. 68-79). Zachariah's speaking in Luke 1 contains no wasted words, and it is full of riches. How long you should speak depends upon your age and experience. Your experience and knowledge of the word of God constitute the content and the length of your speaking.

If everyone in the meeting speaks for a short time, and the meeting is full of mutuality, the new ones who come to the meeting will be convinced (1 Cor. 14:24-25). They may be shocked at first, asking what kind of meeting this is. They may have been Christians for many years, but they may never have seen a meeting with such mutuality—with everyone speaking.

We should also learn not to speak lightly. We must speak with weight. Otherwise, some may say that our speaking does not have much content. Our speaking must be with content. This needs the proper learning, practice, and training; therefore, the churches should train the saints to speak with content. If we all learn to give living and weighty words whenever and wherever we speak, we will surely be welcomed by all the churches. On the other hand, if we go to the meetings and only sit without saying anything, we will not be appreciated that much. Learn to speak, but do not speak lightly. This needs our daily practice. Every morning we should contact the Lord, reading a few verses to enjoy the Lord by enjoying His Word. We should pick up something from the Word and practice speaking the Lord the entire day. This will enrich our being, our person, and this will constitute the proper speaking. Then wherever we go, we will have not only the boldness but also the practice and habit of speaking. If I go to visit a church and stay for a few days, I cannot refrain from speaking. I am addicted to speaking. Wherever I go, I must speak—the more, the better. Build up a habit and taste for speaking.

When you speak, you get the firstfruits of the benefit. While I am speaking, you get some

benefit, but I get the firstfruits of the benefit. This is why I am so strong. Learn to speak. To merely listen weakens you. On the one hand, listening nourishes you. On the other hand, if you listen only to others' speaking, it does nourish you, but it does not allow you to grow. The more help you receive in this way, the more you will eventually die. We must learn to speak, speak, speak.

It would be marvelous if we would learn to speak every item of the contents of chapter 1 of this book, [entitled "The God-ordained Way to Meet and to Serve as Revealed in the Holy Word"]. We can tell others, "The Christian meeting is linked to the processed Triune God. It is linked to Christ, who has passed through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension." We should learn to speak these things. Chapter 1 of this book is enough for the saints in the churches to speak on for one year, day by day and in every meeting. The contents of all my writings are embodied in this chapter. The husbands should speak concerning these things to their wives, and the wives to their husbands. I have been speaking concerning God's economy and the processed Triune God for nearly twenty-five years in the United States, and I have not yet exhausted this subject. Speaking concerning the Triune God is like cooking American beef in many different ways. The beef is the same, but the ways of cooking and serving it are many. Learn to speak concerning the processed Christ all the time. In other words, learn to speak the same thing all the time (1 Cor. 1:10). In order to fill the meeting with mutuality, the primary thing is speaking. When everyone speaks, the meeting is always full of mutuality.

In Considering One Another and in Exhorting One Another

Hebrews 10:24 says, "Let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works." *Consider one another* indicates mutuality. I take care of you, and you take care of me—this is mutuality. Exhorting one another in verse 25 also indicates mutuality. In the New Testament, exhortation is mutual; it is not just in one direction. With exhortation there should be a two-way traffic, as indicated by the words *one another* in verses 24 and 25. In the meetings of Christianity exhortation is usually from one direction—from the pastor to the congregation; there is no exhortation that goes back to the pastor. However, when we meet, our exhortation must be among ourselves; it must be mutual.

In Teaching and in Admonishing

Teaching and admonishing are also in mutuality (Col. 3:16). We speak to one another, teaching and admonishing one another. Sometimes the sisters could admonish the brothers. The sisters should not say that because they are not teachers, they cannot speak. They should not teach (1 Tim. 2:12), but they should admonish. We admonish one another because we love one another. We are members of the same Body, so I admonish you, and you admonish me.

When I was young, I discovered that some Christian teachers said that females could teach in the church meetings, but others said that they could not. One day in Los Angeles in 1963, a brother who was knowledgeable of the Bible attended our meetings. When he observed that the sisters spoke in the meetings, he asked me why we allowed the sisters to speak. He said that the sisters should be silent. I responded by asking him whether or not the sisters were silent in his meetings. He said that they were. I then asked him if the sisters sang in his meetings. He affirmed that they did. Then I asked him whether or not singing was a kind of speaking. In other words, as long as the sisters were singing in his meeting, they were not actually silent. Then I asked why the sisters were allowed to sing and were not allowed to pray.

How strange that was! It is strange that the sisters were qualified to sing hymns but not qualified to pray. According to 1 Corinthians 11:5, however, women may pray and prophesy in the meeting, but they must do this under the covering of the brothers. The sisters must be emancipated to speak in the church meeting. They must be encouraged to speak but not in terms of teaching. The sisters should not teach, but they can exhort and admonish. Many times mothers can admonish their children better than fathers; likewise, the sisters are usually very skillful in admonishing. This is because the sisters are fine, not rough or coarse. Brothers, on the other hand, may be rough and coarse. When the brothers say Amen, it can be very rough. However, when the sisters say Amen, it can be like music, very pleasant to our ears. Since admonishing is a fine work, it is sometimes very difficult for the brothers to admonish. As a brother, teaching is very easy for me. But I may not be as qualified to admonish as some of the sisters. When the brothers admonish, the saints may not listen very much. But when a dear sister comes and admonishes, everyone may listen and obey. This illustrates why we need the sisters to speak. As long as they would speak and not teach, everything is fine.

All the sisters should be encouraged to speak. Many of the sisters need to be “emancipated,” not from man’s control but from their own control. Many sisters control themselves too much. It is always good for a sister to be quiet, gentle, and meek. I agree with and appreciate this. But I do not agree that the sisters’ mouths would be shut in the meeting. The sisters need to be gentle and meek but speaking.

PAYING A HIGH PRICE TO REACH THE STANDARD

To reach the standard of these characteristics of the believers’ meetings requires that we pay a high price. We must endeavor to reach this highest standard so that our meetings could be revolutionized, bearing the proper characteristics. Once our meetings are converted from the old way into the new way, the Lord will have something according to His New Testament economy. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1987*, vol. 3, “The Scriptural Way to Meet and to Serve for the Building Up of the Body of Christ,” pp. 300-306)