
CONSECRATION ISSUING IN A NEW REVIVAL



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

CONSECRATION ISSUING IN A NEW REVIVAL

by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee

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CHAPTER ONE

THE VISION OF CONSECRATION

The Heavenly Vision, Ch. 6
by Witness Lee
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Scripture Reading: Acts 1:12-14; Rev. 3:18

BOUND BY THE FLESH, THE SELF, AND THE WORLD

Fallen people are bound by a cord composed of three strands: the flesh, the self, and the world. The flesh is the human body corrupted by the sinful nature of Satan. Sin is nothing less than the sinful nature of Satan injected into the human body, which had been created by God for His purpose. In Romans 6 and 7 sin is personified and likened to a living person who dwells in us, works in us, and reigns in us. As we have the flesh in the body, so we have the self in the soul. The self is the soul plus the satanic mind, the satanic thought.

The human body has become the flesh, and the human soul has become the self, but what has happened to the human spirit? There seems to be nothing wrong with the human spirit, for, in contrast to the body and the soul, there is nothing evil or sinful in it. No, there is nothing sinful in the human spirit, but nevertheless the human spirit has been deadened. The spirit has been deadened by the sin in the body and by the self in the soul. The more sinful we are, the more our spirit is deadened. Likewise, the more self-seeking we are, the more our spirit is deadened.

Human beings are bound not only by the flesh and the self but also by the world. Satan has systematized all the things on earth which are necessary for human existence. These things include food, marriage, clothing, housing, and transportation. The Lord provides everything necessary for our existence so that we may live to fulfill His purpose. However, Satan has come in to systematize these things into a system which in the Greek New Testament is the word *kosmos* and in English is *world*. Originally, all these things were on earth for human existence, and there was nothing wrong with them, but Satan

came in to change the earthly things into worldly things. Satan transmuted the human body into the flesh and changed the human soul into the self. In the same principle, Satan has changed the earthly things—the things that were originally on earth for man's existence—into worldly things. These things have become elements of Satan's system, the world, in which all people are imprisoned. Man has been systematized by Satan and has no freedom to fulfill God's purpose.

How evil and how subtle Satan is! Satan has corrupted the human body with sin, causing the body to become the flesh. Satan has polluted the human soul with the satanic mind, causing the soul to become the self. Satan has systematized all the earthly things that are necessary for human existence, organizing them into one system, the world.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WORLD

The world may be likened to a large university. A university is a system with many colleges, schools, and departments. In a university there may be a school of medicine, a school of law, a school of business, and a school of liberal arts. Such schools are the systematizing elements of the university. All the students in the university are systematized according to their major, and they study in one of the many schools.

The entire world today is a big “university”—the university of the world. In this university there are different “schools”: the school of food, the school of marriage, and the schools of clothing, housing, and transportation. Whereas most students in a university study in just one school, the worldly people, who have been systematized in the university of the world, may study in a number of different schools, taking many “units” at a time but never graduating. They are so busy and so occupied that they have no time for God. They will not say that they are too busy to eat, but they will tell you that they have no time to come to a meeting, to read the Bible, or to pray. They have time for anything in the university of the world, but they have no time for anything related to God.

In the great university of the world, there is also a school of religion. There are even a school of Christianity and a school of Judaism. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the Jewish people were systematized by Satan in the school of Judaism.

TURNING FROM JUDAISM TO THE HEAVENLY VISION

The apostles and disciples in the early days were taught and trained by the Lord Jesus to realize something new, something absolutely different from Judaism. They came to know Christ, and they saw the vision of Christ. They knew that Christ had been crucified and resurrected, that He had ascended on high, that He had been enthroned and had been made the Lord and Christ, and that He would come back to the earth. They also had the vision of the church and realized that God would gather together His chosen ones and build them up as local churches. They had been in Judaism, but they were turned from Judaism to the heavenly vision.

THE CONSECRATION IN THE UPPER ROOM

Acts 1 speaks of the upper room in Jerusalem. In this upper room a group of about a hundred and twenty prayed for ten days in one accord. They not only prayed, but they also consecrated themselves to the Lord, offering themselves to Him in a very real and practical way.

Three and a half years earlier, the Lord Jesus came to Peter by the seashore, and Peter offered himself to Him. Peter left his job and began to follow the Lord (Matt. 4:18-20). We may say that Peter consecrated himself to the Lord. However, Peter's experience in the upper room was something else. Here Peter had a new kind of consecration, not an ordinary consecration but something specific. At the seashore Peter gave up his job, indicated by his leaving his fishing nets, but in the upper room he gave up much more. We need to itemize the things Peter gave up in order to be in the upper room.

Standing with the Heavenly Vision to Give Up the Religion of His Forefathers

The first thing Peter gave up was Judaism. The heavenly vision was contradictory to the religion of his forefathers. Peter's attitude was not to stand with his forefathers' religion but to stand with the heavenly vision. In the first several chapters of Acts, we see that Peter and the other apostles were troubled and persecuted by Judaism, but they continued to take sides with the heavenly vision. The first item of their consecration in the upper room was to give up the traditional religion of their forefathers.

Giving Up His Country

In order to be in the upper room, Peter also gave up his country. Peter was from Galilee, but he left Galilee and came to the upper room in Jerusalem.

Giving Up His Relationships with His Neighbors and Friends

As a native of Galilee, Peter surely had relationships with his neighbors and friends in Galilee. For Peter to be in the upper room required that he give up these relationships. This is not an insignificant matter. Peter gave up these relationships at a real cost.

Giving Up His Relatives

Peter also gave up his relatives. I doubt whether Peter brought his parents with him into the upper room. There is no hint to this effect. Actually, Peter's parents might have remained in Judaism.

Risking His Life

Finally, Peter was in the upper room at the risk of his life. He was ready to give up his life. At that time Jerusalem was a threatening place to Peter and all the others in the upper room, yet they were willing to risk their lives to be there. In order to be in the upper room, they all gave up Judaism, their country, their neighbors and friends, and their relatives, and they were willing to risk their lives.

THE KIND OF CONSECRATION WE NEED TODAY

We need to see the vision of this upper-room consecration. You may talk much about consecration, but this may be a consecration at the seashore, not a consecration in the upper room. Yes, at the seashore you gave up something to follow the Lord Jesus, but you may not have yet come to the upper room. What kind of consecration do you have—a consecration at the seashore or a consecration in the upper room?

The time in the upper room in Acts 1 was a turning time. It was a time of the turning of an age, a time of the turning of a dispensation. The turn that took place at that time affected heaven and earth. Do you know what the issue

of that consecration in the upper room was? That consecration issued in the church. The church came out of the consecration, the dedication, of the one hundred twenty in the upper room.

During those ten days in the upper room, everything was dedicated in a practical way and was dedicated at any cost—at the cost of their forefathers' religion, at the cost of their country, at the cost of their relationships with neighbors and friends, at the cost of their relatives and families, and at the cost of their lives. The only thing they cared for was the heavenly vision. They were “drunken” with this heavenly vision. They were “married” to this heavenly vision; their whole being was held by this heavenly vision; and they were beside themselves with this heavenly vision. This is the kind of consecration we need today.

PAYING THE PRICE FOR THE HEAVENLY VISION

Have you seen the heavenly vision about which we have been speaking? Have you seen the visions of Christ, the church, the Body, the self, and the world? I believe that you have seen something. Will you be able to stand before the Lord at the judgment seat and tell Him that you have not seen any of these visions? Surely you have seen something concerning Christ, the church, the Body, the self, and the world, and thus you are without excuse in this matter.

Some claim that they have not seen the vision. They say this because they are not willing to be in the upper room. In other words, they are not willing to pay the price for the heavenly vision. They know that there is a cost to admitting that they have seen something. They realize that all these visions are costly, but they are not willing to pay the price.

Regarding this matter of cost, or price, let us read the word of the Lord Jesus in Revelation 3:18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.” In this verse the Lord counsels us not to pray nor to ask nor to receive nor to take by faith; He counsels us to *buy*. Here we are concerned only with the third of the three things which the Lord counsels us to buy—eyesalve to anoint our eyes that we may see. Perhaps, in a sense, you have not seen the heavenly vision, but as soon as you are willing to pay the

price, to buy the eyesalve, you will see. The crucial matter is the willingness to pay the price. Once you come into the upper room, everything is clear. But if you are not willing to come into the upper room, no matter how many messages you hear, you still will not be able to see.

You need to buy the eyesalve. Do not excuse yourself by saying that you have not seen the vision. Do not say that you are not clear. You may be clear, but you may not be willing to pay the price. If you are not willing to pay the price, you will not dare to say that you have seen the vision. Whether or not you have seen the vision depends on this one matter—whether you are willing to pay the price. Pay the price to buy the eyesalve, and you will see the vision.

I encourage you to pray, saying, “Lord Jesus, by Your mercy I will buy the eyesalve. By Your mercy I am willing to pay the price to be in the upper room.” If you say this to the Lord, the heavens will be opened, the scales will fall from your eyes, and you will see the heavenly vision.

BURNING THE BRIDGES BEHIND US

If you pay the price for the heavenly vision, you will “burn the bridges” behind you and will have no way to go backward. Christianity will be behind you, and you will have no way to return to it. Even if you wanted to go back, the people would not accept you.

However, suppose that one day an offer is presented to you, an opportunity to have a better position or a better future. The opportunity may be for you, or it may be for your wife or children. Would you consider this offer? For you to consider such an offer would mean that you have not burned all the bridges. It would mean that you have left yourself a way to go back. By the Lord’s mercy I can testify that I burned all my bridges more than thirty years ago. We should not be ashamed of burning our bridges—we should praise the Lord for it.

THE COST OF TAKING THE WAY OF THE LORD’S RECOVERY

To take the way of the Lord’s recovery is not cheap. This way is expensive; it requires a costly consecration. To take this way will be at the cost of the religion of your fathers and of your country, at the cost of your relationships with your neighbors and of your relatives, and at the cost of your own life. Are

you ready for such a consecration? Are you ready to come into the upper room to be clear concerning the heavenly vision?

We are here not for a movement but for the Lord's recovery. How can the recovery be realized? The recovery can be realized, carried out, only by the experience of the consecration in the upper room. This is not an ordinary consecration; it is a special consecration, a specific consecration, an extraordinary consecration. This consecration is a turning point.

What happened to those one hundred and twenty who were in the upper room in Acts 1? They all became a burnt offering. They were burning, and they burned others. We also need to be burned, and then we will burn others.

What are we expecting today? Do we expect a revival or a movement? Do we expect a new kind of Christian activity? What are we doing here? Have we come together to hear something that we cannot hear elsewhere? We may be here for this reason, but this is not enough. We must be here for the Lord's recovery, which is the issue of an upper-room consecration.

IN THE CROWD OR IN THE UPPER ROOM?

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, great crowds followed Him. Multitudes were saved and healed, and multitudes received the favor of God. Eventually, however, there were only about one hundred and twenty in the upper room. The crowds, the multitudes, did not afford the Lord Jesus anything for His move. The Lord's move was with those in the upper room, with those whose eyes had been opened and whose hearts had been touched. This small number came into the upper room to be burned, and then they turned the whole world upside down. The principle is the same today. It is a small number who will turn the world upside down and change the age.

Do you intend to be in the crowd or in the upper room? Will you remain one of the multitude, or by the Lord's mercy will you come into the upper room? I do not know who you are. Only the Lord knows who will be in the upper room.

I would urge you to pray to receive the Lord's mercy so that you might be in the upper room. If you are not willing to come here, then you will be like those in the crowds, those the Lord did not count on. If you would be in the upper

room, you need to pray in a specific way and say, “Lord, I am willing to be in the upper room for the recovery of Your testimony.”

CHAPTER TWO

THE NEED FOR MEN WHO TURN THE AGE

Men Who Turn the Age, Chap. 1

by Witness Lee

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Scripture Reading: Dan. 1:1-21

Today we would like to consider how young people who are under God's hand can be used by Him to turn the age.

GOD PURPOSELY USING YOUNG PEOPLE TO TURN THE AGE

We need to realize that many times God does things on earth to turn an age. When God works on earth, He does so age by age. The reason that God has many age-turning moves is that men used by Him in one age often become fallen and fail to reach His goal. This forces God to turn the age, that is, to have a new start so that He can do what He wants to do in a new age.

We can see many cases like this in the Old Testament. God would bring in a new age by doing something through some people during a particular time. However, due to man's degradation, that age would soon become fallen and degraded. It would become so degraded that God could not have a way with men on earth and could not do anything anymore. As a result, God would have to bring in a new age. Only by bringing in a new age could God do any work again. Unfortunately, the next age did not continue for long before it fell again. God once more could not do any work. Consequently, He had to bring in another age. When one reads the Old Testament, he can see that one age came after another had degraded. One age rose only to see it wane again. Another age rose and then also failed again.

I would like you to realize that God's work in turning the age is always done through men. Before a new age is ushered in, there are always men in the previous age who are used by God particularly to turn the age. And in every

age-turning work, God purposely uses young people. The two most obvious examples are Samuel and Daniel.

THE TURNING OF THE AGE BEING FOR THE BRINGING IN OF GOD'S AUTHORITY AND EXPRESSION

Samuel turned the age of the priesthood to the age of the kingship, whereas Daniel turned the age of captivity to the age of return. The age of the kingship brought in by Samuel, properly speaking, began with David. It came to its golden peak when King Solomon built the temple. At that time God's authority was manifested through men; God was able to rule through men under His authority. At the same time, God's glory was expressed among men.

In those days in Israel, on the one hand, there was the throne of the house of David and, on the other hand, the temple. The throne speaks of God's authority, and the temple, of His glory. One should remember that the glory of God filled the temple when Solomon consecrated it to God immediately after its completion. We know that there is symbolic significance in this. The throne and the temple among the Israelites show that God desires to rule and to express His glory.

I hope that the young brothers and sisters will see these two things. God wants to have a throne on earth and a habitation on the earth. The throne speaks of His ruling, and the habitation speaks of the expression of His glory. Such an age was brought in by Samuel. On the one hand, he brought in a throne and, on the other hand, he brought in a habitation through this throne. This situation was quite apparent among the Israelites after King Solomon succeeded in building the temple. God established a throne, ruled through it, and obtained a dwelling place, a place for His expression through which He manifested His glory among men. This period can be considered a very normal age.

However, this condition did not last long. Due to man's corruption and Satan's attacks, this testimony was destroyed. When Solomon was old, the age had become fallen. At that time it seemed that God's throne was laid aside and His glory was neglected.

From King Solomon on, his descendants began step by step to fall further. At the time of King Ahab their condition could not have become more fallen. By the end of the books of Kings, which was the very end of the age of kingship, everything had become degraded and desolate. There was no more of God's throne or God's glory. Both of these had disappeared. What could God do? God could only give them up and let them go. As a result, the enemies came in, and Jerusalem was destroyed; the temple was burned down, and all the utensils for serving God in the temple, together with the Israelites, were carried away to Babylon. It totally became the age of captivity because everything was carried away.

GOD'S FOCUS THROUGHOUT THE AGES

BEING HIS AUTHORITY AND EXPRESSION ON EARTH

I have no thought of giving young people too much doctrine. Nevertheless, I hope that you would know something about God. In the first chapter of the Old Testament, after God created man, His focus was on two things: first, He wanted man to have His image, and second, He wanted man to have authority on His behalf. From the beginning of the Bible, we can see that what God cares for in man are the matters of image and authority. From Genesis to Revelation, from the beginning of mankind all the way to the new heaven and new earth in the future, God's special focus on man has been with these two matters.

Image indicates God's expression. Suppose you are not presently in the United States. Your friend in the United States cannot see you. However, you can take a picture and send it to him. He will then know your image by the picture. You can print copies of this picture and send them all over the United States. You can even print the picture in all the American newspapers. In this way everyone in America will see you. Hence, an image is an expression. In the same way, man is created in God's image. In other words, man is God's picture; he is an expression of God's image. Someone once told us that a sculptor first takes pictures of a model from the front, back, right, and left sides and then sculpts according to these pictures. In the end the statue that he makes will be exactly the same as the image of the model. When you see the statue, it is as if you see the real person. Hence, an image is the expression of a person.

Please remember that expression is a matter of glory. Image is expression, and expression is glory. After Solomon finished building the temple, it was filled with God's glory. That was God's image expressed, and God Himself was manifested.

At the same time, there was the matter of authority, that is, the matter of the throne and the kingdom. Brothers and sisters, the Bible focuses all the time on the matters of image and authority.

If we realize this, we will understand the reason that in the prayer the Lord taught the disciples, He said, "Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory" (Matt. 6:13b). The reason He said this is that in the beginning of the Bible there were these two matters, and at the end of Revelation there are still these two matters. I cannot speak in detail here. I only hope that the young brothers and sisters will have an impression that being a Christian is not merely a matter of being saved or just a matter of loving the Lord. What being a Christian concerns, touches, and relates to is something very significant; it has to do with the question of image and authority, of God's glory and the kingdom.

MAN'S FAILURES THROUGHOUT THE AGES BEING AN OVERTURNING OF GOD'S AUTHORITY AND A FAILURE TO ALLOW GOD TO BE EXPRESSED

Although from the very beginning God focused on the matter of image and authority, and although the work He did on Adam concerned these two things, we know that before God reached His goal, that age became fallen. This fall continued from Adam's time to the time of the tower of Babel. At the time of the tower of Babel, men did two things: First, they denied God's authority. Men collectively rebelled against God there, denying His authority. They said with a stern face, "Who is God? We do not know Him! We human beings are everything. We will build a tower reaching to heaven in order to proclaim our name. We do not know who Jehovah is. We know only ourselves!" In this way they utterly overturned God's authority.

Please remember that before the tower of Babel, no nation had yet appeared on earth. It was from the tower of Babel that nations of men began on earth. Men wanted to establish their own nation; they did not want God to

rule. At the time when the age of the kings was about to begin, the Israelites did one thing that displeased God very much. They imitated the nations and desired a king over them instead of having God as their King. It was at Babel that men began to resist God's ruling and tried to make themselves king.

At the tower of Babel, not only did men overturn God's authority, but they worshipped idols. Archaeologists and historians tell us that in those days there were all kinds of idols on the tower and in the city of Babel. Idols are versus God's image; they do not allow God to be expressed. Rather, they allow the demons to be expressed. Even today there is no country that is without a shrine; every country has its own shrines. What is a shrine? It is a place where Satan is expressed. At the time of Solomon, there was a throne in the nation of Israel, which spoke of God's throne and authority. There was also a temple, which spoke of God's expression. However, today's nations have become Satan's throne and the place where Satan rules. At the same time, every nation has its shrines and its places of idol worship. That is the expression of Satan. This is not simply a matter of human superstition or of the backwardness of civilization. Satan's subtle work is in it. We must realize what Satan is always doing in the universe. He always establishes a nation among men, instigating men to rebel against God and to deny His authority. At the same time, he sets up shrines everywhere in every nation for men to worship him so that they would express him. Everything that he does is to damage God's authority and glory.

Consequently, God began to call Abraham out of the land of the tower of Babel. We cannot cover this matter in too much detail. If we read the experience of Abraham, we again see the matters of authority and expression. His story is one of many distractions and frustrations.

Later, the descendants of Abraham came out of Egypt and arrived in the land of Canaan. There they passed through many stages of degradation. Finally, Samuel came. God brought in the kingship through Samuel and turned the age. At Solomon's time we can still see these two things: the throne (as soon as there is a king, there is the throne) and the temple. The throne is a matter of authority and the kingdom, and the temple is a matter of expression and glory. We can see a return to God's original desire. Here, on the one hand, there is God's ruling and, on the other hand, God's image and His expression.

Not too long afterward, when Solomon became old, the condition of Israel became degraded again. Eventually, the majority of the Israelites were captured to Babylon. By then the throne was no more, the nation was gone, the temple was totally destroyed, and all the utensils of the temple were carried away to Babylon. *Babel* is a Hebrew word; *Babylon* is its Greek translation. The two refer to the same place in the land of Shinar.

Genesis 11 records the descendants of Adam moving to the land of Shinar. There they built the city of Babel and the tower of Babel to resist God. As a result, God forsook that age; that is, He forsook the descendants of Adam and chose Abraham, intending that his descendants would become God's testimony—to rule for God and to express God's glory—in the land of Canaan. In Daniel 1 the land of Shinar is mentioned again. The enemies had carried the Israelites away to the land of Shinar again. This means that they returned to Babel again. The story of Babel was repeated again with them. As soon as they entered Babel, they were fully under men's ruling and the ruling of demons. There were Chaldean shrines in Babel. I have said earlier that shrines are places where demons are expressed. At this time the nation of Israel was no more, the temple was destroyed, and the utensils for God's worship were carried away to the land of Shinar and placed in the shrine of Babylon. This means that in that age God's authority was no longer seen and God's expression no longer existed. Everything had collapsed. It was at this time that God needed a man to turn the age.

THE RAISING UP OF MEN WHO TURN THE AGE FOR THE RECOVERY OF GOD'S AUTHORITY AND EXPRESSION

It was at this juncture that Daniel was raised up. Through Daniel's being raised up, God's people returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. Those who returned to Jerusalem were of two lines. One was the line of authority, which included men like Nehemiah and Zerubbabel who were David's descendants. Among them were also some governors. The other line was the line of priests. These men expressed God's glory in the temple. Men like Ezra and Joshua, the high priest, were Levites. Hence, their return was a recovery of authority and expression as at the beginning. One matter was to rule for God, because among David's descendants rulers such as the governors were raised up. The

other was the expression of God, because there was a return to the priestly and Levitical services of the temple.

In relating these matters, it is not my intention to tell some Bible stories. My only wish is that among the young brothers and sisters here, some would realize what is happening in the universe. If we realize what is happening in the universe, we will easily receive a burden. We will realize that in the present age also, God needs someone to rise up and to turn the age as Samuel and Daniel did. We should agree that the condition of today's age is like that of Babel and Babylon and that God's authority is denied on earth and His expression torn down.

In these days the whole world is celebrating Christmas. Look how they celebrate! Outwardly, they are celebrating the holy birth of Jesus Christ, but actually, they are in the flesh and indulging in their lusts. No dancing in the world is worse than the dancing on so-called Christmas Eve! People even call such a dancing party "the holy party"! This is how men celebrate Christ's "birthday"! Not only do the Gentiles behave this way, but even many Christians also are carried away by the tide of this age. Many send Christmas cards to each other, greet each other with "Merry Christmas," set up trees at home, and hang little light bulbs on them. It seems that if they do not do these things, they will not be fashionable. I am afraid that among the young brothers and sisters, some have also done this in the past. Please remember that all these are fallen things. Today all of Christianity has fallen into Babel. There is not a trace of God's ruling, not a trace of God's expression. It is altogether a condition of men forsaking God. In such a desolate age God needs young people to rise up to turn the age.

MEN WHO TURN THE AGE BEING THOSE WHO CONSECRATE THEMSELVES VOLUNTARILY

Let us now take a look at Daniel. How did God use Daniel to turn that age? There is an important principle with Daniel as also with Samuel. It is voluntary consecration. Samuel was a Nazarite. A Nazarite was a person who consecrated himself voluntarily (Num. 6). We can see the same principle in Daniel. Apparently, Daniel was not a Nazarite. Actually, he was, because a Nazarite was a person who did not drink any wine or strong drink. What is the meaning of not drinking wine or strong drink? It means to not enjoy any

pleasures of this life. This is the principle with Daniel. Daniel would have said, “I do not want anything that the world considers sweet, joyous, or satisfying.”

Why did Daniel drink neither wine nor strong drink nor partake of the king’s diet? It is because all these things were related to idols. What the king of Babylon drank, as well as his meat and grains, must have been offered to the idols. At least those meals were not clean according to the ordinances on cleanliness in Leviticus 11; it was defiled food. Daniel said, “I will not be defiled by that food. The young people of the world may participate in it. But I will not have a part in it.”

In principle, Daniel and Samuel were the same; both were Nazarites. Daniel refused everything that men enjoyed and boasted of. He refused everything that would offer him some position in the world. He was a voluntarily consecrated one.

Brothers and sisters, a little spiritual pursuit or a little godly living before the Lord is not enough to be used by the Lord to turn the age. All those who are used by the Lord to turn the age must be Nazarites; they must be voluntarily consecrated ones. I believe that by now all of us know what voluntary consecration means. It means that when everyone else on earth seeks after the world and enjoys the world, I separate myself from it. This separation is a voluntary consecration. The Bible records that in those days the king of Babylon chose a group of young men from different races to stand before him. The opportunity of being chosen was something beyond one’s dream because the king would give them good food and drink for three years so that they would be fair and fat in the flesh to stand before him in the palace. Many yearned for such opportunity but were not able to have it. Yet Daniel and his three companions vowed, saying, “We forsake such opportunity. We will not enjoy the food and drink here. We cannot be the same as other people. We must take another stand. Other people do not have God and are not for God, but we are for God.”

At that time Daniel might have been only a young man in his teens, yet the two matters of God’s authority and God’s glory were recovered in him. This young man with his three young companions accepted God’s authority and came under God’s authority. This is not all. We also see God’s temple and God’s expression with them. When Daniel’s three friends flatly refused to worship the idols, that was in fact a proclamation that they expressed God!

They seemed to be declaring, “Although it is true that we are in the land of Shinar, we are not the people of Shinar. It is true that we are in Babel, but we are the descendants of Abraham. We cannot worship the idols here. We want to testify of this God of glory. We want to have the God of glory expressed in us!” On that day his three friends fully expressed God before the idols. The Bible records that after the king of Babylon cast them into the burning fiery furnace, he saw that the three persons whom he cast into the fire had become four persons (Dan. 3:23-25). The form of the fourth person was like the Son of God. Please remember that this was God being with them, in their midst, and expressed through them while in the furnace.

Of course, we must realize that they expressed God this way because they submitted themselves to His authority. While the whole earth denied God’s authority, they acknowledged God’s authority. While the whole earth had men as kings, they had God as their King. The whole earth was saying that they would eat and drink what the king of Babylon told them to eat and drink; to them, whatever the king of Babylon said counted. But these few said, “No, we are not under the authority of the king of Babylon. We are under Jehovah’s authority. Only His words count. If what the king of Babylon says is in accordance with what God says, we will obey. If not, we will not obey. We cannot go against Jehovah in obeying the king of Babylon.” Hence, this was not a question of not eating or not drinking but a question of who was ruling over men. If we read the book of Daniel carefully, we will see that Daniel and his friends were truly under God’s authority and truly allowed God to be expressed through them. Whether they were bound in the land of captivity, were cast into the furnace, or were even cast into the den of lions, they allowed God’s glory to be fully expressed.

How could they be like this? It is because they were voluntarily consecrated ones. It seems that God had never called Daniel, nor had He appeared to him. (Of course, we believe that God was working there in a hidden way.) What we see from the book of Daniel is that these men offered themselves to God willingly.

In turning the age, God needs man’s voluntary consecration. In almost all cases of turning the age, God does not show us that it is the Holy Spirit who calls and seeks for men (the only exception being the case of John the Baptist). On the contrary, God shows us that every time the age is turned, God’s work is seen in a very hidden way; it is not so apparent to man. What is obvious to

man is man's voluntary consecration. With Daniel and his three friends, we do not see the outward work of the Holy Spirit. What we see is the voluntary consecration of these men.

The condition at that time was one in which the nation of Israel was in captivity, the temple was destroyed, and all the utensils within were carried away. God's authority, glory, and expression were gone from the earth. Everyone had rejected God's authority and was under the authority of the king of Babylon; they were expressing the demons and had become involved with the demons. Even the food they ate and the wine they drank had been offered to demons and were defiled and unclean. Yet at that juncture Daniel and his three friends (who were very young then, Daniel probably being not more than twenty years of age) stood up and said, "While the whole earth is rejecting God's authority, we will come under God's authority. While the whole earth is involved with demons, we will be involved with God. We are here to express God. While the earth is drifting downward in this current, we four will go against the current and will go upward. We cannot go down with the tide. On the contrary, we will go upward against the tide." Brothers and sisters, this is the secret for one to be used by God to turn the age. You can also be used by God to turn the age today, but the secret lies in your willingness to consecrate yourselves.

**THE NEED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
TO CONSECRATE THEMSELVES VOLUNTARILY
TO BE AN ANTI-TESTIMONY IN THIS AGE**

Brothers and sisters, while I was considering before the Lord what to share, I had a strong feeling within that I should let the young people realize the importance of turning the age and should show the young brothers and sisters the kind of persons God uses to turn the age. This kind of people are those who consecrate themselves voluntarily. While everyone else is going downward, a few persons are standing as an anti-testimony.

The whole book of Daniel is an anti-testimony against that age. All the others were eating the king's meat and drinking the king's wine, but these four were not. All the others worshipped idols, but these three would not do it. The others had stopped praying because of the king's decree, but Daniel still

prayed three times a day toward Jerusalem on his knees before God. This is the anti-testimony.

Brothers and sisters, let me say it again. What kind of persons can be used by God to withstand the age? They are the voluntarily consecrated ones. We can see this basic principle in both Samuel and Daniel. We must say, “I cannot do the things that the world does. I cannot take the way that the world takes. The world may follow the tide of this age, but I cannot follow it.”

Young people, you must realize that God’s testimony, including the authority and glory, has been destroyed in the tide of the world. Everyone who is used by God to turn the age must be one who consecrates himself voluntarily in the midst of this tide. He can stand up and declare to everyone, “I cannot follow this tide. I will be one who stands against the tide.” If you do this, God’s authority and God’s glory will be expressed through you.

If we read the book of Daniel, we will realize that God’s authority and God’s glory were both with Daniel. Daniel truly became God’s throne and God’s temple. In Daniel we see God’s ruling and God’s expression. Even the idol-worshipping Gentiles saw God’s glory and ruling in Daniel. No wonder that through this one person, Daniel, God was eventually able to bring the Israelites back to Jerusalem and to recover His authority and His temple among them. That turning point was totally because of Daniel. He was able to be such a one because he was a voluntarily consecrated one. He was willing to stand against the tide and be a testimony for God. This was a young man who could be used by God to turn the age. May God raise up young men like Daniel for the need of this age.

CHAPTER THREE

CONSECRATION

Messages for Building Up New Believers,

Vol. 1, Chap. 3 by Watchman Nee

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Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:1-2, 40-41; 29:1-25; Lev. 8:14-28; Rom. 6:13, 16, 19; 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:14-15

Whether or not a person consecrates himself depends on whether he has a healthy salvation experience. If he views his faith in the Lord Jesus as being a favor to the Lord and his faith in God as a courtesy to Him, it will be impossible to talk to him about consecration. It is equally futile to talk about consecration to a person who feels that he is promoting the cause of Christianity and that his conversion is a great honor to it. Such a one does not have a good start in his Christian faith; he does not have a good beginning. It is impossible to expect him to consecrate himself. We must realize that it is the Lord who has graced us and granted mercy to us. It is the Lord who loves us and has saved us. This is why we consecrate our all to Him.

Teaching concerning consecration can be found in both the Old Testament and New Testament. Many passages in the New Testament, such as Romans 6 and 12, speak of consecration. In the Old Testament consecration is spoken of with special reference to Aaron and his household. Exodus 28 and 29 and Leviticus 8 speak of the consecration of Aaron and his household. Although consecration is the first basic experience of our service to God, we do not find many direct teachings from God's Word concerning it. In order to understand the meaning of consecration, we need to study the above referenced verses.

I. THE BASIS OF CONSECRATION

Second Corinthians 5:14-15 clearly shows us that the constraining power of the Lord's love is the basis for God's children to live unto Him who died for them and has been raised. A man lives unto the Lord because he is constrained by the Lord's love. According to the original language, the word *constrained* can be translated "pressed on from all sides," that is, tightly

confined on all sides. It means to be tightly bound and wrapped up. Love has bound us up, and we cannot run away. When a person is in love, he will have a sense of bondage. We are bound by Him; we have no way out. He has died for us, and we should live unto Him today. Hence, love is the basis of consecration. A man consecrates himself to the Lord because of the Lord's love. No one can consecrate himself unless he first touches the Lord's love. A man must touch the Lord's love before he can consecrate himself to Him. When one touches the Lord's love, consecration spontaneously follows.

Consecration is based on the Lord's love. But it is also based on the Lord's right. This is the truth revealed in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "You are not your own...For you have been bought with a price." Our Lord gave His own life for us; He even became the ransom to purchase us back to Himself. We are those who are purchased by the Lord. Because the Lord has redeemed us, we willingly lose our own freedom for Him. We are no longer our own; we are the Lord's. We must glorify God in our bodies because we are not our own; we have been bought by the Lord with a price. The blood which the Lord shed on the cross is the price He paid. Therefore, as far as the Lord's right is concerned, we belong to the Lord.

We must be clear that we are those purchased by the Lord. He has purchased us with the highest price. He bought us, not with silver or gold, but with His own blood. Here we see the Lord's love as well as His right. We serve the Lord because He loves us, and we follow Him because He has a right over us. The right secured through redemption constrains us to give ourselves to the Lord. The love that results from redemption also constrains us to give ourselves to Him. The basis of consecration is His right as well as His love. It is a legal right, and it is beyond all human sentimental love. These are the two reasons that we have to give ourselves to the Lord.

II. THE MEANING OF CONSECRATION

Merely being constrained by love or acknowledging His legal right does not constitute consecration. After a person has been constrained by the Lord's love and has acknowledged His right, there is a further step that he should take. This step will bring him on to a new position. Through the Lord's constraining and based on His purchase, we separate ourselves from every other thing. Henceforth, we live for and unto the Lord. This is consecration. In some instances in the Old Testament, the Chinese Union Version translates

the word *consecration* as “the receiving of the holy service.” To receive the holy service is to receive the ministry of service to God. This is a holy service. This is consecration. Consecration is receiving the ministry of serving God. It is to say to the Lord, “Today I will separate myself from everything to serve You, because You have loved me.”

III. A CONSECRATED PERSON

Let us look at Exodus 28:1-2 and 29:1, 4, 9-10.

After reading these verses, we can see that consecration is a very special matter. The nation of Israel was a nation chosen by God (Exo. 19:5-6), but it did not become a consecrated nation. There were twelve tribes among the Israelites, but not all the twelve tribes received the holy service. The tribe of Levi was one of the twelve tribes. They were a tribe chosen by God (Num. 3:11-13), but they were not a consecrated tribe. Among the many Levites, only the household of Aaron received the holy service. Not all of the Israelites received the holy service, not even all of the Levites. Only the household of Aaron received the holy service. In order to be consecrated, one had to belong to this household. If one were not a member of this household, he could not consecrate himself. Only the members of this household—the household of Aaron—were qualified to be priests, and only they could consecrate themselves.

Thank God, today we are the members of this household. Those who believe in the Lord are the members of this household. All who have been saved by grace are priests (Rev. 1:5-6). God has chosen us to be the priests. Initially, only the members of Aaron’s household could consecrate themselves; if anyone else came near, he would have been put to death (Num. 18:7). We must remember that only those chosen by God to be priests can consecrate themselves. Thus, only the members of this household could consecrate themselves. Today God has chosen us to be the priests; therefore, we are the members of this household. Hence, we are qualified to consecrate ourselves.

Here we see that man does not consecrate himself because he has chosen God. Rather, God is the One who chooses and calls, and then man consecrates himself to Him. Those who consider that they are doing God a favor by forsaking all are but outsiders; they are not consecrated at all. We must realize that our service to God is not a favor or courtesy to God. It is not a

matter of offering ourselves to God's work, but a matter of God being gracious to us and giving us a portion of His work. It is God who has given us the glory and the beauty. The Bible tells us that the holy garment of the priest is for glory and beauty (Exo. 28:2). Consecration is God giving us glory and beauty; it is God calling us into His service. If we boast in anything at all, we must boast in our marvelous Lord. There is nothing marvelous for the Lord to have servants like us. The marvelous thing is for us to have such a Lord! We must see that consecration is the result of being chosen. Serving God is an honor to us. We are not uplifting God, as if we were sacrificing anything for Him or as if we had any glory in ourselves. Consecration is God giving us the glory. We should prostrate ourselves before Him and say, "Thank You that I can have a part in Your service. There are so many people in this world, yet I am chosen to have a part in it!" Consecration is our honor, not our sacrifice. It is true that we need to have the greatest sacrifice, but there is no sense of sacrifice in consecration. There is only the full sense of God's glory.

IV. THE WAY OF CONSECRATION

Leviticus 8:14-28 speaks of a bull, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread. The bull was for the sin offering; the first ram was for the burnt offering; and the second ram and the basket of unleavened bread were for the consecration offering.

A. The Sin Offering

In order to receive the holy service before God, that is, in order to consecrate oneself to God, the first thing that has to be taken care of is the propitiation for sin. Only a saved person, one who belongs to the Lord, can consecrate himself. The sin offering is the basis of consecration.

B. The Burnt Offering

Following this, we see two rams. We need to study Leviticus 8:18-28 carefully. One ram was for the burnt offering; it was to be burned. The other was for the offering of consecration; it enabled Aaron to serve God.

What is a burnt offering? A burnt offering is an offering which is burned completely. The priest could not eat the flesh of the burnt offering. All the flesh of the burnt offering was burned completely. The problem of our sin is

settled by the sin offering, but the burnt offering makes us acceptable to God. The Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross. This refers to His work as the sin offering. At the same time, while the Lord Jesus was on the cross, the veil was rent from top to bottom, bringing us into the Holy of Holies. This is His work as the burnt offering. The sin offering and the burnt offering start at the same place, but they arrive at different destinations. They start where the sinner is. The sin offering stops at the propitiation of sin, but the burnt offering brings the sinner further by making him acceptable to God. The burnt offering is the offering which makes a sinner acceptable in the Beloved. It goes further than the sin offering. The burnt offering is the sweet savor of the Lord Jesus before God that secures God's acceptance of Him. Today when we offer Him to God, we are accepted by God as well. We are not only forgiven through the sin offering but also accepted through the Lord Jesus.

C. The Offering of Consecration

1. The Sprinkling of the Blood

After the first ram was slain, the second ram followed. What was done with the second ram after it was slain? The first thing that was done was the putting of blood upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron and his sons, upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the big toe of their right foot. This means that since God has accepted us in Christ, we should acknowledge the blood's separation of our ears, hands, and feet fully unto God. We should declare that our ears, hands, and feet are fully God's. Because of redemption, our ears, which were made for hearing, should now hear for God; our hands, which were made for working, should now work for God. Our legs, which were made for walking, should now walk for God. We apply the blood upon the tip of our right ear, the thumb of our right hand, and the big toe of our right foot. This means that our ears, hands, and feet have all been purchased by the Lord. We should say to the Lord, "Because of Your redemption, Lord, from this day forward, I will no longer consider my two ears to be my own, or my two hands and my two feet to be my own. Because You have redeemed me, Lord, my entire being will henceforth belong to You; it is no longer mine."

Blood is the mark of possession. It is also the symbol of love. Both the "price" spoken of in 1 Corinthians 6 and the "love" spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5 refer to this blood. Because there is blood, love, and possession, our entire being is not our own. The Lord has shed His blood, and we must acknowledge

the rightful claim of this blood upon us. Because the Lord loves us, we will confess that our entire being belongs to Him alone.

2. The Wave Offering

After the sprinkling of the blood, there was the wave offering. We must remember that when the second ram was slain, its blood was put on the ear, the thumb, and the toe. This is still not consecration. It is just the basis of consecration. The sprinkling of the blood is merely a confession of love and of right. It qualifies us for consecration, but the actual consecration comes after this.

After the second ram was slain and its blood was sprinkled, the fat and the right shoulder (right thigh) were taken, and out of the basket, an unleavened cake, a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer were also taken. All these things signify the two aspects of the Lord Jesus. The shoulder is the strong part, showing us the divine aspect of the Lord Jesus. Fat is rich, signifying the aspect of God's glory. Bread is of the vegetable life, showing us His highest humanity. He is the perfect man, who is unleavened and unblemished. He is full of the anointing oil, being filled with the Holy Spirit. Like a wafer, His nature, the sentiments in His heart, and His spiritual insight are fine, tender, and fragile, being full of feeling and compassion. All of these things were placed in the hands of Aaron, who took them and waved them before the Lord. After this they were burned with the burning of the burnt offering. This is consecration.

Here we need some explanation. The Hebrew word *consecration* means "to have one's hands filled." Both Darby's translation and Young's concordance refer to this meaning. Initially the hands were empty, now they are filled. When Aaron's hands were filled with so many things, he was filled with the Lord and there was consecration. When Aaron's hands were empty, there was no consecration. When Aaron's hands were filled and his hands could no longer hold anything except the Lord, there was consecration.

What then is consecration? God demanded that the household of Aaron serve Him as priests. But Aaron could not come presumptuously. First, his sins had to be taken care of, and then he had to be accepted in Christ. His hands (denoting work) had to be full of Christ. He had to have nothing but Christ. Only then was there consecration. What is consecration? Simply put,

consecration is, as Paul said, “I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

Before the Lord, we need to see that in this life there is only one way for us to take, that is, serving God. We have no other way. Serving God is our only way. In order to serve God, we have to present our entire bodies to Him. From this day forward, our ears will listen for the Lord, our hands will work for the Lord, and our feet will run for the Lord. Our two ears will only listen to the Lord’s word, our two hands will only do the Lord’s work, and our two feet will only walk the way of the Lord. We are here only to serve God. We have consecrated ourselves as an offering, a sacrifice; we have consecrated our all to Him. Furthermore, our two hands will be filled with Christ; they will uplift Him and express Him. This is what consecration is all about. Only when we have done this, will God say, “This is consecration.” This saturation of Christ is what God calls consecration.

Consecration means that we have touched the Lord’s love and have recognized His right. For these reasons, we can come before God and beg for the privilege to serve. It is not just a matter of God’s calling us but of our offering ourselves to serve. We should say, “O God! I am Yours. I have been bought by You. In the past I was under Your table, hoping to eat a little of the fallen bread crumbs, but from this day forward, I want to serve You. Today I choose to serve You. I have been accepted in the Lord. May I also be granted a little portion in the great task of serving You? Be merciful to me so that I can have a part in Your service. In granting salvation to many, You did not pass me by or reject me; You saved me. Now give me a part among the many who serve You; do not reject me.”

This is how you present yourself to the Lord. Everything is for Christ and for Him alone. When you present yourself to Him in this way, you have consecration. This is what Romans 12 calls the presenting of our body. Romans 6 speaks of the consecration of the members. This is like the sprinkling of the blood on the ears, the hands, and the feet. Romans 12 speaks of the consecration of the whole body. It is the filling up of both hands with Christ. This links the Old Testament and the New Testament in a perfect way.

V. THE GOAL OF CONSECRATION

The goal of consecration is not to become a preacher for God or to work for Him. The goal of consecration is to serve Him. The result of consecration is service. In the original language the word *service* means “to wait upon.” This means that a person is prepared to serve. We must remember that the goal of consecration is to wait upon God. Waiting upon someone may not be strenuous work. To wait upon God means that you stand when He wants you to stand. If He wants to shuffle you aside, you allow Him to shuffle you aside, and if He wants you to run, you run. This is what it means to wait on Him.

God requires that all Christians offer up their bodies to wait on Him. This does not necessarily mean that He wants you to stand at the pulpit or evangelize some remote land. It means to wait on God. If God sends someone to the pulpit, that person has no choice but to speak. If God sends someone to remote lands, he has no choice but to go. All our time is for God, but the work that we do is flexible. Everyone should wait on God, but the specific work that one should engage in is flexible. We must learn to wait on God. The presenting of one’s body is for serving God.

As long as we are Christians, we have to serve God all our lives. As soon as a person consecrates himself, he must realize that from that point on, the Lord’s requirement comes first. Service to God becomes one’s lifelong mission. May God be gracious to us and show us that our service to Him is our rightful duty. We should show every believer that henceforth we are those who serve the Lord. We must realize that as Christians, we can no longer be loose in anything. I am not saying that we should not be faithful and committed to our career or that we can be idle. This is not what I mean. We still need to be faithful and serious in our vocation. But before God we must see that our entire life is directed towards our service to God. We do everything for the purpose of obeying God’s will and pleasing Him. This is the reality of consecration.

Consecration is not how much we can give to God. It is being accepted by God and being granted the honor of serving Him. Consecration is reserved for Christians alone; it is not for everyone. Only the saved ones, those who belong to the Lord, can consecrate themselves. Consecration means that we say, “Lord, You have given me the opportunity and the right to come before You and to serve You.” It is saying, “Lord, I am Yours. My ears were purchased by the blood; they belong to You. My hands were purchased by the blood; they

belong to You. My feet were purchased by the blood; they belong to You. From now on I can no longer use them for myself.”

We do not beg others to consecrate themselves. Instead, we tell them that a way is now available for them to consecrate themselves. There is a way to serve our God, the Lord of hosts. We must be clear that we are here to serve the Lord of hosts. It is grossly wrong to think that consecration is a matter of granting God a favor.

The revelation in the Old Testament is very clear. A man can only consecrate himself to God under His approval. The New Testament also exhorts us to consecrate ourselves through the compassions of God. God loves us so much; therefore, we have to consecrate ourselves. This is the most reasonable service. This is not a request for favor; this is the most reasonable thing, the most natural thing, to do. Consecration does not depend upon our willingness. It is because of God's abounding grace that we can consecrate ourselves. We must see that having the right to be God's servant is the greatest honor of our life. It is a joyful thing for a man to be saved. It is a far more joyful thing for a man to have a part in God's service! Who do we think our God is? We have to see His greatness and His glory. Only then will we see the tremendous significance and honor of this service! What a tremendous thing it is for us to receive His grace and be counted worthy of serving Him!

CHAPTER FOUR

THINGS TO CONSECRATE

The Overcoming Life, Chap.11
by Watchman Nee
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The first thing we have to do after we have experienced the overcoming life is to consecrate ourselves. Of course, this should be the first thing that a person does after he is saved. However, many people have never consecrated themselves even though they are saved. Therefore, after they have entered into the experience of the overcoming life, they have to consecrate themselves. There are some who consecrated themselves to the Lord after they were saved. However, they have risen and fallen throughout the years, and they are not as fresh as they once were. Therefore, they also need to consecrate themselves. I dare not say that consecration is the first step or first expression of our overcoming. I can say only that since the Lord died for us and lives for us, the first thing we should do after we overcome is consecrate ourselves.

Some have said that we should consecrate ourselves before we overcome and that we must consecrate ourselves before we can overcome. However, Romans 6:13 says, “Neither present your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God.” This shows us that consecration comes after experiencing the overcoming life. This is an obvious fact: A person cannot consecrate himself before he experiences death and resurrection. Only those who have died and resurrected can consecrate themselves. During the past few days, we have been speaking of our crucifixion with Christ and of His living within us. We are those who have died with Christ and who are living with Him. Hence, from Romans 6:13, we see that a Christian consecrates himself after he has experienced the overcoming life. If a person has not experienced the overcoming life, he cannot consecrate himself, and even if he did, God would not accept his consecration, because He does not want anything that is related to Adam or death.

If we have not experienced the overcoming life, our consecration is not reliable. Today we may consecrate ourselves and tomorrow we may forget about it. Today we may make a vow before the Lord, telling the Lord that we will do this and do that, but tomorrow we may forget all about it. There was a missionary who attended seven Keswick Conventions. She said that attending the Keswick Convention every year was like winding up the spring inside a watch. The watch would slow down, and she would wind it up again. Every year she went for a “winding up,” and every year she found herself slowing down again. This is the way with many Christians. They make big promises before God, but when they go away, everything is forgotten. This is why I say that we cannot consecrate ourselves. We do not have the strength to consecrate ourselves.

If we have not experienced the overcoming life, God will not receive our consecration even if we do consecrate ourselves, because everything we have is from Adam and is dead. We say “thank you” to the unbelievers and refuse to accept their gifts. The same is true with God; He cannot accept our gifts. Only that which is from the Lord can be consecrated to the Lord. Anything that comes from ourselves cannot be consecrated to the Lord.

We must realize that the first thing we should do after experiencing the overcoming life is consecrate ourselves to the Lord. Now is the time to consecrate ourselves to the Lord. Now there is an opportunity to consecrate ourselves to the Lord. If we do not consecrate ourselves now, we will draw back, and we will fail again in a few days.

THE BASIS AND MOTIVE OF CONSECRATION

Consecration is spoken of not only in Romans 6 but also in Romans 12. Why do we have to consecrate ourselves? Paul exhorted us through the compassions of God. What are God’s compassions, and what are God’s mercies? Romans 1 through 8 speaks of God’s compassions and mercies. Doctrinally speaking, chapter twelve immediately follows chapter eight. God’s compassions and mercies are covered in the first eight chapters. Formerly we were sinners, and God’s Son came to shed His blood for our sins. Chapters three and four are on the blood; chapter five is on forgiveness, while chapters six through eight are on the cross. On the one hand, the blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins; through the blood we are forgiven. On the other hand, the cross is for the crucifixion of the old man; through the cross we are

released. Thank the Lord that He was crucified on the cross to die in our place and He is now also living in our place. Based on these compassions and mercies, we are exhorted to consecrate ourselves to God.

Brothers and sisters, God created us with a purpose, and He also saved us with a purpose. God's intention is that we express the life of His Son and partake of the glory of His Son. In eternity past God had a purpose; He did not want just an only begotten Son, but many sons. Hence, Romans 8:29 says, "Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers." God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Then He bought us and redeemed us so that He could gain us. He gains us in two ways. On God's side, He sent His Son to die for us and to redeem us. As far as our redemption is concerned, we are His slaves. Thank God that He has bought us! We are those who have been purchased by God. God said to Abraham, "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed" (Gen. 17:12). Hallelujah! We have been begotten of God, and we have been bought by God.

We have been bought by God, and we belong to God. Yet He allows us to go free. As far as His sovereign right is concerned and as far as redemption is concerned, we belong to God, but He does not force us to do anything. If we want to serve mammon, He allows us to go, and if we want to serve the world, He does not stop us. If we want to serve our bellies, God does not stop us, and if we want to serve idols, He allows us to do so. God does not make any move; He waits until one day we say, "God, I am Your slave not only because You bought me, but also because I want to be Your slave willingly." Romans 6:16 speaks of a most precious principle of consecration. Please remember that we are not God's slaves merely because of the fact that He purchased us. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey?" On the one hand, we are His slaves because He has purchased us, but on the other hand, we are His slaves because we want to be such voluntarily. Brothers and sisters, as far as the law is concerned, we became His slaves the day that we were redeemed. But as far as our experience is concerned, we become His slaves only after we consecrate ourselves. As far as God's sovereign right is concerned, we became His slaves on the day we were redeemed. But as far as experience is concerned, we become His slaves the day we willingly tell the Lord, "I consecrate myself to

You.” “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey?” (v. 16). Therefore, no one can be God’s servant without being conscious of it. We have to consecrate ourselves before we can be His slaves. This consecration is a matter of our own voluntary choice. God does not force us, nor does Paul force us. He exhorted us and beseeched us. God will not force us at all. He wants us to willingly consecrate ourselves to Him.

Brothers and sisters, the overcoming life has much to do with salvation. When we were saved, we spontaneously had the desire to consecrate ourselves. The life we receive compels us to consecrate ourselves. Every saved person has the feeling that he should live for the Lord, yet he does not have the strength to do so. Many things ensnare and frustrate him from living for the Lord. But thank God that He has given Christ to us so that we can consecrate ourselves to Him. When we were dead in sin, we could not consecrate ourselves to Him. If we continue to live in sin after we are saved, we still cannot consecrate ourselves to Him. But now that Christ has become our life and our holiness, we can willingly consecrate ourselves to God.

Mr. Panton once told about a black slave girl who was about to be auctioned. Two men were bidding for her, and the price was going up. Both of them were evil men, and the slave girl knew that she would suffer no matter whose hand she fell into. She wept and grieved. Suddenly another man showed up and joined the bidding. The first two men could not offer as much as the third one, and the girl was eventually bought by him. Immediately, he called in a blacksmith and broke her chains and declared that she was free, saying, “I did not buy you to be my slave. I bought you to free you.” At that word, he walked away. The girl was bewildered. After two minutes she came to her senses, and she ran up to the man and said, “From this day forward until the day I die, I will be your slave.” Brothers and sisters, this is the love of the Lord toward us. We are constrained by this love to tell Him, “From this day forward, I will be Your slave.” Brothers and sisters, God has bought us, crucified us, and raised us up. Since we have tasted of His compassions and mercies, we should consecrate ourselves to Him.

Romans 6 tells us to consecrate ourselves, that is, our members, to God, while Romans 12 tells us to consecrate our bodies to Him. These two consecrations include many things. During the past eleven days, we spoke about letting go and believing, and we pointed out that we will meet God’s

requirement and live out His life when we do these things. God's requirement is that we consecrate ourselves absolutely to Him. This requirement is an all-inclusive requirement. But we cannot do it by ourselves; we can do it only by the Christ who lives within us. Formerly we could not do it, but we can do it now because of Christ. We have received His mercies; therefore, we can consecrate ourselves.

When a Hebrew man bought a slave, the slave had to serve the master for six years. In the seventh year, the slave could go free. However, if he said that he loved his master and would not go out free, the master would bring him to the judges and the doorpost and bore his ear through with an awl. Then the slave would serve his master forever (Exo. 21:2-6). Brothers and sisters, God has saved us and bought us with the blood. He did not purchase us with corruptible gold but with the precious blood of His Son. Many Christians feel that they have to serve God for their conscience' sake. But when we see the Lord's preciousness, we will voluntarily and willingly consecrate ourselves to Him. When we tell the Lord that we are willing to be His slave, He will take us to the door and the doorpost, and He will bore our ear through with an awl. The doorpost is the place where the blood of the Passover lamb was applied. Today we are being led to bleed there as well; we are being led to the cross as well. We love the Lord and choose to be His slave forever. Because we know that He loves us, we are willing to serve Him forever. We have no choice but to declare, "Lord, You have loved me and saved me and released me! Lord, I love You and cannot help but serve You forever!"

THINGS TO CONSECRATE

People

The first thing we should consecrate is the people we love. If a man does not love the Lord more than his parents, wife, children, and friends, he is not worthy to be the Lord's disciple. If you have consecrated yourself to the Lord, there should be no one in this world that can occupy your heart and nothing that can capture your heart any longer. God saves you in order to gain you wholly. Many tears pull you back. Many human sentiments bid you to return to them. Many heartbreaks persuade you to turn back. You have to say, "Lord, all my relationships with men are on the altar. My relationship with the whole world is over."

When the wife of a brother was sick, and others asked him to pray for his wife, he said, "God has not told me to pray for her yet!" When another asked whether he would grieve if his wife died, he said, "She has died to me already." Another brother had a good friend, and God wanted him to drop this friend. He could only obey. He told the Lord, "If You want this, I am willing to give it up."

God has given Christ to us as our overcoming life so that we would not only know His will but also obey it. We must never think that the overcoming life only delivers us from sin on the negative side. The real overcoming life enables us to fellowship with God and to obey His will on the positive side. God gives us His overcoming life so that we can meet His goal, not so that He can meet our goal. No Christian can hold on to any person. Tonight if the people we love are not consecrated, we cannot satisfy God. The people have to go. We must say, "Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth" (Psa. 73:25). We must say, "I will serve the Lord my God with all my heart, all my mind, and all my soul."

I loved Miss M. E. Barber because she was a person who truly loved the Lord with all her heart, all her mind, and all her soul. After she died, I found the following note in her Bible next to the verse "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37): "Lord, I thank You that there is such a commandment." We often think that it is a grievous thing that God has so many commandments. But we should say, "Lord, I thank You that there is such a commandment."

Even if the Lord has given someone to you, He will not allow you to be attached to him or her. He will not allow you to be attached to your wife, your children, or your friends. Even the Isaac that God promised had to be put on the altar. Many Christians have failed because their hearts are captured by people.

Affairs

We have to consecrate not only people but also affairs. We often make up our mind to do many things and are determined to accomplish them. But we have not sought after God's will in these affairs. A brother was determined to make the top grade on his graduation examination and to rank at the top in his college class. All of his time and energy were spent on his studies. After he

entered the overcoming experience, he committed this matter to God. From that time on, he was willing to follow God even if it meant coming in last on his examination.

Brothers and sisters, you may feel justified in putting all your time into your career, but if you do not have an intimate fellowship with the Lord, your career will not profit anything. You cherish some hope for your career and are not willing to let it go. You have some kind of expectation in your job which you are willing to fulfill by any means. If you act in this way, you have to consecrate yourself. You cannot allow one thing to entangle you. There are many brothers and sisters whose pursuit of education becomes their hope; they hope to excel above others. This is a hope mixed with pride. I am not saying that you should drop out of school, but I am saying that you should leave everything behind if the Lord calls you.

There was a brother who was an orphan, who grew up in a poor family. He drew beautiful calligraphy and was also very good at music. In the orphanage, while others were learning woodcraft and masonry, he was able to enter high school. He received awards every term. After he finished two years of college, the school decided to send him to St. John's College in Shanghai for two years and then to America on the condition that he come back after his study abroad to serve his school. Both his mother and uncle wrote letters to congratulate him. Two months before he was scheduled to leave, he was saved, and many of his former hopes were shattered. At the same time, he consecrated himself to the Lord. I asked him what he wanted to do. He said he had made up his mind to go and was ready to sign the agreement. He told me, "You have been my classmate for eight years. Have you not known of my aspirations all along?" When we were about to part, I said, "Today, we are still brothers. But I fear that when you come back from America, you will no longer be my brother." At that word he went to the Lord and prayed, "God, You know my aspirations. I know that You have called me, but I cannot drop my aspirations. However, if it is Your desire, I am willing to go to the villages to preach the gospel." After his prayer, he went to the principal and told him that he had decided not to sign the agreement and would no longer be going. The principal asked whether he was sick, and he answered, "The Lord has called me to preach the gospel for Him." Four days later, his uncle, cousins, and mother came. The mother said in tears, "Since your father died, I have struggled all these years with the hope that you would one day come out ahead of others to support me. Today you have a chance, yet you are throwing

it away.” The mother kept crying, while the uncle went on to say, “Before you entered this orphanage, I was the one who raised you. I also took care of your mother. Now you owe this to both of us. Your cousins do not even have the money to go to school, and yet you want to throw away this great opportunity.” They also came to me and said, “Mr. Nee, you do not need to support your parents, but he will have to support us.” Our brother was pressed on both sides. He asked the Lord what he should do. Then he realized that he owed men but little, but that he owed the Lord much more. He promised to support his mother and uncle, but he also told them that he could not satisfy their aspirations and had to obey the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, we all should consecrate our affairs to the Lord. I am not saying that all of us have to give ourselves to be preachers. I am saying that all of us have to consecrate everything to the Lord. What is consecration? What does it mean to offer ourselves up? It is to declare, “Lord, I will do Your will.” Many people think that consecration is offering up oneself to be a preacher. No, we consecrate ourselves to do God’s will. Many people realize through a genuine consecration that they should be faithful in their business and supply the need of God’s work. As a result, they give up their preaching work. Many others are motivated by the present needs and the needs in frontier lands to devote themselves to the preaching work. During the past few years, we have been short of co-workers. If God is to work among us, many brothers and sisters will give themselves to serve the Lord full-time in the near future. They will find that they must consecrate all of their affairs to the Lord.

Objects

We have to consecrate not only people and affairs but also all objects. There are people who have to consecrate their jewelry. Others may have houses or clothing they have to consecrate. Some may have only a very small thing to consecrate, but they cannot allow this small thing to become a hindrance to them. Some may be holding back a few gold rings or some pearl ornaments. There is nothing legal about this, but if we want to live a consecrated life, gold ornaments probably have to go, fashionable clothes have to go, and perhaps our money has to go. Many people have been squandering their money and are not pleasing the Lord. Many others have been saving their money and likewise are not pleasing the Lord. Squandering has no place in the eyes of the Lord, just as saving has no place in His eyes. We should not spend our money

all at once; we should transfer it to the Lord's account. In the New Testament, nothing is said about tithing a tenth of what we have; the only thing that is spoken of is putting everything in the Lord's hands. The first day we take home our wages, we should tell the Lord, "God, all of this money is Yours. Give me back what I need for my household expenses." It is not a question of using a certain amount and then saving the rest for God. I dare not say that God will or will not take all you have at times. But I would say that if we have truly consecrated everything to God, what is consecrated belongs to God.

Many brothers and sisters have furnishings in their homes, clothes in their closets, or possessions in their hands that are unbecoming of God's children. Once the Lord touches these things, we have to consecrate them. We have a few elderly brothers and sisters with us today. You have to be careful how you write your will. Whatever you write will show the kind of Christian that you are. God has saved us. Since all of our money belongs to God, we should not put the money back into the world. If we plan for our children and allow them to take our money back to the world, we are not doing the right thing. God has separated us and our possessions from the world. We should not allow them to go back to the world. When the Israelites left Egypt, they did not leave one animal in Egypt. The same should be true with us. Of course, we cannot do this, but thank God that everything is possible with Him. Philippians 4:13 says, "I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me." This means that as soon as the Lord energizes us, we can do all things. It is impossible for us to offer up all things, but we can do it by the One who empowers us. Since Christ is our life, we can do it.

Many young brothers and sisters can consecrate what they have when they do not have that much. When they become richer, their offerings become less. If the Lord gains our heart, He should gain our wallet as well. If the heart closes up, it means that the wallet is closed up. If the wallet is not open, the heart can never be opened.

Ourselves

We should consecrate people, affairs, and objects, but the last thing we should consecrate is ourselves. We have to consecrate ourselves to God. We should say, "God, I consecrate myself to You to do Your will." Brothers and sisters, we do not know what lies ahead of us. But we know that God has a will for every one of us. It may not be blessings, and it may not be sufferings. But

we have to consecrate ourselves to His will. We should be willing to accept His will, whether it comes with blessing or suffering. Many people are willing to be used by God; they are filled with the Spirit and live the overcoming life continuously because they have consecrated themselves to the Lord.

What kind of consecration is this? It is a consecration in which we present our bodies as a living sacrifice. The Bible never speaks of the consecration of the heart; it only speaks of the consecration of the body. No one who has consecrated himself can leave his body unconsecrated. We have consecrated our whole being to the Lord. Henceforth, our mouth is not our own. Our ears are not our own, and our eyes, hands, feet, and even bodies are not our own. From now on we are merely the Lord's managers. From now on our feet are the Lord's, and we cannot use them for ourselves any longer. When a young man died, his old father charged the pallbearers to be very careful because that body had served as the Lord's temple for twenty years. However, we should not wait until we have died for our bodies to be consecrated to the Lord. Today the Holy Spirit is already living in us. First Corinthians 6:19 says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" One hymn says, "Let my hands perform His bidding; / Let my feet run in His ways. / ...All for Jesus! All for Jesus! / Let my lips speak forth His praise" (*Hymns*, #444). This is the meaning of consecration. This is what it means to consecrate our body. No one should say that his body is his own. Every single day of our life is for the Lord, and our whole body is for the Lord; we are merely His managers.

Once in another country, someone was passing the offering plate on a Sunday morning. When the plate came to a thirteen-year-old girl, she repeatedly asked that the plate be lowered. When the plate was lowered to the ground, she stepped onto the plate. She had no money, and therefore, she decided to offer herself up.

Today we should not only consecrate people, affairs, and objects to the Lord but also consecrate ourselves to Him. Every Lord's Day when we put the money into the offering box, we should put ourselves into it as well. When we hold ourselves back, God does not want our money. God will not have "ours" unless He first has "us." God must have us first before He will have ours. There are many people who will consecrate themselves to the Lord, and the Lord will not necessarily ask them to be preachers. He may want some to be good businessmen. Every corner in this world needs light, and we cannot

choose our own work. We should say to the Lord, "From now on I resolve to do Your will."

THE RESULT OF CONSECRATION

What is the result of consecration? The first result is described in Romans 6, and the second result is described in Romans 12. Many people do not know the difference between the two. Actually, there is a great difference. The consecration in Romans 6 is for one's own benefit; it is to bear the fruit of righteousness. The consecration in Romans 12 is for God's benefit; it is for the accomplishment of God's will. The result of consecration in Romans 6 is deliverance from sin to be a slave of God in order to bear fruit unto sanctification. This is what it means to live out the overcoming life day by day. The result of the consecration in Romans 12 is not just God's pleasure but the proving of God's good, well pleasing, and perfect will.

Brothers and sisters, it is not enough just to let go, believe, and praise. There is one final matter: We have to put ourselves in the hands of the Lord before He can express His holiness through us. We did not have the strength to consecrate ourselves in the past. But after entering the overcoming experience, we can consecrate ourselves. Please remember that we were not able to put ourselves in God's hands in the past. Now it is no longer a question of being able or not being able; it is a question of being willing or not being willing to put ourselves in His hands. Formerly it was a question of inability. Now it is a question of unwillingness.

There was a brother in Australia who had consecrated himself fully to the Lord. When he was on a train, a few friends decided to have a card game. Three people were present, and they were short one person, so they invited him to join in. He answered, "Sorry, friends. I do not have my hands with me. These hands are not mine but Another's. They are merely placed on my body. I dare not use them."

From now on our hands, feet, and mouths belong to the Lord. We dare not use them ourselves. Every time temptations come, we have to say that we do not have our hands with us. This is the consecration of Romans 6. When we consecrate ourselves this way, we will be sanctified and bear the fruit of sanctification. Hence, consecrating ourselves is the first thing we should do

after the overcoming experience, and it is also the firstfruit of the overcoming experience.

The consecration in Romans 12 is something for God. It says that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. It also says that such a consecration is holy and well pleasing to Him. Hence, we have to remember that the consecration in chapter twelve has the goal of serving God.

Chapter six is for personal sanctification, while chapter twelve is for the work. Chapter six speaks of consecration, and it also speaks of sanctification and the fruit of sanctification. Chapter twelve also speaks of holiness or being holy. What is sanctification, and what is holiness? Being sanctified or being holy means to be separated unto a certain person for his own use. Formerly we were affected by many objects, people, and affairs. Formerly we were living for ourselves. Now we are living for God alone.

Once I was coming back home from Hsiao-feng Park. I was about to board a bus, but the driver told me to get off. When I looked carefully, I found that it was not an ordinary bus, but a chartered bus. Every Christian should be a “chartered” person. Unfortunately, many Christians are “public” Christians. However, we are not public, but “chartered,” fully reserved for God’s will and separated. Romans 12 shows us that our jobs, husbands, children, money, and treasures are all for God alone; they are reserved for God’s use. When we are for God alone, and when we present ourselves to God alone, we should believe that God has accepted us because this is what God is after. God’s goal is not that we would be zealous for a little while. If a man does not consecrate himself to the Lord, He will not be satisfied. Unless a man consecrates himself fully to the Lord, God is not satisfied. God is not satisfied until man anoints the Lord with the ointment. He is not satisfied until we cast all the living that we have into the box (Luke 21:4). Everything has to be offered up to Him.

Brothers and sisters, thank God that we are raised from the dead. We have received mercy from God. This consecration is well pleasing to God, and it is reasonable. Every Christian should consecrate himself; it is wrong to assume that only special Christians should consecrate themselves. His blood has purchased us, and we are His. His love has constrained us, and we live for Him.

Please note the kind of consecration that is spoken of here. We are living stones. Although we consecrate ourselves, we remain living. We are living sacrifices. The sacrifices in the Old Testament were killed by the knife, but we are living sacrifices.

The result of the presenting is in Romans 12:2. “Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.” This is our ultimate goal today. During the January conference of last year, we saw that God has an eternal purpose, which is accomplished through His Son. God created everything through Him for this purpose. Redemption is for this purpose, the defeat of Satan is for this purpose, and the salvation of sinners is for this purpose. We have to know God’s eternal purpose before we can accomplish what God wants us to accomplish. We are not here merely for the salvation of sinners; we are here for the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose. Every kind of work must be linked up with God’s eternal purpose.

If we do not consecrate ourselves, we will never realize that this will is good. Today many people are afraid of the very words “God’s purpose”; many people feel uneasy about these words. Christians are afraid of hearing about God’s will. However, Paul said that after a man has presented his body, he will prove what is God’s good, well pleasing, and perfect will. We can sing about the goodness of God’s will! We can say hallelujah because of the goodness of God’s will! God’s will is good and not malicious. His will is for our profit and without malice. We are too shortsighted. God’s will is good. A brother once prayed a very good prayer: “When we asked for bread, we thought that You would give us a stone, and when we asked for fish, we thought that You would give us a serpent. When we asked for eggs, we thought that You would give us a scorpion. But when we asked for stones, You gave us bread!” We often do not understand God’s love. We do not understand His will. We do not realize that His thoughts toward us are good and excellent. We may complain about many things when they come upon us, but after a couple of years, we have to praise Him for these things. Why should we not praise Him today instead?

God’s will is not only good but also perfect. All of God’s will toward those who love Him is profitable. If we know this, we will not reject His will. Presenting our bodies to Him is holy and well pleasing to Him. Moreover, we will find His will well pleasing to us and find that His will is good and perfect.

Tonight is the last meeting, and I will ask you to do one final thing, that is, to say to the Lord, “God, I am wholly Yours. From now on I will not live for myself.”

Brothers and sisters, we have seen all of the conditions for overcoming, and they are behind us now. Consecration is the last item in the overcoming life; it is also the first thing that we should do after experiencing the overcoming life. Once we have consecrated ourselves, we should believe that God has accepted our consecration. Once we have consecrated ourselves, we will become consecrated persons. We may feel hot or we may feel cold, but as long as we have truly consecrated ourselves to God in our heart, everything will be all right. I say this in order to help us not live according to our feelings. In Chefoo a brother consecrated himself to the Lord, but he felt that something was wrong between him and the Lord. He thought he had to consecrate himself again. I told him that after a girl is married and finds that she is at odds with her husband one day, she does not marry her husband again. Even if there is something wrong between the Lord and us, we can only consecrate ourselves once. From that point on, we belong to the Lord, and we can only be for His use.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSECRATION AS REVEALED IN ROMANS 12

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Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:1-5

INTRODUCTION

In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, the first fifteen verses of chapter one are an introduction. The first section of his letter begins from verse 16 and goes through the end of chapter eleven. Chapter twelve begins the second section. In chapters one to eight of the first section, Paul shows us the riches we have obtained in Christ. In chapters nine through eleven, a contrast is made between the riches we have received and the riches the Israelites once received. From chapter twelve onward, Paul begins to exhort us to do something. In the first eight chapters, he repeatedly tells us what Christ has done for us and what the Spirit has done for us. He does not emphasize what we as Christians should do. In the first eleven chapters, Paul speaks of what the Triune God has accomplished for us. Since God has done so much, we should do something also. If we do not do anything in return, we are being unreasonable and ungrateful. At the very beginning of chapter twelve, Paul uses the word therefore. This indicates that he is continuing his previous discussion and relating it to what a believer should do. He says that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. We may not be able to do much, but the least we can do is present our bodies a living sacrifice.

At the minimum, a Christian must see what Christ has done for him and what the Holy Spirit has done for him. Chapters one through seven tell us what Christ has done for us. Chapter eight tells us what the Holy Spirit has done for us. Chapters nine through eleven tell us what God's sovereignty and authority have done for us. In chapter twelve Paul tells us that all these works are based on God's compassion. The words compassion and mercy are the

same word in the original language. God's compassion is the same as His love and mercy.

PRESENTING OUR BODIES THROUGH THE COMPASSIONS OF GOD

Paul says that since God loves us so much and is so merciful and gracious to us, we should consecrate ourselves. Anyone who wants to serve God must first touch His mercy and grace. If a man has not seen God's love and mercy, he will feel that it is a hard task to present his body to do something for God; he will feel that this is harder than making bricks for Pharaoh. Once a man sees God's mercy, however, it is a reasonable thing for him to present his body.

The first reaction of a man who has obtained mercy from God is consecration. Once a man touches God's love and mercy, he no longer can live for himself. Before he receives mercy and light, his possessions, his life, and his self are most precious to him. Once he touches God's love and mercy, however, he no longer treasures these things. Once we experience God's mercy, we will look back at ourselves under God's great shining and ask Him, "What should I do? What do You want from me?"

THE POWER OF CONSECRATION COMES FROM GOD'S SHINING

Before Paul believed in the Lord, he was a persecutor of the Lord's disciples. He obtained letters from the high priest to put into bondage those who called on the name of the Lord (Acts 9:1-2, 14). How proud and arrogant he was when he was riding on his horse to Damascus! Just as he was about to enter Damascus, a light from heaven shone on him, and he was struck down. Such a proud and arrogant person never would have consecrated himself if he had not touched God's great love and mercy. But as soon as the light shone, he no longer could sit comfortably; he had to come down from his throne. Paul immediately asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" (22:10). If we have not touched God's mercy, consecration is the hardest thing on earth. Everyone in the world loves himself; there is no one who does not treasure his own life and possessions. However, consecration is easy once we are brought before God's great love and compassion.

CONSECRATION NOT A REPAYMENT BUT A RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORK

During the past two thousand years, countless numbers of people have consecrated themselves to God. In one sense we may say that they were paying back in gratitude what they owed, but it is hard to say that there was any paying back at all, because they all felt that they were unworthy of the Lord. What they had consecrated were worthless items when compared with what they had received. Brother Lan once said that we are like beggars; it is actually a joke to say that we are offering anything to God. Psalm 116:12 also says, "What shall I return to Jehovah for all His benefits toward me?" Many people have the thought of paying back, but they dare not say this with their mouth. They can only say, "God, under Your great and unmatched grace, I should at least offer up myself to You." Romans 12 is a most special chapter in all the Epistles. It tells us that the beginning of the Christian work is consecration. Chapters one through eleven tell us the great things God that has done for us. In chapter twelve, we bow down and say to Him, "I offer myself to You."

THE CONSECRATION OF THE BODY BEING THE MOST PRACTICAL AND SPECIFIC CONSECRATION

Paul was very wise. He charged us to present our bodies, not our hearts. In order to be specific, practical, and thorough in our consecration, we have to present our bodies. The consecration of the heart is very abstract. The heart is a strange thing. It can be very honest, but when it is not honest, it can deceive itself. Proverbs 28:26 says that only the foolish man will trust in his own heart. No one knows when the heart will run away or change. It is more practical, solid, and reliable for a man to offer his little finger to the Lord than to consecrate his heart to Him. The little finger is tangible, but the heart is not. When we talk about the consecration of the body, we are no longer speaking abstractly. This is the wisdom of Paul. Many people talk about consecration, but their consecration is not as practical and specific as Paul's consecration. Consecration means offering up our bodies and everything related to our bodies, including our possessions, our members, and our time. When our body is consecrated, everything related to it will spontaneously be consecrated as well.

THE PRACTICE OF PRESENTING OUR BODIES

Three things are involved in the presenting of the body. The first is time, the second is money, and the third is physical energy. The presenting of our body is the presenting of our time. Our time must be available. We cannot squander our time; we have to devote our time to the service of the Lord. We cannot say that we have consecrated ourselves, yet still have our time in our own hand. Once our time is offered up, our body is offered up, because the body is bound up in time. We also have to present our money. Many poor people and poor brothers and sisters are around us. They all have needs. There is also the need of money in the work of the gospel. Saying that our heart is consecrated without offering up our money is like shutting up our affection (1 John 3:17). Affection may be there, but it is shut up and useless. We have to remove the things that shut up our affection before we can love God and serve Him.

Third, we have to offer up our physical energy; we have to work with our own hands and serve the Lord in this way. Every chore in the meeting hall, including scrubbing the floor, dusting the chairs and tables, and cleaning the windows, should not be done by any hired workers. Perhaps many of the brothers and sisters here have never dusted the chairs in the meeting hall or scrubbed the floor. The people in Hong Kong are very peculiar. Some of them love Mr. Chiang (Chiang Kai-Shek), and some love Mr. Mao (Mao Ze-Tung). If either of these two persons were here today and requested a cup of tea from us, we would feel very honored to do it for him; we would not want to hire a servant to do it for us. We may have servants at home, and we may be managers in our office, but when we come to the meeting hall we have to learn to do everything by ourselves. This will perfect us and give us the opportunity to serve in a genuine way. Hiring a servant is easy, and he actually may do a better job than us, but let me ask, "Do we hire people to distribute tracts?" We can hire people to market our goods at the street corner, but spiritual service is a matter of our body; no money can replace this. The Lord wants us to do many things by ourselves. In Shanghai we have a sister who is the wife of a bank director. Many times she was driven by her chauffeur to the meeting hall. Once she reached the hall, she got down on her knees to scrub the floor. This is the Lord's grace. In other places you could never hire the wife of a bank director to scrub floors. There are a couple of sisters who have at least four servants in their homes, but when the church gathers for a meal, they come and serve at the tables. This is beautiful.

Consecration is not just a heart matter. We are the Lord's servants. Every item of service in the church needs to be taken up by ourselves. I would love to see a few brothers with high positions in the world cleaning chairs in the church. This would be sweet and beautiful.

The second year after I was saved, I read the books of Chronicles, and found that David had many mighty men. When David was ready to build the temple, these mighty men were assigned to guard the gates (1 Chron. 26). I was very touched when I read this. Even David, who was being served, and who was a mighty man himself, longed to serve at the door of the temple of God (Psa. 84:10). Our service to the Lord is a personal thing. Today the co-workers are serving the Lord with their mouths, but just presenting our mouth is not enough; we have to present our hands as well. Here we should not have any worldly concepts or private habits. The sisters in Shanghai organized a sewing group to wash, mend, and iron the items that the saints offered up, and then they gave them away. This is not a simple thing. It is easy for the sisters to offer money to buy new clothes to give to the poor, but they collected worn items and washed, mended, ironed, and folded them, and then gave them away. Of course, we should not think that this is all that consecration involves. Nevertheless, there is a principle here: We have to make our consecration practical and specific.

THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSECRATION

Romans 12 tells us that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice for the purpose of serving God. This service bears three characteristics: First, it is holy, which means it is separated. I have a friend who worked as a public officer during the war. Once I invited him to a meal, but he declined, saying, "Sorry, my body has been offered to the country; I cannot use it at will." This is the meaning of separation. Others cannot touch us or use us. I am reserved for God's use only. This is being separated unto God, and this is being holy. Second, this service is well-pleasing to God. Third, this service is also reasonable. God holds back nothing when He gives Himself to us. We should hold back nothing when we give ourselves to Him. God does not settle accounts with us; He does not calculate how much He has given us. He only cares for the principle. God has not put up any resistance; He has not held back anything. In giving ourselves to Him, we should not put up any resistance; we should not hold back anything from Him. Our consecration

cannot match His giving in quantity, but at least it should match His giving in quality.

THE MEANING OF BEING A LIVING SACRIFICE

The consecration in Romans 12 is the first reaction to God's work in the life of a Christian. This reaction is the presenting of ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. In the Old Testament a sacrifice was an animal that was set apart to be killed and slain. Everything that is placed on the altar is destined to die. Once it dies, its life is over; it no longer has another use. A sacrifice can be offered only once. It cannot be used twice, because it died the first time. Today we are the sacrifices; therefore, we should die. Thank the Lord that we are also living. We are a living sacrifice. This means that we can constantly present ourselves to the hand of the Lord. We can offer up ourselves as sacrifices to the Lord continually, and the Lord can use us continually. The first thing a Christian should be to the Lord is a living sacrifice.

THE RESULT OF PRESENTING OURSELVES

AS A LIVING SACRIFICE

Spiritual Understanding

Once we present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, something follows in verse 2: We gain spiritual understanding. It is important for a Christian to have a proper, spiritual understanding. Many brothers and sisters are serving the Lord and the saints in the church, but they do not have any spiritual understanding. They are very clear and savvy about worldly things, and they are very clever about secular business. Whenever they open their mouth in the church, however, only "outsiders' talk" comes out; they always say things that others cannot respond to with an "amen." This is because they have not been transformed by the renewing of the mind. This is the reason they are void of spiritual understanding. A man cannot understand God's will when there is a problem with his consecration. When I was in Shanghai, I often said to Miss Ruth Lee that many people think that the problem with their Christian service is with their mind, but I do not believe that any Christian has a problem with his mind. Many people think they have a problem with their mind when they actually have a problem with their heart. Their heart is muddled, and this affects their mind. Problems with the heart are caused by halfway consecrations that are fraught with reservation. A man makes wrong

judgments because his heart is pursuing treasure; his heart is influenced by money. This is the reason his eyes cannot see clearly. Once his consecration is absolute, his eyes are opened. If our eyes are only for God's glory and will, we will discern the inner makeup of everything. If we have other interests beside God, such as our treasure, our eyes will not be single, and we will not understand God's will. In the Bible treasure always relates to our eyes.

Not Being Conformed to This Age

Romans 12:2 begins with the conjunction and. The second practical result of consecration is that we are not fashioned according to this age. The word fashioned means to be molded into a shape. God's intention is that we not be molded by the world. We should not have a worldly appearance, and we should not give others the impression that we are a "walking abacus." As long as we are in the world, we have the shape of the world. It is possible to take the way of worldly property brokers when we negotiate for meeting halls; it is possible that we give others an impression of the world. Once we are consecrated, we should be free from any worldly appearance on the negative side, and we should be transformed by the renewing of the mind on the positive side. This means that we have spiritual understanding. Presenting the body comes first, renewing of the mind follows, and finally one has the spiritual understanding. Originally we were very dull, but now we are sensitive, and it is easy to understand God's will.

Knowing God's Will

Let me emphasize this: If we want spiritual understanding and if we want to know God's will, we cannot have any contention over our consecration. Once we have a problem with our consecration, we will be blind to God's will. We will cover our own eyes and not see many things. Other brothers and sisters will see, but we will not. Many people will feel sorry for us, but we will feel no sorrow. What we consider precious will be refuse in the eyes of the church. What is shameful to many Christians will be a glory to us. Many times we will be more than wrong, but we will feel very proud. We have to learn to not trust in ourselves too much. We have to constantly ask, "I have been insisting that this and that are right, but is it possible that when I receive more grace and experience deeper consecration, I will find these things to be wrong?" Our consecration will greatly affect our understanding of God's will.

In Shanghai a sister came to me and argued with me about baptism for a long time. She gave one, five, even twenty reasons for not being baptized. After she finished, I remained silent. We sat facing each other speechless. After a while, she became anxious and asked, "Mr. Nee, why are you not saying anything?" I laughed and said, "You have said everything already. I have nothing more to say." Then I said, "I am not concerned about your reasons. I am concerned that your consecration is not thorough enough. Can you say to God, 'Whatever You want me to do, I will do it. Whatever You want from me, I will give You'? What would you do if your consecration was more absolute than today?" She quickly answered, "Of course, I would go and be baptized." This shows that no Christian has a problem with his mind. All the problems are related to consecration. Once there is a problem with consecration, even the best mind will not get us through. A halfhearted consecration will affect our judgment, our mind, and even our conduct. Everyone who is absolute with his consecration will not be fuzzy about God's will. Whether or not we understand God's will depends on the degree of our consecration. This is something very subjective; no one can be arbitrary about it.

Bringing In the Coordination of the Body

Romans 12:1 is on consecration. Verse 2 is on understanding God's will. Based on an absolute consecration, we understand God's will. The result of this is the coordination of the Body in verses 3 through 5. A consecrated person is a coordinated person. Verse 3 says that we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Many children of God cannot be one with others; they cannot coordinate with others. They think this is because they have different views, but this is not the real reason. God only has one will. How can different people take different ways? According to God's principle, He only has one will. There are many different views among Christians because there are differences in the degrees of consecration. Once consecration is not absolute, there are differences in views. When consecration is absolute, there are no different understandings concerning God's will.

We have to be absolute with our consecration before we can be thorough in understanding God's will. Once we are absolute in our consecration, we will not be irresponsible in our coordination in the Body life. If I say something is mine, and you say it is yours, there will be no manifestation of God as we

argue for our own cause. In the world the most precious things to man are possessions and the self. This is the reason God ordains the altar for all these things. Not consecrating means keeping things in our own hands; it means that we can freely direct them. Many people do not want to live corporately because they are afraid that they cannot move about freely. When we live corporately, no one can say that anything is his own. We can readily see that "things" are what separate the brothers and sisters from becoming one. Acts 2 and 4 say that no believer claimed anything as his own. No one dared to boast to his brother that he was different. At the closing of this age, the deep ones and the experienced ones before the Lord will ultimately express the life and glory of the Body life. Unless we hand over ourselves completely, we cannot coordinate together for the Body life. Once we consecrate everything, our mind, our ways, and our plans will not give the appearance of the world. Spontaneously, we will be the same as other brothers and sisters in outlook and motive. We will spontaneously understand God's will and spontaneously experience the practical Body life in coordination.

I hope that God will speak to us. Our only wish today is that no one would keep back anything for himself. If we do this, God will have a way among us. May the church in this end time live like the first church. May none of us live our own life any longer. We only have one occupation—preaching the gospel. No one will try to start a private business within this gospel enterprise. We pray for God's will to be done on this earth. May He grant us the grace to learn to serve Him. He does not want a wavering mind in His service. May we all give ourselves for this.

I hope that you will not be discouraged from handing yourself over just because we have not been doing a good job. I hope that this will not cause you to have a problem with God. God's will is absolute. This is the only way to serve Him. I hope that no one will be left behind just because he has not done his best. May the world be cast out from today onward, and may the Lord be fully exalted through His children.

CHAPTER SIX

ENTERING BY THE GATE OF CONSECRATION AND WALKING ON THE WAY OF CONSECRATION

Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life, Ch. 3

by Witness Lee

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Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:19; 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:14-15

Following regeneration a believer needs to have a clearance of the past, and he needs to consecrate himself. The New Testament clearly teaches and deals with our need to consecrate ourselves to the Lord after we are saved. In a local church we must spend a certain amount of time to help the brothers and sisters one by one experience consecration and realize it in a full way. In some places we have spent one or two years, week after week and message after message, stressing that all the believers, the saved ones, need to consecrate themselves, not merely in a doctrinal way but in a very practical way. Some brothers and sisters have even been willing to open themselves and give a testimony of their consecration so that their experience can be checked by others in the church.

In his teachings in the New Testament, the apostle Paul always stresses consecration. In Romans, for example, consecration is mentioned in chapter 6 and again in chapter 12. Romans 6 deals with our release from sin by realizing that we have been crucified with Christ. If we read this chapter carefully, however, we will see that the chief point is not only realizing our crucifixion with Christ but that we must offer ourselves, not only consecrating ourselves as a whole but offering our members. Verse 19 says, “I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.” To present our members is to present them one by one. If we realize that we have been crucified with Christ and that we are released from sin, we must cooperate with the work the Lord has done by offering our members to Him.

Then in chapter 12, before the apostle begins to say something about the Body life, he advises and exhorts us to present our bodies in a definite way (v. 1).

**CONSECRATION BEING THE BASIS
FOR EVERY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE
AFTER REGENERATION**

From our own experience we can testify that without consecration it is impossible to experience the crucifixion of Christ and even more impossible to realize the Body life. Consecration is the basis for every kind of experience after regeneration. For regeneration alone, there is no need for consecration, but if we do not consecrate ourselves after regeneration, we will be frustrated. We will be outside the gate, having no entrance into further experiences. All spiritual experiences after regeneration depend on the step of consecration.

Many spiritual writings in the past, such as those by Andrew Murray on prayer, the inner life, and abiding in Christ, point out the need for consecration. In many of his writings, Murray points out that in order to experience what he is talking about in that book, we need to take the step of consecration and pass through this crisis. In order to have a prayer life, we must pass through the crisis of consecration. In order to have faith, we must pass through consecration. And in order to abide in Christ, we must offer ourselves to Christ.

In her book entitled *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, Hannah Whitall Smith also stresses consecration. With the central message of consecration, Mrs. Smith and her husband, among others, began what became the Keswick Convention in England in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Keswick Convention had the sole purpose of helping Christians to realize that they had to pass this crisis, and according to history, the blessing brought in through Keswick was due primarily to consecration. In the early publications of Keswick, the messages spoke much of consecration. It seems that those writers, such as Evan Hopkins, knew nothing but consecration. There is no doubt that at that time, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, consecration was the main item of the Lord's recovery. About that same time, the work of the foreign missions began. This was something of the Lord, because for service in the mission field there is the real need of consecration. According to church history, more people

consecrated themselves to the Lord at that time than ever before, most of them helped by the messages of the Keswick Convention.

ENTERING BY THE GATE OF CONSECRATION AND WALKING ON THE WAY OF CONSECRATION

It is entirely right that for any kind of experience we need to consecrate ourselves. Consecration is like the entrance to a building; if we do not pass through the entrance, it is impossible to go anywhere in the building. In order to share in any part of a building, we must pass through the gate. Immediately in front of the first entrance to the tabernacle there was the altar. There were many things to experience in the tabernacle. Outside was the laver, and inside were the table of the bread of the Presence, the lampstand, the incense altar, and the Ark with its items, but in order to share in those things one had to pass the altar and deal with it. There was no possibility of touching anything within the tabernacle without passing through the altar. With the altar there is the aspect of redemption, but there is also the aspect of consecration. Everything placed on the altar was an offering; this signifies consecration.

The tabernacle is a type both of Christ and of the church. In order to experience the riches of Christ typified by the things in the tabernacle, we need to pass through the crisis of consecration. In addition, in order to experience the church life as God's building and dwelling place, we must pass the altar, that is, the crisis of consecration. In order to have the real Christian life and the real church life, we all must learn day by day to live a life of consecration.

The life of consecration begins with a crisis. Then after the crisis we have the way. The Scriptures speak differently from our common understanding. We often say that we take the way and go through the gate. According to the Scriptures, however, we first go through the gate, and then we have the way. The gate, not the way, comes first, as in Matthew 7:13 and 14. In spiritual matters, if we do not enter the gate, there is no way for us to go on. The gate of the spiritual things related to life is regeneration; for the life within we need the gate of regeneration. However, after we are regenerated and receive life within, we need to have a living, and for our living and daily life the gate is consecration. Many have been regenerated; that is, they have entered the gate of life. However, they do not have the proper living because they have never consecrated themselves to the Lord. They have passed through regeneration,

but they have not passed through consecration. Although they are regenerated persons, they do not live as regenerated persons; that is, they have the life but not the living.

The gate for our spiritual living is consecration. Then after we enter the gate of consecration, we go on the way of consecration. Consecration has two aspects: a crisis to pass through and a way to walk on. The crisis is once for all, but the way is not once for all. Many cannot go the way of consecration because they have not entered the gate of consecration. Have you passed through the gate? As I mentioned before, Brother Watchman Nee held a training in Shanghai in 1939 and 1940, mostly for co-workers. For one year's time he trained us in the matter of consecration. Every week when we came together, he would first ask a person to give his testimony about consecration. Brother Nee would ask us to consider the testimony, and then he himself would critique it. Almost no one passed this examination. We were all subdued by him. He would point out something in each testimony that proved that the consecration was not genuine, absolute, complete, or without reservation.

CHECKING OUR CONSECRATION AND BEING FAITHFUL TO IT

The way to check whether or not we are faithful and honest in our consecration to the Lord is by our daily life. If we check ourselves, we will see, as Brother Nee pointed out, that in many matters there is a struggle between us and the Lord, and we often win the victory. Whenever there is a struggle, the defeated one is the Lord. It is good to have a struggle with the Lord. If we have no struggle with Him, we are through with the Lord. Especially in this age on this earth there is always the struggle. To not have a struggle means that we are fallen and backslidden. In our struggle, however, who wins the victory, we or the Lord? The way to check whether or not our consecration is complete, genuine, and without reservation is by who wins the struggle. That the Lord is defeated is due to the unfaithfulness of our consecration. We have consecrated ourselves, but we may not be faithful and honest to our consecration. If we Christians would keep our consecration, the Lord will always have the victory.

All our problems today are due to our unfaithfulness in consecration. We may not have a morning watch, for example, because of a problem with our

consecration. Many of us have passed the crisis, but we have not continued on the way. Therefore, in order for a church to be built up, the first foundation we must lay is the matter of consecration. We need to check with ourselves and deal with our consecration, and then we need to help others. We need to pray, fellowship, and encourage the brothers and help them one by one to come into the real experience of consecration.

We may say that we do not have much faith. The reason we do not have faith is that we are not faithful to our consecration. When we are faithful to our consecration, we have a living faith. We may say that we do not have power. The reason again is that we are not faithful to our consecration. When we are faithful to our consecration, we have the ground to claim the power, and it is ours. We need to go to the Lord once again to deal with and clear up our consecration. If we do this, we will see the blessings. Then we will have a burden to help others.

ADVANCING STEP BY STEP IN OUR CONSECRATION

We may have consecrated ourselves to the Lord after we were regenerated, but the problem is whether or not we have continued in our consecration. The unfaithfulness to our consecration is the reason many of us have not grown much and advanced on the Lord's way. We may compare this to someone who walks all the time but does not walk on the right way. We may come to the meetings, fellowship with the saints, and do many things in the Christian life, but we may not be on the proper way. To go on is a matter of consecration. Whenever the Lord points out something to us, we need to say, "Lord, I let You have it." If we do this, we advance by one step, but if we do not let the Lord have the victory, we are not on the way, regardless of how many things we do. To go on the proper Christian way is to take step after step in our consecration.

We have to go on by consecration day by day. A day without consecration is a wasted day. If we struggle with the Lord and win the victory, defeating the Lord, we will only waste our time regardless of how much we do for the Lord. The measure of our life and going on is our consecration.

If we once again deal with our consecration, we will have a revival. Our outreach to bring people to the Lord and our consecration go together. If we have no real experience of consecration, we have no power to bring people to

the Lord. Our power to bring people to the Lord depends on our consecration. If we struggle with the Lord and win, causing the Lord to be defeated, we are weak, and we lose the power to bring people to the Lord. However, if we always take the ground of consecration and go on step by step, we have the power to bring people to the Lord.

THE NEED FOR THE CONTINUAL BURNT OFFERING

As we have said, the crisis of consecration is the key to our other experiences, and it is a lifelong, not once-for-all, experience. In the type of the people of Israel, they had to offer the burnt offering day by day, morning and evening (Lev. 6:9, 12-13). The altar was called the altar of burnt offering. The burnt offering was the continual offering, and the fire for the burnt offering was not supposed to cease; it had to stay burning day and night. This type shows us that we need to have a life of the burnt offering, a life with fire burning on the altar all day long. It is entirely right that as Christians we should consecrate ourselves every morning and again in the evening after the day's duties. We may think that this is too much, that we already have offered ourselves to the Lord for many years, but we still need to offer ourselves each morning and each evening. In addition, although it is not legal, it is right that we should offer ourselves specifically for the Lord's Day and for the service and worship on that day.

THE WAY TO HELP OTHERS TO BE CONSECRATED

By Being a Consecrated Person

In order to help others by bringing them to the Lord as new converts or by helping the younger ones to go on, we need the real experience of consecration. Then when we help someone, we should first determine whether or not he is regenerated. If he is not, we need to find a way to help him to experience regeneration. If he is a regenerated person, however, the most important thing is to help him one way or another to consecrate himself. A person may pray to the Lord, seek His mercy, and obtain His mercy, but if he is not consecrated, these are not the real experiences of life. The genuine experience of Christ depends entirely on consecration.

In order to help someone to be consecrated, we must first be a consecrated person. If we are not a consecrated person, we cannot help others to be. We

must also have a consecrated living. If we live in our consecration, it will be easy to help others to consecrate themselves, because there will be an atmosphere and a power of life with us. When we contact people and fellowship with them, we will have an influence on them. This must not be something in word only; this must be something we practice.

By Praying for Them

In order to help someone in this way, we must pray for him to find one way or another to bring him through the crisis of consecration.

By Fellowshiping with Them

Giving a Testimony of Consecration

Then after we have a certain amount of prayer, we should fellowship with that person. Here we need the proper techniques. Of course, the way we take depends on the Lord's leading at the time, but our fellowship will usually be in one of several ways. One way is to give him a testimony of consecration. We may give our own testimony, but presenting someone else's testimony can also be effective.

Having a Fresh Sense of the Lord's Loveliness

A second way is to help the person to realize the Lord's love and how lovable He is. This is not easy to do. Many ministers realize that the most difficult message to give is one on the loveliness of the Lord. To speak of the Lord being faithful, great, or marvelous is easy, but some brothers may not be able to speak for five minutes on the loveliness of the Lord. To say something about the loveliness of the Lord requires that we have the fresh sense of His love. Someone may have love for a brother, for example, but after working with him for a year, he no longer has a fresh sense of love. Even a husband and wife can lose the fresh sense of love. If we do not have a fresh sense, it is hard to speak about love. We may talk about love, but we may not have the power of inspiration.

The most effective way to help people to consecrate is to help them to realize the loveliness of the Lord. I have heard the testimony of a certain co-working sister many times. Every time she speaks of the Lord's loveliness, she speaks with tears. With her there is always the freshness of the sense of

His loveliness. I have never heard her testimony when I did not see many people weeping. She has caused thousands of people to consecrate themselves to the Lord.

Using the Proper Verses of the Scriptures

The third way to fellowship with someone is to use the proper verses of the Scriptures. One of the best passages is 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, which says, "For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised." Another good passage is 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, which says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price. So then glorify God in your body." As we have seen, Romans 12:1 also speaks of presenting our bodies.

By Helping Them to Pray

A further way to lead someone to consecrate himself is to help him to pray with us. When we help people, we should not talk too much. When we bind something with a cord, we tie a knot in it. To talk too much with someone is to loosen the knot. Before praying, many people do not have the sincerity to consecrate themselves, but after they pray, their consecration becomes real. After we talk with someone, we must find a way to help him to offer himself in prayer to the Lord. This is the same as in our gospel preaching. When we speak with people about the gospel, at a certain point we need to ask them to pray. The Lord is very willing and ready to hear and answer a prayer of consecration.

We need to help people to pray in a definite way. This very much depends on our own experience. If we have the experience of consecrating ourselves in a real and full way, we will know how to help someone. We will be able to help him to realize that he must offer to the Lord in a definite way whatever he is, whatever he has, and whatever he can do. We must believe that when a person prays in this way, he is having a real contact with the Lord.

Even if a person is not sincere, the Lord is faithful. In the types we can see that whether or not a person was sincere in offering something on the altar,

the Lord accepted it. Anything offered on the altar could not be taken back, even if it was offered without sincerity. We can make a deal with a man and then cancel it, but we cannot cancel our deal with the Lord. We cannot say, “Lord, I gave You something wrongly, so I take it back.” We may agree with that, but the Lord will never agree. Some brothers and sisters were not sincere before they prayed, but after they prayed, they became sincere, consecrated ones. Someone may even say, “A brother asked me to pray to offer myself to the Lord, so I just prayed. It did not cost me much.” However, his prayer is still accepted. He may cancel it, but the Lord will not. The brother may “break the engagement,” but with the Lord there is no divorce. There is no account in the Scriptures in which a person brought something to the altar, then repented, and the thing came back to him. There is no repentance for anything offered at the altar. Regardless of what kind of person one is, if he offers anything at the altar, the matter is settled.

Therefore, we should not talk too much. At a certain point we should help someone to pray, to go to the altar and lay himself on the altar. Then we will see the result. I have heard genuine testimonies to this effect. Someone may still remember the place, the time, and the persons he was with when he offered himself to the Lord. He may testify that for many years he did not keep his word, yet he could not forget it. Even after twenty years that word still remained with him, and he had no peace until the Lord caused him to keep his word of consecration. If we know many Christians, we can present many testimonies like this. Let us help people in a practical way. We should not merely give them a message. We must help them to “tie the knot” by making a definite decision in prayer.

THE ISSUES OF A PERSON’S CONSECRATION

Helping Others to Stand on Their Consecration and Not Doubt It

After a certain time we should fellowship again with the new ones to check the outcome of their consecration. We mostly find one of three issues. First, after consecrating themselves, some genuine ones doubt whether or not they have truly consecrated. They may not feel that they were sincere. We must help them to realize that this doubt comes from God’s enemy. We should help this kind of person believe that he has truly consecrated himself. We should not say, “If you do not feel that you have truly offered yourself, do it again.” If

we help someone in this way, we open the back door for the enemy to come in. Then if we come to that person a third time, we will find that he is still doubtful. Rather, we should say, “Brother, there is no need for you to pray in this way. You have already offered yourself. The only way you should pray now is to say, ‘Lord, I stand on the ground of my consecration, and I continue to offer myself more and more.’” To pray in this way is right.

I once heard of a brother who offered himself to the Lord, after which the enemy came in to fool him and cause him to doubt. He was a farmer who tilled the soil. When he was at one end of the field, he offered himself to the Lord, but by the time he reached the other end, he already doubted it, so he offered himself again. However, by the time he turned around and reached the first end of the field, he doubted his consecration again. He did this many times, falling into the snare of the enemy. Finally, he realized what he was doing. He put a stake in the ground and said, “Satan, this marks the spot on which I truly consecrated myself to the Lord. Do not speak any further word of doubt to me.” After that he had the peace to go on. If we are not sure that we have consecrated ourselves to the Lord, it is hard to have the peace to go on. This is why the enemy, Satan, always does his best to cause us to doubt our sincerity and doubt whether we have truly consecrated ourselves to the Lord. We must learn this lesson of how to help people.

Calling on the Highest Authority for a Person

A second issue of a person’s consecration is that he may have offered himself in a shallow way. After his consecration, he neglected it. The best way to help him is to pray, not in a general way but by calling on the Lord as the highest authority to deal with this person. We may pray, “Lord, this is a brother who prayed in Your name. You have to honor Your name, raise up Your name, and claim this person.” Many times this kind of prayer is prevailing. We should not pray this way in our self, because many times the Lord will do something such as bring a certain kind of hardship to that person. He will answer this call to the highest authority and come in to intervene and deal with the person for whom we pray. Then something may happen to him, and he will come to us for help. It is not like this every time, but this is a principle.

Being Defeated by the Lord and Following the Inner Anointing

The third issue of a person's consecration is that it is real and normal without any doubt. This is wonderful, but we still must know how to help such persons, not legally but according to the principles of the spiritual life. We should tell them that consecration is not a once-for-all matter. It is not only a crisis to pass through but a way to go on. Day by day we must keep our consecration real, living, and available. This means that day by day we need to consecrate ourselves. Then after we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, there will always be some struggle between us and the Lord. Whenever this happens, we must be defeated by the Lord; we must never defeat Him. We must always let Him win the victory, and we must be willing to be defeated. We should pray, "Lord, I want to be defeated by You. I do not want to defeat You."

We should also help such a person to realize that his inner consciousness, the anointing of the indwelling Holy Spirit, will now be very living and keen. All day long he must walk, live, and do things in the way of caring for this inner consciousness. As long as we care for the inner consciousness, we will keep a living fellowship with the Lord. Strictly speaking, therefore, the next experience after consecration is the sense of the inner anointing. It is a great thing to help the brothers and sisters pass through a crisis of consecration and enter into the stage of the inner sense of the anointing.

OUR NEED FOR TRAINING WITH DEFINITE TEACHING CONCERNING THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE

Too often we help the brothers in the church only in a general way. This is why I tell the co-workers that the proper way to learn something is in courses. The proper way to learn mathematics, for example, is by completing one course and moving on to another. If we do not learn by courses, we can study for our whole life and never learn much. In the church we may have message after message every week, but some brothers have been listening to messages for fifty years without learning much because the teaching is too general. The writings of the apostles, especially of the apostle Paul, are not general; they are very definite. Today in the church we need definite teachings. This is why we need trainings. It is right to take a certain period of time in a local church

to deal with the stages of spiritual experience. We may need six months to deal with the real experience of regeneration, helping people to be clear what regeneration is and how they can know its experience. We need another period of time to deal with consecration. We need period after period in this way for a number of years. Then we will see a local church built up with a group of believers who have the real experiences. They know what regeneration is, they have experienced it, and they know how to help people with it. Likewise, they know what consecration is, they have this experience, they live in it, and they know how to help new converts to go on. The believers will have not merely a certain desire or love but the experience of life, the genuine learning, the discipline, and the practice. Such a church is a proper church.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HANDING OVER

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The following hymn was written about a person, Dara, whose heart was most sincere and whose spirit was most pure towards the Lord. It speaks of the proper attitude a man of God should have towards the world. As we sing this song, we touch a spirit whose purity rarely has been found in the past five hundred years. As we learn to touch the Lord's Spirit with our spirit and as we turn our heart fully to the Lord as the writer did, we can lay aside every earthly possession.

1. Having seen the world's fair beauty,
Lord, I would be blind once more,
Lest I lose the loving Presence
And Delight I knew before.

Having seen the world's fair beauty,
Lord, I would be blind once more,
Lest I lose the loving Presence
And Delight I knew before.

2. Dawn and sunset, star and moonlight,
I can see in paradise,
But while here on earth His mercy
For my blindness will suffice.

3. I no more would be delivered
From my thorn, but look for grace,
While within the veil His glory
Shineth brightly on my face.

4. In the deep dark night, His beauty
I by faith, not sight, may trace;
He was ridiculed and hated,
Yet I see His glorious face.

5. Sun and moonlight far surpassing,
Clouds and Milky Way o'erspread,
Is the glory all transcending
Shining from His thorn-crowned head.

Five or six hundred years ago, there was a person by the name of Miss Bride who was greatly used by the Lord to perform miracles. She laid hands on Dara, and the little sister, who was born blind and who was then in her teens, recovered her sight. After Miss Bride prayed for her, her eyes were opened and everything around was new to her. She was very happy and greatly enjoyed the sight of the sun, the moon, the stars, and everything around her. After a few days, however, she went back to Miss Bride in great sorrow. When Miss Bride asked her what she wanted, she said she wanted someone to pray for her again. Miss Bride asked, "Do you have some other illness?" She answered, "Please pray for me to have my eyes blind again. The beautiful scenery is distracting me from the Lord." Later Miss Bride put Dara's words together in a poem and composed the above song. We can see that this is a song from the heart of one who is absolutely single for the Lord. It shows us the kind of attitude such a person has towards the world.

Tonight we want to talk about the matter of handing oneself over. In order to serve the Lord, we have to hand ourselves over. First, we have to see the meaning of handing oneself over. Next, we need to see what we should do after we have handed ourselves over. Before this, however, let us first talk about the loss and recovery of the truth concerning handing oneself over.

THE LOSS AND RECOVERY OF THE TRUTH CONCERNING "HANDING OVER"

The Degradation in Catholicism and the Loss of the Truth

Roman Catholicism reached its zenith during the Middle Ages. During that time the truth expounded by the church became distorted; it became very different from the teaching found in the four Gospels and in Acts. In the four Gospels, while the Lord Jesus was on earth, He not only emphasized deliverance from sin but also emphasized deliverance from money (cf. Luke 16:19-24; 19:16-26). The Acts of the Apostles is a book on the teachings of the apostles. These teachings exhort men to flee from money, on the one hand, and from sin, on the other hand. The Christian foundation is built upon deliverance from these two things. If a man continues to live under the bondage of sin as a sinner, he cannot be a proper Christian. In the same way, if he continues to live under the bondage of money, he cannot be a proper Christian. In order to serve the Lord, a man must first be delivered from sin and money on the negative side. In the fourth century the world was brought into the church. It was no longer poor; it became very rich. Within the church, there was a gradual turning away from the teachings taught by the Lord Jesus and the apostles at the beginning.

The early church followed the teachings of the apostles and exhorted men to flee from both sin and money. It is ugly for a Christian to tolerate sin, but it is equally ugly for a Christian to tolerate money and the world. Yet after the first apostles passed away, the church gradually became relaxed in the matter of money. It still taught that Christians should not sin, but it allowed believers to keep their money. There was no end to the degradation. From that time onward, the trend has been ever downward. This went on until the Middle Ages. Since the sixth century, when the church developed into the system of Catholicism, there has been a toleration not only of money but of sin as well. Men began to accumulate wealth, yet spiritually they became extremely poor. Later the Catholic Church even came up with the teaching of purgatory. As long as a man had money, he could absolve himself from his sins by buying indulgences. To help finance the building of St. Peter's Cathedral, the pope greatly promoted the practice of selling indulgences, especially when he found out that little was coming in from the general offering. For example, those who had committed adultery could be absolved of their sin with four indulgences. Those who had murdered could be absolved of their sin with twelve, and those who had lied could be absolved of their sin with two. In this way society became corrupted, and there was much confusion.

God's Recovery Work

At man's darkest moment God began His recovery work. It began with Martin Luther, but this does not mean that only Luther made progress towards recovery. Among his contemporaries, there were others who saw the same thing. Luther was a representative of God's recovery work in that age. Nine hundred years after the degradation of the church, we see a new beginning in Protestantism. For the first time Christians were again expected to turn from sin.

Since Luther's time God has been recovering His truths one by one. First, the church saw the need of turning away from sin. All the spiritual giants in church history, such as Moody, Spurgeon, and Finney, paid attention to turning men away from sin. They said that in order to receive salvation and become a Christian, one had to be sincere. He should not lie, debauch, or commit adultery. But the church has never been bold enough to proclaim, as the Lord Jesus proclaimed, that one should forsake everything to follow the Lord. I am not saying that there have been no real followers of the Lord. Thank the Lord, there has never been an interruption in the line of true Christians. First, we have St. Francis of Assisi. He was the son of a rich man, but he sold all of his possessions and gave to the poor. He began to practice a life of voluntary poverty. Later in Moravia God raised up Count Zinzendorf. He was a nobleman, but he opened up his estate to receive saints from everywhere. The result was the establishment of the Moravian Brethren. After this there was Sister Eva, a German, who also took the way of voluntary poverty. In the last century the Brethren were raised up by God. Among them many truths were recovered. Many leading brothers among them, such as Darby and Kelly, practiced voluntary poverty. They forsook everything to follow the Lord. This is the reason the Lord could have a way through them. In 1922 when I was just saved, I saw this truth and I began to practice forsaking everything to follow the Lord.

The Lord's Recovery in China

In the light of the entire history of the church, we can say that today is our day. In China many of God's children have risen up to take this way. More and more Christians are rising up and forsaking all. In the past the church did not have the courage to preach this truth. It did not have the boldness to tell men that they have to forsake everything to follow the Lord, that unless they forsook everything, they could not be proper Christians. In 1943 the Holy Spirit began a great work in Chefoo. Many brothers and sisters obeyed the

move of the Holy Spirit and offered up everything for the Lord. Later Shanghai followed and then Foochow. I hope that today Hong Kong will follow. To be a Christian, one must be a Christian in accordance with the truth of the Bible. To serve the Lord, one has to be absolute; it is useless to be otherwise. In singing the hymn about Dara, we can sense the joy within her. The most foolish thing is to be a half-way Christian. Such a one does not have the joy of the world (John 15:19) or the joy of the Lord in his spirit. He wants to have a little of the world's joy and a little Christian joy. He is not absolute, and he does not grow.

No One Can Be a Good Christian without Absolute Consecration

Why must a child of God hand himself over completely and forsake everything? This is because this is the only way to be a proper Christian. Many people do not have many problems in other areas, but they have a problem with their consecration. Today many Christians have hundreds and thousands of problems. Actually, the root of their problems is only one thing—a lack of consecration. If a Christian does not have a problem with his consecration before the Lord, he will not have a problem with anything else.

THE MEANING OF HANDING ONESELF OVER— FORSAKING EVERYTHING AND BEING DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF MAMMON

What does it mean to hand oneself over? It means to forsake everything. Selling one's all is a matter of being delivered from the power and bondage of mammon. The Lord shows us in the Gospels that a man is bound not only by sin but by mammon as well. The Bible does not say that sin is versus God. Rather, it says that mammon is versus God. The Bible does not say that sin is man's god, but it does say that mammon is man's god. In Matthew 6 the Lord Jesus said that God and mammon are against one another. We cannot serve two gods. Either we serve God, or we serve mammon (v. 24). Nothing opposes God as much as mammon. Today mammon has gained many people in the world. Many people do not necessarily serve sin, but they serve mammon. We are Christians today. We cannot serve both God and mammon. A Christian must not only be saved from sin but also from the power of mammon. We should hand ourselves over. This means that we should consecrate everything.

We should offer up everything for the Lord's use. This is the only way to be delivered from the control of mammon.

Today we have two groups of people in the church here. One group has touched money. The other group consists of students who are still in school. The way to be free from the power of mammon is to sell all. We should get rid of the mammon in our pockets. Today the gospel has needs, the poor have needs, and the brothers and sisters have needs. All these needs are beckoning us to hand ourselves over. Handing ourselves over means to break the backbone of mammon within us. From now on, we should no longer be under the influence of mammon. Students may think that they have no problem with this word. The brothers and sisters who have touched money and who have learned some lessons about money have experienced the power of money. This word is not easy for them to take. Perhaps none of what we have now has come through unrighteous means. We did not sin or cheat. But we cannot free ourselves from its power as long as we allow mammon to remain. You may say that my words are too harsh and severe, but being a Christian requires one to be harsh. The Lord told the disciples to forsake everything for His sake and for the gospel's sake (Mark 10:29).

We have to go through the experience of thoroughly giving up everything at least once. After we have given up everything, God's blessing gradually will bring us into contact with mammon once again, and it will try to recover its power in us. This is the reason some of us have to deal with our possessions once every few years. We have to fear mammon as much as we fear sin. The Lord Jesus' cross delivered us from the judgment of sin, but we still sin and need to apply the Lord as our propitiation offering (1 John 1:7—2:2). Similarly, the problem of mammon is not solved forever once we have given up our all. After we have given up everything, we have to learn to deal with mammon continually. This will ensure that we have a way to go on before the Lord. We should not think that everything is settled once we have forsaken our all. It is only a beginning.

A THOROUGH LIQUIDATION, TERMINATION, AND DEALING

Handing oneself over means to thoroughly give up everything. The emphasis is not only on the words give up everything but on the word thoroughly as well. Thorough means a clear-cut liquidation, termination, and

dealing. Objects related to sin cannot be sold; they have to be burned or destroyed. Acts 19 speaks of Paul's work in Ephesus. Many who had practiced magic brought their books, put them in a pile, and burned them on account of the strong testimony. The value of the books was fifty thousand pieces of silver (v. 19). If Judas had been there, he would have been in rage, saying, "Why this waste? These books at least could be sold at twenty percent discount, and we could give forty thousand pieces of silver to the poor." The Holy Spirit wanted to burn them because these objects were related to sin. Sin was in them. They were offensive objects and, therefore, needed to be burned.

A brother in Shanghai was in the business of selling comic books. He could earn seven thousand People's yen a day. He depended on this business for his living. His books were worth over eight hundred thousand People's yen. For many years he kept his occupation. When filling out the personal data card from the church, he would leave the "occupation" column blank. If anyone asked him about his occupation, he would dodge the question. One day the Lord touched him and would not let him go. He felt that he had to deal with this matter. He went to the brothers and spoke with them. He was willing to hand himself over, and he asked the brothers and sisters to burn the books for him. When Brother Chang Yu-zhi heard this, he praised the brother and promised to burn the books for him. When I heard about it, I stopped him. I asked the brother to burn the books himself. This is like Abraham killing Isaac; he had to do it with his own hands.

The young brothers and sisters who are in school have not yet touched mammon. I would say this to them: From now on keep yourself pure. You have to make up your mind not to touch or be defiled by many things. You have to separate yourselves from these things. You have to ask God to keep you pure and to grant you the grace to be blind to mammon. Today man's heart is open to mammon. But I hope that you can touch the hymn we sang earlier. I hope that you can maintain a pure heart and never fall to the power of mammon for the rest of your life. Do not wait until you have become rich to seek deliverance from mammon. In the Bible the Lord speaks of "the mammon of unrighteousness" (Luke 16:9). Its very nature is unrighteous. It is versus God, and it turns men away from God. You have to be saved from it just as you need to be saved from sin.

Hating Mammon like Hating Sin

In the past we put the blame on the co-workers, but the church should bear the blame as well. It did not have the boldness to speak as the Lord Jesus did concerning selling everything, forsaking all, and following Him. Being delivered from mammon is not just a simple act of handing oneself over. Some people do not have mammon in their hands, but they do have it in their heart. Actually, there is a greater love for mammon in many poor people. The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), but many people are not poor in spirit. They crave mammon. They crave it because they do not have it. This proves that they have not been delivered from the power of mammon. In 1 Timothy 6:9-10 Paul said that those who intend to be rich and aspire after money have pierced themselves through with many pains. This word shows that those who desire to be rich are under the power of mammon. Today I hope that we all will advance step by step and be totally free from the power of mammon. We have to hate mammon as much as we hate sin. It is wrong for a Christian not to hate sin. Such a one is a fallen Christian. In the same way, when we find that we cannot hate mammon like we hate sin, we have fallen. We should be like the apostle Peter who said, "Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I have, this I give to you..." What he had was the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene (Acts 3:6). The early church did not have silver or gold; it only had the name of the Lord Jesus. Today we have to go back to the very condition at the beginning.

If we take a look at this generation, we can see that our age does not allow us to accumulate mammon. Christian poverty is a voluntary poverty that results from salvation. This was Zaccheus's experience (Luke 19:1-10). Many people are poor because of their environment or upbringing. Others become poor as a result of persecution or class struggle. These are not poor voluntarily. The last time I was in Shanghai, I saw many people who are poor outwardly but not inwardly. I also saw many brothers and sisters who once were rich but are now poor for the Lord. They are very happy. In the future the greatest suffering in hell will be the suffering of unfulfillment. In hell none of man's lusts will be fulfilled. This will be the greatest suffering. There still will be sin in hell, in fact, many sins (Rev. 21:8), but man will not be able to indulge himself or find satisfaction in his lusts. Today many people crave the riches of the world but cannot get them. They are not only suffering in this age; they also will suffer great chastisement when their soul goes through Hades's fire for their avarice. How unnecessary this is!

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE MONEY THAT HAS BEEN HANDED OVER

What should we do with all the money that has been handed over? There are three ways to manage money that has been handed over. First, use it to spread the gospel, second, use it to help the poor, and third, spend it on the brothers and sisters in the church.

For the Gospel

Money that has been handed over should first be used in the spread of the gospel. In Matthew 19, after the episode with the young ruler, Peter asked the Lord about the reward he and the others would receive since they had forsaken everything for the gospel (Matt. 19:27; Mark 10:28). The Lord answered, "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now at this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, with persecutions, and in the coming age, eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30). The Lord showed Peter that he would receive a hundredfold reward, but Peter had to be genuinely ready to forsake everything. Everything means everything, including houses and fields. Everything has to go because the Lord said that it is not only for His sake but for the gospel's sake. When we forsake everything and hand over all, we should use the money first for the gospel.

For the Poor

The second use of our money is to take care of the poor around us. The Lord said that we have the poor with us always (John 12:8). In Matthew 19 the young ruler asked the Lord how he could inherit the kingdom. The Lord told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor. The Lord wanted him to dispose of his possessions and give them to the poor around him and then to follow Him (v. 21). St. Francis of Assisi saw this truth, and he sold all that he had and gave it to the poor. He vowed to live a poor life. Count Zinzendorf was a nobleman. He was very rich, but he opened up his estate to receive the believers. Helping the poor is a principle as well as a requirement in the Bible. The Lord always cares for the poor. However, the purpose of caring for the poor is not just for the sake of the poor themselves. The main purpose is to make us poor so that we can be free from the power of mammon. A Christian

should not be an accumulator of mammon and wealth. He should only be one who is rich in faith, and one who enriches others (James 2:5; 2 Cor. 6:10).

For the Brothers and Sisters

Acts shows us the third way to use our money. We have to hand it over to God's household and to share it with other children of God (2:44). We are in the church, and there are many brothers and sisters around us. In order that they do not lack, we have to give away what we have in excess. The church has to be the household of faith.

HANDING OVER OUR ENTIRE BEING TOGETHER WITH OUR POSSESSIONS

Handing ourselves over does not merely mean offering up our whole person; it also means offering up all our possessions. We should not make the mistake of thinking that we only need to give our hearts to the Lord. Many people make the mistake of thinking that giving everything to the Lord means offering their heart to Him. Many people preach this way. They exhort men to give their hearts to the Lord, but they dare not preach on giving the body to the Lord. We have opened up a big back door if we cannot preach a total consecration, including ourselves and all that we have, instead of just pledging our heart to Him. The most practical consecration is one in which we give our bodies to the Lord. Romans 6:13 says that we have to present our members as weapons of righteousness to God. Romans 12:1 also says that we have to present our bodies a living sacrifice. In both instances, the word body refers to the tangible physical body. If a man comes to us and says that he will give us his heart and hands, which would you take? I would choose the hands. The heart is too arbitrary; it is not easy to pin down. If we can lay hold of the body, we will know where the heart is.

WHERE THE TREASURE IS, THERE THE HEART IS

We say that we are giving our heart to the Lord, yet our mammon is in the bank. First, let us consecrate the mammon in our bank, and then the heart will follow. Only the Lord can see our heart, because only He is the one who searches the inward parts and the hearts (Rev. 2:23). This is the reason the Lord said that where a man's treasure is, there is his heart also (Matt. 6:21). It is very easy for us to set our heart on the things above. All we have to do is to

send our money there. It is impossible for our heart to be set on the things above while our mammon is in the bank below. Every man's heart is set on the earthly things because his mammon is on earth. The Lord never tries to eradicate the root of sin in us. Similarly, He never asks us to give up mammon to love God. He only says, "If your heart is truly after God, you have to place your mammon on God's side. If you bring your mammon to God, your heart will truly love God." The Lord does not ask us to give Him our heart, but He does ask us to bring Him our money. Our mammon must be deposited in heaven first before our heart will go to heaven. When we say that we want to hand ourselves over, we have to bring our heart and mammon to God at the same time. Let me shout this again: The Lord does not say that we should not love mammon and love God instead. Rather, He says that we should send our mammon to heaven. This is because our heart follows our mammon. Not only does the world's heart follow mammon, even a Christian's heart follows mammon. Our heart will always go where our mammon is.

We should never think that only the world loves money and that Christians do not love money. There is not such a thing. A Christian can love money too. A Christian's heart is the same as the heart of someone in the world; both go after mammon. The only difference is that a Christian's mammon is in heaven. We are Christians, and we love the Lord. What should we do now? We should send our mammon to heaven. Spontaneously, our heart will follow. Man's heart always loves money. If a man says that he does not love mammon, he is deceiving himself. Men in the world put their mammon in one place, while a Christian puts his in another place—heaven. This is the only difference between a Christian and a person in the world.

We can feel our love for the Lord by offering up our mammon. Moreover, we should not just offer up what we have in excess. We have to offer until our heart hurts. When the heart hurts, we know that our heart has gone out to where our money is, and we will find joy. It will be easy for us to love God, and our love for Him will flow out. Let me repeat this: Where our treasure is, there is our heart also. Following this statement the Lord said that no man can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). When the Lord says no man, He means no man. No man can serve two masters. If we want to serve God, our money has to go. I do not aspire to be anything in this world. I only aspire to gain God. Let me say this in a most respectful way: Our God can be bought with money. No one can accumulate mammon on earth yet have his heart in heaven. We should not fool ourselves.

The matter of handing oneself over is not just an exercise of the heart. One has to hand over his person as well as his possessions. It is very easy to shift the heart, but it is not easy to shift material things. I want to emphasize this: It is useless to say that one offers up his heart without offering up his things at the same time. If our heart goes to the Lord, our things have to go to Him as well. Our heart is very arbitrary; it can turn back and forth. The Lord said that where our treasure is, there is our heart also. If my treasure is not with God, my heart cannot rest in Him. It will be in God one moment and in the world the next moment. The Lord says that no man can serve two masters at the same time. When He says no man, He means no man.

What Does It Mean to Hand Over "All"?

Perhaps some will ask to what extent we have to offer ourselves before we can say that we have handed over our "all." Whatever we have, we should offer it and hand it over to the church. When we really feel the hurt, we have handed over our "all." When a man truly hurts from his giving, he enjoys the greatest joy in giving. A man laughs when he is happy, but he also weeps when he is happy. The greatest happiness is a happiness that makes a man weep. This happiness has a special taste.

HOW TO HAND OURSELVES OVER

How do we forsake everything? How do we hand ourselves over? In the Gospels we only see individuals forsaking everything. They sold their all and gave it to the poor; they did not give it to the church. This is because, in a strict sense, the church had not been established. In Acts the church was formed as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At this time the forsaking of all things became related to the church. At Pentecost there was a proper arrangement for everything that had been handed over to the church. The disciples sold their fields and possessions, and placed the proceeds at the feet of the apostles. The apostles then disposed of them and distributed them to everyone according to need (2:45). The church became involved. It was not a random selling; everything was done for the good of the church.

The church has to be bold to speak, and it has to be bold to act. The apostolic churches did not teach about selling one's all. The disciples acted this way spontaneously. The result of this giving was a great revival. This pattern is recorded in the Bible. The church should now be bold to preach this,

but it must back up this preaching with the proper arrangements. When the brothers and sisters hand themselves over, they should do so in coordination with the church. They should not follow the examples in the Gospels. It should not be a random and haphazard giving. Rather, the handing over should be done with much arrangement. Some have handed over their factory or business to the church, but the church cannot conduct business or run a factory. Therefore, under the church's direction, some businesses are returned to your hand. You must manage these businesses yourself, but you should feel that the boss has changed. The Lord through the church is now your boss, and you should not take any profit for your own use anymore.

When we see the brothers and sisters hungry and lacking food, we have to take care of their needs more urgently than we take care of our business. If the brothers and sisters do not have daily necessities such as towels or toothbrushes at home, would we have the audacity to keep many of these items at home or, worse still, to display other useless objects around our house? The best thing for us to do is to ask the responsible brothers to come to our house and see if there are things that need to be given to the needy saints or see if there are things that need to be sold for the poor saints. Some brothers say that they have very little, but they are not the ones to judge whether they have much or little. Leave it to the church to decide this. We would rather overdo than not be enough. Even if we offer an item to the church and the church returns it to us, we will have the feeling that the item has been consecrated.

This kind of handing ourselves over will give us a "joy of poverty." It will give us a joy that we have never tasted before, the joy of "not having." Many have tasted the joy of "having," but when we hand everything over, we will taste the joy of "not having." It will be the same joy as the joy of "not having" sin. I hope that the brothers and sisters will all take this way.

If sin does not go away, the gospel will not go out, and if money does not go away, the gospel will not go out either. Mammon must first go away before the gospel can go out. The going away of mammon is only a way for our love to go out. It is not easy for me to ask someone to consecrate his heart. It is, in fact, impossible to exhort anyone to just consecrate his heart. The heart can be offered up, but it can be taken back in an instant. Our heart is at our own disposal. It is not easy to tell a person to "love the Lord your God from your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole strength and with

your whole mind" (Luke 10:27). We are here to urge ourselves to send away our mammon. When we do this, our heart spontaneously will go where our mammon is. Once we hand over everything, our heart will go out with it. If we do not first send our mammon to the kingdom, it will be hard for us to enter the kingdom. Luke 18:24 shows us that it is difficult for those who have riches to enter the kingdom. The Lord told the young ruler to send away his mammon. If he had sent his mammon away to heaven, he would have entered the kingdom spontaneously.

THE CONSECRATED ONES LEARNING TO COORDINATE IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Let us talk a little about what one should do, how one should live, and how one should coordinate with others after he has consecrated himself. A man who has handed himself over naturally has questions concerning his dwelling, living, and employment. He will ask, "What should I do now that I have handed over all my possessions?" This is important because we have not only handed over our possessions, but ourselves, our very person, as well. We have to live for the gospel and for the church. From this point forward, where we live, the job we take, and the future we have must all be determined by the gospel. It is for the brothers and sisters' benefit that we tell them to sell their all. When they sell their all, they can coordinate in the church life, and they can live for the gospel. For example, a student who used to go to school for his own study, after selling his all, must go to school for the purpose of spreading the gospel. Perhaps his last term in school had only one goal—his own study, but now he has two goals. In the same principle, we are not living in Hong Kong for ourselves but for the sake of the gospel. If the church needs us to go to Sinkiang, we should be able to respond and go. We do not wish to see personal choices here. We do not want to exercise personal freedom.

Some Chekiang brothers and sisters have migrated from Hangchow to the Yi-Yang region. The Communist Party commended us for this. Recently a group of brothers in Shanghai followed in their footsteps. They did not move there by choice but for the sake of the gospel. There are over two hundred people now living in straw tents. Some saints from the church in Chefoo moved to the northwest some time ago. A Christian lives on the earth for the Lord. Everything is for the Lord and for His gospel. We should be able to find more than just the Christians of past generations forsaking everything for the

gospel. In the coming days, we also have to forsake everything for the gospel. Either we will not do it at all, or we must do it properly. We do not want unbelievers to laugh at us. For the sake of the prospering of the gospel, we are willing to go to any length. The responsible brothers have no interest in interfering with your personal business. This only adds to their burden of management. This is not something that we want to do, but we are forced to do it for the gospel's sake. Today there are still brothers and sisters in Shanghai who are ready to be sent to the northwest. They do not want the gospel to stop because of them.

You have to do the same in Hong Kong. Today there are two million people in Hong Kong. This number will increase. Now we have only a hundred saved ones among us. Even a thousand is too few. If just a tenth of the population in Hong Kong was saved, we would have two hundred thousand people. That is far greater than a thousand people. Your heart must not be satisfied. It is a foolish thing to be satisfied with your present condition. The Lord desires that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). May we all have God's desire. Our view must be enlarged. The Lord's commandment is that we go into all the world to preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15). If we have this heart, it will be easy for us to spread the gospel throughout Hong Kong. But first we need a group of brothers and sisters to hand themselves over in a thorough way. No one should have any reservation for himself. No one should fool himself. If we all do this, other brothers and sisters will be attracted to follow. The responsibility is on our shoulders. We have to rise up to consecrate ourselves first. Eventually, this consecration will spread to the whole church. Unless the whole church rises up to take this way, we will have problems in the church life sooner or later. Some will see the truth and sell their all, while others will not want to give up their possessions. How can there be one accord if this happens? We have to see that the Lord's requirement is high. He requires that we forsake everything. The leading brothers must go on in a proper way and not have any reservations within. Only then will we be able to lead others on.

You do not have to be afraid. Brother Qu, Brother Lee, and other elder leading brothers are walking ahead of you and taking the lead among you. You have to be led to the point where you realize that no further progress will come unless you sell your all. To be a Christian we have to act decisively. It is meaningless and senseless to be a half-way and indifferent Christian. Brother Witness Lee once said that the church's channels have to be dug deep before water will flow abundantly. We can say the same thing about consecration.

The more we consecrate, the more the blessing will come, and the more we will see men saved. The more hesitation we have, the less useful we will be. In every place many saints have experienced this. Once a child of God hands over his all, the gospel breaks forth. When the disciples sold their all in Acts, God added to them daily those who were being saved (2:47). If there is not a single soul in Hong Kong who wavers, who is held back, who keeps his body and possessions, and who lives for himself and if everyone is willing to rise up to serve under the church's direction, I believe there will be great hope in Hong Kong.

WE HAVE TO BE THE LORD'S WAY

I have wanted to say a word for many years. Before the Lord entered Jerusalem, many people broke branches and took off their garments and laid them on the street. Had they not done this, the Lord could not have entered Jerusalem. This does not mean that the branches and the garments are the way in and of themselves, but it does mean that these ones first had to break many branches and take off many garments to cover the way before the Lord could enter the city in His glory. The Lord rode into Jerusalem on a colt as a King. Some had to break branches, remove garments, and lay them on the street so that the Lord could pass over them. If the gospel is to go out, we have to consecrate ourselves to be the way. Today it is not enough to merely break branches and take away garments. Our very person has to be the way. If we have any reservations, if we hold back anything, or if we are unwilling to fall down, the Lord will have no way. The Lord must have a way through us before the gospel will have a way in the world. We must regard the gospel like chariots, horses, and colts, and we ourselves have to be the way. The gospel has to roll over us so that more people in the world will hear the gospel.

In this matter we have to be very desperate and violent. If we are desperate enough, we will spread the gospel throughout China no matter who is in control of the government. If the Lord has a way through us and the gospel has a way through us, it will be very easy for the gospel to spread throughout China. As long as something is for the Lord, we should not count the cost. We should not save anything from the Lord. For His sake, we should not spare anything. No spending is excessive when it is spent on the Lord and His gospel (John 12:7-8). We must have absolutely no reservation. We should not leave anything for the world.

This world is very dangerous. We have to ask the Lord to keep us from touching the world. May the Lord be gracious to us, and may He grant us a way. In order to be a proper Christian we have to be violent and decisive. Those who do not consecrate themselves invariably go away in sorrow. The more absolute our consecration is, the more joy we will have. If we do not consecrate ourselves, even the life within us will rise up to protest against us.

A PRAYER

Lord, when we were blind, we did not see Your preciousness. When we were blind, we saw only the world; our eyes were filled only with mammon. Tonight we ask You to show us Your glory. May we be willing to drop everything and forsake everything on account of Your shining face on the throne.

Lord, stir us up so that we will be more violent, desperate, and thorough, abandoning everything to follow You. May more people give themselves through our giving. Show the brothers and sisters that mammon and the world are hurting them; they do not help them. Lord, we do not belong to this world but to You. Just as You have shed Your blood on the cross for the gospel's sake, may more people shed their sweat for the gospel's sake. Perhaps some will even have to shed their blood for the gospel's sake. Since You have shed Your blood on the cross for the gospel's sake, may we suffer a little for Your sake, and may we shed our sweat and deny ourselves for the gospel's sake.

Lord, may You turn the church around fully in the coming days. May the whole church be conquered and subdued. First gain the church in Hong Kong, and then spread the gospel through it. It seems that men do not know You today. It seems that You are hidden. But we deeply yearn for the day when the gospel will have a breakthrough from the church.

Lord, we ask again: Reveal Your shining face to us. Teach us to forsake everything and to have a change in concept and valuation towards everything. May we be blind to the world and to mammon, and may we have a high and glorious valuation of Yourself and Your gospel. Be merciful to us. Amen.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MONEY AND OCCUPATIONS

Messages Given During the Resumption
of Watchman Nee's Ministry, Chap. 54
by Watchman Nee/Witness Lee
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THE SOLID CONSECRATION— HANDING OVER ONESELF TO THE CHURCH

We believe that many of the critical issues in consecration have to do with God. But there are two conditions to consecration without which our consecration will not be solid. The first factor has to do with the church. Consecration is not simply for us to hand ourselves over to the Lord, but for us to hand ourselves over to the church. Surely when a person consecrates himself, he hands himself over to the Lord. But no one knows when this kind of consecration has changed or has been retracted. Only the consecration that is done under the authority of the church is solid, and only this kind of consecration will last. If a man says that he is consecrating himself, yet has not handed himself over to the church, such a consecration is not solid.

THE THOROUGH CONSECRATION— INVOLVING MONEY AND OCCUPATIONS

The second thing about consecration is that it always touches our money and our occupation. A consecration that does not result in handing oneself over to the church is not solid, and a consecration that does not touch one's money and his occupation is not thorough. These two subjects, money and occupation, require special attention.

MONEY

The Relationship between God, All Things, and Money

How does God see money? Here we need to understand two kinds of relationships. The first is the relationship between God and all things. The second is the relationship between all things and money. God made from one all things (Acts 17:26). Everything a person touches with his hands and treads over with his feet is made by God. God not only made from one all things; He is even the Lord of all things. Satan is God's adversary. Yet he cannot deal with God directly. Because he cannot deal with God directly, he deals with all the things that issue from God's creation. Because Satan cannot damage God Himself, he tries to damage God's work. If Satan can snatch God's creation out of His hand, God will have failed. In order to damage God's work, Satan tries to snatch away God's creation.

God Making from One All Things, Whereas Satan Unifying All Things through Money

Today I wish to point out to you the relationship between all things and money, and the relationship between all things and God. Satan tries to gain all things, but he cannot gain every item of all the things. "All things" are too much for him to handle. It is too troublesome to gain all things. "All things" include the cows, the goats, wood, stone, and so forth. You cannot exhaust the whole list of all things with a thousand lines. God made from one all things. Hence, Satan reduces all things into one kind of thing. This one thing is money. There is nothing in this world that cannot be bought with money. If a person has money, he has all things. This is why "money" in Chinese is tung-hwo, which means the "common good." You cannot call a piece of stone plus a piece of wood, two of anything. You cannot call a chair plus a table, two of anything. But through the invention of money, Satan is able to unify all things. He makes all things simple. Originally, the world with all its myriads of items was made from one. Now Satan is unifying these myriads of things into one through money. Everything that we see today can be reckoned in terms of money. That is why money is the means to unify all things. All things are created by God. Only money is not created by God; it comes from Caesar. When men asked Christ if there was a need to pay tribute money, He asked them to show Him a denarius, and He answered, "Render then the things that are Caesar's to Caesar" (Matt. 22:21). He did not take any money out from His own pocket. Had He done this, others would have said that He too had Caesar in His pocket.

Money is created by Satan for the purpose of unifying all things. All things can be reckoned in terms of money. The earth is created by God. Yet, today man can reckon the price of lands in terms of money. If it is possible, man will even reckon the price of the moon, or the hydrogen in the sun, with money. Today man can buy everything. He can buy time. He can even buy human souls. One brother worked in the post office for many years. The post office has bought his soul. Included in Jacob's wealth, there were the cattle and the sheep, and there were also the souls of men. Revelation 18 tells us that the human soul is a commodity that can be bought and sold (vv. 12, 13). God has made from one all things. But Satan has unified all things into one.

Satan Withstanding God through Mammon and Usurping Man's Worship through Mammon

When we gain God, we have all things. In the same way, when Satan takes hold of money, he has everything. Money is omnipotent; everything can be bought with money. To buy wood, stones, or any other things that we like, we need mammon. In this way, mammon becomes the power, the center of man's worship. Is man going to worship God or mammon? This becomes the controversy of the universe. The worship of God lies on one side of all things, and the worship of mammon lies on the other side of all things. Mammon is diametrically opposed to God. Why can mammon withstand God? It is because it is the only thing that can unify all things. Covetousness is not only a root of all evils (1 Tim. 6:10); it is even the same as idolatry. Riches are an idol. The Bible says that covetousness and idolatry are the same kind of sins (Eph. 5:5). After a man is saved, if he has not dealt with his money in a clear way, he is not yet fully saved. If a person still keeps wooden or stone idols in his house, will we accept such a one for baptism? Yet, many people have never dealt with the matter of money after they are saved. Today, we say that India is a nation of idols and that there are more idols than people in that land. Yet, there are countless more people today who worship mammon than people who worship idols. From the people in Asia to those in Africa, from the scientists to the most superstitious people, everyone worships mammon. Mammon is the most common object of worship.

Being Delivered from Mammon to Serve God

God wants to gain us, and mammon also wants to gain us. Unless God's people are delivered from the power of mammon, they will not have a proper

testimony and cannot be proper Christians. If a man tries to hold on to both sides, he will not be able to serve the Lord well. Why did the Lord put such a harsh requirement upon the young ruler and ask him to sell all he had? That young man was quite good and had kept all the laws. But the Lord said that he lacked one thing, the most important thing, which had to do with mammon (Luke 18:18-23). The same principle applies when Zaccheus, at his repentance, gave half of his possessions to the poor (Luke 19:8). The same principle can also be seen in Acts 4 where the disciples sold their land and possessions, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own (v. 32). By the time we come to the Epistles, we see Paul saying, "He who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no lack" (2 Cor. 8:15).

Overcoming Mammon to Have Spiritual Power

In church history, the Moravian church was the group that had the strongest mission. Its founder, Count Zinzendorf, gave up all his possessions for the Lord. Sister Eva also gave up all that she had. A few decades ago, seven Englishmen came to China to preach the gospel. They were known as the Cambridge Seven. Among them was C. T. Studd, who was a cricket champion. He had received an inheritance of two hundred fifty thousand pounds, which equals 1.2 million U.S. dollars, and he gave it all away. When he told the British Consulate that he was going to China, the Consulate General was shocked by his consecration and dared not accept his application. After a week, Mr. Studd was still firm concerning his decision. God could use Mr. Studd in a great way because he had overcome mammon. Mammon stands in opposition to God. For this reason, every child of God has to overcome the power of mammon. If anyone does not overcome its power, he will have no spiritual power. The power of mammon does not lie in how much mammon a person possesses. Its power on the poor may be stronger than its power on the rich.

Working Only to Sustain Our Living, and Not for Making Money

For this reason, no Christian should try to make money. Men think that it is wrong to make money by unrighteous means and that it is right to make money by righteous means. But mammon itself is unrighteous. Just as God Himself is righteous, in the same way mammon itself is unrighteous. Luke 16 mentions making friends with the "mammon of unrighteousness" (v. 9).

Money is intrinsically unrighteous. Its nature is contrary to God. We have to be clear about the position money occupies. If we are not clear, it will be difficult for us to go on as a Christian. Christians cannot try to make money from the worldly people. If we do, we will lose our Christian standing. We say that our Father is over and above everything, and that we are His sons. Yet if such a person as we are would try to make money from the rickshaw coolies, whether it is ten thousand or twenty thousand dollars, it would be a shame to us. There are only two kinds of people on this earth, the unbelievers and the brothers. We cannot make money from the unbelievers. What then about making money from the brothers? Would we not feel ashamed to make money from our brothers? Hence, no one can neglect dealing with money properly. A Christian cannot make money; he can only work to sustain his living.

OCCUPATIONS

God Having Ordained That Man

Take Up Occupations That Involve Manual Labor

The second question is occupations. What are the occupations that God wants? God's will for man is that he has to eat bread in the sweat of his face (Gen. 3:19). In the Old Testament, God ordained that Adam must till the ground and that Abel had to tend to the flock. Men like Abraham and Jacob were all herdsmen. Genesis 4 mentions the "artificer in brass and iron" (v. 22). All these are manual labor. In the New Testament, the apostles were fishermen, and Paul was a tentmaker. These are also occupations that involve manual labor.

Paul said that to the one who works, his wages are accounted according to what is due (Rom. 4:4). Occupations that are based on one's labor are right occupations, for they have no element of money-making. Such kinds of occupations increase and add to the value of the goods. You cannot consider these kinds of occupations as making money; they are merely a selling of our labor. There are only a finite number of things in the world. Suppose there were only ten thousand cattle in the world, and through my farming there are now eleven thousand; my labor has caused the world to have one thousand more cattle. Suppose there was only one stalk of wheat, and through my farming there are now thirty stalks, or one hundred stalks. This is to cause an increase in value. Why do I gain some money? It is because I have caused the

world to have ninety-nine stalks more. Paul brought the material home, sewed it into a tent in the night, and sold it the next morning. The money he made came from the work of sewing. However, if you buy five rolls of fabric, store it away until the price for the fabric is high, and then sell it, you have made your money without increasing the value of the fabric by one bit. We cannot engage ourselves in this kind of business. All the occupations that do not increase the value of the goods must be changed. We have to have a turn in our mentality. The mentality of many people is focused on money, and not on value.

Rejecting Occupations That Do Not Increase the Value of Goods

We cannot engage ourselves in occupations that do not increase the value of goods. The occupations that are right are those that earn wages through manual labor. Those occupations that do not increase the value of goods make a poor testimony before God and even before Satan. In addition, they corrupt a person's heart.

We have two brothers who were business students. Now they no longer want to study business any more. Commerce turns a person's mind immediately to money. Before the Lord, we have to be delivered from money. Our occupations must be such that they increase the value of goods or that they improve the goods. Only those who are undefiled in their occupations can serve God in a useful way. If there is a group of people who are delivered from money and on whom money has no effect, God will have a way through these ones. In Chefoo, the brothers with lowly jobs were sent out first. These brothers were all engaged in occupations that increased the value of goods. Some occupations are involved with commerce. Those saints who are involved with this kind of occupation have to learn to drop them. The assignment of co-workers is an absolute matter today. The assignment of the saints' occupations should also be an absolute matter. The co-workers cannot choose their own place of work. Neither can the brothers and sisters choose their own occupations. Those who are on the jobs need to be coordinated in the same way as those in the Lord's work need to be coordinated. God can only use clean money. The need today is too great, yet we cannot lower God's standard.

Occupations Having Much to Do with God's Testimony

Brother Chang's occupation is not very good. It has too much to do with the government and politics. A job in the post office does not have much to do with politics. Working with the Customs Department is not very good, because it can involve taking bribes from others. An occupation has much to do with God's testimony. Here is the need for one to pay a great price.

Offering Up Ourselves and Our Occupations to God

Our views have to be enlarged. A man cannot say on the one hand that he is learning to serve God, while holding on to money on the other hand. The Lord has no intention that we serve Him while engaging in some money-making occupation. I hope that we can offer up ourselves and our occupations to God for the accomplishment of His purpose.

The Long-term, Normal Way— Providing for Those of One's Own Household, and Accepting the Arrangements Made by the Church

During the time of revival of a church, there are special measures taken. These special measures are different from the long-term measures. During the time of revival, we have to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. But in the long run there is the need for the church to make some arrangements. At the time of revival, Ananias could not keep back anything for himself. The minute he kept back anything, he was lying, and he was sinning against the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-5). But in Paul's Epistles, we are told that a person has to provide for those of his own household and that we have to care for the widows who have no support (1 Tim. 5:8-16). In the long run we do not expect the church to do the same things as it does during the time of revival. During revivals, we feel constrained to offer up everything. But during ordinary times, we have to take care of our family. Particularly, we have to take care of the children when they are young.

The long-term way for the church to deal with money is different from the way it takes during the time of revival. During revivals, we cannot quench the Holy Spirit. But in the long run the church has to make some arrangements. In the early churches, there were arrangements. The brothers and sisters should also make their own arrangements before the Lord; they should save something for their own use, and they should set aside the rest as available funds. In this way, even the jobs of the brothers and sisters become something that is for the gospel. Everyone has to consider and reckon before God. Where there are burdens that individuals cannot take up, other brothers and sisters have to come in to help. The church should not bear all the burdens. For this reason, the saints' relatives should be taken care of first by the saints themselves.

The Whole Body Coordinating Together for the Accomplishment of God's Will

Our occupation must be such that we earn our wages through labor and through increasing the value of the goods. Today, it is not a sin to receive much, but it is a sin to have excess. It is not wrong to take in much, but it is wrong to keep the excess. We have to simplify our own living, and we have to save money for others. Only those who have given to others know that indeed it is more blessed to give than to receive.

The increase in bank deposits is just the increase in zeros; it will not give you joy. Only those who save for God, who labor for God, and who increase the value of goods will have true joy in their hearts. If we will practice this, the whole of China will be won by us. Even the whole Southeast Asia will be won by us. We can carry out our work under the best arrangements. During the past years, there was not much coordination among the co-workers, and there was not much coordination among the brothers and sisters in their occupations. That is why we have not done well in both areas. Today, the occupations of the working brothers and sisters have to be coordinated, and the work of the co-workers also has to be coordinated. If the coordination is solid and good, all the brothers and sisters who are holding jobs will become our true co-workers.

If the Lord comes back soon, we will all see Him. If the Lord delays His coming for another one or two hundred years, those coming after us will watch the way we conduct ourselves today. We believe that the Lord has set a

straight path before us. Our conference this time has much to do with God's business, the church's work, and the whole counsel of God. This is not a question of individuals doing business or making money.

A TESTIMONY OF THE REVIVAL IN THE CHURCH IN CHEFOO

Brother Lee: Since the end of 1942, I saw clearly that unless the problem with money is solved, there is no way for the gospel of God to go out effectively. God's gospel has been preached in China for over a century. However, the gospel cannot spread to the inland regions. For over one hundred years, it has been Western money that has been supporting the gospel work. This money has been spent along the coastal regions. Many people became rich as a result of becoming believers. These brothers and sisters are no longer able to move, for they have been nailed down by money. At the same time, money was not able to go into the inland regions.

We saw that as long as money has not been released from the brothers and sisters, there is no way for there to be a genuine revival. On December 13, 1942, the Lord did a work among us. That afternoon, I was getting ready to preach a message on life. We had been preaching messages on life for two or three years. But that afternoon my message took a turn. From that day on, we saw that as long as the problem with money is not settled, God's gospel can never be released.

Today, God cannot be released because the gospel cannot be released, and the gospel cannot be released because money cannot be released. I know that in a certain denomination in a certain place, a few rich people put their money together and built a chapel. Yet the men themselves were still collecting debts and exacting high interest on loans. Can God be released under such circumstances? On that day, some brothers in Chefoo had been without jobs for over a year. Some sisters had to take up embroidery work, which required fine labor, but which did not allow them to earn much money. As a result, not much was received from the offering box. For six months, we received nothing from the offering box designated for the co-worker sisters. But on that day, there was a great difference in offering; many envelopes were received. The offering on that day was not a result of my preaching. On the 20th, which was the following Lord's Day, I went up to the platform again. At that time, we sang Hymns, #472, and many were moved to tears. They realized that the

gospel had not been released because they had been holding back their money. By the next Lord's Day, the 27th, the Lord's work was even stronger, and we felt that we had to meet every day. Beginning from January 1, 1943, which was a holiday, we began to have conferences that lasted from ten o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the afternoon. One brother was sick and could not sleep at night. The Lord touched him and asked him to consecrate himself. He could not resist the Lord, and in the end he yielded everything. In this way, about six to seven hundred people all consecrated everything to the Lord. Some consecrated their grant deeds. Others consecrated their stocks and shares. Many consecrated themselves for the work in northwest China. This lasted for three and a half months. We met every day for over one hundred days. One day I said, "Who is willing to go to northwest China for the gospel's sake?" Almost everyone stood up. Many were willing to move their whole family including all their wealth for the gospel's sake. The first group that went were laborers with lowly occupations, farmers, and manual workers. The second group that went had better occupations. Some were nurses, whereas others were doctors, or men with capital. The third group that went out were the preachers and the co-workers. When the first group moved out, it shocked the whole city of Chefoo, for the outsiders had reckoned that we would never be able to do this.

This kind of revival went on for three months, and we got ourselves into big troubles. This does not mean that we tried purposely to get ourselves into trouble. All the brothers and sisters had consecrated their everything. What should we do now? The brothers and sisters had emptied out their hearts and had offered up all their belongings. Some came laughing, while others came weeping. But all came with their belongings. For two nights, we waited on the Lord until after midnight, and we discussed again and again what we should do. On March 14, which was another Lord's Day, after the bread-breaking meeting, we told the saints what they should do after they have consecrated themselves. During this period, everyone got into this revival. Many dared not even touch their clothes when they went home. The minute they touched them, the Lord would ask them to consecrate. If they kept anything back, they would not have any peace. But when they offered up everything, they had peace.

I realized that it was not right for the church to go into business, because the church was simply the brothers and sisters. Hence, we considered the general condition of the saints and assigned them to various businesses. We

closed down some improper businesses. The consecrated lands could not come under the name of the church, and they could not be distributed. As a result, we put them temporarily under the names of the original owners, with the condition that when the church needed the money, they would sell the lands.

Nothing of what we did then causes me to have any regret. The only lack then was prayer. This gave the Japanese a chance to creep in. At that time, we did not see that Satan was doing everything he could to frustrate the work. At that time, because the brothers and sisters had offered up everything, including their time and all their possessions, the church had to make some arrangements. It was also at this time that I fell into trials. I became ill, and I separated myself from the work. Because of this, I was able to escape the hands of the Japanese. After the past five years, I look back and realize that what we did then was indeed the Lord's way.

COORDINATION BETWEEN THE WORKING SAINTS AND THE CO-WORKERS

We have to see today that we are not our own and that our possessions are also not our own. Some people should consecrate themselves for the gospel, whereas others should offer up themselves in their occupations. There is the need for the coordination of both sides. Outwardly, you may be managing your own business, but in reality and spiritually, you are doing everything for the church. I reckoned then that this was the only way to have a thorough coordination. Today, if there is a lack with the co-workers, it is a shame to those who are holding jobs. On the other hand, there are some places who have many riches and little work. This is a shame to the co-workers. We have to see what a great force there is when the two sides coordinate together. If we see this principle, we will be free, and we will begin to trust in our brothers in the coordination. If you earn ten thousand dollars, and you spend it all on yourself, you do not need the church to rise up to condemn you; you will condemn yourself. No one will need to say anything to you; you will condemn yourself. If you ask what we should do if some decide to take back their consecration when they hear this kind of words, I would say that we are not afraid of anyone taking back his consecration. If anyone can take back his consecration, let him do it.

ON BEING THE WISE STEWARDS IN MATERIAL RICHES

Brother Nee: When we offer up all our money and then receive it back again from the Lord, the money will be very different. Formerly, we were the masters. Now we become the stewards. If we are a steward, yet waste our master's money, the Lord's illustration says aptly that some will accuse us (Luke 16:1). They will say that we are wasting our master's money. Today, we may hold different standards of living. But the principle remains the same: We have to do our best to be frugal.

Once the problem of money is settled, we will become a broad person. Today everyone's mind is different. This is why the same word conveys different connotations in different people's minds. If I say that I will treat you with a meal, the northerners will think that they will have wheat rolls, the southerners will think that they will have rice, the westerners will think that they will have bread, while the poor people will think that they will have corn. In the same way, when we speak of the need of the church, different people have different thoughts and reactions. When some hear about the need of the church, they will say that it is all right to buy less land and build smaller buildings; they think that there is no need to be very serious about the matter. A person who is not serious will not do things in a serious way. However, we cannot consider matters from our point of view. We have to consider matters from God's point of view. Once the problem of mammon is settled, we will be enlarged. A man cannot serve two masters. Either he serves the Lord, or he serves mammon. The reason we are in darkness and are not in the light is that there is the entanglement of money. If we can solve this problem, many other problems will be solved.

The gospel has been "bottled up" like water kept in a bottle, and money is like the cork of the bottle. If money does not go away, water will not come. If you do not give away your money, you will not even be able to live a proper human life. A person has to open his eyelids before he can see. In the same way, if money does not go away, a person cannot see the Lord.

I know that many brothers here are more well off than brothers in other localities. In other localities, some people cannot even send their children to school. We can be in scarcity, but we cannot become small. We cannot become small just through our scarcity. We have to show other brothers that not one thing is our own.

What should we do as far as our practice is concerned? First, we have to write down a list. Should we consider the matter individually, or should we consider it corporately? Both ways are possible. Many brothers and sisters receive help through others' testimonies, whereas others look to the Lord directly. This is not the time to talk about the left hand not letting the right hand know what it is doing. It is not a question of myself as a person individually; it is a question of myself being a member in the Body. Even if we will lose our reward, it is still worthwhile for us to cause one or two brothers to rise up. Forget about our personal rewards in the future!

The church does not want to do anything that will eventually come short. We hope that more stewards will be raised up by the Lord. If some of us have made such a decision, they can present their testimonies before the brothers.

FIRST HANDING OVER OURSELVES AND THEN OUR MONEY

What we want is first you, and then yours. I am a priest, and I live for God. We care only for the fact of handing ourselves over and not for argument. We are not here for money; we are here to help others to hand themselves over. If a man does not hand himself over, it is meaningless to receive a few dollars from him; it is better to return such money back to him. God would not be pleased with such money. In God's eyes, money is not the main problem. A man hands over his money because he has first handed over himself. You as a person are more important than your money. When a person comes, what he has will come along with him. It is difficult to say this kind of thing to all the brothers and sisters in general.

If you do not want to hand yourselves over, I will not say such words. But if you have handed yourselves over and I have handed myself over, then we can say such words. What we were not able to say among the co-workers for the past twenty years, we can say today. Today we are standing on the same ground, and we are working and serving together. We are all the same, and we are all serving God together.

We have to look to the Lord to bring all the saints in Shanghai into this practice. Otherwise, our words here for the last few days will result only in a few more consecrations. In another five days, things will all cool down again.

This is indeed a serious matter. If we can bring the brothers and sisters into this practice, many tremendous things will follow.

PAYING A SERIOUS PRICE, AND COORDINATING TOGETHER

In all the past years, all of us have suffered so many dealings, made so many sacrifices, borne so much hardship, and paid so much price. But today, the Lord is asking us to pay a higher price. Only by paying a serious price can we obtain serious results. The Lord has no intention that the co-workers be the only ones to go through dealings and that the other brothers and sisters be exempt from dealings. It is difficult for the co-workers to be coordinated together. It is likewise difficult for the working brothers and sisters to be coordinated together. When two or three brothers go into business together, they invariably say at the beginning that they are doing this to glorify the Lord. But in the end, many times the result is a shame to the Lord. However, if you hand yourselves over today, things will be different. This is not just a combination of capital, but a coordination of the persons. Here, one person can bring forth results a thousandfold, and two persons can bring forth results ten thousandfold. If the brothers will be faithful to the Lord in their jobs and if they are coordinated together, there will be the blessings. With such a purpose, center, ground, and goal, we can bring in the Lord's blessing. When there is any hardship, we try to solve it in coordination. When the co-workers are not coordinated, they can do their own isolated works. But when they are coordinated together, there will be no more room for individual freedom. The same principle applies to those brothers and sisters who are holding jobs.

Personally, I am most reluctant to do such things. But looking ahead, the Lord has His works. For this reason, we have to take upon us this inconvenience and to have such a beginning. The co-workers and the responsible brothers should not try to avoid such an inconvenience. When we are doing our isolated works, we can be very comfortable. But in order for the Lord to have a way, we must be coordinated together. In the coordination, we have to accept all the inconveniences. If we do not do this, it will be difficult for the Lord to have a way among us.

During the past four evenings, my words have been coming out like water gushing out from an open tap. Once the tap is turned to open, there is no

more thought of turning it to closed again. We do not know how far this water will carry us. It is not an easy thing for me to speak about these four topics. To speak about them is more difficult than to speak about forty other topics.

In 1942, we prayed much for the Lord to have a way among us. I do not know how much we had prayed. However, although we prayed so much, every time we felt that something was blocking. Because of that something, we did not get through. Now, we have broken through the small circle. We will see if we can break through the larger circle.

CHAPTER NINE

DEALING WITH MAMMON AND SERVING GOD

Messages Given During the Resumption
of Watchman Nee's Ministry, Chap. 56

by Watchman Nee/Witness Lee

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MAKING MONEY BEING UNBECOMING OF A CHRISTIAN'S STANDING

Today there are only two ways to serve. Either one serves God, or he serves mammon. Of all the Christians in the whole world, perhaps eighty percent serve mammon. Of the remaining twenty percent, perhaps eighteen percent serve both mammon and God. It is difficult to find a few persons who will serve God only. In the past, we never mentioned the matter of mammon. On the one hand, it was because we were not faithful. On the other hand, it was because mammon is a difficult subject to talk about. Mammon itself is unrighteous. A Christian should not only consider it wrong to make money by unrighteous means, but should realize that making money itself is improper. It is not a question of much money or little money. God's word says that we cannot serve God even by making money by righteous means. If a person has not settled this question, he has not settled the most basic issue. God made from one all things, and money unifies all things into one. God created all things, and money can procure all things. Any thought of making money is a sign of serving mammon. Rice costs three million dollars a basket. If you try to make three million dollars to buy the rice, you are serving mammon. Where are you going to make your money? Will we not feel ashamed to make money from our brothers? Can we make money from the unbelievers?

For example, if the president of a country were to make money from a rickshaw coolie, would it not be very unbecoming for him to do such a thing? We are more noble than any president in the world. The worldly presidents are elected, but we are born kings. I wish that we could give away all our things. This is more proper and becoming.

All proper occupations extract riches from nature itself; they do not extract riches from others' pockets. For example, if there are two billion people on the earth and everyone has a dollar in his pocket, the total wealth of the world would be two billion dollars. If I try to make money, I will have to cause the money in my pocket to increase. In order for the money in my pocket to increase, the money in the pockets of others will have to decrease. How can a Christian extract others' money into his own pocket? Is it becoming for a child of God to do this? Any kind of money-making is a reduction of others' wealth and an increase in one's own wealth. What we have to do is to increase the natural wealth on this earth. Why do we have to increase our own wealth at the expense of others' wealth? How can a Christian do such a shameful thing?

REJECTING OCCUPATIONS OF PURELY COMMERCIAL NATURE

All the occupations in the Bible derive their riches from nature. The fishermen derive their wealth from the sea. The farmers derive their wealth from the land. These occupations increase one's own wealth without decreasing others' wealth. It is all right for us to increase our own wealth, but not at the expense of others' wealth. The increase of the herd of Abraham and Isaac was a blessing from God (Gen. 24:35; 26:12). But the increase of the herd of Jacob came from Laban (30:37-43). The increase in the herd of Abraham and Isaac was right, but the increase in the herd of Jacob was wrong, because in making the increase, he did injustice to Laban. Today, there are many people like Jacob. If this problem is not solved, we cannot serve God in a proper way. As a minimum requirement, we cannot engage ourselves in money-making jobs. We have to reject any work that is purely commercial in its nature.

Ezekiel 28 mentions the king of Tyre, who refers to Satan. He fell because of the multitude of his merchandise. Merchandising is a purely commercial activity. Ezekiel 28 is the record of the first commerce, whereas Revelation 18 is the record of the final commerce. Ezekiel 28 is the beginning of world commerce, whereas Revelation 18 is the consummation of world commerce. Revelation speaks of "the merchants of the earth." The word merchants here refers to great entrepreneurs. Antichrist will use Babylon to carry out his commercial activities. Pure commerce is not just a matter of money, nor is it a matter of gold or silver. Rather, it is a question of where the money is coming

from. Today, we have to pay attention to how money comes in. It is all right for me to increase my wealth, but I cannot decrease society's wealth. For example, to turn iron into steel is to contribute something to society, and such kinds of work are proper.

Today, our thoughts have to be controlled by God. Those who are for money see nothing but money. They do not see how many fishes have been added; they only see how many dollars have come in. Pure commerce is too great a temptation for man. This is why we have to make a complete turnabout in many things in the days ahead.

The Jews were originally farmers, tillers, shepherds, and laborers. But after they became degraded and were scattered into the nations, they became the most numerous and powerful merchants on earth. In the Old Testament, God allotted the lands to the Israelites and charged every one of them to work on their own land. The Jews learned the lesson through this, and they would not want to work for others or to have others work for them. They would rather manage their own business.

Here is a serious hurdle, and one that is difficult to overcome. We have to ask God to turn our thoughts around. It is wrong to make money. Somehow, we have to be delivered from money.

THE NATURE AND SUBSTANCE OF MONEY BEING UNRIGHTEOUS

Luke 16 mentions the unrighteous steward and the unrighteous money. There the Lord commended the unrighteous steward for his wisdom. He used his master's money to make friends. There is a difference between the parable itself and the teaching that comes after it. The parable itself goes from verse 1 to verse 7, whereas the teaching begins from verse 8. Here it says that the sons of this age are more prudent than the sons of light in their own generation. This one changed the bill of one hundred measures of oil to read fifty, and the bill of one hundred measures of wheat to read eighty. This is unrighteousness in procedure. Surely it is wrong. But after this, the Lord teaches us to bring people into the eternal tabernacle with the mammon of unrighteousness. Here we have the money itself as being unrighteous. Not only is the procedure unrighteous, but money itself is unrighteous. In the parable itself, it says that the procedure is unrighteous, but in the teaching it

says that the money is unrighteous. Money itself is unrighteous in nature and substance. Here it does not say that wheat is unrighteous, or that oil is unrighteous. Instead, it says that the person is unrighteous; he is an unrighteous steward. And in the teaching it says that even money itself is unrighteous. Some people think that since unrighteous money can give us friends and cause others to be saved, and it can send people to the heavenly eternal tabernacle, this must mean that money is good. But we have to realize that before God the nature and substance of money is unrighteous. Today we need to repent for our attitude toward money. Money stands in opposition to God. We cannot allow one thing that is in opposition to God to exist. Either we serve God, or we serve mammon. Mammon demands man's worship, in the same way that God demands our worship. Once this matter is settled, our service to God becomes simple.

During these years, concerning money, the co-workers can boast that they have not been tied down with jobs for a living. Although the other brothers and sisters have more occasions to be exposed to money, they have to remember that they are serving God just as the co-workers are. We do not expect anyone among us to be a steward for his whole life and yet find nobody to receive him into the eternal tabernacle.

THE WAY TO DEAL WITH MONEY

Returning Money

that Comes by Unrighteous Means

When the Israelites left Egypt, they were supposed to take with them as much gold as possible (Exo. 12:35-36). If the money that we have comes from righteous means, we can give as much as we want to. But if it is gained through unrighteous means, we have to return it. Some people will never let go of the money in their hands. From now on, we have to maintain our Christian standing. We should have the sense that, in the matter of money, we can rise above others' heads. Others consider money as their life, but we do not. Money that we gain through righteous means can be kept, but money that we gain through unrighteous means should be returned.

Avoiding Occupations that Do Not Increase the Value of Goods

With some kinds of money, it is all right to make it as a businessman, but not all right to make it as a friend. These are things that we can have no part in. In short, we can only deal with this question by taking care of the principles; we cannot deal with it in detail. It is wrong to buy with a view to speculate. But if a man moves some goods from one place to another, it is a work of labor, and there is nothing wrong with it. However, if there is the need for bribery in the process of doing this, we are faced again with temptation. In choosing our occupations, we should take the broadest possible way, and we should avoid dangerous bridges as much as possible, because with such bridges there is always the danger of falling, and the fall can be quite serious. Always remember that the mentality of a businessman is on making money. This mentality does not revolve around need, but around money. It is not a question of righteousness or unrighteousness, but a question of our occupation.

Brother Weigh Kwang-hsi asked: Is an occupation with the insurance business all right? (Everyone smiled, but there was no answer.)

Brother Nee: Today, we should walk on the safe side as far as our occupations are concerned. It is not worthwhile for us to stumble because of our occupations. If I am to look for a place to live, I will never settle at the border next to Siberia. It is foolish to do that, because I would be the first one to be shot should someone come across the border. The wise way is to settle farther away from the border.

If we want to serve God, we cannot remain at the borderline. We can answer Brother Weigh's kind of questions a thousand times, and the problem will still not be solved. The safe way is to move a little farther away from the border. The main thing is that our occupations should not be a mere increase in dollars, but should be an increase in the value of goods. Any work that is of a service nature is always more noble than works that are purely commercial in nature. A Christian should maintain a high standard in the occupation he chooses. We have to study the noblest way for money to be earned. There is a difference between running a woodcraft store and being a carpenter. A carpenter improves on something from nature, whereas a store owner merely sells woodware; the latter is commercial in nature. It is wise always to stand on the safe side as far as our occupations are concerned.

Perhaps Paul did not have the time to sell the tents himself. Perhaps Mark sold them for him. If that was the case, Mark would have been acting as an agent. This kind of business can still be considered permissible. If I go into some kind of manufacturing business with three or five brothers, and one of us works as the sales agent, this is different from pure buying and selling. Hence, we see the need of coordination here.

Giving Up Occupations that Contain Elements of Danger or Temptations

As for those occupations that contain elements of danger or temptations, we have to give them up. Some resignations involve time and cannot be completed right away. At any rate, it is wrong to take money from others' pockets. We have to settle the matter of occupation by taking care of the basic problem. All occupations should add to the value of goods. The world should see something added to it through my occupation. Works of a commercial nature increase the money, but do not increase the goods. If there is only an increase in wealth without there being an increase in goods, it is wrong. It is unjustified for us to take from society without giving back to society.

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING BROTHER NEE'S OPERATION OF HIS PHARMACEUTICAL BUSINESS

I think I have to say a few words to the brothers who are holding jobs. Among those with whom I have been having fellowship, the matter I am about to share has been quite clear. My personal affairs should also be handed over to the brothers and sisters and be left to their arrangement. It is a long story, and there is no need for me to go into the details of it. But there are certain things that I need to say. At the beginning, I told the brothers that if one day I, Watchman Nee, had to go into business, it would be to the shame of all the brothers who are in business. When the co-workers at times tried to go into business together, I always did my best to stop them. As a result, I began to hear words behind my back, saying that I only allow myself to go into business, but would not allow others to do the same. At that time, I told others, "It is enough that I have gone into it already. There is no need for all of you to do the same." Later I allowed three other co-workers to be involved with it.

From 1931 to 1937, the number of workers among us increased. At that time, many said that they lived by faith. However, they engaged themselves in many "methods" and "schemes." This made me disgusted. I told two or three of the so-called co-workers, who are no longer with us, that they are "living by faith," but I am not "living by faith." What I had said once to the brothers in business, the co-workers, and the ones who were so-called living by faith, I say the same thing today; I will not change what I have said. I begged these three groups of people not to put up their signboard of living by faith. I was hoping that there could be a fourth kind of people, those who can arrange work for the brothers and sisters, and who can help some brothers to live with a peaceful conscience. Although I dared not hope to give them a lot of money, at least I hoped that I could help them to get by in their living and to live with a peaceful conscience.

At the beginning, ninety-eight percent of the pharmaceutical enterprise was in my hand, or in the hands of those who had put their trust in me. Later this became eighty percent. After some time, I was left with only sixty-five percent. After the war, some had requested to withdraw, and my part increased again to become eighty percent.

I went into the business at the beginning with one hope. My situation today is like a widow with a few children, who hopes to raise them up, but who fails. Eventually the widow remarries, and after a while the children are all gone. By that time, she cannot tell why she had remarried in the first place. My hope today is the same as it was then. In between, however, something happened, and I cannot tell you why there was a "remarriage."

For over a year I have not involved myself in many things. When Brother Lee came to Foochow, the fellowship was recovered. But I must say again: My feeling today is the same as it was in 1939. Thank the Lord that in these days Brother Witness has the same feelings as I do. We feel that there are many books we need to write, and many hymns we need to put out. We hope to prepare a new translation of the New Testament. Yet these things are left undone. Some young co-workers wanted me to resume some responsibilities, but time does not allow me to do the same things any longer. If I were put back to 1939, it might have been possible to have another beginning.

Because of the four turmoils and the four incidents of unfaithfulness, money that would have been enough to purchase two or three meeting halls

all slipped out of our hands. Last year, when money was in our hands, it was worth over four hundred thousand dollars. Now, other than the seventy-three thousand dollars that we owe to others, there is still in our hands over two hundred thousand dollars. The money I have in my hands is trust funds; it is what others have entrusted to me. I want to tell you that I am not running away from anything. From now on, this trust fund will be entirely in your hands. Twenty or thirty percent of the shares is in my hands...I cannot do it now, and perhaps you will not allow me to do it now either...What we personally feel in these days is a small thing. Nevertheless, my personal feeling is that, as I have been telling you these days, there must be some to come forward to offer.

Concerning the brothers who are in business, forgive me for saying a few uncomplimentary words: You have taken too much upon yourselves. It seems as if somebody is telling me something. Actually, no one is telling me anything...One sister, Amy Carmichael, who went to India to preach the gospel, was much helped financially by some others...Everyone is needed.

I have to say a few words for my co-workers. I know how Brother Lee spent his days in Chefoo. Some co-workers' children could not go to school and were starving at home. Among us, we have five widows who are without any care. Even today, Brother Tseng Li-san's child is still unable to graduate from elementary school. Today, among us, the number of widows left behind by former co-workers is not five, but twenty. While the husbands of these sisters were alive, they gave up their positions and their jobs. After they died, they were all forgotten. My co-workers, I cannot say that I am good. I admit that I have my shortcomings. We come short in the work, in offering, and in the Lord's grace. But I ask myself, "Why is it that among my co-workers, other than Brother Li-san who was killed by the Communists, ninety percent died of tuberculosis?" On the one hand, I have to say that we have not been responsible enough. On the other hand, I thought that it was I who persuaded them to leave their jobs. You may say that you trust in God, and that God can take care of them. But when I saw them one by one passing away and dying, I was angry. I may have done many wrong things, but God knows why I have done them...(Editor's note: At this point, Brother Nee wept, and everyone wept bitterly.) You may say that I have not been frugal enough. But you do not know my position. If this matter is not settled, many other things cannot be settled.

I do not count on receiving my reward before God. I admit that I had my mistakes. I looked for a way. I told others that CBC [the pharmaceutical enterprise] is a business corporation. I was hoping that I could render some help to those brothers and sisters in need. But I have no liberty in this matter. There should not have been the need for me to say all these things. But since you have handed over yourselves, I also should hand over myself.

We spent fifty thousand dollars on Kuling, another forty thousand dollars on Foochow. For the purchase of the land in Shanghai, we spent four hundred seventy thousand dollars. We have to give everything we have for the gospel. If possible, in the future, please do not force me to do the same thing as I have done. If my co-workers have to do the same thing again, the responsibility falls on the shoulders of you brothers who are in business.

BROTHER LEE'S FELLOWSHIP

Brother Lee: For many years, God's blessings have been among us; they have never left us. God's responsibility is still on our shoulders. We are not so-called "watching the sky from the well," looking at the outside from our small circles. We do believe that God's blessing has not left us. Our responsibility on earth is not finished yet. I do not know how many burdens there are on our shoulders. Brothers, the population of our country occupies one-fourth of the population of the whole world. The most unreached continent in the whole world is Asia, and the most unreached land in Asia is China. The gospel is like a relay race. The Western brothers have sent the gospel to China. But because there was no outreach from China, there was no blessing. This is not God's principle. At least the gospel has to spread throughout the whole of China. Today, we can stand on a lofty ground and say that God can do everything. But who will meet the need? If we are not faithful, God will cause a reaction. If we are not faithful this time, the blessing will come again. But when it does, there will be confusion. It is like a farmer directing water to his field; there must be the proper water ducts. Without the ducts and the ditches, the water will flow all over. If we are more faithful before the Lord and will dig a deeper channel, the water will flow better. God has put us in this place; it is a blessed place. Here we need two groups of people. One is the group that offer their time and bodies for the work of the gospel. The other is the group that offer their money for the gospel.

My words are for both groups of people. I speak to myself, and I speak to the brothers and sisters. In 1943, I went through a severe trial. For a few days, I was asking the Lord why my way was so difficult. Although I cannot say that there was a time when I had nothing to put on my stove, I did fall ill of tuberculosis. It was hard financially. It was hard circumstantially. I was tired in my body, and the Japanese were threatening me. At that time, God provided for me sixteen hundred U.S. dollars through a sister. But later, when I tried to escape, not one dollar was with me. I admit that I felt frustrated. For some time, financially I was at the end of the rope. I could not hold on any longer. I almost collapsed. I told the Lord that I would never admit that my way was wrong. If I were to die that way, so let it be. Yet I would never admit that my way was wrong.

One day, one co-worker came to see me, and he asked, "Should I go back to my job?" I was not weeping outside, but I was weeping inside. I said, "Between the two things, you have to consider what is God's will; you have to consider if God has called you to be full-time and if He has given you the commission." When I said that, I was suppressing God's feeling within me. I saw the difficult circumstances, and I could not bring myself to say what I should have said. That was why I told him to go back to his job.

I do not say that I have done a good work. In Chefoo, many people have asked me to help to train some young ones. I was not so strict with them. If I were to be stricter, I would have said, "The way is here before you. It is up to you to take it or not to take it." Everything will have its final reckoning before the Lord...We have to admit that God's blessing is among us, and it has exceeded the financial limitations that we have put on Him.

From last year until today, we have been trying to buy some land. Because our requirements are too high, and the supply has not come up to the need, what we have received up until today, including what Brother Nee has come up with, is only enough to buy half of the proposed land. If we had three to four hundred gold bars in our hands, the new meeting hall would have been finished nine months ago. This matter is a big burden upon us. Now, brothers everywhere have handed themselves over. It may seem that if we go on this way, we will stir up trouble. But even if we are to stir up trouble, and even if we are to die for it, we have to strive on. In the summer, over one hundred brothers and sisters will have to be trained in Foochow. Every one of them needs three million dollars for support. How much money do we need here!

My co-workers, I admit that the way ahead is not easy. I admit that there will be sufferings. You brothers who are holding jobs should ask the Lord and inquire of Him. How should these problems be solved?

BROTHER NEE'S FELLOWSHIP

Brother Nee: I beg that all of you would take up the things that are in my hands. For you to go into business, there is no shame. But for me to go into business, there is the shame. But I will still say that the responsibility today is on your shoulders.

CHAPTER TEN

FELLOWSHIP AND EXHORTATIONS

Messages Given During the Resumption
of Watchman Nee's Ministry, Chaps. 57-59

by Watchman Nee/Witness Lee

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INDIVIDUALS HANDING OVER RESULTING IN THE BODY TAKING OVER

Brother Du Chung-chun asked: What occupations are considered proper?

Brother Nee answered: Brother Chu said something once: "If I hand something over to the Body, I do not have to take care of it any longer. It is no longer my own business, but the Body's business." This is rightly put. Your burden is no longer on your shoulders, but on the shoulders of the brothers and sisters and the church. If you hand yourself over, everything becomes the Lord's. If you make money, it is God who is making the money; and if you lose money, it is God who is losing the money. Our principle is to let the dead bury the dead. We have to know that to serve God is not just a matter of serving God alone, but to serve Him in the Body. Today, by the grace of God, we have handed ourselves over. If you merely say with your mouth that you are serving God, nobody knows when you have stopped this service. This kind of service is not definite. However, if you hand yourself over, you cannot turn back even if you want to. You may say that you cannot walk, but many others will carry you; they can move you. If our service is for the church, we will be able to give up even the things that we could not otherwise give up. It is not a matter of my own arrangement, but a matter of the Lord's arrangement in the Body. It is a tremendous thing for a person to decide to consecrate himself. However, this thing is not done individually, but in the Body.

Brother Chow asked: In the future, should the brothers engage in business by using the name of the church? (No answer from Brother Nee.)

SISTER RUTH LEE'S FELLOWSHIP AND TESTIMONY

Sister Ruth Lee: I have asked for permission already from the other brothers concerning what I am about to say. It all happened about thirteen years ago. At that time I wanted to have an apartment, but I could not go into detail about the reason for having it...Although I have been negative in recent years, there was still a supply from the brothers. Brother Chu gave me ten thousand dollars, and when Brother Chang Tze-che came from Tsingtao, he gave me a few thousand dollars. From that time on, I decided to set aside a certain amount from what I have received...When I moved back from the countryside, I saw many more white-haired people in the church. The next time I came back, there were even more white hairs...The sisters had given up all their savings, and some sisters had to stay in the hospital and could not go home...What I have can only become less; it will never become more. All the money that I have is enough to feed one more person for a month only; it will be gone by the second month. I can sleep on the floor and let others sleep on my bed. But others will not feel comfortable sleeping this way. If we have to provide a place for others to rest, it should be a place where others can rest comfortably. I felt that somehow I have to have a place that is like a home, that others will not feel ashamed or burdensome to live in, and which is close to the meeting hall. Only then will such a place be able to render others some spiritual help...When a person gets older, she tends to develop her own peculiarities. Others say that living together provides fellowship. Actually, living together provides frustrations. This is why I have hoped all the time to have a place that can provide hospitality for the saints. Brother Lee said that perhaps they can provide a place for me in Chefoo.

Today, I ask Brother Nee to forgive me for all my past attitudes and words. I also ask the responsible brothers to forgive me for my past attitudes and words. I was sympathetic toward Brother Nee's venture into business. Concerning the CBC Laboratory, I heard too many words, and they made me angry. Eventually, these angers spilled over to Brother Nee. Brother Nee said, "The magistrates are the only ones that can light a fire; the common folks should not even light a lamp." [Translator's note: A Chinese idiom meaning that only one is allowed to do something, referring to Brother Nee's venture into business.] I am not Brother Nee, and I cannot speak for him in many things. When others said that Brother Nee was wrong, how could I take such words? I could not single out Brother Nee for blame. As a result, I began to blame the other responsible brothers. Since they had promised that this [the business venture] was God's will already, how could I stop other brothers and

sisters? Yet when others came to me, they were bothered to the point of a mental breakdown, and I could not help but sympathize with them. It is God's grace that I have not had a mental breakdown today. Even if ninety-nine percent of the responsibility lies with others, I still hold one percent of the responsibility. Actually, I should say that I hold more than one percent of the responsibility.

At one time, some people criticized the book *The Normal Christian Church Life* and asked me to say something bad about Brother Nee. People wanted to use me as a tool to oppose Brother Nee.

Concerning the CBC Laboratory, I did tell people that it was a "gossip center." My motive concerning the business was bitter, and my attitude toward Brother Nee was also bitter. I would not say that I have never condemned anything; there were indeed things which I took offense in. Once a person got involved with the CBC Lab, their spiritual condition collapsed. If what has happened these few days had happened then, none of what I am saying would need to be said.

I wish that the tears I shed today would be my last tears. I wish that when I leave the world one day, and others open up my closets, they will find them empty. If my closets are full, it will be to my shame. I realize that it is better to prefer poverty than to prefer wealth. During these years, I did have the thought of selling everything I have. Sometimes I cannot recognize my own belongings. Others always push me to buy something for myself, but I always give this and that kind of excuse. I seldom buy things for myself. When I bought an overcoat, it was three people who literally dragged me to the store to buy it. I do not care much for my own clothing. I am not saving things in my closets and keeping them for myself. As for cash, I cannot come up with even a thousand dollars. I do not have a single piece of gold with me. I can testify for my conscience' sake that all that I have is worth nothing; everything I have is what I need for myself. Of course, I can hand over my rice and my oil. I can give my last drop to the church.

The last time, when the church proposed to buy a piece of land, some people were blaming others, while others were plainly sitting back and watching. At that time, twenty pieces of gold would have done the job. But we waited and waited, until all the money was gone, and everyone was still sitting there watching. Because of this, we accomplished nothing. This is wrong. If

everyone hands himself over today, what follows is the responsibility of the church. I open up myself this way today out of necessity. My words end here.

REQUIREMENTS OF A WORKER

A Proper and Pure Spirit

One brother asked: When is it the time to say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:9)?

Brother Nee answered: In the past, the brothers in all the localities gave the co-workers quite a lot of headaches. Some people were quite zealous outwardly, and they wanted to work full-time. The brothers in those localities went ahead and acknowledged such ones as co-workers, and they received such ones as co-workers on our behalf. This brought us a lot of problems. We cannot recognize such acknowledgments. Those who serve with the ministry of the word ought to learn to touch others' spirit. A servant of God ought to know, when others are speaking, whether the speaker's spirit is in accord with him or is in contradiction to him. The spirit of some is improper or defiled. There is no way for us to remove their defilements. For example, you may come and tell me that Brother Suen is wrong. If Brother Hsu comes along and asks me how Brother Suen is doing, I cannot tell him Brother Suen's mistakes. Even if I were to tell Brother Hsu the mistakes, he may not believe me. Hence, we hope that all those who wish to serve the Lord full-time will first learn some lessons in the church.

Waiting for Confirmation

I am not saying that those who want to give themselves to the work have to be perfect in any sense. However, their spirit has to be pure and simple before the Lord. You may not know the kind of spirit you have. Up to a certain point, everyone else may say that now is the time for you to drop your job. By that time, you should drop your job. Even though some have a heart to serve full-time, they should still wait in their jobs for a while. The question is whether or not the Lord wants such a one to drop everything to serve God at that time.

Our brother Philip Luan died because of our unfaithfulness. He left his job, but did not receive adequate care. Hardly can we find another brother who

loved the Lord as much as he did. We did not have enough light. If we did, and we realized the hardship in the environment, we would have persuaded him to go back to his job. Everyone should have the same need in the preaching of the gospel. Brother Hsia Hsi-ling has a good job at the customs department. He has been working there for many years. He has not asked if he should drop that job, but we feel that he should drop it. Everyone has to offer up himself to the Lord. Those brothers and sisters who are in their jobs are not the first-class citizens. Unless everyone offers up everything, we have no way to go on.

Brother Suen Chang-ming asked: Everyone should be a priest. This kind of service is a matter of coordination. Now in our factory, we have to support one hundred workers, and the burden is already very heavy. In Acts 2 and 4, there were over eight thousand people that needed support. How did they do it?

"Offer Up Yourselves"

Brother Nee answered: After the war, the CBC Laboratory was worth eight hundred thousand dollars. Last year, it was worth only four hundred thousand. This year, it is worth 1.2 million. Yet we owe others seven hundred thousand dollars. We have no idea what will happen next year.

When we were going to buy the land from Mrs. Chow, some consecrated all they had by selling everything. I felt that that money was blood money. After I made the announcement the first and the second time, I dared not make any more announcements, because all the ones who were giving money were middle-class and lower middle-class saints. Those who had the money and who should have offered were slow to move.

After that first failure, I dared not ask others for money again. I told others that, should we have to build a meeting hall, I would do it myself. Sister Ruth Lee may have harbored some complaints against me, that I did not take care of so many works that were necessary, and that instead I went into business. But in order for the work to be done properly, some have to sacrifice themselves. I can say this word to you today: I have done my work, and I have sacrificed myself. Today, I am a part of those who are sharing responsibilities in the work, and I am also a part of those who are holding jobs. I am not an insensitive person. For you to go into business, there is no sense of shame.

But for me to go into business, there is the sense of shame. I know that with this matter some have something to say about me, and I can tell you that some have come and questioned me. Yet, I risk bearing the shame of receiving no greetings on the street. I risk bearing the shame of "remarrying" myself as a widow, so much so that the children are gone, and I am left wondering why I was doing what I was doing, with a dead child in my arms. For eight years, I could not lift up my face and look into the brothers' and sisters' eyes. Do I not have the right today to say a word to you: "Offer up yourselves"? Why would you not offer up yourselves? Today is the time for all the working brothers and sisters to offer up themselves.

TESTIMONIES

Riches Frustrating a Person from Becoming a Proper Christian

Brother Hsu Yung-ming from Hangchow: If we do not take the first step now, we will have no spiritual future. I am willing to hand over all that I have in my hands. I do not have to grit my teeth to take such a step. In order to be a proper Christian, I have to take the way of poverty. If I am rich, I cannot be a good Christian.

Thoroughly Handing Oneself Over

Brother Chan Kwang-hsien from Hangchow testified: Those who are entangled with affairs cannot serve the Lord. We are the Lord's soldiers, and we are trained daily for the purpose of going to war. During the past two years, I saw in Romans 12 that it is a reasonable thing for us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. If we do not obey the Lord, we will be in trouble. If salt loses its taste, it will become useless. If we do not hand ourselves over to the Lord in a thorough way, what we do will amount to nothing. Everything belongs to the Lord, and everything of the Lord is ours. We can never be separated from Him. If I do not follow the Lord, I will remain in the world, and in the world there is only darkness. Even when we make some money, we will not have peace, and we will not be able to sleep well. May the Lord remove our foolishness. He is the One who abides forever.

Handing Over One's Riches to Become Free

Brother Chang Yu-lan from Nanking testified: I am quite old already, and I have been saved seven years. In the past, through my work in scientific research, my two eyes were damaged by an explosion. After I prayed, the Lord recovered one of my eyes, which can now see clearly. I have three shortcomings. The first is that I am short in consecration. Consecration requires concrete expressions. Without concrete expressions, it is not enough just to have the heart. Now, everyone is handing over themselves with a consecration slip. I must therefore hand myself over also. Second, I have been a major general for twenty years, and all the officers have been very good to me. It is difficult to cut off this relationship. Third, there is the problem of serving mammon. Mammon has put my body and soul under bondage. I can have twenty million dollars with me, but what good does that do if my mind is in bondage? If I cannot get through in this matter, money will still exercise its influence on me. If I hand over my wealth and I die, everything will be over. But to be a living sacrifice is more troublesome, because I still have to live. I am willing to hand over everything I have to the apostles, and I am willing to be without any opinion. When I hand myself over, I become free. Many people have died in the hands of the Communists; their goods were confiscated. It is better that I consecrate everything to the Lord instead.

Brother Witness Lee laid hands on him and prayed for him: Lord, gain our brother within and without. Your works are eternal works. May You work more and more in our brother, that his spirit will become stronger and stronger, that his eyes will become brighter and brighter. This is the Body's prayer, and we believe that the Head affirms it. May those who touch him see light daily, and may he be able to send others away in blessings. Accomplish for him what he purposes in his heart. Prepare for him a job that exceeds all that we ask or think. May You cover him much with Your blood for Your testimony's sake. Strengthen our brother's inner man, until the day we see You.

Brother Hsia Wen-tsao testified: In the past, I was always bound. Two years ago today, I had a thousand mou [Chinese acre] of land and a fabric store. Although I was strong outwardly, I was weak inwardly. Today, all these things are gone. I should have consecrated everything then, and I would have saved so many souls. Today, if we do not give ourselves to the Lord, Satan will not let us go; he will try to gain us.

Offering Up Our Money Being a Great Deliverance

Brother Chi Yung-tung testified: After I heard Brother Nee's words, untold tears were flowing within me. I was brought into the responsibility of the work through our brother. When I left my job in 1928, I had five children, and I was in debt. But what the Lord has given me today is so much richer than what I had. The Lord is responsible for meeting His demands, because whatever comes from God, God Himself will be responsible for fulfilling it. I was once a rich man, and I encountered robbers four times. These robbers were not only after money; they were after our lives. They tried purposely to kill the landlords and the capitalists. They had killed over thirty people out of forty. These facts are for our warning. It is good for Christians to be neither rich nor poor. Money makes a person proud, and consecration is a great deliverance. We must not miss the Lord's command today.

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:1-2, 4; Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-35; 5:12-14

MONEY AND THE SERVICE IN THE BODY

Consecrating Everything for the Purpose of Serving in the Body

Brother Witness Lee's fellowship: Romans 12 speaks in a strong way of the matter of consecration. The consecration there is for service. This service is a service in the Body of Christ. It is not individual service, but service in the Body. If a man is not in the Body, it is difficult for him to understand God's will. I am afraid some people will misunderstand what we are doing here during the past few days and will think that we are rallying a fund-raising campaign. If you understand things in this way, you are off. We have received God's grace to serve Him in this age. In order to do that, we have to offer up everything and put everything in the Body. We need to be coordinated in our work and in our jobs. In order for God to take the fast way, and in order for the work to reach a high standard, we must have such a kind of consecration.

Where Riches Are, There Being Our Person Also

Why do we have to touch the matter of riches? It is because the Lord says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). Where your heart is, there will be your very person also. Riches are like a nail; they

nail a person down. Perhaps in these few days, some nails have loosened up. But they have not fallen down yet.

Deliverance from Riches Being the Practical Way to Offer Up Our Bodies

The first time God did such a work was in Acts 2. There the saved ones were delivered from riches on the first day (vv. 44-45). Yet today, every one of us is still under the tight grip of riches; they are still nailing us down. May God deliver every one of us from riches. Romans 12 speaks of two bodies. One is our own body, and the other is the Body of Christ. We offer up our bodies for the Body of Christ. If a man has not been delivered from riches, he cannot offer up his body to God.

The most powerful testimony in God's recovery is the testimony of the Body. In order to have the Body service, a man must offer up his own body as a living sacrifice.

Being Delivered from Money to Serve in the Body

Acts 2 and 4 show us that as soon as money goes out, there is the one accord. When the disciples took care of the problem of money, the one accord followed, and God's work was realized in a marvelous way in an instant. The book of Acts is our standard. The first time God saved men, He saved them in great numbers. All those men were delivered from riches. Their service was carried out in the Body. This service in one accord is the Body service spoken of in Romans 12.

Dealing with Money to Have the Body Service

If a Christian has not been terminated by God with respect to money, he cannot serve the Lord along with other members. Even if he is to serve, his service will be a superficial one and will not be one that issues from the heart. One of the greatest obstacles to our consecration is the matter of riches. And one of the greatest enemies in the Body of Christ is individualism. In Acts, no one said that anything was his own. If you say that this money is yours, it will be difficult for you to be delivered from individualism. The strongest manifestation of individualism is in the matter of money.

Our way, our work, and our testimony in the future lie with the Body. If the question of money is not settled, we cannot expect to have good coordination, and we cannot expect that we can serve God.

TESTIMONIES

Consecration through the Lord's Love

Brother Du Chung-chun testified: I once consecrated myself to the Lord. For a few months I did not have a job, and I was left with twenty to thirty thousand dollars. Others were hoarding, but I would not do that. Others suggested that I should stock up on rice, but I did not do it. Later I almost committed suicide. I thought that I was quite good, that Satan would choose to attack me. I knew that Satan did not attack some others. This meant that they were worse than I was!

But then later I also did some hoarding. I bought medicines. On the one hand, I was condemning others for hoarding. But on the other hand, I was doing the same thing. It is bad enough for a man to be sick; it is worse when others hold back medicines from him. From that time on, I dared not despise others any more.

I was like Thomas, who would not believe until he saw with his own eyes. I did not consecrate myself, and I became very unhappy. Humanly speaking, consecration costs our life. But actually, it is the Lord who has loved us. If a mother asks a child for something, and if the child loves the mother, he will surely give it to her. But will the mother take the thing away and keep it for herself?

Everything Being in the Body

Brother Lan Chi-i testified: I am a misguided man. I was brought up in a misguided environment, and I have been taught by misguided teachings. At the age of thirteen I was saved. Although I was misguided, the Father who has begotten me is not misguided. His leading and His demands are the same as His supply. The supply to meet the demands does not come from us, but from the Lord.

In 1939, Brother Nee spoke on the Body. He said that if a person leaves Christ, he cannot survive, and that in the same way, if a person leaves the

Body of Christ, he also cannot survive. In our work and our living, we have to be in the Body. That revelation was like the shining of the sun to me; it outshone my dying lamp and made me feel ashamed.

Forsaking All for the Lord Not Being a Loss but a Gain

Brother Chen Keh-san testified: After I was saved, someone said to me, "In what position you are called, you should remain in that position" (1 Cor. 7:20). I was deceived by this word. At that time I was the superintendent of the police department. Later, when I dropped the world, I shed many tears. Yet the Lord was moving within me. I have dropped many things, but it was not because I was afraid of the Communists.

From age twenty-four to twenty-six, I was the superintendent of the police department. After I was called, I felt that, should I have to give up the whole world to gain one soul only, it would have been worthwhile. I reckoned that even if I could get only one person saved during my whole life, it would be better than for me to gain the whole world. But a few days after I said this, I got one person saved already. You may think that what you have dropped is something great, but to the Lord it is a very small thing. What we have is very little. The Lord is the great ocean. Seemingly, when we forsake something, it is a loss to us. Actually, it is a gain.

At Home in the Body

Once a person touches the Body, he feels happy. One day I was on a ship, and I did not see any brother. It made my spirit depressed. Here, you have too many brothers. This may cause you to take things for granted. In Kutien, one brother had to travel seven days to visit another brother and had to spend eight days for the return journey. The traveling alone took him fifteen days. In our heart, we fellowship with the Christ in heaven. But while we remain in our bodies, we still have to seek for the fellowship of the brothers who are visible.

I was invited by someone to visit Hsien-yu, and I thought that I could be back home in one or two months. But once I was there, I was kept from coming back. This was a foolish thing for me to do. It was not until Brother Witness Lee came to me that I returned home. Today, it is not a question of doctrine, but a question of life. A man can listen to Charles Spurgeon speak

for twelve years and still not be saved. Yet when he touches life, he will be saved. In the same way, we only have to touch the Body once. We are coming forward to the heavenly Jerusalem. There we have Paul and Peter; this heavenly worship also includes us. Here is no limitation of time and space; what is theirs is ours also. By this, the individuals receive the riches of the Body.

Scripture Reading: John 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17

THE LIFE OF THE BODY AND THE LIVING IN THE BODY

Every Life Having Its Own Characteristics, Demands, and Tastes

Brother Witness Lee: With the Lord's salvation, there is the life. This is different from all teachings, doctrines, religions, or philosophies. The Lord's salvation does not cause us to do something in an outward way. This life has its own demands and characteristics. The fish has the characteristics of a fish, and the bird has the characteristics of a bird. Every living thing has its own characteristics, and each kind of life has its own taste. The fish needs to live in the water. We do not have to tell the fish, "You should live in the water. This is proper and right." When we eat, the food meets the need within us. This need within us causes us to realize that the food is good, sweet, and pleasant.

There are things that we do not like. Yet, if you put these things in front of a pig, it may think that they are very good. On the other hand, the food that you like, such as chocolate, oranges, or peaches, may not be appealing to the pig when they are placed before it. Why is this so? It is because there is a difference in life that results in a difference in taste.

Living in the Body by the Demand of the Body Life

A person is not a Christian according to teaching, but according to taste. It is a matter of the demand of the life within. Only those Christians who live according to this demand and this taste are "standard" Christians. Why would you not sin after you are saved? Is it because the Bible teaches you so? Is it because you are afraid that the church would excommunicate you? We do not

sin because we do not feel comfortable within if we sin. We act righteously, live a holy life, and walk in the light because we feel uncomfortable within if we do not do these things. A Christian loves others because the life within him is a loving life. The life that we have received at salvation is a Body life; it is a corporate life. It demands that you serve God together with all the saints. Is it possible for a person to be saved and yet not meet with others? Will he be happy? Surely he will not be happy.

Some have said that, after a person has been a Christian for a long time, meetings will become tasteless to him. If you have lost your taste for the meetings in Shanghai, try to go to Soochow to study the Bible and to pray alone. Immediately, you will see that this will not meet the inward demand. The life within demands that we mingle together with all the saints in fellowship and coordination. By yourself, you can ride in the clouds all alone. But let me ask you: When Brother Chen Keh-san was in Hsien-yu, was he comfortable? Did he not feel like a hanging corpse, being neither in heaven nor on earth? When I arrived at Kulongsu, he was still trying to stay at Hsien-yu. Of course, in the end he still came. The first day we spoke, he began to cry. He said, "For so many years, I did not know where I was." If your hands remain in your Body, they look fine. But if the hands are cut off from the Body and are hung on a tree, will they look fine? If you see such hands, you will surely be startled. That would surely be like a hanging corpse.

At Home in the Fellowship of the Body

The Body is not a teaching; it is a life. Anyone who acts contrary to the demand of this life will not feel comfortable or be at ease. This life not only demands that we love and be patient; it also demands that we behave as Body Christians. Twenty years ago, God might have tolerated your being an independent Christian. But all those who want to meet God's demands today feel the need of fellowship, the Body fellowship. Once a person is in this fellowship, he feels at home. The Christian life is a matter of life; everything issues from the demand of this life.

Offering Up Everything for the Body Life

I was saved twenty-three years ago. At that time I did have the opportunity to make money. Yet, when money came into my hands, after a few months I did not have the peace.

In reading the history of the early martyrs, we find a story about a group of soldiers who once rounded up some Christians in order to torture them. One Christian could not stand the pressure and withdrew. But a soldier who saw the glorious expressions on the faces of the martyrs ran up and asked to fill in the place of the one who had withdrawn.

From today on, if you are still an independent Christian, you will not feel comfortable. This is not simply a demand of love, it is a demand of life. All those who will not offer up themselves will go away sorrowing, just as the young ruler did (Matt. 19:21-22). All those who offer up themselves will say, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" Every time you meet God's demand, He will become your strength. Today, we need to meet all of God's demands. If you only meet part of His demands, He will not work for you. Only when you meet the Lord's full demands will He work for you.

One sister hoarded many legs of ham in her house. The Lord constrained her to consecrate. When she took up one leg, she felt that it was too big and tried to change for a smaller one. When she took up the second one, she still felt that it was too big. When she picked up the third one, she still felt that it was too big. In desperation she said to Satan, "Satan, if you say one more time that this is too big, I am going to give every one of them away!"

God's commandment to the Israelites was that they first had to put their feet into the waters of the Jordan before the waters would open up and the power would come. Brothers and sisters, give yourselves boldly to the Lord! Do not worry about anything any longer!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HOW TO HANDLE THE ITEMS THAT HAVE BEEN HANDED OVER

CWWN, The (Set 3) Vol. 61:
Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (1), Chap.13
by Watchman Nee
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PRAYER

Brother Weigh: Lord, You are the Head of the church. The church is Your Body. We pray that the church will receive something from You as the Head. May Your Body feel what the Head feels. May it be directed by the Head and receive supply from the Head. May each member in the Body receive the same rich supply from the Head. Lord, in ourselves we can do nothing. May Your anointing be with us, and may Your church speak the right things and make the right decisions. May the church be under Your full control. Amen.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH BEING THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

Watchman Nee: The gospel is a work that the Lord has assigned to the church. The church exists on the earth for the gospel. The entire New Testament shows us clearly that the responsibility of the church is to preach the gospel. Last night we went one step further and saw that the preaching of the gospel by the church means that the preaching is not done by just a few people. We do not preach when we are hot and stop when we are cold. It is not a preaching in which each person takes turns being burning and preaching by himself. The whole church has to rise up to preach in coordination. Evangelism is a matter of the whole church. The whole church has to further the gospel of God in one accord. The church has the responsibility of joining hands together to preach the gospel. The church is the Body of Christ; it is always active. Therefore, the gospel should always be moving; there must not be any lull. In the early church, we find men who handed themselves over. Today we should see men doing the same thing, not

just in ones and twos, but as a whole. Everyone has to offer up himself as well as his all. If only a few offer up themselves, or worse still, if none offer up themselves as in the past, the gospel will never reach the uttermost part of the earth.

DEALING WITH THE ITEMS THAT WERE HANDED OVER

Tonight we will address the brothers and sisters who have handed themselves over. We are not going to give a message. Instead, we would like to have a talk with you. We want to say something on the negative side as well as something on the positive side. Presently, we have a good number of saints who have handed themselves over. I hope that you can testify to the other brothers and sisters how you have willingly forsaken everything to follow the Lord. We want to make suitable arrangements concerning the items that have been handed over. We want to do this according to the Lord's heart. We do not want to make mistakes with the things that have been handed over. We hope that we can make proper arrangements. We should address two matters—first the things that have been handed over and then the very persons who have handed themselves over, including what to do with their future. There are two groups of people among those who have handed themselves over. One group is the brothers and sisters who have been holding a job in the world for a number of years. The other group is the young brothers and sisters who are still in school and have not touched many of the things of the world yet. A man goes through only a limited number of crises in his lifetime. If he fails to gain something beneficial through these crises, he will stumble and falter before the Lord. We will make some arrangements concerning their future. Our hope is that they will be brought into coordination and that their way ahead will be straight. Tonight we will deal with the items that have been handed over.

Sister Cheng

Sister Cheng is a student. On her consecration slip she consecrated her whole life to the Lord. In the items that were handed over, she included three U.S. dollars and a few dresses. Sister Cheng, you are living with your parents at home. Do they have a problem with your consecration? God does not want us to steal or rob for Him. The heaven, the earth, and everything therein are His. He does not need us to give Him anything. Whatever is in your house

that you do not have a full right to dispose of should not be offered to God. Even if you are giving these things to God, He will not take them. Concerning your personal clothing, you should go home and discuss this matter with your parents. You can sell one or two of them and give the money to the poor. You have handed over your belongings to the church. Now the church hands them back to you to be placed under your trust. These things are no longer yours.

Voluntary Poverty for the Gospel's Sake

More than one student is sitting here. I will say something to the young people as a whole. In all the Gospels God requires that we love the sinners and the poor from the bottom of our hearts. This is the reason the Lord said in Luke 4:18 that the poor have the gospel preached to them. In this world there are many poor people. We are not as poor as those who are genuinely poor. In the past we could say that we were the middle class, but there are not many people who now belong to the middle class anymore. There are many people who are much poorer than us. As we preach the gospel to them, we will find a great difference between us and them. This will make our preaching ineffective. A Christian must learn to take the way of voluntary poverty before he can preach the gospel effectively. We have to volunteer to become poor. We have to volunteer to forsake everything. Please remember that our Lord Jesus was rich but was made poor for our sake (2 Cor. 8:9). When our Lord came to preach the gospel, He became poor. If we do not become poor, we cannot preach the gospel. Today you are becoming poor for the first time for the Lord's sake. This is a sanctifying time for you. Tonight you are standing on new ground.

Building Up a Character of Giving

A problem with human beings is our tendency to build up our preferences. The children of the devil walk according the desires of their heart (Eph. 2:3), but, as Christians, we have to learn to break down what we once cherished. We have to learn to give up what our heart loves. People in the world are worried that they have not taken enough from the world, but we must learn to drop what we love. We want to build up a proper Christian character gradually. If we continually drop what we love, we will become more like a Christian. In order to build up a Christian character, we have to learn to give up everything for the Lord at a young age. We have to learn to say, "I give this and that up because I love the Lord." We have to give away things again and

again. While we are young, we should learn to not act according to our preference. Learn to give everything away. Only this kind of people will be able to preach the gospel.

Learning to Buffet the Body

When we go to the villages, we have to dress like the villagers. Do not say anything about their filthiness or lowliness. We should be able to live in the cities as well as in the villages. If we cannot stand the villages, we are loving ourselves too much. We have disqualified ourselves from the gospel. In order to preach the gospel, we have to learn to deny ourselves. Some people dare not touch the tea offered to them in the villages. They wash and rinse the bowls that are offered to them. Such ones cannot preach the gospel. The Lord cannot use anyone who is selfish or self-loving. If we think that living in the villages will wear us out, we should move back to our original place; there is no need to stay there reluctantly and claim that we are preaching the gospel for the Lord's sake. We have to learn to live in a lowly way.

Budgeting Our Need and Offering Up the Rest

Those who are living by their parents' income should learn to do one thing: They should find out before the Lord how much they actually need every month. They have to find out how much they need for pocket money and how much they need for food and for other uses. They must make an accurate calculation. From our youth we have to decide for ourselves the maximum amount we can spend. Before we spend any money, reckon carefully. While we are students, we should learn to budget every item of our expenses and then offer up the excess. There should be such a covenant between us and the Lord. If our parents give us more, we should offer it to the church for the gospel work in inland regions or for the poor.

Sister Bau

All of your things are returned to you for your own use. We believe that your consecration before the Lord has been accepted by Him. However, if there are any items which your heart cherishes, you should give one or two of them to other sisters. This is for your own good. If you have extra clothing, you can ask the church to help you to send them to Yi-Yang or Kuling. There are over thirteen hundred brothers and sisters everywhere who are in need.

Sister Yang

The two watches that you handed over can be given to younger sisters. Find out who does not have a watch and give these to them. If any item is a cherished object, you should give it to a faraway place. Everything you have in your house should be things that you need. If you do not need something, do not develop a habit of buying it. I say this because none of the things you consecrated are particularly valuable. The church is handing these things back to you. You should do your best to keep this principle month by month. Do not spend easily. Always buy only what you need.

John Wesley's Example in Spending

The first year John Wesley served the Lord, his total spending was ninety-eight pounds. Ten years later he was still spending ninety-eight pounds a year. Thirty years later it was still ninety-eight pounds. By the time of his death, he was still spending the same amount. In his latter years he was able to offer thousands of pounds every year. He learned this habit from his early days when he spent less than a hundred pounds a year. His heart was fully for the spread of the gospel. He is our good pattern.

Sister Chan

Among the items that you have handed over are seven skirts. Is this not too much to give them all away? If you only have seven skirts, I hope that you would give away the one you most loved. That is all you need to do. I do not wish to see you giving away too much. Handing ourselves over is for the purpose that others will not be in want. But if that will leave us in want, then the time for handing over has not yet come.

Saving Everything We Can for the Gospel

We are the most generous people in the world because we can give away everything. At the same time, we are the most thrifty people in the world. We will not buy anything that we do not need. After we have offered up everything, we may be asked to take it back from the hand of the church, but the feeling should be completely different. Previously we were the master. Now we belong to the Lord, and our money belongs to Him. We dare not randomly spend any longer. If a servant uses his master's money carelessly,

others will report to the master that he is wasting and squandering his master's money. Of course, all of us have different standards of living, but we should always do our best to save our money for the Lord and for the gospel.

Sister Nee

When I was young, I was full of cravings. I wished that I could possess everything in this world. But today this craving is gone, because the Lord has satisfied my heart. My taste towards the world has changed. Others are taking in the things of the world like hungry men. I am taking them in like a filled man. This is where the difference lies. Paul said to the Corinthians that those who use the things of the world should be as though they do not abuse them (1 Cor. 7:31). A Christian is not one who shuns the things of the world. Rather, he uses them as though he is not abusing them.

Sister Yang

All the items on your list can be given away. Let me say a word to the young brothers and sisters: You have to put a limit on your spending. Spend only what you need to spend. Do not waste anything. If you are making or knitting a dress, learn to make a few more and give away one or two of them. Never be negligent in this matter. You have to learn to say to yourself, "I am a servant of the Lord. My possessions should only be enough for my own use. Anything that I have in excess I should give away." Of course, you have to have your mother's permission. Please remember that today is the day you are making a vow before the Lord. If your parents do not approve of your vow, they can overturn it. Their silence, however, can be considered as their consent (cf. Num. 30:3-5). In addition to learning to hand over your all, you have to learn to submit to your parents. In this way you can give a good testimony to the gospel.

Brother Yu

I read your list yesterday. Many young brothers and sisters loved the Lord very much when they were students, but when they started to work they became different. In my youth in Fukien, sixty-six brothers and sisters were baptized. Later, I corresponded with Mr. D. M. Panton. In my first letter to him, he told me that Miss M. E. Barber had written to him and had told him that it would be a miracle if six out of the sixty-six remained after ten years. At

that time I could not take this word. I thought that these sixty-six brothers and sisters were not ordinary people; they were the pride of their generation. Today, when I count, I find that only four, not six, remain of the sixty-six. At that time we were all poor students, but we did our best to save. By saving ten cents, we could print a hundred gospel tracts. By saving a dollar, we could print a thousand tracts. However, in looking back, I can see that many of them were poor involuntarily; they were forced to take this way. Once they took up a job and earned some money, their thought turned to their own replenishment. The more they acquired things of this world, the more they wanted to acquire. The more they took in the world, the more they wanted to take in. It is like an opium addiction; the more one takes, the more he is addicted. In the end he is unable to quit. You have to learn to consecrate yourself voluntarily from the bottom of your heart; no one should force you to do it.

Miss Lei

There are a few items which you have handed over. In addition you have two rings and a lapel pin. It is good that you have handed over your jewelry, but take care that you do not buy any more again. A Christian should not have any gold or silver, except that used for dental fillings of his teeth. He should be like Peter, who said that we should not have for our adorning any jewelry, but should have instead for adornment a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

The Principle of Selling or Giving Away the Offered Goods

The principle the church exercises concerning consecrated items is to return them to you for you to sell them. The church will not do the selling and giving away for you. This is because the church wants to stay away from criticism or slander. The church can find a place for you to sell your things, or it can inform you where there are needs and who has needs. But the church will not do the selling or giving away for you. You have to do the selling and giving away yourself. When I return to you the things and ask you to sell them yourself, I am showing you where the things have gone. This is to prevent Satan from bothering you or lying to you one day by giving you the thought that the church has cheated you. Paul said that we should exercise foresight for what is honorable in the sight of man (2 Cor. 8:21). I hope that we will all be clear about this principle.

Brother Sun

Mr. Sun is also here with us. Brother Sun has given a short testimony concerning how the Lord led him to hand over himself the first and second time. The first time was in Foochow. One day a certain Brother Hsieh asked him, "Shanghai is having a revival because all the brothers and sisters have handed themselves over. What would you say to that?" At that time he felt that those engaged in business could never be ready for the rapture. It so happened that, during that period of time, there was a seven-day conference in Foochow, and the truth and practice of handing oneself over was released. The second night he stood up and declared that he would sell everything to follow the Lord. Thank God it has been two years since he made that commitment.

He testified that because of that first consecration, the Lord began a revival in him. Later, in his escape from the war, he was enlightened a second time on his journey. He confessed his sin on a ship, saying, "Lord, I have not been faithful in the service of Your house. I still have many possessions." At that time, the ships in front of and behind him were bombed, and between one hundred to two hundred people were killed. Yet he was preserved. He had thought of escaping to Taiwan. But in order to avoid further bombing, he decided to change his course and come to Hong Kong instead. Now he has a car shop. He is willing to hand himself over once more. He has forty bicycles, forty-five tires, twenty rolls of fabric, two pieces of land in Nanping, and ten cars. In addition, he has thirty-five cars and two taels of gold in Taiwan. He wants to hand over all these things.

I believe that in principle all these things need to be dealt with. If a Christian has a piece of land or a shop, it is best that he does not rent it out to others. The two pieces of land in Nanping can be sold. The golden necklace and the rings can also be sold. According to the principle of the Bible, we should not have any silver or gold (Acts 3:6). As for your trading business, after some time you can join the brothers in Fukien and go into a trading business together. But time does not allow us to be in trading for too long. If the Lord is willing, you can try to start some small manufacturing business. A Christian should earn by producing something. God does not want us to be in the employment of pure trading. Paul made tents; he did not engage himself in wholesale tent trading. Pure commerce easily corrupts Christian character.

I hope that you will stay away from pure commerce, and involve yourself in some form of production instead.

A COVENANT OF CAREFUL SPENDING

There is another thing of which I would like to remind the brothers who are in business. I believe we should learn from John Wesley, who had a holy, secret covenant with the Lord. Between you and God there should be a careful pact as to how much you can spend. A Christian's spending habit should be according to God's measure of spending. To increase spending based on increased income is not the Christian way of living. The church does not want to say anything about a man's standard of living. It will not decide what this secret covenant between you and God should be.

I am not an extreme person. I do not want to say any extreme things, but presently, in the midst of all the turmoil of war, many people do not have enough to eat. How can we live peacefully in excess? This corrupts Christian character. Between us and God there should be a crucial and secret covenant. This will limit us from careless spending. We will not dare to buy anything capriciously.

John Wesley kept his secret covenant with the Lord all his years. As soon as his spending reached a certain point, he would freeze his spending. All the brothers in business should learn to do the same. They should say, "My standard of living will only go up to a certain point, after which I will have to freeze it. I will only allow it to reach that point, beyond which I will not do anything." Many people will have to make this decision before the Lord. Whether the standard should be higher or lower should be decided by each individual's amount of consecration before the Lord. Do not compare yourself with others. But do not set the standard too low, unless that is a standard with which God has enlightened you. Always follow the Lord's leading, not your own choices. Once you have made the decision, do your best to abide by that secret covenant. You should abide by it for ten years, twenty years, or thirty years. In this way we can give away everything for the Lord.

The brothers and sisters who are in school should decide for themselves how much they should spend a month on miscellaneous items. They do not have to let their parents know about this amount. If their parents give them more, they can offer it up for the gospel. There are things that they have

control over and that occupy their heart. They should select one or two cherished items of these things and give these away. In this way they will learn not to love mammon and the things of this world.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE SERVICE OF THE WHOLE BODY

Messages Given During the Resumption
of Watchman Nee's Ministry, Chap. 61

by Watchman Nee/Witness Lee

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ALL REDEEMED ONES NEEDING TO SERVE GOD

At present, among God's children there seems to be a common phenomenon that only a certain group of people are serving. However, God's word says that everyone who belongs to God is a servant of God. When the Israelites were in Egypt serving as slaves, they did not have any freedom. God delivered them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea for the purpose that they would serve Him in the wilderness (Exo. 3:18). The number of people under the blood was the number of people who left Egypt. The number of saved ones was the number of serving ones. When the Israelites left Egypt, they brought all the gold and silver with them (Exo. 12:35-36). Hence, as many as there were who were redeemed, that many served God in material offerings, and that many followed the tabernacle. It was not just a minority who served. Both in the Old Testament and in the New as well, there was not a distinction between the serving ones and the non-serving ones. Only degraded Christianity makes a distinction between the serving ones and the non-serving ones.

THE HISTORY OF THE PRIESTHOOD AND ITS CHANGES

God's Salvation Being to Obtain a Kingdom of Priests

God said explicitly that He would make the Israelites a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:6). The priests are those who wait on God and follow God. No one else is able to come as close to God as the priests can. Their job is to serve God. The Israelites were to be a kingdom of priests; the whole nation was to be priests.

The priests' eating, their living, and their slaughtering of the bulls and the goats were all for the purpose of serving God. The proper profession of the priests was to serve God; everything else was a sideline. They were not working as teachers, doctors, or in any other professions. Exodus 19 tells us that God intended that all the Israelites, old or young, great or small, male or female, were to be the priests.

The goal of God's salvation is to gain the priests (Rev. 1:5-6a). The blood of the Passover lamb delivered the Israelites with the goal of obtaining and ushering in a kingdom of priests. The greatest calling and also the greatest grace is that men can serve God as priests. As many as there were who left Egypt, the same number were to serve God. As many as there were who reached Sinai, that many should serve the Lord.

The Degradation of the Israelites Resulting In a Kingdom of Priests Becoming a Tribe of Priests

At the bottom of the mountain, the Israelites worshipped the golden calf and sinned against God. As a result, Moses told the people to kill their own brothers. However, only the Levites obeyed Moses' words, and they killed three thousand people (Exo. 32:1-29). The loss of three thousand men was not the greatest loss. The greatest loss was that the people could not all be priests any longer. Originally, it was twelve tribes who were to be the priests. Now only one tribe was left (Num. 8:5-19). Originally, it was to be a kingdom of priests. Now it became a tribe of priests. The Levites did not care for human feelings or sentiments, and they stood on God's side. As a result, they gained the priesthood. Here we see that some had forsaken their priesthood. They had forsaken it through the worship of the idol; they established another worship.

Because of rebellion, the earth opened up its mouth and swallowed up the rebellious ones (Num. 16:30-33). Only Aaron's rod budded; all the other rods became dead (Num. 17:6-10). Only one tribe was selected to serve God. After this, the people lost their standing before God; they could only come to God through the priests. Even those who had a heart to come to God were kept outside. The eleven tribes became those who were far from God, and only the Levites were the ones who drew near to God. The eleven tribes became those who could only come to God indirectly, whereas the Levites were the ones

who could come to God directly. The eleven tribes became the ones who were served, while the Levites became the serving ones.

The book of Judges shows that the Levites became excessively honored because the Israelites could not serve, even if they had money. The Israelites had to ask the Levites to serve for them (Judg. 17), and it took a great effort for men to invite a Levite to serve in their house.

In the New Testament, God's Desire Being for the Church to Be a Kingdom of Priests

This situation lasted for over fifteen hundred years. All of this time, eleven out of twelve tribes were kept outside the tabernacle, and only the tribe of Levi was admitted into the tabernacle. This lasted until the New Testament, when Peter said in his first Epistle, "But you are...a royal priesthood" (2:9). Now everyone becomes a servant of God. At the end of the New Testament, in A.D. 95, when John was about to die, he said that we have been made "a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev. 1:6). God's intention toward the church today is for everyone to be a priest. We are a kingdom of priests. What the Israelites had lost, God is recovering through the church. Through their unfaithfulness, the Israelites lost the priestly kingdom. God's intention today is for every Christian to be recovered to be a priest.

THE RECOVERY OF THE UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD

All the Saved Ones Serving God

Any service that is not in the nature of a priestly kingdom is wrong. The church has been selected out of the world already. There cannot be a further selection within the church. As long as there is no sin, no fall, and no golden calf, God forbids any further separation. As many as there are who are redeemed by the blood, that many should serve. However many sons there are, that should be the number of servants also. The number of servants should equal the number of sons. Service should include the same number that salvation includes. Today among God's people, there are only backsliding ones; there are no non-slaves or non-maids. There are only rebellious ones; there are no non-serving ones. Any service should be a service by the whole church. This is the Body service that we are talking about in these days. The problem today is that God is not satisfied even when ninety-nine percent of

the people are serving. God wants everyone to be serving. We do not believe that a majority of the people should serve, while a minority of the people do not serve. Neither do we believe that a minority of the people should serve, while a majority of the people do not serve. Service is not the work of the ministers, or the work of a few evangelists. Why do we speak so much about the Body service? It is because it is a matter that belongs to all the brothers and sisters.

A Person Needing to Forsake Everything to Serve God As Soon As He Is Saved

God's word tells us that we are those who have received God's mercy. But what should we do now? Christianity thinks that a man is first saved through the Lord's blood and by His grace, and then goes on further to forsake the world. As he advances further, he drops everything to serve God. This is degraded Christianity. According to God's word, as soon as a man is saved, and as soon as he steps into the entrance, the Lord tells him to take up the cross (Matt. 16:24). Either a man does not become a disciple, or he has to be one in an absolute way. The Lord sets the price clearly right from the beginning for every saved one. The first day they come, they see the tomb. The first day they come, they are asked to forsake the world. We cannot lower down the gospel, and make the gospel no more the gospel. The Lord never lowers the price to attract customers. The gospel is the least expensive thing there is. Yet at the same time, it is the most costly thing there is. If we are to be saved, we have to be saved in a clear-cut way. Only those who have paid a high price can feel the joy. When the young ruler returned home, his money remained with him, and so did his sorrow (Matt. 19:22). Where money is, there sorrow remains. When money is gone, joy comes along. This kind of salvation requires that a man give up everything totally. Today, many brothers and sisters are sorrowful, just as the young ruler was. They have things in their hands that they cannot drop. The only difference between them and the young ruler is that they have not returned home yet; they are still meeting here. If you want joy, you have to consecrate yourself fully and offer up everything.

The Whole Body Consecrating, Ushering In a Thorough Service

Last year I asked a student at the Chiao-tung University how he would feel if someone were to hit him on his right cheek. If someone hit your right cheek, you would be angry when you go home. However, those who are joyful before the Lord are the ones who, after being hit on the right cheek, turn their left cheek to the enemy. After a person has been hit twice, he will be joyful, and he will be able to utter praise. The Lord's way is the way of absoluteness. Those who are not absolute cannot sing. I am not begging people to come to serve. I am showing you that you are a servant of God. God wants you to serve.

This time our conference is a co-workers' conference, but this does not mean that the responsibility is only on the co-workers. Today, the responsibility is on the whole Body. When we read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, we see that service belongs to the whole Body; it is not a service of three or five special people. For this reason, we asked all the brothers and sisters to hand themselves over. What the Lord wants is absolute service. We hope that every brother and sister can get through in this matter. The Lord wants such an absolute service. Not only the co-workers need coordination in their work; every brother and sister needs to be coordinated also.

THE ONLY SERVICE THAT COUNTS

BEING THE BODY SERVICE

I want to ask the brothers a few questions. What kind of service is considered real service? The only service that counts is the service in which the whole Body serves. Only the Body service can be counted as real service. Either you are not a Christian at all, or you have to be a serving Christian.

FULL COORDINATION

BRINGING IN THE BODY SERVICE

In order to have the Body service, there is the need for coordination. What is coordination? It is not a loose arrangement. If my hands are connected to my body, they will be useful. But if they are locked up upstairs, they will not be useful.

Since the time you have been a Christian, have you ever inquired of the Lord concerning your job, your house, and your business? Is your job suitable for the gospel? When a man moves to a new place, he considers whether the place is beneficial to him spiritually. But he never considers whether the job

he takes will help him to give himself to the gospel. Today, our co-workers cannot seek for their own convenience in the work; they cannot freely choose their own field. Those brothers and sisters who are holding jobs should in principle do the same thing. You have to hand over your job, and you should learn to coordinate together. In other words, all the brothers and sisters are co-workers. Everyone should hand himself over for the gospel. If there is to be coordination, it has to be a coordination of all the brothers and sisters. Some of us have to change our dwelling or our occupations, and all of us have to offer up our possessions. This is a great price. It may cause some to have heartaches. We have to realize that from the very beginning the Lord requires that we serve this way. Any service that drags its feet along is not joyful and clear-cut service.

CONSECRATION BRINGING IN SINGLENES IN SERVICE

We have to tell the young brothers and sisters that whatever they do in the future, whether they will be a teacher or a doctor, they can only do it as a secondary occupation. Every one of us lives for the purpose of serving God. Why do we tell people to offer up their possessions? It is because without offering up our possessions, we can never serve God. The Lord says that a man cannot serve two masters; he cannot serve God and mammon at the same time (Matt. 6:24). The colt must be loosed (Matt. 21:2), and everything has to be offered up and released before a person can serve. Those who are not loosed cannot serve.

If anyone asks me how much he should offer, I would answer, "Everything." Brother Lee said that the church will lay aside the consecrated things for you. But what would you do if the church does not lay them aside for you? If we want to serve God, we have to serve Him in a desperate way.

SERVING GOD BEING THE HIGHEST GLORY

It Being God Honoring Us and Granting Us the Favor

When I was in England, I heard of a brother by the name of C. A. Coates. Once someone gave a book written by him to the Queen of England. The Queen read the book and was helped by it. Coates wrote eight books

altogether. When I was in England, I asked the British brothers, "Coates has eight books. Why wouldn't he give the other seven books to the Queen also?" The brothers did not say anything. They acted as if I had said something wrong. Later I asked some other people and found out that a common English person could not give a book to the Queen. Even if you were to try to give her a book, she might not necessarily accept it.

Consecration is God honoring us. It is not a favor we grant to God. Rather, it is God's acceptance of us and of our possessions. Hence, it is God's honor to us. We are not granting Him a favor; He is granting us a favor. For God to accept a person such as we are is the greatest privilege He grants to us. If I kneel before God and He sends a fire to consume the sacrifice, it is His favor to us in accepting my service. Man thinks that he is sacrificing himself by consecrating himself to God. Little does he realize that for God to accept him is His mercy. Why do we have to calculate so much? We have to learn to push our way through to serve Him, to crawl before Him, and to kneel before Him. A man ought to learn to humble himself before God. We are not begging you to go to God. Rather, you should beg to go to Him yourself.

Serving God Being to Our Profit and Being the Result of the Lord's Dynamic Salvation

Now the China Textile Corporation no longer dares to issue any more shares because, once it issues them, they will be sold out within half an hour. Today, the blind ones are not the ones who cannot see; the blind ones are the ones who do not see. Our only fear is that we give too little to God, that God does not accept what we give to Him. Is our consecration a profit for God, or is it a profit for us? Is it a favor we render to God, or a favor God renders to us? When we come to God, the only thing we fear is that God will reject us and deny us. We only fear that we give to God too little, that He will not accept us. All those who know God will say, "Lord, here is some more. Here is some more." All those who have once seen the Lord can give half of what they have to the poor without any complaint. The Lord said to Zaccheus, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). Today, many people do not realize the greatness of the Lord's salvation. This is why they encounter difficulties. Salvation not only saves our soul; it means that we are delivered from everything. Let us remember the story of our burial. Why were we baptized? Baptism is a declaration that we have been separated from the

world. Merely to invite three or five people to come and serve will not solve the problem. What we need to do today is for the whole Body to rise up for the gospel. The demand for the co-workers in the days ahead is quite severe. The need is also very great. For the sake of China's gospel, for the sake of the co-workers going on, we need a fresh consecration.

THE NEED IN SERVICE AND THE WAY OF SERVICE

If I had a hundred billion dollars today, I could distribute it all to the proper use within a few days. Our work needs money. From now on, we have to work with a goal and with proper arrangements. All the co-workers are living for the Lord. We ask all the brothers and sisters on the job to offer up themselves also. We have to work in coordination and in the Body. None of us is for ourselves. We must live for the Lord and for the gospel. We cannot have part of the people offering up themselves, while part of the people are not offering up themselves. We need all the brothers and sisters to offer up themselves and to live for the gospel. Those who are teaching or who are in business have to offer up their all for the gospel. The Lord has to do what He did in the first century. We are not afraid of believing in the first-century gospel. We are not afraid of preaching the first-century gospel. We are not afraid of doing what the first-century gospel did. If we would rise up as a whole Body, the whole of China will be taken; no one will be able to withstand us. If we do not believe in a thorough gospel, and if we do not have a thorough consecration, it will be difficult for the Lord to use us.

The gospel has been preached in China for over a century. All the time, it has been restricted to the coastal regions. Not much has been done in the inland regions. We have wasted twenty years. If we are not faithful again, we will be set aside.

A STRONG TESTIMONY PRODUCING A STRONG RESULT

In the first century, men were not able to preach the gospel freely. They could not go to the church buildings. At that time, men believed because they saw the gospel and they saw the Christians. The Christians at that time were hiding in their homes. It was when they were put on the fiery stakes that they were seen and heard for the first time. The effect of seeing the gospel is much stronger than that of hearing the gospel. This kind of gospel shows men that salvation is not cheap. The prayer of the martyrs during those hours became

their gospel messages. Historians tell us that the believers in Rome were killed first, and the ones who were not killed were exiled.

Today, Christianity is weak in others because it is weak in us. During the first century, men were afraid, yet they kept coming. Today, lukewarm Christians are useless ones. On the one hand, the testimonies of the early believers frightened many people away. But on the other hand, this kind of gospel also made many frightened of running away. Where there is the apostles' service, there is the apostles' blessing. Today, the whole responsibility rests on our work. If the Lord cannot get through among us, He cannot get through anywhere. The past twenty years were the Lord's preparation of us, while we were praying and seeking during that time. However, if the young ruler is to come today, he may not wait any longer. Today, we have to offer up all our money, time, and heart. Only then will the Lord have a way, and only then can we reach our destiny. Do not allow money to choke our heart, and do not allow it to block man's way to God. All the brothers and sisters have to participate in the spiritual work, and all the possessions have to be offered up. If we do this, the Lord will have a free way among us.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
FORSAKING EVERYTHING
FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE

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The church accomplishes much more and produces more results during times of trial than during times of peace. The darker the environment, the brighter the church shines, and the more thriving it becomes. This is because the church receives from the very transcendent life of the resurrected Lord. The more this life is placed in a difficult and trying situation, the more resilient it becomes. The persecution of the church in Smyrna represents the persecution of the church under the Roman Empire. History tells us that the result of that persecution was a proliferation of Christians. God never contradicts His own will. Similarly, His life never contradicts its own law; it never yields to persecution. God has no intention to spare His church from persecution. He only has promised that the church would be built on the rock—Jesus Christ, and that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). The gospel is powerful because the Lord Jesus has resurrected from the dead, bringing life and incorruption to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10).

As a consequence, the Lord challenges men to leave their possessions and relatives "for My sake and for the gospel's sake" (Mark 10:29). He did not say "for My sake" only, but "for My sake and for the gospel's sake." Without the Lord's life, the gospel is empty. The gospel is the proclamation of the victorious and resurrected life of the Lord Jesus. If a man believes in the gospel, that is, if he believes in the risen Christ, he has life in him. The Lord spoke this word after He met the rich young ruler who went away in sorrow (vv. 17-22). He thought that the Lord Jesus' demand was too high and that no man could fulfill it. This was not only the thought of the rich young ruler; it

was also the thought of the disciples. They asked, "Then who can be saved?" The Lord answered, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God" (vv. 23-27). This passage clearly shows us that we cannot give ourselves to the gospel unless we give ourselves to the Lord. In order to be for the Lord and for His gospel, however, we have to forsake everything. This is impossible with men. After receiving the resurrection life of the Lord through faith, however, we can and will do it happily.

The Lord Himself forsook everything. In the parable of the treasure and the pearl in Matthew 13, the Lord Jesus told the disciples that He was the One who sold everything to buy the treasure (the kingdom) and the pearl (the church) (vv. 44-46). The apostle Paul also said that the Lord Jesus was rich but was made poor for our sake so that we could become rich through His poverty (2 Cor. 8:9). This is the Lord's life. This is the gospel which He has given us. Today, when we preach the gospel, we have to be like the Lord who forsook everything in order that others would share the blessing of the gospel.

THE REASON THE GOSPEL HAS LOST ITS IMPACT

Today the gospel has lost the impact it had at the beginning. This is because no one is forsaking everything. Many people say that their time, money, and all are for the Lord, but it is hard to find one or two in a hundred who really mean what they say. The rest only say this with their mouth. In reality, everything is still theirs. The gospel has lost its initial impact because of this. Being a Christian is a secondary profession to many people; their primary profession is not being a Christian. The order of things has been reversed. Paul clearly said, "For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Christ died and resurrected for us so that we may no longer live to ourselves but to Him. But how many people are living to the Lord today? Many people are Christians in name, but they really live in the same way as the world. The world seeks fame, fortune, position, and education. These Christians seek the same. They glorify their pursuit by saying that they are pursuing these things for the Lord's sake. Actually, their Christian confession is a secondary profession. The gospel has lost its power because Christians today are short of a full consecration and do not practice their Christian confession as their primary profession.

In the beginning of the church age, everyone was fully consecrated. They were in one accord, and the gospel was powerful. Although there were false consecrations like those of Ananias and Sapphira, the church was still victorious in God's eyes. There was falsehood, but there was also judgment. The Holy Spirit was still able to take control in the church life. This is the reason the gospel was able to spread and multiply. The disciples in the church in Jerusalem were dispersed through persecution (Acts 8:1), but thirty years later, when Paul went up to Jerusalem, thousands of new believers had been added (21:20). Since the Ming Dynasty, the Catholic Church has been working over three hundred years in China. Its number is about three million. Protestantism began in China with Robert Morrison, and it has been here for over a hundred years. Yet it has only four hundred eighty thousand believers. Compared with the beginning, the church today has failed miserably in the eyes of God. The basic reason the gospel has lost its impact is because men no longer forsake their all like the first believers. The church should have taken over the responsibility of the Jews. It should be the overcomers among God's people. The Jewish nation has been destroyed for 2,565 years, but the church has not overcome yet. This is because it has lost the early practice of total consecration.

At the time of the Lord Jesus' ministry on earth, those who believed in Him were called disciples. They were not called doctors, merchants, laborers, or teachers. After the church came into being, there were only Christians in the church, not doctors, merchants, laborers, or teachers. Perhaps you will say that Luke was a doctor. Indeed he was, but he was a doctor on the side. When we read the Gospel of Luke and Acts, we have the impression that Luke was Paul's co-worker. We do not have the impression that he was a doctor. Paul said that he was an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Since he was an ambassador, he did not have a second occupation. Paul called Luke a doctor because Luke took care of him (Col. 4:14). This did not refer to his profession but to his work of caring for Paul. In reading Acts, we only find Luke as a co-worker of Paul; no attention is paid to the fact that he was a doctor. He did not have the air of a doctor with him. Similarly, in reading the New Testament, we do not have an impression that Paul was a tentmaker. He was an apostle appointed by God. He was a worker of God. Today many Christians have lost their flavor as disciples. Their mind is full of commercial thoughts. All the time they think about making more money. They make the money but lose both their testimony and the power of the gospel.

If we want to be for the Lord's gospel, we have to cast aside our own occupation. This does not mean that we no longer have a job. Many people still need a job on the side, but these jobs must be compatible with our testimony. They must make us love the Lord's church more, and they must supply our needs and the needs of others. Nothing discredits God's glory more than depending on others' love more than depending on one's own faith in God. Paul made tents so that he could be an apostle more effectively and thus maintain his apostleship. One should take up a job not for the purpose of making money but for maintaining his Christian status. If a Christian takes a job purely for the sake of making money, God's house will become a market for oxen and sheep and doves. It will no longer be a house of prayer for the nations. We must beware of making too much money.

The cork in a bottle must be unplugged before its precious content can be released. The more we hold on to material goods, the more the gospel will be bound. The more we love ourselves, the less His life will flow out. In order for the gospel to have the impact, we must remove the "cork."

OUR PRIMARY PROFESSION— BEING A CHRISTIAN

A normal Christian should be one who is totally consecrated. Our Christian confession is our primary profession; this is not something that we do on the side. What does it mean to have our Christian confession as our primary profession? First, we have to be absolute for the Lord and His gospel. "Christians" in Greek is *Christianos*, which means those who attach themselves to Christ, who follow Christ wholeheartedly. I hope that all of us will be men who give themselves wholeheartedly to the gospel. If we all have the same interest, every problem will be easily solved.

In order to take the Christian confession as our primary profession, we need a practical consecration. Consecration cannot be words in our mouth only; we must take some practical steps. At Pentecost there was the fact of consecration without any preaching of a message on consecration. The apostles only preached Jesus Christ as Lord; they did not speak about consecration. Yet, as a result, the believers shared everything in common. They sold their lands and distributed to everyone according to his need because they had a pattern of the gospel to follow (Acts 2:44-45). The apostles were men who had given up everything. The ones they brought to the Lord

also became men of consecration, even though they did not hear messages on consecration. We all aspire to have the power of the gospel like the apostles, but we neglect the fact that they were men who had forsaken all.

There is also the need of one accord. If everyone is fully for the Lord and the gospel, can anything break the one accord? If two persons are not in one accord, they cannot walk together (Amos 3:3). However, it is not a simple thing to be in one accord. We know that the church in Philippi comforted and encouraged Paul because it strove together with one soul in the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). Yet even among those believers, there were problems. Paul had to exhort two leading sisters to be of one mind (4:2). This shows that they were not in one accord very much. In the beginning of Acts we see a hundred and twenty people praying in one accord for ten days. We should not think that this was a simple thing. It was a very difficult task. This is the reason the Lord Jesus asked the Father before He departed from the world to make us one (John 17:21). The apostles also charged us to be diligent to keep the oneness (Eph. 4:3-6). The principle of the gospel is for five to chase a hundred and for a hundred to chase ten thousand (Lev. 26:8). The one accord will bring in the impact of the gospel. Actually, only those who are truly consecrated can be in one accord. Consecration is to pour out one's very heart. Where our treasure is, there our heart is as well (Matt. 6:21). If a man pours himself out, will he still insist on any opinion of his own? Those who are truly consecrated will be in one accord, and their gospel will spontaneously be powerful.

Today there are two kinds of systems in the world. One is capitalism, and the other is communism. Capitalism protects private ownership; everyone can accumulate wealth for himself. Communism practices the sharing of all things in common. No one has any private possessions, and everyone gives up everything for the good of the state. The communist way appears to be similar to the Christian way, but it does not have the life of God, and it is not easy to carry out this practice. D. M. Panton wrote about democracy and socialism in one of his expositional writings. In the image in Daniel, the ten toes are made of iron and clay. Panton interpreted the iron as referring to dictatorship which will "stiffen up" to become fascism. The clay refers to democracy which will degenerate into communism. Therefore, clay refers to the communist party today. Since the time of Martin Luther, the Brethren have been the champions of orthodox interpretations of the image in Daniel, telling us that iron refers to dictatorship while clay refers to democracy. Prior to the

Brethren, interpretations on the iron and clay focused on the incompatibility of the mixture. Other teachers emphasized their interrelatedness. For example, G. H. Lang said that dictatorship brings in democracy, while democracy in turn creates dictatorship. The clay of democracy is too weak to meet the challenges of crises, and so power goes to the hand of a few or even one person. The result is a fascist dictatorship or communist autocracy. An example of the former is Napoleon during the French Revolution, and an example of the latter is the Soviet Union which evolved into communism from the instability of democracy. Mr. Panton is the first person to interpret clay to mean communism. Communism extols sharing all things in common. Karl Marx borrowed this concept from Acts. It would be a shame to Christians if one day the communists would turn around to teach Christians about sharing all things in common, selling everything and distributing to everyone according to his need. A proper Christian does not accumulate riches for himself; rather, he forsakes everything to take the Christian confession as his primary profession.

In Acts, first we have the twelve apostles and then one hundred twenty people. Later three thousand and then five thousand people were saved. The ones who were saved followed the example of the twelve apostles. Spontaneously they forsook everything. When a new one is saved and comes to the church, he sees that everyone around him has forsaken everything to follow the Lord. If he does not follow, he will feel uneasy; he may even feel that he is a dropout. Therefore, in order for our next generation to forsake everything, we must take the lead to sell our all. Otherwise, our gospel will only be a pat on others' shoulders; it will amount to nothing but a few nice words.

THE PRINCIPLE OF OFFERING

The Epistles show us that the principle of offering is, "He who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no lack" (2 Cor. 8:15). Of course, God allows some to have lack so that the ones who have excess can be tested in their heart to see if they love the Lord and the brothers more than mammon. God's test shows man what he is like. Such a test does not show God anything; otherwise, He would be lowered to the same level as man. God wants us, the person, not our things. Consecration is not mainly offering our possessions to God, but offering ourselves and our heart to God. This kind of consecration is acceptable and blessed by God.

A foolish man thinks he earns all of his money by his own effort. Little does he realize that he will earn nothing but trouble unless he operates according to God's principle. As believers we should live on earth by looking to God for everything. Without God's mercy, we cannot pass our days. The apostle told us not to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment (1 Tim. 6:17). Riches are uncertain. Only God who sits on the throne is eternally secure. It is true that we have problems, but we have the Lord, and He can take care of all our needs.

The Lord Jesus told us that since God can feed all the birds in the air, He can surely feed us. In His eyes we are more precious than the birds (Matt. 6:26). Except the Father wills it, a sparrow will not fall to the ground. We are more valuable than sparrows. Every hair of our head is numbered. God has marked each one by number. Not one will fall without His permission (10:29-31). We should do our best to offer up everything, and should not accumulate any excess.

FORSAKING EVERYTHING TO USHER IN THE IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL

In the Old Testament God told the Israelites, "Bring the whole tithe to the storehouse that there may be food in My house; and prove Me, if you will, by this, says Jehovah of hosts, whether I will open to you the windows of heaven and pour out blessing for you until there is no room for it" (Mal. 3:10). If we withhold what we should offer to God, God's church will be poor. If we hold fast to what we have, how can we expect God to answer our prayer? Today there are two million people in Hong Kong. If one tenth of the population were Christians, we would have two hundred thousand believers. The church cannot receive the blessing of the power of God's gospel because we have held back the tithe which we owe. Throughout history, every time the church experienced a revival, there were men in the spirit of Pentecost who sold their all and forsook everything to follow the Lord. J. N. Darby, Miss Groves, John Wesley, Count Zinzendorf, and many others took this way. They chose the way of voluntary poverty and forsook everything to follow the Lord. The result was great revivals in the church.

In Revelation 6 a white horse came forth when the Lord Jesus opened up the first of the seven seals. The one who sat on the horse had a bow in his hand (vv. 1-2). Verse 2 only speaks of a bow, but not an arrow. The arrow has

been shot. This is the reason it says that he went forth conquering and to conquer. The white horse and its rider refer to the Lord's gospel. When the Lord ascended in victory, the arrow was shot. The result was much conquering and much more to conquer. Today we have the arrow in our hand. If we do not shoot it, the gospel will not continue in its victory.

Among the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, only one church received praise from God—the church in Philadelphia. Philadelphia is a recovery that comes after Sardis. In name Sardis is living, but in reality it is dead; it has no power at all. Philadelphia, however, has the power. Therefore, it is a recovery. Where does its power come from? Church history tells us that every time there is a revival, it is brought in through consecration. Every time the power goes away and the church becomes Sardis, it is because money has crept into the church. Before he died, John Wesley said, "I am concerned for the Methodists. They are honest and frugal. In the future they will become the richest people on earth." Today his word has become a reality. Methodists everywhere are the richest people. Yet their testimony is finished. This is true not only among the Methodists but also among the Moravians raised up at the time of Zinzendorf and the Brethren raised up at the time of J. N. Darby. A Christian must be fully rescued from money. He must fully consecrate himself before he will know the meaning of Philadelphia. He must also continue in his consecration if he wants to stay away from Sardis. Do we want to be Philadelphia completely?

It is simple to be a man living in the world; he only has one god—mammon. However, it is very troublesome to be a Christian. It is possible for him to have two gods—mammon and God. If a man wants to be a real Christian, a real consecrated one, he must be delivered from mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Brother Hwang said that it is easy to earn back the two mites that the widow dropped into the treasury, but I would say that at least that woman had the faith at the time to drop them. It was not easy for her to offer even that little. Unless our faith in God is strong, we will not dare to drop our coins into the treasury; they will remain hot in our hands for a long time.

In summary, God's requirement today is to forsake everything for the gospel. May we match God's present demand. May we not lower His demand, and may we give up everything for His sake and His gospel's sake.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN HANDING ONESELF OVER
AND THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

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HANDING ONESELF OVER FOR
THE BUILDING UP OF THE GLORIOUS CHURCH,
USHERING IN THE LORD'S SECOND COMING

All servants of God as well as all Bible students pay much attention to the state of glory which the church must reach before the second coming of the Lord. If the church does not reach this state of glory, the Lord's coming will be delayed indefinitely. In Revelation 5 John saw a scroll in the hand of God; it was a sealed scroll. John knew that it was God's plan. God's plan could not be fulfilled unless the scroll was opened. At that juncture an angel proclaimed that no one was worthy to open the scroll or to break the seal, and John wept (vv. 1-4). We read the Bible often, and we know God's plan, but do you weep? Are we anxious for the fulfillment of God's plan?

Of all the prophecies in the Bible, only two raise apprehensions within me. I do not know if you have ever been apprehensive about them. They are Ephesians 4 and 5. It seems as if these two chapters will never be fulfilled. Ephesians 4 speaks of the church being built up and growing into the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (v. 13). It seems very hard for the church to reach this state. But there is more. There is Ephesians 5. It seems that this chapter is not as hard to attain to as the previous one, but the requirement is certainly more stringent. In this chapter we are told that when the Lord comes back, the church will be without spot as far as its very nature is concerned and that it will also be without blemish. This means it will not have any mark from previous wounds and sicknesses. The church will also be

blameless. Even if it is presented before all men and is subject to open scrutiny and criticism, no one will be able to find any fault (v. 27). The church will be so prepared that it will become absolutely blameless. I must ask the Lord to forgive me for saying this word: Today we can only look at the church with our eyes closed. Once we open our eyes, we will see many areas in which the church is not blameless. We can only give it a score of fifty out of a hundred. Some people are not willing to give it even a score of five. Moreover, the church will be without wrinkle. A wrinkle is a mark of oldness. There was a time when there was no wrinkle on our face, but now wrinkles have appeared. This means that we have grown old. After two thousand years the church must still be young; it must still not have any wrinkle. This is truly the hardest thing to achieve in the whole Bible.

During the past five hundred years, there have been gradual recoveries in the church. The church was once steeped in idol worship; even images of God Himself were made. There were images of Christ, images of Mary, and images of God. Worshipping images means that the church tolerates sin; this is degradation. I have spent four to five years studying Ephesians 4 and 5. Every time I came across these passages, I shook my head and prayed, "Lord, this is impossible." I admitted that I could not climb that high; my heart could not believe what I read. The church was wonderful at the beginning; it was indeed powerful, but what about now? It seems as if it has become desolate. However, during the past two thousand years, the church has been advancing as well. From Catholicism to Protestantism, there was clearly a recovery in the revelation of God's Word. Truths were recovered, such as justification by faith, sanctification by faith, Christ as our life, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and others. Even teachings on faith and prayer were recovered. There was also the recovery of gifts, not to mention the recovery of the power of the Holy Spirit to cast out demons. But before 1923 no one knew the church. Preachers did not pay attention to the church; they only paid attention to revival meetings. One revival meeting saw two thousand five hundred persons saved, but only sixty-six people were willing to be baptized. Many people thought that it was enough to be saved and to go to heaven; they did not think that it was necessary to be baptized. Everyone wanted to take the easy way. They did not pay attention to the matter of the kingdom. But thank the Lord that there were still some who were concerned about the matter of the church. This shows us that God has been taking the way of recovery. Why do we have to hand ourselves over? Why do we have to consecrate in an absolute way? It is

because God's children must stand on His side before the church can move on to perfection. The church must pay the price to gain God's riches before Ephesians 4 and 5 can be realized and before the Lord can find a way to come back.

NOT CHANGING GOD'S WILL, NOT LOWERING HIS STANDARD

In order to be a servant of God and in order to serve Him, we have to uphold His will. We cannot change God's will, and we cannot lower His standard for the church. A person from a denomination once said, "The Bible does not say explicitly that we should not smoke. Therefore, believers can smoke, and even pastors can smoke." But if Gentiles consider smoking bad for them, how will they feel when they see Christians smoke? No matter how we view the matter, when a Christian smokes, it places him in a lower position than the Gentiles; it is a step backward. Suppose Brother Chan and Brother Chow are both smoking in the meeting today. It will be hard for some brothers and sisters to fellowship with them. The smokers may feel that they are actually better than others in many areas, but as long as some brothers and sisters think that it is wrong to smoke, the smokers will have to stop if they want to keep their fellowship with them. Everyone wants to take the easy way. This is the reason some people opt for sprinkling instead of immersion. The sprinkled ones should realize that there are those who consider sprinkling to be contrary to the Lord's commandment and that continuing in their way stops everyone from being perfected. Smoking and baptism are examples only. If we tolerate many sins or teachings, we will open a back door for sinful and fleshly ones to come in, while placing a stumbling block before seeking ones. Many people do not believe in miracles and are even afraid of them. Many other people, however, have experienced God's answer to their prayers. If we say that miracles ceased with the apostles, we can satisfy some who are weak in faith, but there are still many in the world who have faith. Our word will become a stumbling block to their perfection in God. In other words, we cannot change any commandment that God has ordained in the Bible. Selling one's all to follow the Lord is an ordained way that God has revealed in His Word. But in China during the past one hundred years, no one dared to say such a thing except for the "Jesus Family" (Je-Su-Chia-Ting). No one dared to talk about forsaking all to follow the Lord. When we preach the gospel to others today, do we tell them that they can be rich and at the same

time live a Christian life? We have pursued perfection in the past, and we have obeyed the Lord in many things. Why should we come short in this one thing? Can we be victorious in many things yet fail in this one thing?

A few years ago when I was in Shanghai, a member of a denominational church came to me. He wanted to argue about baptism. He gave me many reasons for not practicing immersion. In the end the only reason he gave was that it was inconvenient to immerse people and that there was no need to insist on it. I said, "This is the Lord's ordination. We cannot respond to Him by saying that it is optional." Later we changed the subject to foot-washing. He asked me, "Do you practice foot-washing? Do you break bread to remember the Lord every Lord's Day?" I said that we practice foot-washing and break bread every Lord's Day. In the end he asked, "Do you sell all to follow the Lord?" I said reluctantly, "We do." We cannot leave one thing undone; we cannot say that there is one thing that we do not have to do. If there is one thing not done, we cannot be a proper testimony for the Lord. Today God is taking the way of recovery in China. His eyes are on Ephesians 4 and 5. Paul did not shrink back from speaking all the counsels of God. If we do not shrink back from doing all of God's will, He will have a way among us. I will repeat Brother Witness's word: The deeper the channel is, the more the water flows. Wherever the channel runs deepest, there the water gathers. Water never flows to the shallow places.

Today we can only speak for those who are most desirous of obeying the Lord. We cannot speak for those who do not want to obey or who are thinking of taking the easy way. We have to speak for those who want to pay the price, who want to take God's way today. If we make allowance for those who do not have a heart for the Lord in everything, we might as well be the YMCA. Why call ourselves the church? If we want to call ourselves the church, we cannot skip any commandment of the Lord. If God finds another church that is absolute for His will, He can easily set us aside. Our failure is a small thing, but our failure can delay God. It is easy for God to raise up other people, but that would take a dozen or so years or even a few decades. In order to give God a way to accomplish His will, we have no alternative but to give our all. We do not have the right to change His commands. Among all the commandments of God, one commandment says that we should be delivered from mammon. We should not be bound by mammon. If God says that we should forsake everything, we have to follow. We are His slaves; we dare not change His will. We are not qualified to change His will. As slaves we have to

carry out whatever God says. Where our treasure is, there our heart is also. We cannot serve Him and mammon at the same time. Therefore we have to send our money to heaven. It is impossible for our treasure to be in heaven and for our heart to remain on earth. God's will is the most crucial thing to us who are His slaves. We have to try to understand His will fully, and we have to strive to meet His demand with no reservation.

THE CHURCH'S PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S RETURN

The Need for Maturity

There is a strong link between the readiness of the church and the Lord's second coming. We fully believe that this is the time for the church to prepare itself. In order for God's children to be reaped, they must first mature (Mark 4:29). D. M. Panton illustrates this by the picture of the harvest. The day of harvest is not determined by the farmer but by the crop. The farmer does not set a date for harvesting with no regard whatsoever for the ripeness of the crop. The crop must mature before the harvest can come. Similarly, the day of rapture is determined by the church, not by the Lord. It is a very definite day. If the church is not mature, the harvest will not come.

Forsaking Everything to Meet the Lord's Demand

We bear a heavy responsibility today for the maturity of the church. For many years we strove for perfection. If you and I neglect our responsibility today, I do not know how long we will delay the Lord. Let me say a strong word: If we want to follow the Lord, we must tell Him that we will forsake everything to follow Him. If we have any reservation at all, we will lose our joy and power. The power of the early church was in the poverty of the apostles. The degradation of the church today is in its abundance of rich people. If we drop everything to meet the Lord's demand today, our eyes will be opened to a glory that has never before been seen. Concerning God's will, we should not shrink from anything, and we should not question or withhold anything. What God wants today is not ours, that is, what we have; He wants us. He wants us to offer ourselves to Him, to give ourselves to His gospel, to His will, and to the gaining of sinners' souls. Brother Witness often says that as soon as money leaves the church, souls are added from the world.

One consecration is not good enough; we need to continue the practice of forsaking. We may say that we have given up everything without reservation, but according to God we still may have many reservations. We do not know of them because His light has not touched us yet. If we are willing to be continually under His light, He will shine on us again and again, and we will have to drop something further. Whenever there is new light, we have to obey. This is the way to meet the requirement of maturity.

During the past two years, I have been very happy. I feel that Ephesians 4 and 5 are very close to us; they are no longer so far away. They are not a hard yoke to us; they have become an easy burden. In a very short while, the Lord will gain the glorious church, but the glory will be experienced only by some. Others will miss it because they have cared too much for themselves. If we all come up to this standard, it will be easy for God to do His work. I wish that all of us here tonight would become desperate. I wish all of us would give our all. May we all pray to the Lord, "Do not pass me by. Do not leave me here. Just as You have made others partakers, make me a partaker. You are not a respecter of persons; do not leave me behind. Just as You have granted others the grace to catch up, grant me the same grace."

HANDING OVER EVERYTHING, SERVING THE LORD IN COORDINATION

Handing ourselves over does not necessarily mean that we will become poor. Handing over everything is different from merely living in poverty. When we hand ourselves over to God, we are not only giving Him our money but our time and future as well. The cheapest and most shallow consecration is the consecration of the heart. Heart consecration alone does not cause any pain. If we have not offered up our time, body, and future, we may say that we have consecrated everything, but in reality everything is still in our own hands. The young people may say that they have consecrated themselves, but their consecration has not touched their education or their future occupation at all. Today when you hand yourselves over, the church may send you with five or ten other saints to a school where there are no believers at all. You will not only study in the school but also bring people to the church. If some do this, perhaps fifteen or even a hundred people will be saved by the end of a term. In the church in Shanghai, some have handed themselves over, and they have been sent to study at Nanking Central University. In the coming days every

consecrated one will need a change in his future and occupation. He will go to school for God; his education will be merely a sideline.

When you hand yourselves over to serve the Lord, you have to learn to work in coordination, not alone. In particular, you have to learn to accept the arrangement made for your occupation. A brother may be working alone in a company or business, and you may be assigned to join him. You should not ask how much money you will make. You should ask how you can take care of the gospel there. You have to take all the colleagues at work as your gospel prospects, and you have to preach in coordination with the other brother. When you take up a job as a consecrated one, it is not for the sake of making a living. If it is, you are no different than the people in the world. Your real occupation is to serve God. Everyone from ten to eighty years old should make his service the center of everything. If the whole church is mobilized this way, I believe the gospel will surely saturate Hong Kong and even all of China. Therefore, handing yourselves over does not result in doing your own thing. It does not mean coming on the Lord's Day and dropping some money into the offering box. Handing yourselves over has everything to do with your future, your occupation, and your coordination.

The Acts of the Apostles shows us that the church suffered great persecutions after chapter seven. The nascent church was formed as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When persecution comes, the normal thing would be for all the believers to scatter, but the apostles were not scattered. Only the disciples were scattered. While they scattered, they preached the gospel as they moved (8:1-4). This indicates that the church made a decision; both the apostles' staying and the disciples' leaving were for the gospel. Before Acts 7 there was the practice of handing over everything. By chapter eight there was a well-organized preaching of the gospel. This is the reason the number of believers in Jerusalem eventually reached tens of thousands in Acts 21. This is the church. The church exists on earth for the gospel. Hence, no brother or sister can live loosely or be a Christian carelessly. Everyone has to hand himself over and preach the gospel in coordination. For example, Brother Ku was once the manager of Shin-Yi Dye Factory. One day the brothers went to him and told him that everyone felt he should no longer remain in his job. He prayed about it and felt that he should leave. He was making a good living as a manager. Now his salary is only one-fifth of what it used to be, but he has become very useful in the gospel. He has a good

testimony before the brothers and sisters. He is no longer giving himself to his factory but to serving God.

Handing ourselves over should result in a fundamental change in our being. We are no longer individual Christians. Instead, we serve the Lord in coordination with all the brothers and sisters. Not only has our past been consecrated and dealt with, even our future has been consecrated and dealt with. This is all for the sake of breaking open a way for the gospel to spread through us. In the past we preached the gospel when we felt like it, but we turned away from the brothers when we grew cold and disinterested. Whether we were working or not, we were doing everything as individuals. But now that we have handed ourselves over, we can no longer act individualistically; we must serve in coordination.

Some brothers and sisters are studying at Catholic schools. I advise you to depart from them according to the Lord's command (Rev. 18:4). Do not be defiled by the unclean things (2 Cor. 6:17). However, if many of you brothers and sisters are together at the same school, and if you all have a strong spirit to preach the gospel and to bring others to salvation, I have no objection for your staying. However, you have to be clear. You should not be there only for your education, and you should not say that there is no need to change schools as long as you study the Bible, pray, and come to the meetings. Once you have handed yourselves over, you have to know God's will and arrangement every step of the way. You have to serve in coordination with the brothers and sisters. You cannot go to a school merely for the sake of your education.

THE WHOLE CHURCH RISING UP TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

If we hand over our all and waste ourselves on the gospel, succeeding generations will have a way to go on. Our gospel is not an isolated call of individual voices but a concerted work in which we all consecrate ourselves to coordinate and pray together in one accord. If we do this, all the problems will go away. Otherwise, the first question that comes to mind will be, "What will be my remuneration?" In the future, I hope that we will ask instead, "How will this job give me an opportunity for the gospel?" I hope that we will all consecrate ourselves for the gospel. In this matter we cannot be sloppy. The whole church has to come solemnly and seriously to God and ask for His

mercy. We confess that in the past we have not paid enough attention to the lost souls. If we are so exercised in planning and managing worldly affairs, how can we be so sloppy in preaching the gospel? This is wrong. In the past too many people have cared only for enjoying the benefit of the gospel. In the coming days I hope that many will want to share this benefit with others.

In the last century only missionaries were involved in the gospel preaching in China. During the last fifty years, we saw the need and effectiveness of the church preaching the gospel. No matter how much we tried, however, only a minority of the saints were involved; the rest did not do anything. Today we need everyone to give up everything. We all need to separate ourselves for the gospel. If we do this, we will see the whole church rising up to preach the gospel. There will not be just three or five individual preachers; the whole church will be preaching. The gospel will spread throughout China. No sacrifice is in vain as long as we can gain men's souls. The entire world cannot match the value of one human soul (Matt. 16:26).

In the future the selection of all our occupations has to revolve around the gospel and the church. As long as something is good for the gospel, it is worth paying any price for. Miss Hann was a nurse supervisor, but she decided to move to Yi-Yang. Brother Liu is an internist, but he also moved to Yi-Yang. Humanly speaking, Yi-Yang is a wasteland for good nurses and doctors. But it is not a waste at all. Our going is different. A good nurse and a good doctor care for the gospel and for souls. What good does it do if you heal a person's body but allow his soul to go the way of destruction?

We are not asking you to hand over your possessions as the first thing. We are asking you to first hand over your future, your job, and your work. When you hand yourselves over, you are not handing yourselves over to me; I cannot bear that responsibility. You are handing yourselves over for the gospel. Perhaps ten or twenty years from now, the responsible brothers will tell you to leave Hong Kong to go to another place for the gospel. You have to say, "Amen. Since the whole church has this feeling, I am willing to go. If other children of God call me to go to another place, I am willing to go there as well." The church must live before God and know His will. It has to pray about many things and wait on God. The church cannot be sloppy; it has to trust in God. You should give yourself to Hong Kong first, and then you can give yourself to other places. One day you will be able to send men to the mainland. The entire Southeast Asia lies before you. God has a free way in

Shanghai already. He will also have a free way in Hong Kong. Hangchow handed itself over, and Yi-Yang was brought forth. If Hong Kong hands itself over, I do not know what will be brought forth in Southeast Asia.

Presently, the immediate need is for a big meeting hall. We should not think that as long as we can meet in two sessions on the Lord's Day, we have solved all the problems. God's blessing is related to our capacity. If we have a meeting hall that will hold a thousand people, we have to believe that God will send us the people; they will fill up the hall. Perhaps after you gain this first meeting hall, five other or nine other halls will follow. Once we hand ourselves over, we will see God's great blessings. Perhaps we still do not realize how great a hindrance we are to the Lord!

When God's grace and mercy break out, blessings will flow everywhere in the church, and all the problems will go away. In order for the whole church to rise up to serve, we have to cut off the wasted hours in our occupation. If we hold back anything, the church's prayer will not be effective, and souls will not be added to us. If we are desperate, God will have a way. Do not be afraid of problems. Whatever the price may be, we have to charge forward.

Please forgive me for saying what I am saying. I hope this word will not hurt anyone's feelings. You have to come together to pray much. May the Lord give all of us no peace. May He not let us go easily. May the Lord be merciful to us. May none of us go on carelessly. May all of us be very clear about what we are doing; that is, may we know the reason we are doing what we are doing and to what extent we should do it. May God encourage us to give all that we are and all that we have to the gospel.

I believe one day the church will reach the standard of the first apostles. Then the day of the Lord will be near.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A SIGN BEFORE THE LORD'S COMING

CWWN, The (Set 3) Vol. 61:
Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (1), Chap. 18
by Watchman Nee
ISBN: 0-87083-591-2

Scripture Reading: James 5:1-5

1. How shall I follow Him I serve?
How shall I copy Him I love?
Nor from those blessed footsteps swerve,
Which lead me to His seat above?
2. Privations, sorrows, bitter scorn,
The life of toil, the mean abode,
The faithless kiss, the crown of thorn—
Are these the consecrated road?
3. Lord, should my path thro' suff'ring lie,
Forbid it I should e'er repine;
Still let me turn to Calvary,
Nor heed my griefs, rememb'ring Thine.
4. O let me think how Thou didst leave
Untasted every pure delight,
To fast, to faint, to watch, to grieve,
The toilsome day, the homeless night:
5. To faint, to grieve, to die for me!
Thou camest, not Thyself to please;
And, dear as earthly comforts be,
Shall I not love Thee more than these?

(Hymns, #462)

The first stanza of the above hymn consists of a series of questions. The writer is speaking to himself. He is fellowshiping with his own heart. This musing results in his awareness of his straying away to outward things. The word still in stanza 3 is very good. In stanza 1 there is a yearning for consecration; in stanza 3 the prayer is that the consecration would not change. Consecration is not a once-for-all thing; it should be something continuous. The writer yearns for a continual consecration. The emphasis in this stanza is the word still. Stanza 4 is a reflection on the Lord's forsaking of "every pure delight." There are many delights which are not pure, but the delight that the Lord enjoyed was pure; no sin whatsoever was found in this delight. Immediately after this the word to is used four times. This is a very unusual hymn. In the first two lines of stanza 4, the Lord leaves something behind, while in the third and fourth line, He takes something up. Here we can feel that the Lord's Spirit has brought the writer to a new height. On the one side, there is the "pure delight." On the other side, there are the "toilsome day" and the "homeless night."

Stanza 4 describes the Lord's work, but this description is still somewhat objective. Stanza 5 brings a subjective tone to the hymn: "for me!" He came for me! The word to appears here three times, and they are somewhat different from the previous stanza. The Lord not only grieved and fainted for us, but died for us. The Lord's goal was to accomplish God's work of redemption for us; He did not come to please Himself. Although "earthly comforts" are hard to give up, the Lord's love enables us to overcome them. The hymn concludes with a question.

This song describes a person who was once very prosperous and successful in the world, but who forsook everything for the Lord. We can sense the height that his spirit has soared.

In 1924 I chose this hymn for the brothers and sisters to sing in the meeting. They sang well with spirit and with much feeling; their voices were loud. While they were singing, I was meditating on the song. It is sometimes difficult to meditate on some hymns if they are sung too loudly. Some hymns which are suitable for meditation cannot be sung loudly at all. Between 1923 and 1924, a few of us young people were zealous for the Lord. One couple among us considered quitting their jobs to work full-time for the Lord. They felt unsure about their future. While they sat quietly this way, they began to sing this hymn. As they sang they made the decision to serve the Lord. This

hymn has a grand feeling to it, yet it is not overbearing. Some people are carried away by the grand feeling of a song, yet they do not touch the tender spirit behind the song. When this couple sang this song, they touched the tender feeling behind it. If we feel that our future is unsure, we can try to sing this song and offer ourselves once more to God.

A SIGN BEFORE THE LORD'S SECOND COMING— ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH

James 5 begins with the words come now. This is an exclamation that is rarely used in the New Testament. When the apostle James came to this point, he uttered a sigh. He even wrote down his sigh, because he considered what followed to be totally wrong. It was something that should not happen at all. He lamented, "You rich, weep, howling over your miseries." Weeping is soft crying, while howling is loud wailing. All the rich men cry in a loud or soft voice because "miseries...are coming upon you!" They were about to go through God's ordained sufferings. They should not rejoice but should sorrow.

What has happened in recent days should not be surprising to Christians at all. Before the Lord's imminent coming, there will be clear signs. During this time, men will accumulate wealth in an unprecedented way. In other words, no other age will see as much wealth as the age immediately preceding the Lord's return. In the end time, the world will pay much attention to the accumulation of wealth. When men talked about wealth just a half century to a century ago, they meant something different from what is implied today. In every age there were rich men, but there has never been a time when there were so many rich men. In the past rich men were called millionaires. Now some people make U.S. \$1,300 every second. In less than twenty minutes, they are millionaires. The rich of the past cannot be called rich when compared to the rich of this age.

OVER-ACCUMULATION BEING THE GROUND OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:8 that we should be content with having food and covering. Today men not only have food and covering; they have many more things. They have much gold and silver in the bank. This is the reason James

sighed that the garments of the rich have become moth-eaten, and their gold and silver have rusted. This is more than a matter of just having food and covering. It is a matter of unused garments being eaten up by moths. In other words, it is not a matter of exhorting men to be content with their covering. They have too many garments, and they have no more use for them. Since these garments are useless, they are eaten up by moths. Today the world is accumulating wealth at a maddening pace. The number of garments some have accumulated could last for two thousand years. Many of them are just idly laying around. These ones also accumulate much gold and silver. This gold and silver have become so useless that they have become corrupted and rusted.

James pointed out that when garments are moth-eaten and gold and silver have rusted, it is time for judgment. This is the ground for God's judgment on men. Please remember that all men will stand before the judgment seat of God. Some will defend their accumulation, but no matter what they say, God will point His finger at the holes in their garments and the rust on their gold and silver and ask, "Why did you accumulate so much when you had no need?" The rust of the gold and silver will not only be a testimony against them, but it will eat their flesh like fire. This probably refers to the burning of the lake of fire. This fire will scorch them and burn away their flesh; it will try them.

As a man accumulates more, he will have more trouble, he will be more bound, and he will fall into more sin. Areas under Communist rule have learned the truth of James 5. Let me relate a story to you. A brother from the countryside had a set of redwood furniture. He was moved in his spirit to sell it but was unwilling to give it up. Later his village experienced a change, and he decided to give the furniture away, but nobody wanted it. He was so afraid of being purged by the Communists that eventually he ran away to Shanghai.

The book of James was written nineteen hundred years ago. Yet it speaks of the worker-capitalist dispute. It says that problems arise because the rich are too rich, and the workers are exploited. It is unfortunate that the Marxists do not pay attention to the word of the Bible which precedes them by eighteen hundred years. The word withheld means to keep back the wages of the workers. Everyone who studies Marxism knows that this is the exploitation of workers, the so-called "surplus value" of the workers. Karl Marx lived in the last century. He wrote a book called *Das Kapital* in which he talked about the

capitalists investing money in factories and hiring workers to manufacture goods. Does the profit belong to the capitalists or to the workers? I have no interest in discussing who is right and who is wrong. My interest lies in his claim of the usurpation of the workers' surplus value. The profit is earned through the labor of the workers, yet the employer takes it into his own pocket. While a worker receives a dollar, he actually may be making two dollars, with one of the dollars being retained by the employer. James said that the wages retained by the employer cry out and reach "the ears of the Lord of hosts." Today the changes in China are under God's sovereign hand. It is hard to believe that one-fifth of the inhabitants of this earth are undergoing such a change without God's intervention. I believe God's judgment is in it.

GIVEN TO PLEASURE, NOURISHING ONESELF, AND GETTING READY FOR GOD'S JUDGMENT

In verse 5 James rebuked the rich for accumulating material goods and gold and silver. Let me say a word of truth: There has never been a time when the world has had as many rich men as we have today. There has never been a time when so much surplus value was taken from workers. There is an abundance of rich men and wealth because many wages are being retained. This is not all. The luxury these rich men enjoy is unprecedented. In the Middle Ages a few noblemen enjoyed some privileges. In the last one or two dynasties in China, only one or two families were able to have the kind of luxury these rich men enjoy today. Throughout history, there has never been a time when there were as many rich men as today. There has never been a time when there were as many material goods and material enjoyment. Not only is there a multiplication of material enjoyment, but there is a multiplication of lustful indulgence. We only need to partially open our eyes to see what I mean. There is an abundance of rich men, riches, and exploited wages of workers. This is the characteristic of this age.

Once a brother told me that a certain man always wears a platinum ring, and the ring is always new because he discards and replaces it when it becomes rusty. This is just like what the Bible speaks of in regard to the rusting of gold and silver. Once it rusts, the owner discards it. For such hedonists and seekers of pleasure, anything that becomes rusty is no longer an enjoyment to them. Some people have hoarded enough goods to last them two thousand years. No wonder many rich men seek longevity and everlasting

life after reaching middle age. They know that they cannot enjoy all their wealth; they cannot use up all their riches even if they live another two thousand years. They seek longevity so that they can enjoy more.

The second part of verse 5 says, "You have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter." This means that men are like animals before going to the slaughter house—they are well fed and nourished. Once a sister brought three chickens from her village for a brother in Foochow. The brother felt that the chickens were not fat enough. He was reluctant to kill them, so he kept them for a few more days until they became fat. Then he killed them and ate them. This is James's meaning. Those who are accumulating riches and given to enjoyment are nourishing their hearts. Their unprecedented hedonism and license are a kind of fattening of themselves. When the fattening is complete, God will come in to judge them. He will slaughter them, and they will perish in that day.

THE PROPER CHRISTIAN WAY— FORSAKING ALL FOR VOLUNTARY POVERTY

A Christian should not set his hope on any change in the government. His hope lies in his own deliverance from the bondage of mammon. From the first chapter of James to the end of the fifth chapter, there is no justification for riches and wealth. James 2:5 speaks of the poor in the church being rich in faith, and chapter five speaks of the end of rich men. The current of the age lures men to become rich and to accumulate material goods, but James says that Christians should be long-suffering (5:7). This means they should not try to change their poverty. They should not follow the spirit of the age. The spirit of the age is to compete for riches. Christians, however, should not try to change or alter their poor condition. Only when the Lord comes back again, will all of the problems be solved.

I hope that the brothers and sisters in Hong Kong will not be three or five years behind those in inland China in spiritual growth and life. Today the Holy Spirit is calling; He is calling you to forsake everything to follow the Lord. In the Communist regions, not only does the Lord move and the Holy Spirit call you to forsake everything, but the environment forces you to forsake everything. This world is like fire; you have to run away from it. This world is also like a flesh-eater; it will not allow you to fatten yourself. Today in Hong Kong, this is more than a matter of the Lord's calling. I hope that the

brothers and sisters will seize the opportunity, answer the gracious calling of the Lord's Spirit, and serve Him together as one Body.

When I returned to Shanghai from Foochow, many brothers and sisters came to me in tears and said, "Had I listened to your word, the brothers and sisters as well as the church would have had a chance to enjoy my consecration. I do not feel sorry because I have lost my possessions. My greatest sorrow is seeing the things disappear without giving the brothers, the sisters, and the church a chance to enjoy them. The poor did not get them, and neither did the gospel." Letters from many places reported the same thing to me. If we do not seize the opportunity to answer the Spirit's call, one day we will find that our greatest sorrow is the Lord not gaining anything, the church not gaining anything, and the poor not gaining anything.

James 5 is a sign of the end times. It depicts things that will happen before the Lord comes back. James told us to be prepared. We should be aware of these things. The entire New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, tells us that the church should befriend the poor and stand against the rich. It says that the poor have faith, that the gospel is preached to them, and that God answers the prayer of the poor. Today, if we want to be Christians at all, we should not prepare ourselves to be rich, nor should we dream of becoming rich. Forsaking everything here in Hong Kong is different from forsaking everything under the Communist rule. We are anticipating James's words. Riches will burn a person like fire; they will consume his flesh. We cannot embrace our riches and be burned by them; we cannot allow them to eat up our flesh. On the one hand, this is a consecration. On the other hand, it is a kind of running away. We should get rid of our riches while they are still in our hand. We should offer them up for the brothers, the sisters, and the poor. I hope that we will all think the same thing. We should take the way of voluntary poverty. We should not be forced to become poor. Day by day we should be simple, choosing poverty with all of the children of God. Like Moses, we should not live in a palace while the rest of God's children are outside of it. If we take this way, the church will have a good testimony.

CHRISTIANS BEING A PECULIAR PEOPLE

The brothers and sisters in Yi-Yang were thoroughly checked out by the Communists. They investigated them even to the bone and marrow. Their searching was in a sense sharper than the two-edged sword, but they were so

surprised by our brothers and sisters. They forced others to share everything in common because they were afraid that no one would do it, but we practice this voluntarily. They said that the biblical practice of having everything in common was wrong, and they told the brothers and sisters in Yi-Yang that no one was allowed to practice this. They said that such a practice would make everyone lazy. We practice having everything in common because we love the brothers, but they thought this was wrong because it would encourage laziness. However, even though we have everything in common, we are not lazy. This bewilders them. The world cannot do this, but we can. This is what it means to be a Christian. The world does not understand that Christians are a peculiar people, but this does not mean that we are promoting Christian socialism. We only do this as a practice. Christian conduct is not based on a set of Christian doctrines or creeds, but is according to the life we have received. Christian behavior has nothing to do with doctrines and teachings; it is related to life. The father did not embrace his prodigal son according to a set of rules. When the prodigal son returned, the father spontaneously stepped forward to kiss him. A Christian acts according to the life within him. For this reason, it is impossible for him to take the way of the world.

A TESTIMONY

In 1925 a British brother in the shipping business received a telegram saying that an eight-thousand-ton ocean liner would arrive in ten days. Another brother was visiting in his house at the time and was about to receive a check for two hundred pounds from him. The check was designated for the work of the gospel. After the visitor left, a telegram arrived and informed the shipping brother that the ship had sunk, along with all the cargo on board. He rang a bell and asked for men to recall the visiting brother. He told him that the ship was lost and that he had to write a new check. He took the old check and wrote another one for five thousand pounds, saying, "Hurry up and go. Spend this on the Lord." The visitor thought that this brother was out of his mind. Having lost his ship, he should have scaled down his giving. He should have changed the two hundred pounds to fifty pounds, but instead he changed the number, adding more zeros to the check. When he was asked to explain his action, he said, "The sinking of the ship is an urgent heavenly telegram from God. He does not want me to accumulate any wealth on earth! Since God does not want me to manage this money, I have to spend it on the Lord while it is still in my hand." The visiting brother took the check with tears and said, "I have never seen anyone do this before."

DISCERNING THE SIGN OF THE LORD'S COMING AND ANSWERING THE CALL OF CONSECRATION

I am saying this to you not for the purpose of fund-raising. I am saying this to let all the brothers and sisters throughout the whole world know that the day of the Lord is approaching! We have to spend whatever we have on the Lord, while the money is still useful. In this passage, James does not tell us the result of the capitalist-worker dispute. That is not his point. He tells us that the Lord is coming! Let me shout again, "The Lord is coming soon!" Perhaps we cannot see other signs, but we can surely see this sign. We have to endure. While the sign is still here, we have to offer up the money we have in our hand. I truly hope that when the Lord comes back the second time, none of us will miss Him again. It is bad enough to miss Him once. It is bad enough to fail once. We must not miss Him the second time. We must not fail the second time.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE REVIVAL REVEALED IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

Life-Study of the Minor Prophets
on Malachi, Chap. 4
by Witness Lee
ISBN: 0-87083-691-9

Scripture Reading: Hab. 3:2a; Hosea 6:2; Joel 2:28-29; Hag. 1:14; Mal.
3:1b; Hag. 2:7a; Heb. 7:22; Acts 26:18b; Col. 1:12; Mal. 4:2a; Rom.
8:20-22

In this concluding message to the life-study of the Minor Prophets, I have the burden to speak a word concerning the revival revealed in the Minor Prophets. We may say that this matter of revival is the “kernel” within the “shell” of the books of the Minor Prophets.

I. THE ASPIRATION OF GOD’S ELECT

Habakkuk 3:2a speaks of revival: “O Jehovah, revive Your work / In the midst of the years.” Among God’s elect there has always been an aspiration to be revived. As long as you are a saved one, every day, consciously or unconsciously, there is an aspiration with a spontaneous prayer within you: “O Lord, revive us.” Although we may not realize it, such an aspiration has been within us through all the years of our Christian life.

We may think that Habakkuk’s prayer for revival was good for him but has nothing to do with us. However, regarding his prayer, we need to realize that with God there is no time element. In the eyes of God, one person among His elect represents the whole. God always considers His elect as a corporate Body. This means that Habakkuk and we are one in the unit of God’s elect. Thus, when Habakkuk prayed for revival, we also prayed. We prayed for revival twenty-six hundred years ago. Such a prayer is an everlasting prayer.

Many times in the last six years I charged the saints to put the God-ordained way into a living practice, but without a revival, how could we have anything living? If we endeavor to practice just the first step of the God-ordained way—to visit people for the gospel—without being revived, this will be a heavy burden that no one can bear. We all need to realize that we have been saved and kept on earth to do one thing—to go to disciple the nations, beginning from “Jerusalem” and spreading to “Judea,” to “Samaria,” and to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). If we live for our education, a career, a good marriage, or a nice house, that is vanity of vanities. We are living here for the spreading of the Lord Jesus, not merely to our neighborhood but to the entire world. If we would do this, we need to be revived. This is why the Lord has led us to practice the morning revival.

This matter of morning revival is according to the natural law in God’s creation. God created the universe so that there is a sunrising every twenty-four hours. We believers should follow the sunrising to be revived every morning. Every day we need a “sunrising,” and this sunrising is a revival. If we experience a daily revival, then we will be living and qualified to practice the God-ordained way and to help the church to take this way.

II. THE DESOLATION OF THE “TWO DAYS” AND THE RESURRECTION ON THE “THIRD DAY”

On the one hand, Habakkuk prayed for revival; on the other hand, Hosea spoke of the desolation of the “two days” and the resurrection on the “third day”: “He will enliven us after two days; / On the third day He will raise us up” (6:2). Since to God a thousand years are as one day (2 Pet. 3:8), these “two days” may refer to a period of two thousand years. For almost two thousand years, from the time Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, Israel, our representative, has been desolate. From that year Israel lost the priesthood, the sacrifices, the prophets, the king, and the temple. Eventually, there will be the “third day”—the thousand years of the millennial kingdom—when Israel will be raised up, that is, restored.

The principle is the same in our Christian life. At a certain time we became desolate. After the two days of desolation, there is the third day, which signifies the pneumatic Christ in resurrection. Today we may receive the pneumatic Christ in resurrection and thus enjoy the reality of His resurrection.

If we have the resurrected Christ, we are in the morning, the sunrising, and this is a real revival to us.

In 1984 I realized that the recovery was in a dormant condition, like the desolation of the two days in Hosea 6:2. However, if we experience a real revival, we will be in the third day.

III. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT

Joel 2:28 and 29 speak of the outpouring of the Spirit. Every day we need the outpouring of the all-inclusive, consummated, compound, life-giving Spirit as the processed and consummated Triune God. This all-inclusive Spirit includes Christ's divinity and humanity, the effectiveness of His death, and the power of His resurrection. This Spirit is our portion, our inheritance.

IV. THE RESPONSE OF GOD'S ELECT

"Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people" (Hag. 1:14a). Here we see the response of God's elect, who were stirred up by the Lord in the order of God's authority. When they responded by being stirred up in their spirit by the Lord, we all were included.

In the Minor Prophets there are both the divine Spirit, the consummated Spirit of God, and the human spirit, the stirred-up spirit of God's elect. The divine Spirit has been poured out, and our human spirit (the key to experiencing and enjoying Christ) responds to such a Spirit by being stirred up.

We may feel that our spirit was stirred up early in our Christian life but that it is no longer stirred up. However, this is not true. Unconsciously, the spirit of every regenerated believer is stirred up. If we go to a place of worldly entertainment, our spirit will be stirred up to tell us to leave that place. Whenever we grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30), we have no peace. This is the stirring up of our spirit. When we read the Bible, we feel calm and peaceful. Even in this calmness, our spirit is under the stirring up by the Spirit. Every day we cannot avoid the stirring up of our spirit. The Bible reveals that once the consummated, compound, life-giving Spirit comes into us, He will never

leave. As He dwells in us, He is often a “troublemaker,” stirring us up either negatively or positively. If we take care of this negative or positive stirring up, we will be revived, and we will be strengthened and encouraged to carry out the God-ordained way.

V. THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD’S CHRIST

The Minor Prophets also reveal that God’s Christ is our enjoyment. The enjoyment of God’s Christ is actually the enjoyment of God Himself.

A. As the Desire of God’s Elect

We may enjoy Christ as the Desire of God’s elect (Mal. 3:1b; cf. Hag. 2:7a). Whether we are hot or cold toward the Lord, we desire Christ. Can you say that you have no desire for Christ? Every day we desire Christ.

B. As the Angel of the Covenant

We may enjoy Christ also as the Angel of the covenant (Mal. 3:1b). For Him to be the Angel means that He is a serving one. In His coming back, Christ will be the Angel of the covenant. He enacted the new covenant with His blood at His table (Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:20). In the new covenant, God is imparted into us as life and as our life supply, and we have the forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:31-34).

1. To Execute as Its Surety

the New Covenant Enacted through His Death

Christ not only enacted the new covenant through His death, but in resurrection He executes the new covenant as its surety (Heb. 7:22), making it real to us. In particular, He assures us that our sins have been forgiven and that we have Him as our life and life supply signified by the bread at the Lord’s table. Day by day we may enjoy Him as the surety of the new covenant.

2. To Dispense the Riches

of the Covenanted Triune God into His Elect

As the Angel of the covenant, Christ dispenses the riches of the covenanted Triune God into His elect. According to Acts 26:18b, we have received not

only the forgiveness of sins but also “an inheritance among those who have been sanctified.” This inheritance is the Triune God Himself with all He has, all He has done, and all He will do for His redeemed people. The Triune God is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ, who is “the allotted portion of the saints” as their inheritance (Col. 1:12).

C. As the Sun of Righteousness

Finally, Malachi 4:2 tells us that we may enjoy Christ as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

1. For Growing in Life, in the Dispelling of the Darkness

As the Sun of righteousness, Christ is our enjoyment for growing in life, in the dispelling of the darkness. Just as the shining of the sunlight enables plants to grow, Christ’s shining as the Sun of righteousness is for our growth in life.

2. For Healing in Life, in the Effacing of Unrighteousness

As the Sun of righteousness, Christ is our enjoyment also for healing in life, in the effacing of unrighteousness. Before we enjoy this healing in life, unrighteousness prevails, but through this healing unrighteousness is effaced and is replaced by righteousness.

AN ADDITIONAL WORD

At this juncture, I would like to give an additional word on the matter of revival.

The Universal Aspiration for Revival

The revival revealed in the Minor Prophets can be applied to the family, to the church, to the nations, to the entire human race, and even to the whole universe. In principle, everything and everyone on earth are in the desolation of the two days spoken of in Hosea 6:2.

Since the fall of man, there has been in all of creation an aspiration for revival. Concerning this, Romans 8:20-22 says, “The creation was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now.” As a result of Adam’s fall, corruption, slavery, and death have come into the whole creation. Today everything is decaying and is under the slavery of corruption. All the things that are under this slavery aspire to be revived.

Christ—the Reality of the Third Day

Man’s fall brought in corruption, and with corruption there is slavery. Because of this corruption and slavery, there is the need everywhere for revival, for restoration. This need can be met only by Christ and in Christ. Christ was resurrected on the third day, and as the pneumatic Christ in resurrection, He is the reality of the third day. Christ, therefore, is the element of the revival for which all of creation aspires. The corruption and desolation can be swallowed up only by Christ’s resurrection.

Unbelievers as well as believers aspire to be revived, to have a new beginning. Everyone wants something new. Only Christ is the renewing factor. Only Christ, who rose up on the third day, is the renewing power. For the whole universe and for all of mankind, Christ is the reality of the third day.

When we received Christ, we received Him as the One who is Himself the resurrection (John 11:25). Immediately after receiving Him, we had a new beginning in our human life. That new beginning was a revival. However, eventually we again entered into a state of desolation and thus needed another revival. This cycle of desolation and revival, revival and desolation, has been repeated again and again.

The way to have the revival we need is to contact Christ, repenting and confessing our sins, failures, and darkness. By doing this we are brought from the desolation of the two days to the resurrection of the third day. Whenever we are in desolation, we need such a revival. We need to come to the third day, and the third day is nothing other than the person of the resurrected Christ with the reality of revival. In addition, we have the outpouring of the Triune

God as the consummated, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit, and our spirit responds by being stirred up.

Enjoying Christ as the One Desired by Mankind

When our spirit is stirred up in response to the outpouring of the Spirit, we enjoy Christ not only as the resurrected One but also as the One desired by all of mankind. He is mankind's unique need. Everyone, the believers and the unbelievers alike, desires Christ.

The Christ we desire has enacted the new covenant and He, as its surety, is now executing it. Through this covenant God has been allotted to us as our legal portion in Christ, who is the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings. Apart from Him, we have darkness and unrighteousness, but with Him everything is light and righteousness.

The Ultimate Restoration

When we have such a Christ, we not only have revival—we have restoration. The millennial kingdom will be a time of restoration. This restoration will consummate in the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center. That will be the ultimate, the consummate, restoration accomplished by the resurrected Christ.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
A FULL HOUSE SERVING—
JACOB'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S CALL

Life-Study of Genesis, Chap. 78

by Witness Lee

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At the time of chapter thirty-five, Jacob must have been approximately a hundred years of age. Although Jacob had passed through many things, prior to this chapter, we are not told that he had ever made a thorough clearance. He suffered many things in relation to his brother, his uncle, and his cousins, suffering twenty years under the hand of his uncle Laban. But Genesis never says that as Jacob was undergoing those sufferings he purified himself or made a clearance of himself. Rather, we are told of Jacob's skill and supplanting. But, as we shall see, when God told him to arise and go up to Bethel, Jacob made a thorough clearance.

The first time God appeared to Jacob was in a dream (28:10-22) in which Jacob saw heaven opened and a ladder extending from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending upon it. When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he was inspired to call the name of that place Bethel, and the stone that he had used as his pillow he set up for a pillar and poured oil upon it. Following this, he vowed that if God would bring him back safely to the land of his fathers, then the stone which he had set up for a pillar would be God's house (28:22). In this dream God paid Jacob a gracious visitation and caused him, undoubtedly in the spirit, to speak concerning God's eternal economy. If Jacob had not been inspired by the Spirit of God, how could he, a supplanter, have spoken a word revealing God's eternal purpose? It would have been impossible. God unveiled to Jacob His heart's desire, which is to have Bethel.

However, that dream at Bethel did not change Jacob at all. It seems that after the dream had transpired, the inspiration returned to heaven. Jacob's manner of life was unaffected. It is the same with us. At Bethel, Jacob prophesied in a wonderful way, speaking of God's house, but it seems that the prophecy returned to heaven. Like Jacob, many of us have had a dream, a

revelation, or an inspiration in which we uttered a word of prophecy, if not to men, then at least to angels. But the next day we continued to live the same as always. After his dream at Bethel, Jacob continued his supplanting, especially the supplanting of Laban, as if he had never had the dream. In fact, he was even more "Jacobean" after the dream than before.

In chapter thirty-three, Jacob was still Jacob. The heavenly dream and the sufferings had not changed him. But something occurred in chapter thirty-four that touched Jacob's heart. His only daughter became defiled, and his sons caused him trouble by slaughtering people and plundering that city. These events touched Jacob deeply and caused him to make a radical turn. After this, God came in to speak to him.

GOD'S REMINDING—BACK TO BETHEL

God did not give Jacob a sermon. Rather, because Jacob's heart had been touched and, as a result, he was ready to hear the word of God, God simply said, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother" (35:1). Here we see that God told Jacob to do four things: to arise, to go up to Bethel, to dwell there, and to make there an altar to God who had appeared to him. The turn, or the change, Jacob made in chapter thirty-five was very significant.

JACOB'S RESPONSE

In 35:2-7 we see Jacob's response to God's word. Before this chapter, there is no record of a man who was walking in the presence of God and who cleared himself and his whole household. Verse 2 says, "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments" (Heb.). For the single purpose of going up to Bethel, Jacob and everyone with him had to make a thorough clearance and to purify themselves. In this chapter God did not say, "Jacob, you are going to Bethel to build an altar there; you should realize that you must be holy. I am holy, and you must be holy also. You must rid yourself of all your foreign gods, purify yourself of every defilement, and change your garments."

An elderly Christian, a man who had been a preacher for over forty years, asked if we teach our people to dress in a certain way. He had observed the

way the brothers and sisters dressed and wondered if we taught them to do so. I told him that during these past years we had never laid down any regulations about clothing. However, anyone who has been touched by God for His dwelling place will sense that something within is charging him to clear himself and to purify himself. You may tolerate certain defilements and looseness in your life. But whenever you touch the church and you mean business with the Lord to have the church life, something within charges you concerning those things which are not fitting for the church life. Immediately after God commanded Jacob to arise and go up to Bethel, Jacob charged his people to get rid of the foreign gods, to purify themselves, and to change their garments. Later we shall see that changing the garments signifies changing our manner of life, that is, putting off the old manner of life and putting on a new man. Although God did not tell Jacob to do this, something deep within him required this of him. If he had been charged to go to a worldly place, he would have sensed no need to purify himself. Rather, he would have been ready to defile himself even more. Jacob had such a radical change because he had been touched for Bethel, for God's eternal dwelling place.

A. Making a Thorough Clearance

1. Putting Away Their Foreign Gods—Idols

Firstly, Jacob told his household and all that were with him to put away the foreign gods that were among them (35:2). When Jacob and his household were fleeing from Laban, Rachel took the household images (31:34-35). Prior to chapter thirty-five, Jacob never charged Rachel to put them away. But after God had told him to go up to Bethel, everyone had to abandon their foreign gods, their idols. This is a shadow, a type, that is developed throughout the Bible. According to both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the first thing we must eliminate for the sake of God's dwelling place is our idols.

Many may claim that they have never had anything to do with idols. Materially speaking, it may be true to say that you have no idols. But we must know, spiritually speaking, what an idol is. An idol is anything that replaces God. Your education, your ambition, your position, your name, your desire, and your intention may replace God in your life and thus become idols. If you view the matter in this light, then you will have to admit that you have had many foreign gods. If your relative or friend replaces God in your life, then he is an idol to you. Our parents, spouses, and children may all become our idols.

Do you know why people worship idols? Undoubtedly, they worship them because of Satan's seduction. But there is a reason on the human side why people do this. People worship idols for the sake of gaining long life and happiness. Satan threatens people, telling them that if they do not worship idols, they will not have long life and happiness, but that if they worship idols, then they will have long life and happiness. Happiness includes many things: money, position, ambition, fame, a name. Many have idols due to their desire to be healthy. Why do you have something that replaces God? Simply because that thing may make you happy. Unlike Rachel, Jacob had no literal idols, but in his supplanting he had some idols. In fact, his supplanting was an idol. Why did Jacob supplant others? Because of his desire for happiness and enjoyment. Today, man has lost God and, pursuing foreign gods, seeks his happiness in idols. But God is our long life and happiness.

When God spoke to Jacob regarding Bethel, Jacob received the revelation concerning his life and realized that his life on earth was not for his own happiness. His life was for Bethel, for God's house. Thus, Bethel became his goal, the destination of his human life on earth. Formerly, his goal was his own happiness. Now, his goal and destination were replaced. No longer was his goal something for himself but something absolutely for God. In Shechem, Jacob had everything. But due to the trouble caused by his sons, he lost his safety and peace. At that juncture, God seemed to say, "Jacob, go up to My house. Here in Shechem you don't have safety and peace. Safety and peace are at Bethel. You must go up there." Thus, Bethel became Jacob's goal and destination. Jacob realized that the goal of God's house was holy; it was not a common thing. No one could enter into the house of God with idols, pollution, and old, filthy garments. Therefore, Jacob charged his household and everyone with him to put away all the foreign gods.

2. Purifying Themselves

Jacob also charged everyone to purify themselves (35:2). We must not only put away the foreign gods, but also purify our whole being. In other words, our whole being, manner of life, and expression must be changed. This is not merely regeneration or a little change in life. Rather, it is a full transformation. Here in Genesis 35, Jacob was transformed.

In the Bible, purifying ourselves means to be purified from every pollution. Our whole being must be cleansed from anything that is pollution in the eyes of God. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul says, "Therefore, having these promises,

beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Paul's concept in 2 Corinthians 6 and 7 was the same as Jacob's in Genesis 35. Because the Corinthians were the temple of God, Paul told them to purify themselves. There can be no agreement between the temple of God and idols (2 Cor. 6:16). Idols are idols, and the temple of God is the temple of God. Which side do you take? If idols, then go to your idols. If the temple of God, then come to the temple without any idols.

When you came into the church life, no one told you anything, but deep within something convinced you that certain things had to go for the sake of the proper church life. Every one of us had such a clearance upon coming into the church. At that time, we cleared away many, if not all, of the foreign gods, forsaking the things, the matters, and even the persons we trusted in for happiness, saying, "I don't like to keep these things anymore. All foreign idols must go." In the church life, not an inch of ground can be surrendered to foreign gods. Furthermore, when we came into the church life we were purified. At least, we aspired to be pure, saying, "For the sake of the church life, I want to be pure in my whole being, in my mind, emotion, and will." We had the same desire that Jacob had. On the day Jacob's people went up to Bethel, they purified themselves, and among them there were no foreign gods.

Many of us, including myself, realize that we are not very good. Perhaps even today you have said, "Oh, I am not so good. My thinking is still not very pure." However, compare your present manner of life with your past. Although you should not be proud of yourself, you should say, "Lord, thank You. I am not very pleased with myself, but as I compare the present with the past, I have to thank and praise You that I am quite different from what I was." Although in chapter thirty-five Jacob was not yet mature, he had undoubtedly changed from what he once was. More we shall see how radically transformed Jacob actually was. God again changed his name from Jacob to Israel. God told him that he should no longer call himself Jacob but Israel.

I know that many of you are unhappy with yourselves today. When someone asks you how you are doing, according to custom, you say, "I'm fine." According to your inner sense, however, you are not so fine. Perhaps you have just repented, crying to the Lord; but when someone asks you how you are, you say that you are fine. Although you may say "fine" to a brother, you never say this to the Lord. We should neither be proud nor disappointed.

Compare yourself with what you were twelve years ago. Has there not been a great change? Who changed us? We all must admit that we did not change ourselves; we were changed by being in Bethel, in the church life. If you deliberately stay away from the church life for a few weeks, your former ugliness will return, the fox tail will become visible, the serpent tongue will be exercised, and all the bugs will be active. But if you continue coming to the church, contacting the church again and again, the fox tail will be removed, the serpent tongue will be cut off, and the bugs will be poisoned. As long as you come to the church, the bugs will all be exterminated.

The church life is the most effective purification. I experienced a great deal of purification in the prayer meeting. As I was sitting in the meeting joining in the prayers, I was bathed and purified. I would not say that I was purified by the prayers, but I was purified by the church. The church is a large bathroom where we all are bathed and purified. If the church does not have this function, I am fearful that it will not long remain the church. As long as the church is the church, it will function this way. Often, when it is time to go to the church meeting, something within begins to purify us, telling us to cleanse ourselves. On our way to the meeting, we have frequently prayed, "Lord, I'm going to the meeting. Forgive me of this, cleanse me of that matter, and take that away from me." This is the purification for going up to Bethel. Let us all purify ourselves, for we must arise, go up to Bethel, and meet our God. We cannot meet Him in an old, polluted way. We must be purified. This purification is not a matter of our working, but of the working of the divine hand upon us. When we take care of His Bethel, His divine hand will purify us.

3. Changing Their Garments

In addition to putting away the foreign gods and purifying themselves, they changed their garments (35:2). According to the Bible, to change garments means to change your manner of life. Ephesians 4:22-24 reveals that the old manner of life was the life of the fallen humanity and that the new manner of life is of the church. The church is the regenerated, new creation, and humanity is the fallen, old creation. When we were unsaved, we lived a manner of life that was of the fallen, old creation. Now, after having been saved and regenerated and having been brought into the church life, we must have a new manner of life. We must put off the old man and put on the new man. To put off the old man is to put off the old garments, the old manner of

life, and to put on the new man is to put on the new manner of life, the church.

After putting away the foreign gods and purifying ourselves, we must change our garments, changing our manner of life. We should no longer express ourselves in an old way, but express ourselves as the church, as the new man in the new manner of life. We were the old, fallen creation, but now we are the new, regenerated creation. Many of our relatives, friends, colleagues, and neighbors can testify that after we came into the church life, our manner of life drastically changed. The church has changed and continues to change our manner of life. This is for Bethel.

4. Burying Their Earrings

Verse 4 says, "And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem" (Heb.). Not only were the idols buried, but also the earrings. Earrings are self-beautifying items. These were dealt with in the same way as the idols. Many people's earrings, ornaments, are equal to idols in the eyes of God. When those in Jacob's household were putting away the foreign gods, they also put away their earrings. This indicates that to their conscience their earrings were as abominable as their foreign gods. After touching the church, many sisters had the same conviction and put off this kind of abominable ornament. This is not something related to morality but to the house of God.

God did not charge Jacob to make such a clearance. Still less did He say, "Jacob, you must tell your household and everyone with you to make a clearance and to purify themselves." Why, then, did Jacob charge everyone in this way? Because the house of God is not an individual matter. It is not only Jacob. The house of God must be the house of Jacob becoming the house of Israel. Eventually, all the descendants of Jacob became the house of God, Bethel. The real Bethel was not the tabernacle; it was the children of Israel. Likewise, we must see that today we are the church. We must be purified not only because we are going to Bethel, but because we are to be Bethel. We must put away all foreign gods and abominable ornaments, purify ourselves, and change our garments. Putting away the foreign gods also means putting away all foreign trusts. We must be cleansed in our whole being, inwardly and outwardly, from every pollution, and we must change our manner of life. This is all for the church life.

5. Terrifying the Enemies

Verse 5 says, "And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." It is very encouraging to see that their enemies were terrified. Due to the trouble caused by his sons, Jacob was afraid that the city people would fight against him and kill him. But after Jacob and all those with him had put away the idols, purified themselves, and changed their garments, a terror from God fell upon the city people. Their clearance and purification terrified the enemy. This indicates that if, for the sake of the church life, we put away all foreign gods and self-beautifying and abominable ornaments, purify ourselves, and change our garments, the demons and besetting sins will be terrified. There will be no need to fight to overcome; the enemy will be terrified and the victory will be ours. Have you ever terrified sins? Have you ever terrified gambling, drinking, or smoking? Perhaps you have found these things difficult to overcome. If so, it is because you have not put away foreign gods, purified yourselves, and changed your garments. If you do all this, all the "bugs," "scorpions," and "gophers" will be terrified and will flee and hide. I have read some books about overcoming sin and the world. Forty or fifty years ago I practiced what I read in those books. But the more I practiced, the more defeated I was because I was not in the church. Being in the church by putting away the foreign trusts, purifying ourselves, and changing our garments terrifies sin and worldliness and gives us the victory. Are you troubled by the little "gopher" of your temper? It will be terrified. Genesis 35:5 says that the people of the cities did not dare to pursue Jacob. God gave Jacob a prosperous journey up to Bethel. Whenever we are in the church, all the "gophers" are terrified.

B. Going Up to Bethel

After making a thorough clearance, Jacob and all his people arose and went up to Bethel (vv. 3, 6). At Bethel, he built an altar to God and "called the place El-Beth-el" (v. 7), realizing that God was God to him at Bethel. We must respond to God's call or reminder to go up to the church where we can build the altar of our real consecration and experience God in a practical way. After we come into the church, we all realize the need of a real consecration. By such a consecration, we experience God being God to us in His house—the church.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE NEED FOR EZRAS— THOSE SKILLED IN THE WORD OF GOD

Life-Study of Ezra, Chap. 5

by Witness Lee

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Scripture Reading: Ezra 7:6, 10; 1:7-11

The Bible is unique, and everything contained in it is significant. At the very beginning, the Bible tells us that God created Adam as a creature in His kind (Gen. 1:26). Adam was God's kind only in likeness and appearance, not in life, nature, and constitution. God's desire was that Adam would be His kind not only in likeness but also in life, nature, and constitution.

GOD'S INTENTION THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE HIS TESTIMONY

In Genesis 3:15 God promised that He would come to be the seed of woman. Later, He prophesied further He would come to be a seed of Abraham, which would be the blessing to all the nations (22:18). Eventually, God Himself was incarnated to be a man. However, God first, through His continuous labor, took more than one thousand years to produce and form the nation of Israel as a great type.

God selected Abraham, whose descendants fell into Egypt. God sent Moses to them to deliver them out of Egypt as a great nation, numbering about two million, and brought them to Mount Sinai, where they stayed for nearly a year to be educated by God. God's intention was to have Israel as His testimony, but according to their Egyptian culture they were a testimony of Egypt. For this reason God kept them at Mount Sinai to give them the Ten Commandments, all the statutes for the Ten Commandments, all the ordinances for the statutes, the tabernacle with all the furniture and all the offerings, the priesthood, and all the feasts, in order to build them up with a heavenly, divine constitution instead of an Egyptian constitution.

THE NATION OF ISRAEL BEING GOD-MEN IN TYPOLOGY BUT EVENTUALLY BECOMING DEGRADED

As a result of this time of education and training, the nation of Israel became an army not only formed and organized but also constituted to be God with man and man with God. Hence, in typology the Israelites were God-men. They were God-men, and everything related to them, even their environment with the pillar of cloud in the day and the pillar of fire at night, was God's expression. Their going forth became God's going forth (Psa. 68).

After a short time, however, the children of Israel no longer expressed God, and He let them die in the wilderness. Then God raised up the second generation, and they crossed the river Jordan by a great miracle. As a heavenly constituted army they came to Jericho. When they shouted, the city of Jericho fell. This was God's testimony. This was the move, the living, of God-men; it was God marching on. But when they came to the city of Ai, one among them caused them to fail. From that time onward, there was nothing among the Israelites but degradation. God sent the prophets to warn them and bring them back, but they refused to go along with God. Eventually, God brought in the Babylonians to possess the good land and carry the people of Israel away to Babylon to be disciplined and punished.

THE RETURN OF GOD'S PEOPLE UNDER ZERUBBABEL

God could not forget the good land, the promised land, the land of Immanuel (Isa. 8:8). The good land should be the land of God-men for the testimony of God. First, there was a return under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a descendant of the royal family. It was fitting for him to take the lead in the first return from captivity, because he had the capacity to administrate and to govern. He was a strong governor and he led the people in rebuilding the temple with the altar.

THE NEED FOR AN EZRA

However, the people were still unruly, for they had become Babylonian in their constitution. Therefore, there was the need for an Ezra, a priest who

served God, and also a scribe, a scholar, who was skilled in the Word of God, skilled in the law of Moses (Ezra 7:6, 11). He bore the totality of the heavenly and divine constitution and culture. Ezra called the people together and confessed not only his own sin but also the sin of Israel, to bring them back to the Word of God.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ELDERS TO TEACH THE SAINTS WITH THE TRUTHS

In the church life today, the main responsibility of the elders is to teach the saints with the truths. The Bible says that one of the qualifications of an elder is being apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Paul tells us that certain elders may not have a job but may “labor in word and teaching” and therefore should be supported by the church (5:17-18). However, I have observed that some elders are deficient in the knowledge of the truth and may not even be clear whether a particular matter is an item of the truth.

Let me check with you about calling on the name of the Lord. Is calling on the name of the Lord a truth? No, it is not a truth. Calling on the Lord is necessary, and we need to have such a practice in our daily life, but calling on the Lord’s name is not a truth. Likewise, baptism, presbytery, footwashing, and pray-reading are not truths. On the other hand, justification by faith is a truth. Regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, transfiguration, being made God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead—all these are truths.

Some elders may speak about life-practices such as calling on the Lord, pray-reading, praying without ceasing, not quenching the Spirit, and not despising prophesying, but they do not know how to teach the truths to the saints. For example, if these ones are asked about sanctification, they may be able to say only that to be sanctified is to be separated unto God. If they are asked about the difference between sanctification and renewing, they may not be able to explain the difference. Therefore, I say once again that all the elders need to know the truths and be able to teach the truths to others.

All the elders need to spend much time to learn the truths. This is the duty, the responsibility, of an elder. Anyone who accepts an appointment to the eldership must fulfill this responsibility. Like Ezra, all the elders and co-workers must be skilled in the Word of God.

A GREAT FAMINE THROUGHOUT THE EARTH

Throughout the whole earth there is a great famine of God's Word. In Christianity today, both in Catholicism and in Protestantism, there is very little teaching of the truth. In many places, instead of the truth there are superstitions and pagan practices. For instance, in all of Latin America there is very little of the truth. I believe that this is the reason why our publications, which are full of the truth, are so well received there. In Latin America the people who love God also love our publications. These publications cover the entire Bible from the first page to the last.

THE NEED FOR EZRAS TO CONSTITUTE THE PEOPLE WITH THE HEAVENLY TRUTHS

Both Brother Nee and I spent a great deal of time in learning to be skillful in the Word. Much of what we have learned has been put into print. We have almost completed the life-study of the Scriptures, and we have begun what we call the crystallization study. Today there is the need not just for Zerubbabels but for more Ezras. It would be unseemly for an elder to make decisions and expect the saints to follow them but not visit the saints with the truths. The real eldership is not to exercise authority. The real eldership is to visit the saints and to shepherd them, feed them, and take care of them by speaking to them concerning the truths. Today we need Ezras to teach the people, to educate them, and to constitute them with the heavenly truths.

TYPES OF THE RICHES OF CHRIST

I thank the Lord that, even though we are still so short in many ways, He, for His own sake, has spread His recovery, with His riches, to more than two thousand cities throughout the earth. When the Israelites went back to Jerusalem, they were stirred up, they rose up, they went up, and they brought up 5,400 vessels of gold and silver (Ezra 1:7-11). These were the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods. During the first return from the captivity, all these vessels were brought back to Jerusalem. Those vessels are types of the riches of Christ. After I came to this country, I released messages on the riches of Christ, and I also wrote a hymn on the unsearchable riches of Christ (*Hymns*, #542). In Ephesians 3:8 Paul speaks not only of Christ's riches but of Christ's

unsearchable riches. Today the enjoyment of the riches of Christ is by His word.

THE LORD MOVING IN HIS RECOVERY BY HIS WORD

In His recovery the Lord is moving by His word, by the truth. His word is in the Bible, but the Bible needs the proper interpretation, which is found in the life-studies. If the co-workers and the elders study all our publications, there will be many Ezras in the Lord's recovery to constitute people with the heavenly truths.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

JOINT PARTAKER IN THE TRIBULATION, KINGDOM, AND ENDURANCE IN JESUS

Life-Study of Revelation, Chap. 6

by Witness Lee

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In this message we need to consider 1:9, which says, “I John, your brother and joint partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” The book of Revelation is composed in a marvelous way. It is quite significant that this verse comes shortly after the mention of the Lord’s coming in 1:7. This indicates that if we would be those who are watchfully waiting for the Lord’s coming back, we must be those who are joint partakers, not in outward blessing, but in the tribulation, kingdom, and endurance in Jesus.

I. JOINT PARTAKER IN THE TRIBULATION IN JESUS

The phrase *in Jesus* governs the words *tribulation*, *kingdom*, and *endurance*, and we must pay close attention to it. This phrase very rarely occurs in the New Testament. The phrase *in Christ* or *in Christ Jesus*, on the contrary, is used many times. In the New Testament, the truth is mainly in Christ, but here the phrase *in Jesus* is employed. This tells us that if we would be those who are waiting for the Lord’s coming back, we must be those who are joint partakers in the tribulation, kingdom, and endurance “in Jesus.” When we talk about salvation, grace, enjoyment, and all the other good things, we say that we are “in Christ,” for this phrase refers to everything on the positive side of God’s salvation. But to say that we are partakers of the tribulation, kingdom, and endurance in Jesus means that we are suffering. When Jesus lived on earth as a man, He suffered constantly. According to the facts of His life, His name, Jesus, denotes a suffering person, a man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3). Hence, when we say that we are in Christ, this means that we are saved, are enjoying God’s grace, have peace with God, and are under

God's blessing. But when we say that we are joint partakers of the tribulation, kingdom, and endurance "in Jesus," this means that we are suffering and are being persecuted as we follow Jesus the Nazarene. In the book of Revelation, the *in Christ* is not used. In Ephesians, on the contrary, the term *in Christ* or *in Him* is used repeatedly, being found in every chapter of that epistle. The book of Revelation is for those who are suffering tribulation "in Jesus." This means that those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus must be people who suffer tribulation in Jesus. In other words, those who wait for the Lord's coming back are the suffering ones. In the eyes of God, we are the followers of Christ, but in the eyes of people, especially religion, we are the followers of Jesus.

A. Jesus Having Suffered Persecution While He Was on Earth

While Jesus was on earth, He was persecuted by the Jewish religion (John 5:16; 15:20). He was not persecuted by a heathen, pagan religion, but by the typical religion formed according to God's oracles. Religion is greatly utilized by God's enemy. Religion is versus Christ, and Christ is versus religion. John 5:16 reveals that the Jews persecuted Jesus because He broke their Sabbath. Religious people cannot tolerate the breaking of their regulations. Any violation of their religious regulations will stir up persecution against the violators. The Jewish religion was established on three pillars, one of which was the Sabbath; the other two are circumcision and dietary regulations. When Jesus broke the Sabbath, He tore down one of the three pillars of the Jewish religion. Hence, they persecuted Him and even sought to kill Him. Eventually, religion succeeded and actually killed the Lord Jesus, sentencing Him to death according to their Scriptures. However, under the sovereignty of God, the Jews at that time did not have the right to kill anyone. Thus, they delivered Jesus over to the Roman government and the Roman government, using its method of executing criminals, crucified the Lord Jesus on the cross.

Just as religion persecuted Jesus, it will also persecute the followers of Jesus. We know from the book of Acts that the Jews in the synagogues in every city stirred up opposition against the apostles, and Paul suffered this type of persecution very much. John, the writer of the book of Revelation, also underwent this kind of persecution. When John received the revelation of this book, he was on the island of Patmos, having been exiled there for "the word

of God and the testimony of Jesus.” In writing the book, he was encouraging the saints to wait for the Lord’s coming back, telling them that he was their brother and joint partaker, not in grace, life, peace, and light, but in the suffering, the affliction, in Jesus.

As we have seen, when Jesus was on earth, He suffered at the hands of religion. The Roman Empire paid very little attention to Him. It was the Jewish religion that asked the Roman government to execute judgment upon Him. Thus, the persecution against Him did not originate with the secular world but with the religious world. In the book of Acts we see that it was the same with the apostles. The opposition did not come mainly from the Gentiles but from the Jewish religion. The Jews followed Paul wherever he went, perhaps even picketing him. In like manner, a great many martyrs suffered persecution by the so-called Roman Catholic Church. As Foxe points out in his history of martyrs, the Roman Catholic Church killed more saints than the Roman Empire did. Who imprisoned Madame Guyon? The Roman Catholic Church. Who imprisoned John Bunyan? The Church of England. Religion always persecutes the genuine followers of Jesus.

Now it is our turn to undergo this persecution. During the years I was with Brother Nee in China, I saw how much he was persecuted by religion. The rumors, opposition, and condemnation came, not from the Gentiles, but from Christianity, even from some missionaries. The Devil is subtle. The secular world does not oppose us as much as the so-called religious people do. Many Christians think of religion as a good thing, but actually it is something used by the Devil. If you read the book of Galatians, you will see how intensely Paul persecuted the church when he was in the Jewish religion. Galatians 1 reveals that religion is against Christ and that Christ is versus religion. If we cooperate with religion, there will be a type of compromising peace. But how can we go along with religion? It is so subtle and false; it is a counterfeit of God’s economy. Anyone who sees that religion is a counterfeit of God’s economy will condemn it.

B. Jesus Now Suffering Persecution with His Followers

Because we do not cooperate with religion, it persecutes us. The persecution that we are suffering today is the persecution in Jesus. He is now suffering persecution with His followers (Acts 9:4-5). As we are suffering

today, He is suffering in and with us. When Saul of Tarsus was traveling to Damascus with the intention of arresting all those who called on the name of Jesus, the Lord Jesus knocked him down to the earth, saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (v. 4). When Saul said, "Who are You, Lord?" Jesus answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (v. 5). Saul never thought that he was persecuting Jesus. He thought Jesus was in the grave and that he was persecuting Stephen and other followers of Jesus. But according to the Lord Jesus, Saul was persecuting Him, because, at that time, He was in Stephen, Peter, John, and all His other members and was one with them. The same is true today. When the religious people persecute us, they are actually persecuting Jesus because Jesus is in us and is one with us. We may be comforted to realize that the suffering we are experiencing is the persecution in Jesus. We are joint partakers of tribulation in Jesus.

C. His Followers Also Persecuted in This Age, Bearing His Reproach

The followers of Jesus are also persecuted in this age, bearing His reproach (2:10; John 16:2, 33; Acts 14:22; Heb. 13:13). Hebrews 13:13 says, "Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He suffered reproach from religion. Now, as His followers, we must bear His reproach, suffering reproach from religion. This is to be a joint partaker of tribulation in Jesus.

Some sufferings, however, may not be caused by our following Jesus, but by our foolishness. This suffering cannot properly be called the suffering in Jesus. None of us should cause trouble by acting foolishly. But we must be honest and faithful to the Lord's testimony. If our honesty and faithfulness bring us suffering and persecution, that is the persecution in Jesus, and that is Jesus' suffering with us.

It is impossible to avoid the persecution of religion. We cannot escape it because the enemy is utilizing religion more than ever before. Nothing is more frustrating to God's economy than religion. Nothing blinds, covers, and veils people from seeing God's economy more than religion does. Millions have been blinded by it. Throughout the whole world, religion is blinding and veiling people's eyes from seeing God's economy. Because of this, a warfare is raging. In this warfare, we must sound our trumpet, saying, "Get out of religion, tear away the religious veils from your eyes, and forsake your

religious concepts.” Whenever we do this, opposition is aroused. Some good friends have come to me advising me to compromise a little. But we will never compromise. Those who wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus must partake of His suffering. Do not simply say, “Lord Jesus, I love You. Come quickly.” If you say this, the Lord will reply, “I want you to suffer for and with Me.” Do not try to avoid persecution. If we employ our cleverness to avoid persecution, then we are not good waiters of the coming of the Lord. If you mean business to wait for His coming back, the religious persecution will be stirred up against you. But we should not arouse persecution by acting foolishly. In this matter, we must be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matt. 10:16).

II. JOINT PARTAKER IN THE KINGDOM IN JESUS

If we are joint partakers in the tribulation in Jesus, then we are joint partakers in the kingdom. To partake of the persecution in Jesus is to partake of the kingdom. If you do not know what persecution is, then you do not know what the kingdom is.

A. The Kingdom Being with Jesus

When He Was on Earth

Many Christians have a mistaken concept of the kingdom. Some say that the kingdom has already come, but that it has been rejected and suspended. Those who hold this concept say that the kingdom came, that it was rejected and suspended, and that it will come down in the future. According to this teaching, when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will bring this suspended kingdom with Him. This is merely vain doctrine. The kingdom was with Jesus when He was on earth. The Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; Nor will they say, Look, here! Or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:20-21). In this portion of the Word, we see that the kingdom was wherever Jesus was. In Matthew 12:28, the Lord said, “If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then the kingdom of God is come upon you.” This means that the kingdom was with the Lord while He was on earth.

B. His Believers Being Born into the Kingdom

The believers of Jesus have been born into the kingdom. John 3:5 proves this. In this verse, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless

a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” We were regenerated into the kingdom. How could we have entered into the kingdom by regeneration if the kingdom had been suspended? Into what, then, were we born again? As John 3 states clearly, we have been reborn into the kingdom.

C. The Church Life Today Being the Kingdom

In Matthew 16:18 and 19 the Lord said to Peter, “On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens.” This shows that, in a proper sense, the church is the kingdom. Romans 14:17 also indicates that we in the church are in the kingdom. The proper church life is the kingdom life.

What is the kingdom? It is the heavenly rule in the divine nature. We all have been regenerated with the divine life. In this life there is the divine nature, and with this divine nature there is a ruling, a reigning, a governing. This governing is both divine and heavenly. We, the regenerated ones, are under this reign today; we are under this government and control. We need to exercise this rule over ourselves. If you still need someone else to rule over you, it means that you are fallen. We must be under the heavenly rule in everything we do. In a previous message we spoke about being the fighting army of Christ. But if you are not under the ruling of the divine life, you will never be selected to be in His army. Being chosen to be in this army depends upon obeying the heavenly rule in the divine nature. The divine life brings us into the divine kingdom. The kingdom into which we are reborn in John 3:5 is the very kingdom mentioned by John in Revelation 1:9. How could we ever be joint partakers in the kingdom if we had not been reborn into it? After we have been reborn into the kingdom, we should remain in it. If you still argue with your wife or husband, it means that you are an escapee from the kingdom. If you remain in the kingdom and live in it, you will never fight with your husband, your wife, or anyone else. Although the enemy may tempt you to fight, the ruling of the heavenly kingdom will restrain you.

D. His Believers Suffering Persecution for the Kingdom

To be in the kingdom in Jesus today is not a glory. When the kingdom in Jesus becomes the kingdom in Christ, that will be the time for glory. Today,

the kingdom in Jesus is a kingdom of suffering. In Matthew 5:10-12 the Lord said that His believers suffer persecution for the sake of the kingdom. If we are suffering for righteousness' sake, then we are in the kingdom. There are certain things which we cannot do because they are unrighteous. All of humanity today is unrighteous. If we agree with this unrighteousness, people will welcome us. But if we stand for righteousness, people will oppose and persecute us. Suffering persecution for the kingdom proves that we are in the kingdom of God today. Do not think that it is a glory to be in the kingdom today. No, to be in the kingdom now is to bear shame and to suffer persecution. The more we are in the kingdom, the more we shall suffer and be persecuted. But praise the Lord this suffering is a strong sign that we are in the kingdom.

Being in the kingdom today is a matter of being in the suffering in Jesus. Although we are joint partakers in the kingdom in Jesus, we are not yet the co-kings in Christ. When He comes back, we shall be His co-kings in the kingdom in Christ. At that time, we shall no longer suffer. Do not say to others, "You must honor me. I am a partner in the heavenly kingdom, and one day I'll be a co-king with Christ in the kingdom." The more you say this, the more you will be persecuted. Today is not a reigning day but a suffering day. Now we are not in the reigning kingdom but in the suffering kingdom. This is the reason that Paul said that we must enter into the kingdom of God through much tribulation (Acts 14:22). The way to enter into the ruling kingdom is through suffering. The tribulation Paul referred to in Acts 14:22 was mainly the persecution at the hands of the Jewish religion. All believers in Christ undergo this kind of persecution. Paul seemed to be saying, "You Christians, the believers of Jesus, must suffer persecution from the Jewish religion." In principle, it is the same today. If there were no religion in the world today, we would not suffer as much persecution. As we have already pointed out, most of the troubles, persecutions, rumors, and oppositions can be traced to one source—religion. While we are suffering today, we are in the kingdom where we are being exercised, trained, prepared, and qualified to be Christ's army and to reign in His kingdom as His co-kings.

III. JOINT PARTAKER IN THE ENDURANCE IN JESUS

In 1:9, John also said that he was a joint partaker in the endurance in Jesus. For both the tribulation and the kingdom we need endurance. Many saints, even among us in the Lord's recovery, lack endurance. Some have suffered persecution from their relatives, friends, and neighbors, but eventually they exhausted their supply of endurance. While they were able to withstand the persecution for a certain time, they lacked the endurance to bear it for a longer time. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He endured persecution (Heb. 12:2-3), and He is still enduring men's opposition and reproach today. Consider how much, even today, people oppose and mock the Lord Jesus. On the one hand, He is sitting in the heavens; on the other hand, He is still being mocked, opposed, and persecuted. Many of us might expect the Lord Jesus to say to His mockers, "Repent or I will send a great earthquake to destroy you." The Lord Jesus has been mocked for nearly twenty centuries, but He has not fought back. Rather, He has continuously suffered all these attacks. Some may say, "Jesus, I hate You," but there is no response from Him. This is the endurance of Jesus.

Not many of us have heard of the endurance of Jesus. We have heard of the power of Jesus, the love of Jesus, the holiness of Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus, but not of the endurance of Jesus. Nevertheless, as we live in Christ, we not only partake of His life and holiness, but also of His endurance. When we abide in Christ, we partake of His endurance and have the endurance to bear suffering and opposition. The Lord's word is even called the word of endurance (3:10). Today the whole world is opposing and rejecting Him, but He does not fight back. He simply endures it all. Now as we have fellowship with Him and abide in Him, we partake of His endurance. As His followers, we must follow Him on the same pathway with endurance (Heb. 12:1). In this way we also can endure persecution, rumors, rejection, and opposition. This is a strong proof that we are those who are waiting for the Lord's coming back. As we wait for His coming back by being a joint partaker in His tribulation, kingdom, and endurance, we are being disciplined, trained, prepared, and qualified to be His fighting army. Are you waiting for the Lord Jesus to come back? If you are, then you also must be a joint partaker in His tribulation, kingdom, and endurance.

CHAPTER TWENTY

A NORMAL LIFE AND SERVICE

Messages Given to the Working Saints, Chap. 8
by Witness Lee
ISBN: 978-0-87083-480-6

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rom. 12:1; 1:14; Matt. 4:19; 1 Tim. 2:1, 4; 1 Cor. 9:16-17; Acts 5:42; 1 Thes. 2:20; John 21:15-16; 4:24; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Cor. 14:26, 1, 5, 39; Eph. 4:12, 15-16; Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20

OUTLINE

- I. A normal life:
 - A. Being different from the world—Rom. 12:2:
 - 1. Those in the world belong to the world and are for the world.
 - 2. The believers belong to the Lord and are for the Lord.
 - B. Being constrained by the Lord to live to the Lord—2 Cor. 5:14-15.
 - C. Setting up a schedule of one's daily life:
 - 1. One that is suitable for living to the Lord and serving Him.
 - 2. Having a budget in time, energy, and finances:
 - a. Setting aside a fixed time every week and every day for the Lord.
 - b. There being the need to budget one's strength for the Lord as well.
 - c. In budgeting our finances, that which is for the Lord should be increased according to the prosperity bestowed by the Lord—Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2.
- II. A normal service:
 - A. Offering up our bodies and our time—Rom. 12:1:
 - 1. According to budget.
 - 2. Not owing the Lord—1:14.
 - B. Preaching the gospel to gain new ones—Matt. 4:19:
 - 1. Being interested in sinners, and praying for the unbelievers—1 Tim. 2:1, 4.

2. Not being something of a temporary zeal.
3. But functioning in a normal and regular way—1 Cor. 9:16-17.
- C. Taking care of the home meetings and perfecting the new ones—Acts 5:42:
 1. Considering the new ones as one's joy—1 Thes. 2:20.
 2. Teaching and shepherding patiently—John 21:15-16.
 3. Mainly cultivating the spirits of the new ones—4:24.
- D. Helping the meetings and contacting the saints:
 1. Considering those being helped as one's glory.
 2. Helping them to mingle with the saints.
 3. Directing them to open to the saints for mutual fellowship, concern, love, and care—Heb. 10:24-25.
- E. Attending the district meetings to build up the church:
 1. Before and after the meetings, contacting the new attendants and the other saints.
 2. Exercising to function in the meetings by testifying or prophesying—1 Cor. 14:26, 1, 5, 39.
 3. Practice the voice and the proper use of time.
 4. Practice following the flow of the meeting and caring for others' feelings.
- F. Building up the Body of Christ:
 1. By-passing arrangements, acting and serving organically.
 2. Not emphasizing work but supplying Christ, life, and the Spirit.
 3. Leading others to learn to serve and work organically and to grow together with the saints in the life of Christ, being joined together and being knit together for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12, 15-16.
 4. Boasting only in the work of gaining, perfecting, leading, and building up people.
 5. That the all-inclusive Christ may have an unlimited and unceasing increase and spread—Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.

Prayer: Lord, come and speak again tonight. Prove to us once more that You are one spirit with us. Speak in our speaking. Speak a clear word, a word of revelation. You and we are one spirit. This is not just a story of love but a story of the spirit. Lord, we believe in Your presence. We believe that You are with us here in a rich way. Be gracious to us, and visit us. Touch the depths of

our being, and speak to our depths. Grant us a new beginning, so that we would learn to live a life of love and a life of being in the spirit. Lord, You should have the glory in us and should occupy the preeminent place in our lives. May we take this way all the days of our life. When we see You, may we be able to sing the song of victory. Amen.

A NORMAL LIFE

Different from the World

The subject in this chapter is a normal life and service. Basically speaking, we the Christians are different in our way of life from those in the world. They belong to the world and are for the world. We belong to the Lord and are for the Lord. Every lover of the Lord is, outwardly speaking, somewhat peculiar. Every day we have the Bible in our hands. We often go to the meeting halls. All the time we say Hallelujah and Amen. In the morning we read the Bible. In the evening we read the same Bible. Sometimes we even have to read the Bible before going to bed. I advise those who have insomnia to make all necessary preparations for going to bed. Then when they are ready to go to bed, I advise them to open up the Bible and read for ten minutes. After the reading, there is no need for too long a prayer. They may simply say, "Thank the Lord! Be with me, Lord! Amen," and then go to sleep. Many times, in this way, they will fall asleep right away. We Christians are uncommon because we belong to the Lord Jesus. We love Him and live for Him.

Living to the Lord

by the Constraining of His Love

The reason we are different from the others is that we have the love of the Lord in us. We are constrained by the Lord's love (2 Cor. 5:14). The word *constrain* is difficult to translate. Its original meaning is to be pressed on all sides, holding to one end, forcibly limited and confined to one object within certain bounds, being shut up to one line and purpose as in a narrow, walled road. Since the day you first belonged to the Lord, it seems as if the Lord has put two walls at your two sides. These two walls become a narrow lane that compels you to go forward. You cannot turn or take another way. You are compelled to take this way. By our nature we do not want God. We only want ourselves. In our studying and working we are always the center, the goal, and the focus. But after we were saved, His love began to constrain

us, and we began to love Him. When I was young, China was in a period of great reform. I was educated mostly in the Western way. I had quite a bright future. How then did I end up being a “poor preacher”? It is because there is something that has constrained me to take the way of the Lord.

The Lord’s love is too strong. He compels us to accept His love. The more we say that we would not love the Lord, the more He loves us. Wherever we go, the Lord follows us. He will not let us go until we respond to His love. The Lord’s constraining is not mainly a constraining in environments. Rather, it is an inward constraining. It makes us uncomfortable when we do not love Him. All those who belong to the Lord and who love the Lord have been constrained to take this way. Our Lord indeed loves us. Nevertheless, I have never seen another person who bothers us as much as the Lord does. One brother testified that he asked for a leave of absence from the Lord to go to a movie. But the Lord would not let him go. The Lord followed him. When he bought the ticket and entered the theater, the Lord followed him. Even during the most exciting moment, he could not shout. When he went home, he could not sleep the whole night long. In the end he could not help but say to the Lord, “Lord! It is not that I love You. But You have bothered me too much, and there is nothing that I can do. I cannot go to the theater anymore.” This is the meaning of constraining.

Once we submit to the Lord, He stops the constraining, and things become smooth. Formerly, I was all alone, by myself. The Lord was not there, and no one minded my business. Now the Lord is with me, and He minds my business. Thank the Lord! When our concept is changed this way, we will not feel that we are being constrained. The reason the Lord is constraining us this way is to turn us to live to Him (2 Cor. 5:15). The phrase *living to Him* is difficult to translate. It does not mean to live for the Lord. It means to live unto Him. The meaning of living to the Lord is deeper than to live for Him. To live for Him means that He and we are still two. But to live to Him means that we and the Lord are one. It is like a wife living to her husband in the marriage life. In such a way we live a life of living to the Lord and being one with Him.

Setting Up a Proper Schedule of One’s Daily Life

You need to set up a proper schedule for your life. Formerly, you were not living to the Lord, and your way of living was like that of those in the world.

But now you are living to the Lord; you should set up a new pattern of life. Speaking first of the small things of life, most people like to sleep a little late in the morning. This is especially true with the young people. But now you have to get up at six-thirty in the morning. The first thing after getting up is to call “O Lord Jesus” and to pray. Speaking next of the more important things of life, most people want to seek after an academic degree and to be famous and glamorous in the world. Now that we love the Lord and live to Him, our way of living is changed. In everything we should still fulfill our duties properly. We study properly and work properly, without any special coveting. In an ordinary way we should love the Lord and live for Him. Formerly, our life was a struggle and a striving for success in the world. Now we live a simple life of loving the Lord, living for Him, raising a family, educating our children, and daily testifying and bringing people to Him. Even when we venture into business, we do so with a restraint. We only labor in a measured way. We would not be greedy, nor would we be lazy. Neither would we waste time. In this way we will truly be a person who loves the Lord and lives for Him. Otherwise, even though you may have a strong desire, your outward way of living will eat you up totally and bind you. For this reason our way of living has to be one that matches our desire to love Him, live for Him, and serve Him.

Having a Budget in Time, Energy, and Finances

We should have a budget for our time, our energy, and our finances. When people talk about budgeting, most of them consider only finances. But according to my experience, even our energy has to be budgeted. I know how much strength I have. Every day I can use only a certain amount of strength. Every time I have a cold, it is because I have overexerted myself. If I would control my time well, I would not have a cold. This is why I plan ahead how many messages I need to speak and how many people I need to see in a week. Although you are young, you should distribute your strength properly. In this way, you will be able to accomplish the proper tasks.

Timewise, every week and every day we should set aside some time for the Lord. If you really love the Lord, at least you have to sanctify the Lord’s Day for Him. The Lord’s Day is the Lord’s. In addition, you should devote at least one evening out of a week for helping others for the Lord’s sake. Either you

should go to preach the gospel to gain people, or you should go to others' homes to have home meetings or small group meetings with them. You do not have to do too much. If you would spend one evening a week, in a year there will be fifty-two evenings. If all the two thousand brothers and sisters sitting here would do this, many people can be cared for. Now we have thirty-eight thousand newly baptized ones. Who is going to care for them? Although it is difficult to deliver a child, that is done in a day. It is more difficult to raise a child. It takes many years to raise a child. Hence, to bring people to salvation, to bring them to a proper spiritual living, and to bring them to live the corporate church life as a testimony require a tremendous amount of manpower. If all of you here will labor and strive, the church in Taipei can very well become the most prosperous and thriving church on the whole earth.

In the world the thing that worries the mothers the most is that their daughters would not know how to cook after they are married. But in the end all the wives know how to cook. There are very few households that hire cooks. Spiritually speaking, to hire a pastor to preach in the meetings is to hire a cook. Today, in changing the system, we are saying that everyone has to cook. Recently, I have been very happy, because both locally and overseas there are reports telling me that the new way is workable and that the meetings in many places have become rich and high. To practice the new way, everyone has to be diligent. The opportunities are there for everyone to take. We all have to live a revived and overcoming life.

Hence, the new way requires that everyone mean business the whole day long. In the morning we have to contact the Lord and read His Word. During the day, we have to walk according to the Spirit. Every Lord's Day has to be sanctified, and every week we devote one evening for helping others. If we practice this now, when the Lord comes back, we will then be able to give an account. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 16 that if any man does not love the Lord, let him be accursed, and that the Lord will surely come and judge (v. 22). At my age today I am still pleading with all of you. I surely have a burden. I have exhausted my all. I do this because I know that I will have to see my Lord and that I will be judged. I hope that you will also consider this matter seriously before the Lord.

In budgeting your finances, you should offer up what you have in excess according to the prosperity that the Lord has provided you (Acts 11:29; 1 Cor.

16:2). The word *prosper* in the original language means to advance well or to progress smoothly. It means to be successful and profitable in our business, career, or whatever else. To be prosperous is a gift from God that results in abundance and affluence. Take Taiwan as an example. It has turned from a place of perilous and poor conditions forty years ago to one with peaceful and rich conditions today. The foreigners have considered this to be a miracle. This is the Lord's work and His provision. Hence, this prosperity is from the Lord. We have to send out our riches and care for the poor according to the prosperity that the Lord has granted us. In budgeting our finances, we should increase our giving according to the prosperity provided by the Lord. For example, this year you may budget to give a tenth of what you have. Next year you may have to adjust to twelve percent. By increasing this way, you will be blessed.

When I was young, I read a word by Benjamin Franklin. He said that it is easy to make money but that it is hard to spend money. At that time I could not understand this. Later, I became clear. He was absolutely right. It is difficult to use the money that we earn in the right way. The money that you earn should first be used to honor the Lord. You should say to the Lord, "Lord, You have given me this. I am offering a tenth of this to you." As long as you have the heart, surely you can save one-tenth. You should save this money first, either for the preaching of the gospel or to give to the poor. Only then will your money not be wasted. Only then will it be of value. But if you use your money on wasteful, luxurious, or lustful things, you will corrupt the society. Hence, the way of the Lord is a way of blessing. It is a blessing to you, to those that come into contact with you, and to society. If we want to follow the Lord, our financial planning for the Lord should be adjusted upward yearly.

A NORMAL SERVICE

Consecrating Our Bodies and Our Time

In order to have the proper service, we must first consecrate our bodies and our time. Romans 12 shows us that to practice the Body life, we must first offer up our bodies. We have to say to the Lord, "Lord, my body is purchased by You. It is Your possession. I am consecrating it to You." To offer up the body, we have to offer up our time, because the body is in the time. If we cannot give our time, the body cannot be presented. Practically speaking, you

should consecrate your body and your time according to the way of budgeting we described. Paul says in Romans 1:14 that he is a debtor to everyone. This is a debt to the Lord. If we do not preach the gospel and do not help others to go on, are we not indebted to the Lord? Hence, we have to consecrate our bodies and our time to preach the gospel and to help others. Only then will we not be indebted to the Lord.

Preaching the Gospel to Gain New Ones

The second item of a proper service is to preach the gospel to gain new ones. In order to preach the gospel, first we must be interested in sinners. We must not feel that they are evil or repulsive. If so, our gospel will not go out. Romans 5:8 says, “God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” In Matthew 5:44 the Lord also said to love our enemies. Hence, we have to be interested in sinners. When others lie, you have to pity them. If they are saved, they will no longer lie. Man is corrupted by birth. If the Lord had not saved you, you would not be that much better than they are. Moreover, we have to pray for the unbelievers.

Our preaching of the gospel should not be with a temporary zeal. Many Christians become hot suddenly and also turn cold suddenly. This is not normal. We should serve in a normal and regular way. Once a week we go out to knock on doors to preach the gospel. First Corinthians 9:16 and 17 says, “If I preach the gospel, I have no boast, for necessity is laid upon me; for woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. If I do this of my own will, I have a reward.” It was Paul’s commission to preach the gospel. If he would not preach, it would be a woe to him. We should see the same thing today.

Taking Care of the Home Meetings and Perfecting the New Ones

After a person is baptized, he needs care, shepherding, feeding, and teaching. All these require our labor. During the last few years, we have baptized about thirty-eight thousand people through our door-knocking. All the brothers and sisters have to rise up and pick up the burden to care for them. This training is conducted with the hope that the working brothers and sisters would rise up to visit them week by week, caring for them in the home

meetings, perfecting them there, considering them as their joy (1 Thes. 2:20), and teaching and shepherding them patiently (John 21:15-16) with the view mainly to develop their spirit (4:24). If everyone would practice this, the result will be very noticeable.

Attending the District Meetings for the Building Up of the Church

The fifth point of our service is to attend the district meetings for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:26). Before and after the meetings we should contact the new attendants and the other believers. I have noticed this lack among most brothers and sisters in the meetings. The reason for this is that no one has the habit of contacting people before and after meetings. We do not have to sit down that quickly before the meeting. We can wait at the door for the brothers and sisters to come. No matter who we see, we can spend a few minutes talking to them. After the meeting we do not need to leave right away. Find someone to talk to. It is always beneficial for believers to contact each other. Spontaneously, there is the visitation, the shepherding, and the teaching. Next, we have to practice functioning in the meetings by testifying or prophesying. We must also practice our voice and our use of time. When we speak in public, we have to speak aloud. At the same time the speaker should measure his time well. Three to five minutes is good enough. Do not speak too long. Last, learn to follow the flow of a meeting, and learn to take care of others' feeling. Every meeting has its flow. Do not talk about the north when others are talking about the south. When you speak, you should care for the flow and for the feeling of others.

The Building Up of the Body of Christ

The last point in our service is the building up of the Body of Christ. This is very important. This matter cannot be realized in the meetings of Christianity. It can be realized only in the practice of the new way. In the new way no one is monopolizing. Everyone has a chance. Nothing is according to arrangement. Everything is by the organic way and follows the leading of the spirit. For example, according to your plan, you may have every Friday set aside for going out. But this Monday, while you are praying and contacting the Lord, He may give you a leading to visit your cousin that very evening. This is to be organic. We should not have dead services that come from arrangements. Rather, we should have living services that come from being organic. We

should bypass arrangements and serve and act organically. Christianity talks about organization and arrangements. But the new way requires that we serve organically. All the brothers and sisters should be led by the Lord daily. In this way everyone will be built up organically. We will not be building up an organized congregation, but we will be building up the Body of Christ.

Moreover, we should not emphasize work but should pay attention to supplying Christ, life, and the Spirit. Most activities in Christianity emphasize work. But we have to learn not to emphasize work. Rather, we should emphasize the supplying of Christ, life, and the Spirit. For example, a brother may come to fellowship with you. He may mention to you his family problems, that his wife is giving him a hard time. You should not exhort him to be patient, forbearing, or yielding. This is not Christ. You can share with him a testimony, or help him to read some verses. You may say something like this to him: "Brother, today, the Lord Jesus is in you. He is a living Lord, and He is with you all the time. You need to contact Him in the morning. When you see your wife losing her temper, you should begin to fellowship with the Lord within to receive His supply. We all need the filling of the Spirit. We have no way to overcome our problems. But when the Spirit fills us, nothing else will matter anymore." When you fellowship with him this way, you are supplying Christ to him. You are also supplying the Spirit to him. By this he will grow in life.

As a further step, in order to help others learn to serve and work in an organic way, we have to grow together with the saints in the life of Christ, being joined together and being knit together to be built up into the Body of Christ. This is based upon the words of Ephesians 4. We are not merely coming together for a meeting or to build up a congregation, but we are growing together into the Body of Christ. This is the building up of His Body. We should boast only in the gaining, perfecting, helping, and building up of people. By this the all-inclusive Christ will have an unlimited and unceasing increase and spread.