THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH AND THE SERVICE OF THE BODY

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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ISBN: 978-0-7363-3359-7

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PREFACE

This book is a collection of words of fellowship given in 1957 by Brother Witness Lee to the co-workers and serving ones in the churches. The first chapter concerns the relationship between the church, the workers, and the work. Based on the content, it is believed to have been spoken in the Philippines. The remaining eight chapters were spoken in Taipei, Taiwan. Chapters 2 and 3 were spoken to the co-workers and concern the ground of the church and the principle of the work. Chapters 4 through 8 contain words of fellowship given to those responsible for the meetings of the church in Taipei. The last chapter consists of fellowship given to the full-time serving ones.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH, THE WORKERS, AND THE WORK

We need to see the relationship between the church, the workers, and the work. In our fellowship, messages, and prayers, we often use three terms—*church, workers,* and *work.* When brothers and sisters go out to propagate, the responsible brothers may announce, "The church in our locality has decided to set apart one thousand dollars each month for the spread of the work." Some saints have then asked, "What is this money for, and how will it be used?" This question demonstrates that the brothers and sisters are not clear concerning the relationship between the church, the workers, and the work. Hence, we need to explain this matter clearly. For this, we need to spend much time studying the New Testament. This will help us to see the matter clearly so that the saints in all the churches may know this truth.

For two thousand years, since the passing of the apostles, the church has not been clear concerning this matter. The Roman Catholic Church and the various Protestant denominations have deviated in this matter from the teaching of the Bible. Some groups have deviated to a greater extent and others to a lesser extent. It is truly difficult to find a group of Christians that has not deviated in the matter of the relationship between the church, the workers, and the work. In order to see this matter clearly, we must see the composition of the church. We use the term *the composition of the church* for the purpose of helping the brothers and sisters understand that, simply put, the church is composed of all the saved ones. If there were no saved ones, there would be no church. All the saved ones joined together are the church. Hence, the church is a composition of all the saints.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

The church is not simple, because the church is universal as well as local. If we carefully study the teaching in the New Testament, we can see two aspects of the church—the universal aspect and the local aspect. For example, based on the context, the word *church* in Ephesians 1:22 refers to the universal church, whereas *churches* in Galatians 1:2 and *church* in Acts 8:1; 13:1; and 14:23 refer to local churches, churches in specific localities.

The universal church is unique; there is only one church in the universe. This one church is the bride of Christ. A husband should have only one wife; hence, the fact that the church is the bride of Christ speaks forth her uniqueness. The church is universal. Furthermore, the church is the Body of Christ, and there is only one Body of Christ. Hence, the church as the Body of Christ refers to the unchanging universal church. With the universal church there is no distinction of time and space. The word *universal* includes all times and all places, encompassing both time and space. In the Chinese language *universe* means the totality of time and space. All the churches at all times and in all places form the universal church, which is the unique and universal Body of Christ, the bride of Christ.

On the other hand, by reading Acts and the Epistles, we can see that the church is referred to in the plural. Both Acts 15:41 and Galatians 1:2 speak of churches. This shows that there were many churches and that these churches were local. There is a church in Manila, a church in Hong Kong, a church in Taipei, and a church in London. There is a church in each of these places. All these churches in different localities are referred to as local churches. The totality of all the local churches is the universal church.

The universal church is like the moon. There is only one moon. Whether it is seen in New York or in Manila, it is the same moon. Likewise, there is only one church in the universe, the universal church, which is the bride of Christ, the Body of Christ. Nevertheless, she was expressed in Jerusalem over nineteen hundred years ago and in many places throughout Europe over fifteen hundred years ago. Today she is expressed in many places in the Far East. In the universal church there are numerous local churches, because there is a local church in every locality in which there are believers. All these local churches combined together are the universal church. The church in Hong Kong, the church in Manila, and the church in Taipei along with all the other local churches are the universal church.

THE SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION OF WORKERS

In the previous section we addressed the difference between the universal church and the local church. For the past two thousand years the church has not been able to properly solve the question of how the workers are related to the local church. The term *workers* can be used both in a narrow sense and in a broad sense. In a broad sense, all those who serve God are workers. For instance, whenever we go out to preach the gospel and do the Lord's work, we are His workers. In a broad sense, it is a fact that all the saved ones are God's servants. However, when we say that the apostle Paul was a servant of God, we say this in a narrower sense. The same principle applies to the term *workers*. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "We are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9; cf. 2 Cor. 6:1); moreover, he told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman" (2 Tim. 2:15). *Workers* and *workman* as used in these verses are undoubtedly used in a narrower sense.

In this chapter we are speaking of workers in the narrow sense of the word, not the broad sense. In a narrow sense, according to the biblical revelation, these workers are those sent by the Lord; that is, they are apostles. Throughout church history people have held an inaccurate concept concerning apostles. When I was young, I heard a preacher solemnly say that throughout the ages there have been only twelve apostles and that once the twelve apostles passed away, there have been no more apostles. At the time I thought that this concept was scriptural, but the more I read the Bible, the more I felt that it was not true. For example, both Paul and Barnabas were apostles. Those who hold the view that there were only twelve apostles claim that Paul simply filled the place of Judas. If this were the case, there would still be thirteen apostles, because Barnabas was considered to be an apostle. Acts 14:4 clearly uses the term *apostles* when speaking of Barnabas and Paul; hence, Barnabas also was an apostle. Moreover, Silas was an apostle (15:22), and there is clear evidence that Timothy also was an apostle (Rom. 16:21). This proves that there were many apostles in the apostles' time. If there were not many apostles, there would not have been the need to speak of false apostles. Revelation 2:2 says that there were false apostles: "those who call themselves apostles and are not." There is only one president in the Philippines; as a result, there is no need to speak of false presidents. However,

if a nation has three or four presidents, it would be easy to have false presidents.

When some in Corinth questioned whether Paul was an apostle, he said, "If to others I am not an apostle, yet surely I am to you" (1 Cor. 9:2). According to Revelation 2:2, the church and the believers are able to try those who call themselves apostles in order to verify whether or not they are apostles. These verses indicate that there is not a limited number of apostles. They also show that apostles are not limited to a special group of people.

On the one hand, apostles are weighty people in the church; on the other hand, they are not a special group of people. According to the Bible, an apostle is simply a worker who is sent out by God. An apostle is a person who is called by God and sent by Him to preach the gospel, save sinners, and establish and edify churches. Therefore, *workers* in a narrow sense refers to those who are sent out by God, that is, the apostles, as spoken of in the Bible. Later, in Europe the word *missionary*, a term derived from Latin, emerged. This word means "sent one." In recent days, when people are sent out to preach the gospel by either the Roman Catholic Church or various Protestant denominations, they are referred to as missionaries. Because most missionaries have come from the West, there is a new term in Chinese—*Western missionaries.*

In fact, the word *missionary* is equivalent to the New Testament word *apostle.* Both missionaries and apostles are people sent by God to preach the gospel and establish churches. When we speak of workers, we are referring to apostles, those sent by God to preach the gospel and establish churches.

THE CHURCHES BEING LOCAL AND THE WORKERS BEING EXTRA-LOCAL

Some people may ask, "Are there workers in the local church?" If we read the entire New Testament carefully, we will see that there were no apostles in the local church. The sphere of the work of an apostle is extra-local. Acts 13:1 says, "Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers." Surprisingly, there is no mention of apostles in the church in Antioch. Neither

does one find apostles in other churches. However, 1 Corinthians 12:28 says, "God has placed some in the church: first apostles..." How can we explain this? On one hand, there are no apostles in the local church; on the other hand, the Bible says that God has placed apostles in the church. If we read these portions carefully, we will come to the conclusion that although there are no apostles in the local church, there are apostles in the universal church.

There are many local churches in the universal church, but there are no apostles in the local churches. The apostles are only in the universal church. In the apostles' time there were two regions: the Jewish region and the Gentile region. Peter and John were apostles among the Jews in the Jewish region, and Paul and Barnabas were apostles among the Gentiles in the Gentile region. If we read the New Testament carefully, we can tell whether a church was composed mostly of Jewish believers or Gentile believers. The universal church consists of these two regions. In each of these regions there were particular apostles. The churches in these regions were established by the apostles laboring among them. Hence, within the Jewish and Gentile regions there were many local churches.

By reading Acts, we can see that Peter and John, as apostles in the Jewish region, established churches in that region. They established the church in Jerusalem, and through the laying on of hands, they established the church in Samaria. Paul and his co-workers established churches in the Gentile region. Hence, in the universal church there are two regions and many localities. Workers labor in a region and establish churches locality by locality.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE WORKERS

Churches are local, whereas workers are extra-local. Thus, we need to consider the relationship between the church and the workers. When an apostle is raised up, it means that this apostle has been sent to establish churches locality by locality. As a result, the local churches, the elders, and the deacons are all established by the apostle. Hence, an apostle can be said to be the highest authority in the work.

Apostles do not belong to any local church; they are workers laboring extra-locally in order to care for and minister to the local churches in every place. All the churches everywhere are equal; there is no headquarters. This is

truly wonderful. In the Bible we cannot find any headquarters. This is different from the Roman Catholic Church, which takes the Vatican as its headquarters. This is also different from Protestantism, in which various sects and denominations each have their own headquarters. In the Bible the church did not have a headquarters. All the local churches, regardless of their size, were equal, autonomous in administration, living directly under Christ the Head, and directly responsible to the Head. The church in Jerusalem did not control the church in Samaria, nor did the church in Samaria control the church in Jerusalem. Today, in like manner, the church in Manila should not control the church in Hong Kong, nor should the church in Hong Kong control the church in Manila. The church in Manila should not control the church in Iloilo, nor should the church in Iloilo control the church in Manila. Although the church in Manila is much bigger than the church in Iloilo, the two churches are both equally subject to Christ the Head. This is the relationship among the churches in all the localities.

The relationship between the local churches and the workers is related to a local church's being established and edified by a group of workers. If a local church is established and edified by a certain group of workers, it should recognize the spiritual authority of these workers. These apostles, or workers, have spiritual authority in relation to the churches that they establish and edify. A proper local church will receive the authority of these workers and be led and edified by them. This is the relationship between the local churches and the workers.

THE SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION OF THE WORK

Although there is a work that involves the co-workers going out to labor, there is no such thing as the work being an organization. For the work to be an organization is degradation. Once there is organization, the work becomes the missions of Protestantism. In Protestantism there are not only missionaries but also missions. A mission is a work that is an organization; such organizations are unscriptural. In the Bible there are apostles, but there is no organization of the apostles. There are workers and there are local churches, but there is no such thing as the work being an organization. Perhaps some might ask, "Since there is no such thing as the work being an organization, why do we still say that there is a difference between the work

and the church?" The answer depends upon our understanding. If our understanding is that the work refers to an organization, it is wrong to say that they are different; however, if we are speaking simply of the work, it is correct to say that there is a difference between the church and the work. There is no organization; there is only the work. This is the correct understanding.

This shows that the local churches, the workers, and the work are one. The work refers to what the workers do, not to an organization. The work is in the hands and on the shoulders of the workers; it is entirely borne by the workers. For instance, two workers may preach the gospel among some people and begin to labor in a certain place. Hence, they are workers, and what they do is the work. When some are saved, the workers will produce and establish a local church. Later, they may go to another place to preach the gospel. The two brothers are workers, whereas the churches that they raise up are local churches. These brothers are responsible only to carry out the work. Hence, in this example there are workers, churches, and the work. We should never forget that when we speak of the work, we are not referring to an organization but to the work itself. The relationship among these three things is that the workers carry out a work to establish local churches.

For example, a certain brother, after being saved, may meet in the church in Manila. He regularly preaches the gospel, and sometimes he stands up to prophesy and teach. He is in the church, but he is not a worker, because the Lord has not sent him out. However, one day he may sense that the Lord is calling him and sending him to Zamboanga to preach the gospel and establish a church there. At the same time, he may receive confirmation from a group of co-workers that this is the Lord's commission for him, that he needs to undertake this commission, and that he has this gift. The co-workers may also send another brother to go and labor with him. As a result, they go to Zamboanga. At this point these brothers do not belong to a local church; they have become workers in the work. After a period of time they may establish the church in Zamboanga with over one thousand saints meeting together. Because of the need, one of the brothers may not be able to leave but may need to stay in the church in Zamboanga in order to serve together with the brothers. He may eventually become one of the elders and responsible ones there. At such a time he is again part of a local church.

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We also would like to bring up the matter of financial support. First, there are no headquarters among the churches, nor is there an organization of the work. Hence, there is no financial center or financial control among us. If there were a headquarters, there would be a financial center; if there were an organization of the work, there would also be financial control. However, since there are no headquarters or organization of the work, we have no financial control and no financial center. Every believer is free to be led by the Lord in the matter of giving material supply to the local churches. For example, the saints in the church in Manila have absolute liberty to be led by the Lord to give material supply to meet the local need. At the same time, every brother and sister in the church in Manila also have absolute liberty to give material supply to any local church. They do not need to ask the elders or the workers for permission, nor should anyone interfere or intervene in regard to their giving. Hence, if a brother in the church in Manila has the Lord's leading to supply the church in either Hong Kong, Taipei, New York, or London, he has absolute liberty to do so, and no one should exercise control over this matter. We have neither a headquarters nor an organization; rather, there is absolute liberty. All the saints are absolutely free to supply any local church.

Second, all the saints are absolutely free to supply the workers. Suppose there are more than ten co-workers in a certain region in the Philippines. The brothers and sisters have the absolute liberty to support them. No local church is responsible for their support, nor is there an organization of the work that is responsible for their support. The workers look to God directly, just as the local churches also look to God directly. Hence, the saints may follow the Lord's leading to support the workers and do not need to be limited to any region. There may be two or three co-workers who, because of the Lord's arrangement, live and serve full time in Manila, yet when the brothers in the church in Iloilo open the offering box, there are a few envelopes designated for these co-workers. Likewise, by the Lord's arrangement there may be several co-workers serving in Iloilo; however, the brothers and sisters in Manila may give an offering to take care of these ones. This would be a beautiful thing. We have neither a center nor an organization to control or

manage the matter; rather, it is the saints who manage the matter before the Lord directly.

Perhaps some brothers and sisters may ask, “Since the local churches support the co-workers financially, why is there still a need to give financial support to the work?” The significance of this question has two aspects. First, some brothers and sisters may pray and develop a feeling for certain co-workers and sense that they have a need; as a result, they may make an offering and clearly designate it for these co-workers. This is how the saints, under the Lord’s leading, directly care for the needs of the workers. Second, some brothers and sisters may not be clear regarding the needs of the work or know which co-worker has a need. They may not even know the names of the co-workers; hence, they may designate an offering only as being for the work. When a church receives such an offering, it will be given to the senior co-workers because they know the condition of the co-workers in various places and can distribute it on behalf of the brothers and sisters. This does not mean that there is an organization of the work that collects offerings; it simply means that there is a service related to offerings. This is the second aspect.

It is best if the brothers and sisters pay regular and close attention to the co-workers among the churches, especially in regard to where they go, how much burden they bear, and how much need they have. It is pleasing to the Lord if every brother and sister takes care of the co-workers in such a way. Out of their care for the co-workers, the brothers and sisters should follow the Lord’s leading to give to certain ones, and thus there is no need to designate that the offering is for the work. This practice would save the senior co-workers the trouble of distributing the offerings. However, although we care for the workers who go out and for their work, sometimes we may have the capacity to offer a sum of money yet not know where it should be used practically. For this situation we can take a simple way; that is, we can put money in an envelope and designate it for the work. This sum of money will then be handed to the senior co-workers after the brothers take it from the offering box of the church. These co-workers will not keep the money for their own use; rather, they will distribute it to the workers according to the need in the work. At the same time, if we have the intention to give an offering for the work, we should indicate clearly for which work the offering should be used. For example, two brothers may want to give particularly for the work in a certain local church. Hence, they should indicate clearly that it is for the work

in that specific locality. Suppose a saint has a burden for Cebu; he should then write on the envelope, “For the work in Cebu.” If his concern is for the work in Iloilo, he can write, “For the work in Iloilo.” Then when the senior co-workers receive the money, they will distribute it according to the designation.

There is one final matter. A local church may decide to give one thousand dollars each month for the work. This sum is what the church has decided to give; it is not something that the church owes the work, nor is it a salary that the church gives to the workers. The elders should be very clear that they are setting aside one thousand dollars each month from the offerings of the church to support the work of propagation and the workers who go forth. However, the workers and the work they support are matters that require much prayer before the Lord. Although a church has decided to designate one thousand dollars each month for the work, if the church does not give this amount to the work, it does not owe the work. There is no such thing as a church owing the work. Even though a decision was made, if the church never gives the work anything, it still does not owe anything to the work. This is because there is no organization among us. When saints who love the Lord see some brothers and sisters being called by the Lord to spread the Lord’s work in a distant place, they may personally want to express their desire before the Lord by having fellowship with these brothers and sisters through the giving of material supply. This applies to an individual as well as to a local church. Either an individual saint or a local church can give money each month in order to fellowship with the workers in the matter of material supply; however, there is no obligation as in an organization.

If the Lord does not give the church the capacity, it should not give even one dollar, much less one thousand. If the brothers and sisters disagree with and disapprove of the co-workers and their work of propagation and are not inwardly moved to give, they can look on without rendering any help. They may do this, and they are not wrong. We are not in an organization; rather, we are before the Lord. The local churches, the co-workers, and the work are absolutely before the Lord and are not part of any organization; therefore, they have complete liberty in the matter of taking care of one another.

Individual saints can supply the local churches, and the local churches can supply individual believers who are in need. Likewise, both the local churches and the individual believers can supply the workers, and when the workers see that the churches or the believers are in need, they can also supply the

churches and take care of the brothers and sisters. Individual saints, the churches, and the workers in every place can take care of other workers and the propagation work in other places. There is no authority or restriction as in an organization; everyone has absolute freedom to live before the Lord.

Perhaps some may think, “What if the workers fail to receive material offerings?” We do not need to worry about this; this is a matter of their faith in the Lord. Perhaps some may say, “What if some receive too much?” We also do not need to be jealous; this is a matter of their being accountable before God. However, we should remember that a proper local church does not accumulate when it has received more than is needed; likewise, a proper worker does not save up for himself when he has received more than he needs. If the workers and the churches live before the Lord, when they receive more than is needed, they will keep only enough to meet their expenditures and give away the surplus. I can boast that for the past thirty years, the co-workers in China have never saved up for themselves. Their money is always in circulation.

Perhaps we may have had only one thousand yuan, but the money circulated to the point that it was as if we had twenty or thirty thousand yuan. For example, ten brothers and sisters may have given one thousand yuan to a local church. However, the local church may need only one hundred yuan. As a result, the church might then give the remaining nine hundred yuan to three co-workers. The three co-workers might each spend one hundred yuan and have a remainder of six hundred yuan. Thus, when they see brothers and sisters in need, they can give them some money as well as send a portion to co-workers overseas. When the overseas co-workers receive the offering, they might not feel that it is needed because the Lord has already given them enough. If they sense that other local churches have a need, they can send it to them. The money given by the ten saints was one thousand yuan, and when the local church received this amount, it was recorded in the account book. Then when a portion of it was sent out, three hundred was recorded in each of the account books of the three co-workers. Eventually, after repeated recordings, the total of all the recordings would be twenty or thirty thousand yuan.

For this reason, when we were in mainland China, there was no way to calculate how much material supply we actually received. Every one of us was supplying others; hence, we truly saw the Lord’s presence in the matter of

finances. It seemed that even a little money became an abundance. This practice is very different from the practice of storing up treasures. According to such a practice, if an individual has excess money, he stores it up; if a church receives extra money, it deposits the money in the bank. In contrast, our money was always in circulation and never stopped at a certain place. Because of this, we were able to express the Lord's abundance. We did not have a headquarters, organization, or center, and there were no statistics. We did everything before the Lord.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH AND THE PRINCIPLE OF THE WORK (1)

Recently, a brother from Hong Kong came to Taiwan to have fellowship with us. He wants to carry out a students' work in Taiwan. Because this matter has involved a number of brothers, we feel that we should have serious fellowship with all the churches concerning the ground of the church and our attitude toward the work. We have written to the responsible brothers in the church in Hong Kong and also want to have thorough fellowship with all of you.

This brother came to Taiwan and told us that he is associated with an American group involved in a students' work. He considers that the work of many groups among students is too superficial, lacks a foundation, and does not bear a strong testimony. He believes that this is the reason they are unable to fulfill the Lord's desire. He feels that if we were able to raise up a "students' fellowship" among the college students, it could bear a strong testimony for the Lord. Moreover, it would be the best students' work. When he speaks of raising up a students' fellowship, he is seeking our support in contacting and gaining students. He also said that the person who carries out this work needs to be genuinely one with the Lord and able to gather these students into an independent group not affiliated with any denomination.

In order for this matter to be accomplished in the Far East, he feels that it needs to be carried out in cooperation with those in the local church. According to his observation, in order to have a college work that is effective and that meets God's requirement, the leading role would surely need to be taken by the saints in the local church. He feels that if the saints in the local church do not join in this work, it cannot be carried out in a solid way. According to his feeling, we are closest to God's will, and he wants to do a work similar to ours. Therefore, he is very desirous to fellowship with us. I cannot repeat what he said word for word, but this is the essence of his words with me.

When he finished speaking, I asked him if he had spoken with other Christian groups regarding this matter and whether or not he was willing to work in alliance with them. He said that the burden and commission he senses is to work among the college students in alliance with Christians in general. Then he asked me how I felt concerning his burden and if the brothers would think that his work is wrong. This is the main purpose of his fellowship with me.

WORKING FOR THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH ON THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH

Today the matter of the church's expression on earth is very complicated and difficult to make clear; hence, I shared only a few points with him.

First, I told him that according to the revelation in the Scriptures, the proper expression of the church, which God desires to gain in this age and in every place, is entirely different from the present condition of Christianity. In other words, the condition of Christianity is altogether not according to God's intention. According to the biblical revelation, there is and can be only one expression of the church in each locality. This unique expression within a locality is the representation in that locality of the one universal church, and its purpose is to carry out the proper function of the Body of Christ. However, today the condition of Christianity is absolutely not according to God's intention. Hence, we truly hope that we will be able to accomplish this matter for the Lord.

Second, we feel that God raised us up in the Far East, especially among the Chinese-speaking population, for the purpose of gaining the expression of the church that He desires. When we say this word, we are cautious and fearful, because we deeply sense that in uttering such a word, we may seem to be proud. Actually, we realize that we are so small and unworthy that we hardly dare to say such a word; nevertheless, based upon the desire in our heart and the truth, we feel that we must speak this word.

Third, because we have this feeling, for the past thirty years we have been in fear and trembling lest we neglect God's intention. For this reason, although there are many things that other people like to do and have the boldness to do,

we dare not do them. This is not due to a desire to show that we are different but because of a forbidding, fear, and uneasiness within us that causes us to be unable to adopt the same attitudes and actions as others. On our part, we should never care simply for doing things properly, while ignoring whether or not God even desires these things.

Fourth, in these years we have encountered one thing that strongly provokes us; that is, many in Christianity, including the so-called orthodox ones and those who are zealous for the gospel, focus on promoting alliances and cooperation among believers. In order to obtain these alliances and cooperation, they sacrifice the Lord's truth and authority. Regarding this kind of action, we inwardly disagree and cannot praise these so-called alliances and cooperation. We do not value this kind of alliance and cooperation; we would rather sacrifice this kind of alliance and cooperation in order to maintain the testimony for which the Lord wants us to stand. It seems that when we say this, we are professing to be different and higher than others. Nevertheless, we have no alternative. It is not at all our intention to profess to be different or higher than others.

Fifth, we feel that what we are doing is not only for ourselves but for all Christians, for the entire Body of Christ. We deeply realize that in this age God needs some to take the lead to follow Him with all their heart so that He can present a testimony that is pure and of a high standard. We dare not say that we are able to do such a thing, but we truly feel that this burden is upon us, constraining us to carry it out. Whether or not we can accomplish this matter depends upon God's mercy to us and whether we are faithful to Him.

Sixth, we are quite provoked by the past history and present condition of Christianity. Therefore, it is difficult for us to trust the works and activities of Christianity as well as the organization of its groups. The history of Christianity and the existing practices in Christianity cause us to lose faith in this kind of alliance. Although a good number of its works and activities, as well as the organization of its groups, may appear to be good and pure, if we investigate them further and look at them from other angles, we will see that these works and activities still involve a number of impure factors. As a result, because we believe that the Lord raised us up for the purpose of maintaining a high standard for His testimony, we should not be involved with such impure factors and lower the Lord's standard.

Seventh, due to the above reasons we do not encourage the brothers and sisters to participate in any work or activity in Christianity or to be involved with any organized Christian group.

Eighth, we confess that our Lord is great and that He is sovereign. Under His sovereignty He can use many saints who have a ground that is different from ours to do a good work for Him. We acknowledge that the Lord uses many, even those in the Catholic Church. This fact is clearly proven by history, and no one can deny it. Even though we strongly criticize the Catholic Church, we do not deny what history has proven. The Lord is so great that even Nebuchadnezzar, a king of Babylon who greatly opposed Him, was His servant and was used by Him.

As those used by the Lord, we need to consider what category we are in. Not all whom the Lord uses are pleasing to Him, and not all their works are according to His will. Nevertheless, they are under the Lord's sovereignty for His interest. Hence, although we do not approve of or encourage the brothers' and sisters' participation in any work or activity in Christianity or their involvement with any organized Christian group, we do not oppose these groups, because we are afraid that we will damage or hinder the sovereign work that God is doing for Himself.

Ninth, the brothers' and sisters' attitude toward the work and activity in Christianity, as well as its organized groups, is a matter that we leave entirely up to the brothers and sisters and the leading that they receive from the Lord. We do not approve, encourage, or interfere. We cannot and do not want to control anything.

PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT GOD CARES FOR AND NOT HAVING ANY INVOLVEMENT WITH DEVIATIONS

Moreover, the main reason that we do not want to have any part in the work and activity of Christianity and its organized groups is that we fear to have improper involvement. Almost all the work and activity of Christianity and its organized groups are directly or indirectly connected to other matters. Incredibly, these matters have attracted many people, causing them to ignore the potential spiritual outcomes. This is what we cannot accept.

What we pay attention to is the intention in God's heart, that is, the church—not only in its universal aspect but also in its local aspect. Hence, we emphasize the ground and consider that it is a necessary starting point for all our work. The local ground of the church presents people with a great and high demand. We deeply sense that we should maintain God's high standard and not let anything lower this standard. There are many works, activities, and organizations in Christianity that we cannot participate in because we need to maintain a high standard.

After I spoke with the brother from Hong Kong, he said that it is good that we have such a principle, because it prevents our work from falling into error, becoming extreme, or producing a way that seeks only a result and does not care for the original purpose and desire of the work. However, he also told us that if we were willing to adjust our principle just a little in order to take part in his students' work, we would surely obtain a good result. At this point I was clear within that we did not need to talk further.

This conversation caused me to have a deep realization that many who zealously love the Lord pay too much attention to work and not enough attention to spiritual reality. Even those who have much spiritual knowledge and who help people to be spiritual share this fault. It is pitiful that there is hardly anyone who wholeheartedly takes care of the Lord's testimony. Nevertheless, the Lord has had mercy on us to raise us up for the sake of His testimony, not for the sake of a work.

PROBLEMS THAT HAVE ARISEN DUE TO THE DIFFERENCE IN VISION

I spoke for two hours with this brother on the morning of April 22. What I shared earlier is only a summary of that conversation. After my fellowship with him I discovered that he had already spent four hours the previous day talking about his students' work with a brother who is a professor at National Taiwan University. His hope was that this brother would cooperate with him in this matter. After speaking with me, he also had a long talk with a brother co-working among us who has recently returned from the United States. The words he spoke with these two brothers in his contact with them required that I have open fellowship with him in order to clarify the entire situation. Therefore, I immediately requested that someone contact him and ask him to meet with me so that I could clarify this matter with him in a thorough way.

When he met with me the second time, I restated my former fellowship with him, telling him that the previous day I had shared with him that we do not encourage the brothers and sisters to participate in the work or activity of Christianity or any organized Christian group. I stated even more clearly that we do not believe that those things are right. Even though we do not think that they are right, we acknowledge the Lord's sovereignty, and we do not want to interfere with or oppose these works. He did not disagree regarding this matter.

Then I continued to speak concerning our ground, saying that people in Protestantism, especially the missionaries, seem to have an unfair view. In their view Catholicism should be forsaken and isolated, but Protestantism should not be forsaken or isolated. However, we do not recognize the Catholic Church, and neither do we recognize the Protestant churches. In principle, according to our view, the Protestant churches are no different than the Catholic Church. Although they differ in degree, they are the same in principle. Therefore, in terms of principle, just as we do not want to have any part in Catholicism, we also do not want to have any part in Protestantism.

Today people in Protestantism do not want and will not have a part in Catholicism, but they blame us for not having a part in Protestantism. If people in Protestantism blame us for not participating in or uniting with Protestantism, we must ask them why they refuse to participate in or unite with Catholicism. It is the same in principle. The reason they do not participate in or unite with Catholicism is the very reason that we do not participate in or unite with Protestantism. We cannot do anything in regard to Catholicism, and we also cannot do anything in regard to Protestantism.

In conclusion, we should not interfere or debate over such matters. We can only humble ourselves willingly and walk before the Lord according to the calling and the commission that we have received in regard to the testimony that we feel the Lord wants us to bear. We do not want to interfere with others or intervene in their work; likewise, we hope that others will not interfere with us or intervene in our work.

My words caused this brother to speak many inaccurate things, using the same condemning words spoken concerning us by Western missionaries. His attitude and spirit were good, but the words he used were inaccurate. He said, "Are you the only church, and is no one else the church? Are you the best, and

does no one else compare to you? If we fellowship with you, must we sever our ties with others?" I replied, "Your words make me feel that either my earlier speaking was not clear or that your understanding was not clear." Hence, I needed to clarify a little more.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH AND THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE CHURCH

I explained to him that we have never said that only we are the church. Such words are naive and immature. However, we testify that only we are standing on the ground of the church. Then this brother asked, "What is the ground of the church?" He asked this question not because he had doubts concerning the ground or other intentions but because the ground was difficult for him to understand. I could tell that he was seeking understanding, so I gave him an explanation: "The church is universally one, but her local expressions are many. Nevertheless, there should be only one expression in each locality. The ground of this local expression is what we mean by the ground of the church."

He still did not understand, so I explained by using a type in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament God redeemed the children of Israel to be His people. Moreover, He ordained that as His people they needed to meet in Jerusalem in the land of Canaan, a place that He had chosen as the dwelling place for His name. However, one day His people were taken captive to Babylon and lost the ground of God's people, that is, the ground of Jerusalem. Once they left Jerusalem and were taken captive to Babylon, they lost the ground. Although they were still God's people, they were not able to stand on the ground of God's people. Only Jerusalem was the place, the ground, upon which they as God's people could properly stand.

In the same principle, the church is universally one, but her expression is local. Just as Jerusalem was the proper ground for the Jews, locality is the proper ground for the church. Although the children of Israel were taken captive to Babylon and lost the proper ground, it did not mean that they were no longer Jews. They were taken captive and lost the ground of God's people, but they did not lose their status as God's people. To say that the Jews in

Babylon were not God's people would be immature, and those who believe in this kind of speaking are too naive. The Jews lost the ground, but they were still God's people. They were still Jews.

When the seventy years of their captivity were fulfilled, some of the Jews might have said, "We are God's people, so we should be in the place God ordained for us, that is, Jerusalem. It is wrong for God's people to be in Babylon; we should go back to Jerusalem." However, others among them might have said, "It is not necessary to do this. Since we are already God's people, it does not matter whether we are in Babylon or in Jerusalem; all that matters is that we live before God." This is to not care whether God's people are in Babylon or Jerusalem. In New Testament terms, this can be compared to caring for being full of Christ but not caring for the ground. It is as if the only thing that matters is whether God's people live in His presence. In other words, it does not matter whether the ground is right or wrong; all that matters is the presence of Christ and having some degree of spirituality.

Then I asked the brother, "Is it possible to justify such an attitude? Can you say that this is right?" He replied, "I have seen many brothers and sisters in many different groups living for the Lord fervently, serving the Lord wholeheartedly, and endeavoring to keep the Lord's word. Can we say that they are wrong? Why can we not join them?" Our desire was to help this brother see that even if someone is as spiritual as Daniel, he still may have a problem in regard to the ground.

Perhaps some may say, "Daniel was so spiritual, yet he remained in Babylon. Why then do we need to go back to Jerusalem?" I do not believe that anyone can take spirituality as a cover or excuse. The fact that Daniel remained in Babylon was something of God's sovereign arrangement for the interest of God's people; moreover, when he was in Babylon, he prayed three times a day toward Jerusalem, praying desperately for God's people to return to Jerusalem. This indicates that he also longed to return.

Some people have said, "Those who have returned to Jerusalem, that is, to the ground of the church, are not that spiritual or strong." We absolutely acknowledge this. In the days of the return from the Babylonian captivity, the spiritual condition of those who went back to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel was very improper. Some married Gentile women, some were not in one accord, and some were timid. All these conditions were discouraging. Nevertheless,

although their condition was poor, the ground they stood upon was right. They were in Jerusalem. Therefore, God could still deal with them and bless them.

Although the condition of Daniel was good, we cannot say that the ground he stood on was right or that he should have stood there. He was not in Jerusalem but in Babylon, a ground God opposed and cursed. This shows clearly that spiritual condition and the ground are two entirely different matters. It is possible to have one and not the other. God's intention is that we pay attention to both our condition and the ground.

Let us consider several people. The first example is Madame Guyon. I am afraid that hardly anyone among us loves the Lord more and has a greater measure of Christ than Madame Guyon. However, we cannot acknowledge that she stood on the proper ground. She was in the Catholic Church, on a ground that we oppose. Her case clearly shows that while a believer may be very spiritual, he may be on an improper ground. He may be right in his spirituality, but the ground on which he stands may be absolutely improper. Hence, we need to completely separate the matter of the ground from that of a believer's condition. The second example is Andrew Murray. Many people throughout the years have said that he was very spiritual; nevertheless, he was still in organized Christianity.

At this point the brother from Hong Kong asked whether or not there was a church in Andrew Murray's time. After I had spoken so much, he still asked such a silly question. In response, I stressed that the church existed, but it had lost the proper ground. Hence, it is not a question of whether there was a church but of whether there was the proper ground of the church. Madame Guyon had a strong and influential role in the church, but we must acknowledge that she did not stand on the ground of the church. She stood on the ground of the Roman Catholic Church, not on the proper ground of the church. In the same way, Andrew Murray was also a strong and influential saint, but he was in organized Christianity. His ground was organized Christianity, not the genuine church. He was not on the proper ground of the church. He was part of the church, but he did not stand on the ground of the church.

I then used the example of Dr. F. B. Meyer. He was renowned in recent church history, and even T. Austin-Sparks greatly commended him, yet he too

was still in organized Christianity. It can be said that his spiritual condition was very proper, but the ground of the church on which he stood was absolutely wrong.

We should not ask people what they are but where they are. We are not saying that spirituality is unimportant. We confess that it is basic and important, but merely having this is inadequate. Rather than asking, "What are you?" we need to ask, "Where are you?" Let me use another illustration. A member of a family should live at home. If he goes anywhere else, whether to a place where he feeds hogs and eats carob pods or to a grand and luxurious palace, it is the wrong place. It is insufficient to be merely a member of a family; a member should also live at home.

WHAT WE ARE AND WHERE WE SHOULD BE

The matter that I discussed with our dear brother is not a question of who we are but of where we are. It was not a question of whether we are the church but of what ground we are on. Are we on the ground of the Catholic Church or of the Protestant churches? Are we on the ground of the various denominations or on the ground of the church? In the case of the children of Israel, it was not a question of whether they were God's people but of where they were. Were they in Babylon or Jerusalem? Were they in the wilderness of Arabia or in the land of Assyria or Samaria? I deeply sense that among those who stood up to speak for God in the past several centuries, too many knew only who they were. Hardly anyone who has stood up to speak for God has genuinely asked this one question on God's behalf: "Where are you?"

Since the Lord has been merciful to us and led us into His recovery, we should always focus on this central question: "Where are we?" Throughout the ages God has recovered much, but there is still one matter that has yet to be recovered, that is, the matter of "Where are you?" The recovery of this matter began among us almost thirty years ago. Nevertheless, we must continue to ask, "Where are we?" It is not sufficient merely to do things correctly. We will be right only when we are in the proper place. Sadly, until today, those who are saved by God focus only on what they are, but they neglect, or even greatly oppose, the matter of the ground. Some who have much spiritual knowledge strongly oppose, blame, and condemn us concerning this matter. This is most grievous to our heart.

A subtle scheme of the enemy is to undermine the recovery through men who are very spiritual. This scheme of Satan is able to come in through almost anyone. No one is so spiritual that he cannot be used by Satan to damage the recovery. He is able to use any spiritual matter or any matter of faith as a covering. Today, at this critical juncture, we need to consider this matter clearly and carefully.

Although what we have encountered and heard may cause us to feel troubled, we cannot let ourselves be easily shaken. In the past thirty years we have paid a great price and suffered innumerable attacks. We have been slandered and reproached many times because of our desire to maintain the ground of the church.

We feel that we should not only refuse to accept any kind of erroneous influence; much more, we should even rise up and cry out concerning this matter. We should devote our whole being to this task until we go to be with the Lord. I have no desire to speak on any other topic than the ground of the church. The truth concerning the cross has been recovered and adequately preached, and the truth concerning resurrection has also been clearly and sufficiently preached. However, the matter of the ground of the church has not been adequately preached. What God is doing is practical and complete. Brother T. Austin-Sparks once said that since God was unable to get what He was after in the West, He came to the East. I truly say Amen and hope that Brother Austin-Sparks will also apply this principle to the matter of the ground of the church.

God raised up some people in the West who are willing to take the way of recovery; however, over the past six months the matter of the ground has been damaged by much action, work, and speaking. As a result, people in the West avoid speaking of this matter and consider it a shame to do so. If someone were to ask about it, he would be regarded as being the same as the Brethren. My point is that God has had no way in the West. As a result, He was merciful to us by coming to the East. For this reason, in the past thirty years it seems that we have not cared for any other matter. At the time of Martin Luther it seemed that he did not care about any matter other than justification by faith; however, we know that this is not true and that he did care about other matters. However, the reason people have an inaccurate impression is that Martin Luther emphasized the main point that God was

recovering through him. Perhaps he could have discarded all other points, but God would not let him discard this one point.

OUR TESTIMONY TODAY

Regarding the negative reactions to the matter of the ground of church, we should have some understanding and be watchful. In spiritual warfare the enemy continually attacks the place where there has been a "military deployment." In the past thirty years people have not opposed us for the gospel. In the East the gospel preached in many places is based upon our gospel. Most are preaching the gospel that we have preached. Neither are we wrong in regard to the truth. Just as we boast of the gospel, we also boast concerning the many truths that have been revealed through us. We are not wrong in edifying the saints with the truth. Many Christians believe that we have drawn away the seeking ones from the denominations. Actually, we have made seeking ones out of those who formerly were not seeking. In addition, we have not received any financial support from other groups. Even if we have, it has been an insignificant amount. For the past thirty years we have been attacked fiercely, being accused and forsaken by other Christians. All this friction is due to the fact that we stand firmly on the ground of the church. In the past thirty years this has been the very item that the enemy has constantly sought to defeat. We are determined to guard this truth. We must guard it. Moreover, if the Lord is merciful to us, we need to further strengthen this matter.

I told the brother from Hong Kong that when I began to serve the Lord over thirty years ago, I had doubts concerning Christianity. I saw in the Bible that the condition of Christianity was altogether improper. I also saw that the ground of Christianity was improper. The improper condition is an outward matter, but the improper ground is a deeper matter. Actually, it is the source of almost every problem in Christianity. The confusion and errors of Christianity are mostly due to the improper ground. For example, the church has become very worldly and very much according to the human will. Although this is a matter of condition, the condition is the result of an improper ground. The proper ground of the church is locality. If the believers all kept the ground of locality, the many denominations that exist today would no longer exist or be produced. The ground of locality requires that the believers pay the highest price, the price of being dealt with in their flesh and in their natural life.

Today there are many Christian groups because people are not willing to be restricted by locality. Many groups have appealing names, but these are only an expression of man's desire. It may seem that these groups are only declaring that they love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, preach the gospel, and are accomplishing a certain work. However, their organization becomes a support and a symbol of man acting according to his own will. If everyone saw that the expression of the church should be local and that it must be restricted by the local ground, all these groups would no longer exist. As a result, people would no longer only consider what satisfies their own desire but would act and walk in a proper way for the keeping of the oneness of the church.

I said this to the brother to show him that regardless of how proper his motive or how good his college work might be, he should not establish a students' fellowship apart from the church. If his intention is to establish a students' fellowship, he is intentionally seeking a kind of self-expression. To do so would indicate that he has not seen the ground of the church. If he saw the ground of the church, he would not dare to establish a students' fellowship apart from such a ground.

A believer who has truly seen the ground and is willing to be restricted by this ground would never dare to do such a thing. Satan's goal today is to annul the ground of locality in order to give people absolute freedom of action as a pretext to establish denominations. The only thing that can nullify this is the ground of the church. Once we speak concerning the ground of locality, no one has an excuse for doing whatever he desires. The ground of locality is a great restriction to our flesh, our private intentions, and our natural man.

THE GROUND BEING OPEN BUT THE RESPONSIBILITY BEING RESTRICTED

Furthermore, I told the brother that our Lord's table is absolutely open. We do not refuse any saved one who wants to break bread with us—regardless of his background, the ground he stands on, or his current involvements. We must receive and break bread with anyone whom God has received, that is, every believer, unless he has committed a gross sin that God condemns. Nevertheless, we feel that since the Lord has commissioned and raised us up to bear a particular testimony, we cannot open the responsibility for the

ground to everyone. Only those who are willing to bear the same testimony can bear responsibility among us.

Suppose there is a big family that consists of twenty to thirty people. In such a family there may be a one-year-old as well as a thirty-year-old. Some members may be foolish, and some may be intelligent. Regardless of the condition of a family member, the family is always open to him and cannot cast him out. He may choose to stay or leave; that is his business. However, the responsibility for the family cannot be opened to everyone in the family. Being a family member is one thing, whereas bearing responsibility for the family is another thing. Likewise, partaking of the Lord's table is one thing, whereas bearing responsibility within the church is another thing. If people condemn us, saying that we are an exclusive sect, because we do not allow others to bear responsibility for the church, this is a word of slander. However, since they already condemn us, what can we say? Anything we say will stir up a futile debate. Nevertheless, we cannot be so open in the matter of responsibility simply because of their words. If we were to open the responsibility, this would only cause things to become murky. As God's servants, we seek only to please God, not men (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:4).

Regardless of the kind of view a brother holds, he may come and break bread with us. If he wants to do any kind of work apart from us, we will not interfere, because it is his personal business. However, if another comes and breaks bread with us, while openly or secretly doing another kind of work among us, we cannot agree with that. We will tell him, "Brother, we have no control over what you do outside of us. You may come to break bread with us; nevertheless, if you come here to work and teach differently than we do, we will not agree." In the church we do not quarrel; nevertheless, we sow only one kind of seed in our field. We do not allow two kinds of seed to be sown in our field (Deut. 22:9). Anyone is free to sow any kind of seed outside of our field. That is his business. However, if he wants to sow a different kind of seed in our field, we will not allow him to do so. This is our business, and we will interfere. Of course, we hope that people will not interfere with what we are doing and will give us this freedom.

IF WE DO NOT SEE THE GROUND, OUR BUILDING BEING A TEARING DOWN

As a result of our conversation, I feel that this brother is not bad and that he does not have an impure motive. He merely lacks light. He is similar to most believers who care only for the building of the universal church and not for the building of the local church. The work they do certainly results in some amount of building, but at the same time, their work also tears down. This brother's student fellowship is the same. If one cares only for the work, he must admit that even the Catholic Church has done a considerable amount of work. The Catholic Church causes people to know the Lord's name and believe in the Savior; we cannot deny this. However, the Catholic Church cares only for the work, not for the Lord's testimony. This practice has also entered into Protestantism. This is not the Lord's intention. We should not care only for the spread of the Lord's work while neglecting the Lord's testimony. The practice of today's Christianity is to take care of spreading the Lord's work, while it tears down His testimony. In contrast, it would be wonderful if Christian workers were willing to carry out their work while taking care of the Lord's testimony.

The reason we have some amount of spread and success is that we have not departed from the Lord's way, we stand firm for the Lord's testimony, and we take care of the Lord's work on the proper ground. If, like many Christian workers, we did not take care of the Lord's way and the Lord's testimony, caring only for the result of the work, we too would not have much spread. Sadly, those who commend us for our spread condemn the factor of our spread, that is, the ground of the church. Although they appreciate our achievement in regard to the spread, they attempt to tear down the factor of our spread.

This may be likened to appreciating and enjoying our tea, while attempting to break our teapot and teacups. These ones think that our tea is excellent, yet they believe that our teapot should be destroyed. If they believe in the Lord's blessing, they should also take care of the Lord's testimony as we do. If they do so, their work will spread in an unlimited way. However, whenever human opinions enter, truths are distorted and facts are twisted. This shows that man's wisdom and opinion cannot compare to the Lord's blessing and mercy. Men may try to grasp every opportunity to work for the Lord, but little do they know that they kill the opportunity for the Lord to bless them and to come in and show mercy. If men were willing to care only for the Lord's testimony rather than the result of a work, I believe that the opportunity to work for the

Lord would be unlimited; the result and blessing would be immeasurable and boundless.

By the Lord's mercy we would rather have the foolishness of God than the wisdom of man (1 Cor. 1:25). Since we labor together, I will not hide anything from you. What would our condition and the result of our work be today, if, from the time the Lord's recovery came to Taiwan, we had taken care of only the work and had joined ourselves with others in their practices? Would we have the blessing that we see today? I absolutely do not believe so. The results we have today are all due to our stressing the ground of the church and not yielding or compromising regarding this matter.

I increasingly feel that I must stress this matter in a solid way so that the co-workers and the brothers and sisters will have no confusion or doubt concerning it. The ground of the church is for the Lord's step-by-step recovery today. The Lord's recovery is continually advancing. Through Robert Pearsall Smith the Lord recovered the matter of consecration unto holiness. Following this, through Andrew Murray the Lord recovered the matter of fellowshipping by abiding in the Lord. Then through Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis He recovered the matter of identification with Christ's crucifixion. Through T. Austin-Sparks the Lord continued and recovered the truth concerning His resurrection. He did not stop at the recovery of the truth concerning resurrection; rather, He advanced to recover the ground of the church. Because the Lord had no way to go on in the West, He was compelled to come to the East to recover this truth.

ALL ITEMS OF RECOVERY BEING FOR THE LOCAL CHURCHES FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY

The Lord's recovery is according to His purpose for the accomplishing of His economy. Justification by faith, revival, consecration, fellowship by abiding in Christ, identification with Christ's crucifixion, and resurrection are gold, silver, and precious stones. Where should these valuable things be placed? Should they be in Jerusalem or in Babylon? The Lord has come to the East to recover the ground of the church in order to uphold the items of gold, silver, and precious stone. Simply put, where should we put all the gold, silver,

and precious stones? If we say that they should be placed in the universal church, that is too abstract. The New Testament does not provide a location for the universal church, but it does show us churches in various localities, such as the church in Corinth. Not one Epistle in the New Testament was written to the universal church. Likewise, today we cannot speak a message directly to the universal church.

None of the apostles labored directly on the universal church, even though the result of their work was for the universal church. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and to the churches in Galatia, but he never wrote a letter or gave an exhortation that was addressed to the universal church. The universal church is something that cannot be touched directly. It can be touched directly only by the Head, Christ, in the heavens, as shown in Matthew 16:18. In this verse He said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." We, His humble slaves on earth, have no way to directly contact the universal church. As long as we are in our physical body, we will have no way to touch the universal church; however, we can touch the local churches. Our message, exhortation, and comfort can be addressed only to the local churches. It is nonsense to claim that we can speak directly to the universal church.

The order, the sequence, of the Lord's work of creation is wonderful, and we believe that the order of His work of recovery is also wonderful. He first recovered justification by faith. If we look at His work of recovery, we will realize that justification by faith causes man to be revived. Once a person is revived, he needs fellowship, and this fellowship takes place by abiding in Christ. However, the reality of abiding in Christ is related to the Lord's death on the cross and is followed by the resurrection of Christ. Then in resurrection the Body of Christ is produced. This Body needs to have a practical expression, an actual appearance, on earth. Where should this expression be? In other words, where should the gold, silver, and precious stones be placed? We cannot say that the gold, silver, and precious stones are the site; they are the building materials. On the day of Pentecost, God established the ground of locality. For example, Jerusalem is a city, and it was the ground of the church in Jerusalem. Moreover, the many cities in Galatia became the ground for the churches in Galatia. One who sees this light should immediately return to the ground ordained by God. We have been taken captive, and we need to come back to the site of our forefathers. For generations the ground of the church has been lost. This is what God seeks to recover today.

RECEIVING SPIRITUAL THINGS BUT NOT CONSIDERING SPIRITUALITY AS THE CRITERION

We accept all the gifts that God has given throughout the past two thousand years, but we reject anything improper related to these gifts. We receive the matter of loving the Lord and choosing the cross that was recovered through Madame Guyon, but we reject the things of Catholicism that she was involved in and the ground of the Catholic Church upon which she stood. Similarly, we receive the matter of fellowshipping with the Lord by abiding in Him, which was recovered through Andrew Murray. At the same time we reject his title of *Reverend*. We receive the matter of the believer's co-death with the Lord that was recovered through Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis, but we reject the ground upon which she stood. In the same way, we do not receive a ground that is only halfway, a ground that stops in the middle, and does not fully arrive at Jerusalem. Not only do we reject the ground of organized Christianity; we also reject any ground that has not fully come back to the local ground. Only one ground is right—Jerusalem. The grounds of Babylon, Assyria, and even neighboring Samaria were not right. Likewise, the ground of the Catholic Church and all the denominations are not right. All grounds other than the local ground are not right.

In regard to spirituality, Madame Guyon was spiritual. Even today there is no servant of God whose spiritual level exceeds hers; nevertheless, she was in the Catholic Church. If some want to take the ground of spirituality, they should go to the Catholic Church and fellowship with her. Yet they would not go to the Catholic Church. This proves that spirituality cannot be the criterion; spirituality and the ground are two different matters. Daniel was very spiritual, yet because Jerusalem was the ground on which God's people should have stood, he prayed to God with his face toward Jerusalem, asking God to release His people to return to Jerusalem. Sadly, many have not seen this light; moreover, some even say, "Daniel was very spiritual, but he stayed in Babylon rather than go back to Jerusalem to be with those who were not spiritual. Today there are many who are as spiritual as Daniel and who love the Lord as much as he and his three friends; why can we not be in their company?" To say this is to care only for spirituality and not for the ground.

On our part, we care for the ground as well as for spiritual matters. Hence, we accept everything of the last two thousand years that is good and proper, and we will also accept everything in the future that is good and proper, regardless from whom these things come. However, we will say no to everything that is not good or proper related to these things. We want the spiritual things from Madame Guyon, but we refuse to take her ground, the ground of the Catholic Church. Likewise, from a spiritual person, we want only what is spiritual, not what is murky. We are not biased. We accept everything that is right and proper which has been recovered throughout the past two thousand years, regardless from whom it came.

We believe that today God is recovering the matter of the ground. However, quite a number of spiritual ones are not clear regarding this matter. I have come to the conclusion that only those who take the way of the Lord's recovery can measure those who took the way before them. This is because the Lord has gone further in them. However, those who took the way earlier cannot measure those who come after them according to the standard of their age because such a measurement would be short. The Lord has never stopped with any one person but has advanced on to another. Mrs. Penn-Lewis could measure Andrew Murray, who was before her, in regard to identification with Christ's death, which was recovered through her. However, she could not use what was recovered through her to measure T. Austin-Sparks, who came after her, because the Lord advanced further to recover the matter of resurrection through Brother Austin-Sparks. Likewise, while Brother Austin-Sparks can go back to measure Mrs. Penn-Lewis, he cannot measure those who come after him. We sense that after God recovered the truth of resurrection, He did a further work of recovery among us; that is, He showed us the matter of the ground of the church. Can we then say that all the other matters that have come to our attention during the past thirty years are meaningless, superfluous, slanted, extreme, or erroneous? I cannot and dare not believe this.

The matter of the ground is serious. If the children of Israel had built a temple in Babylon with the same materials that they used to build the temple in Jerusalem, they would have been completely wrong. Such a mistake would have been due not to the materials or the work but to the ground. This clearly proves that besides the matter of spirituality, there is still the matter of the ground. Today some people think that to pay attention to the ground of the church is to reduce Christ and the church, making Christ a small Christ, a

local Christ, and to make the church a small church, a local church. I deeply feel that this word is illogical. We only say that we need to recover the church to the proper ground. How does this make Christ and the church smaller? Within the denominations there are many Christians who have Christ, yet how does not standing on the proper ground of the church make Christ larger? The ground of the church does not determine whether Christ is large or small, nor does it determine whether the church is large or small. Christ and the church are simply as large or as small as they are in themselves.

The matter at issue is this: If you claim that you are the church, you should return to the ground of the church. If you do not return to the ground of the church, you still have a ground, but it is not the proper ground, not the ground upon which you should stand. If some people say that we have made Christ and the church smaller by returning to the ground of the church, we simply cannot accept their word, because it is illogical.

THE GROUND BEING NECESSARY TO CONTAIN GOD'S BLESSINGS

We have come into contact with some people in the West who exceed us in regard to their spirituality, gifts, and abilities. They also have better ones upon whom to labor and a better environment in which to labor. However, their work has had no result. The reason they commend us is that we have worked out many things in practicality. There are obviously many talented ones in the West, and it can be said that they have a good environment, abound in gifts, and far surpass us in many aspects. Compared to them, what are we? What do we have? What do we know? We are far too inferior. However, the results they have in the West are not like the results we have in the East. They lack results because they have neglected and even forsaken the ground of locality. This is why God has had mercy upon us. In many aspects we cannot compare to others, but this point, the ground of locality, is our honor. They say that keeping the ground is our error; however, if we did not pay attention to the ground, how could we obtain the positive results that we have experienced in every place? Apart from this, we have nothing superior to others.

In every locality the Lord has blessed us because of three factors: first, we emphasize spirituality; second, we pay attention to the ground of the church; third, we emphasize coordination. The second item, the ground of the church,

entirely upholds the first and the third items. If we were to take away the ground of the church, I am afraid that we would not have any blessing. Without the ground, we may be spiritual, but our spirituality will not serve any practical purpose. Also, without the ground there can be no practical expression of coordination. I would ask those who pay much attention to spirituality: how much coordination do you have in reality? Messages that are accurate and spiritual are given repeatedly, but there is not much result. This can be likened to a person who draws water from a well but does not have a vessel to contain the water; hence, it continually pours out upon the ground. The reason the water cannot be preserved but ends up on the ground is that there is no vessel to contain it.

People commend us for our success, but the reason for our success is that we have a ground to retain the small amount of blessing God has given us. If we were to break our "teapot," the "tea" within would completely escape. Why is it that people drink our "tea," appreciate it, and then, when they have the opportunity, attempt to break our "teapot"? This is entirely unreasonable.

BEING BOLD FOR THE LORD'S TRUTH TODAY

Some have said emphatically that one cannot focus merely on one certain truth. The reason they teach this is that they have seen how much we emphasize the local ground. Of course, their realization is correct, but conversely, we also need to tell them that they should never abandon any truth. If the ground of the church is a truth, they should not abandon it but should keep it in a balanced way. For instance, the fullness of Christ is a central truth, but we should not focus merely on the fullness of Christ and give up all other truths. We should not avoid speaking concerning the truth of the ground of the church simply because we fear that people will not understand and may even despise this truth.

The teaching of the New Testament shows that the Lord Jesus and His disciples' attitude and preaching were definite and clear and that they never avoided speaking something for fear of men's lack of understanding or disagreement. In the same way, we should vindicate what is right and condemn what is wrong. For example, when Paul saw Peter's hypocrisy, he was afraid that this would bring confusion into the gospel and thus opposed Peter to his face (Gal. 2:11-14). Our environment is very similar to that of Paul.

Because the truth of the ground of the church is not sufficiently clear, there is confusion today. While other people can ignore this truth, we cannot. We have no choice but to disregard the feeling of others, even if it hurts their feelings, in order to speak this truth.

We should never speak ambiguously in order to please people or consider that if they do not understand or accept the truth, we should speak the truth only behind closed doors. We should not be like this. Rather, we need to specifically underscore the truth that believers most urgently need to see today, that is, that the expression of the church is local and that any work apart from the local ground tears down God's building.

The Lord Jesus preached the word whether or not people understood it, listened to it, were happy about it, or accepted it. In the same principle, the more people misunderstand the truth, the more we should speak it clearly and strongly. Should we sacrifice God's truth and bury God's word because of man's misunderstanding and ignorance? Should we stop speaking of the ground of the church or be ashamed of repeating this truth merely because the Brethren have already touched upon it? Instead, we should ask ourselves: Is the ground of the church the truth? Is it what God's people need? If it is, we should speak this truth with boldness.

No truth is detached from Christ. Paying attention to the local ground does not detach us from Christ. On the contrary, paying attention to this ground makes Christ as our center a reality. The truth concerning Christ being our center must be matched by the church ground.

THE GROUND LIMITING NOT THE WORK BUT THE CONFUSION

Some people criticize us, saying, "You think that you are special and that others cannot compare to you. By so doing, you have a narrow view that limits the Lord's move. This is similar to Peter before he went to the house of Cornelius. At that time he was limited by his Jewish concept. Today you say that everyone must come to the local church. This limits the Lord's work." However, in reality, paying attention to the ground of the church does not limit the Lord's work; rather, it becomes a great limitation to man's naturalness and flesh. Any kind of correction is a great restriction and limitation to man. The truth concerning the ground of the church strongly

corrects the various situations within Christianity today. We deeply sense that this truth advances God's work while greatly restricting the move carried out by man's naturalness and flesh.

We do not agree that the ground of the church limits the work. If all of God's children came to the local ground, what kind of a spread would God's work have? We do not mean that God works only on the ground of locality. Rather, as we have said repeatedly, God works on many different grounds. He has carried out a considerable amount of work even in the Catholic Church, whose ground is full of fornication and idolatry. When we read the history of the Catholic Church, we see that a great deal of God's work has been carried out by it. Even today the piety found in the Catholic Church is something rarely found in today's Protestant churches. God does work in their midst. People must acknowledge that God works in the midst of the Catholic Church.

The reason we speak of returning to the local ground is that we want people to see God's desire to gain a ground on the earth for a pure testimony. This is a matter not of control but of preservation. Whom does this ground control? God's people stayed in Babylon not because they wanted to but because they were taken captive. Today, now that the time of captivity has been fulfilled, everyone should return. Sadly, few desire to return to Jerusalem, the ground of locality. It would not be considered a matter of control for someone to have said, "Brothers, since we are God's people, we should return to Jerusalem." To regard such a declaration as control is either a misunderstanding or a matter of prejudice.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that our brothers are scattered onto all kinds of different grounds. Hence, some people have asked, "According to the truth you preach, if we return to the local ground of the church in order to worship and serve together, should we have absolutely no contact or fellowship with those on other grounds and no union with them in their work?" With regard to this question, we need to answer it according to two aspects. The first aspect is concerning fellowship. If you fellowship in the Lord with individual saints, it is absolutely proper and acceptable; however, if you have any involvement with a work or organization that is not on the ground, we believe that such involvement is wrong. This is because the difference in grounds will eventually create great problems, even unto the tearing down of God's building.

The second aspect is concerning the work. We have had much consideration regarding whether or not we should work or preach on a different ground. Both Daniel and Ezekiel were prophets in the land of captivity. They were not in Jerusalem but in the land of captivity; nevertheless, both had a ministry raised up by God. Hence, we need to ask, "What was their ministry?" As prophets doing the work of God, they told the people that Babylon was not the proper place and that, as God's people, they should return to Jerusalem. According to this principle, when we go to preach on a different ground, our basic attitude should be, "I come here to speak Christ and the word of God to you, but you are on a ground that is not proper and is condemned by God. You should return to Jerusalem." If your preaching is a different kind of preaching that strengthens and solidifies their ground, not only will we say that this is not right, but everyone else will also say that this is not right.

In the end, we can only say that the matter of serving on a different ground is something that should be decided by each person according to his own conscience; this is altogether a matter of a person's enlightenment. Some people have a conscience enlightened to the extent that they dare not and cannot do a work on a different ground. As an illustration, when a person comes to another's house for a meal, he may not dare to eat the food after seeing the mess in the kitchen. This is because he has received a strong light regarding hygiene. In contrast, other people simply do not care. Hence, we do not want to control; rather, each one should live before the Lord with a pure conscience according to the light that he has received.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE FOR SEEKING FELLOWSHIP

In seeking fellowship, no one should have a definite opinion or preconception, claiming that our refusal to interact and work with other Christian groups is sectarian and wrong. This kind of speaking is wild and rough. If a person has the heart to seek oneness, we should ask him to forsake this kind of rude speaking and arrogant attitude. He should only seek the Lord with a pure conscience in regard to whether or not he should do a certain thing. He should not give us an opinionated answer with rough, wild words.

All the above points were included in a letter sent to the responsible brothers in Hong Kong. The reason I wrote to Hong Kong in such a lengthy manner is that this brother was from Hong Kong. This follows the principle in Acts 15. When some from Jerusalem went to Antioch to teach different things, Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to solve the problem. Because it is inconvenient to get in and out of the country at present, I wrote the leading brothers a letter. I hope that this matter will be completely solved in Hong Kong and that we will all be clear in our concept. I hope that the brothers and sisters will not casually mention this matter again.

If they sense the peace to do so, I ask that the responsible ones read this letter to the elders and the full-time serving ones. I feel that I have a responsibility before the Lord but that I should do only this much. The remainder is others' responsibility, not mine. Concerning this matter, we will have more in-depth fellowship at a later date.

LEARNING SPIRITUAL LESSONS BEING THE CRITERION FOR JUDGMENT

After listening to this word of fellowship, the brothers and sisters should realize that this matter is not simple. It is most foolish for a person to make a hasty judgment concerning this matter. In the past thirty years a number of us, especially the serving ones, have been learning a serious lesson. Hence, I would like to fellowship with you regarding what we have learned and the help that we have received. While we have been laboring, we have also been studying the things in Christianity. This study is based upon the light of firm principles.

It may seem to some that Brother Watchman Nee did not have much contact with Christianity, but the truth is that every day he paid attention to what was going on in Christianity. He always watched objectively and wrote critiques. He was always observing and critiquing. For example, when a revival meeting occurred in a certain place, he would comment regarding who the speaker was at that meeting, what method was used, what the results were, what things God did therein, what the quality of preaching was, and what the fruit of the labor was. He studied very seriously, and nearly every valuable Christian publication was in his hand. If a person were to walk into Brother Nee's room, he would see books lying everywhere and not in an orderly manner. Brother Nee read all the books. When he spoke on a certain truth,

such as Matthew 5, he did not speak carelessly but checked all the expositions concerning Matthew 5 throughout the past two thousand years, keeping what was scriptural and dropping what was not scriptural. Today the great blessing he has left us with is that we accept everything that is proper, regardless of the sect from which it came. Now all these proper matters have become ours.

However, in Christianity the Baptists accept only the things of the Baptist denomination and reject everything else, the Presbyterians take only the things of the Presbyterian denomination and reject everything else, and the Lutherans care only for the things of the Lutheran denomination and reject everything else. Throughout the past two thousand years, only those people under the leading of Brother Nee have accepted everything proper. We are not proud, but it is the fact that all the good matters of the past two thousand years can be found among us.

When Brother T. Austin-Sparks came to visit us and heard us praying aloud all at the same time, he could not stand it. Nevertheless, when we study the book of Acts, we can see that the church in its initial stage also had such a practice. Chapter 4 says that the saints lifted up their voice in prayer and spoke the word of God with boldness (vv. 24, 31). This is undeniable. However, today some people cannot stand it when others pray aloud simultaneously. Neither can they tolerate it when people say Amen too frequently. A certain chapel in America set apart a section and called it the "amen corner." When someone prayed, those sitting in the amen corner would say Amen together. Most of those in the congregation did not like to lift up their voice with one accord to say Amen, but at least some of them practiced this together. This cannot be manufactured, and it depends entirely upon people being moved by God. Hence, from the human perspective no one can limit others as to how they practice as long as there is a basis for it in the Scriptures.

In 1932 I visited a summer camp of the Baptist denomination and saw everyone sitting in deadness, praying with their heads bowed and their eyes closed. That was truly unbearable to me. Later, I fellowshipped about this with Brother Nee. He told me, "We cannot give God's children a set way to pray. Who can say that it is right to pray while standing and that it is wrong to pray while sitting? Who can say that it is right to pray aloud and that it is wrong to pray silently?" In the same manner, today is it right to pray one by one but wrong to pray all at the same time? No one can say that it is right to

preach one by one but that it is wrong to speak with one accord loudly. We will not be fully clear regarding these matters until the day we see the Lord.

Church history has shown that for the past two thousand years everyone has had certain limits and prejudices. Brother T. Austin-Sparks can be in the heavens while preaching, but when he hears the saints praying with one voice, he can no longer be in the heavens. Moreover, whenever the Brethren are mentioned, he cannot tolerate it. One day he asked us why we receive his ministry and also receive the books of those who oppose him. The fact is that we do not care who a person is. As long as he has something of value, we will receive it from him, including from those whom we condemn very much. As long as someone has something positive, we will receive it. For this reason some have said that we are like the Pentecostals. What are we? We are all-inclusive in our receiving. We should not have an attitude that if some oppose and condemn us, we will reject everything they have. If we have this kind of attitude, we must ask, "Did not the Bible become fully recognized through the Catholic Church? If we reject the Catholic Church, do we also reject the Bible?"

Do not think that we have the intention to oppose Brother T. Austin-Sparks. We should not make such a simple distinction. Even if the apostle Paul were to come today, we would still need to discern what he preached. If it were not so, Paul would not have needed to quote the Scriptures. The reason he quoted the Scriptures was to gain man's trust and to prove that his ministry was of God. Not only do we need to quote the Bible today, but Paul also needed to quote the Bible in his day. To exercise proper discernment is not that simple. We need to weigh every person, including the apostle Paul. The standard of our weighing is not merely in regard to whether or not a person is spiritual but in regard to whether or not he is according to God's will.

Brother Nee once told me, "Brother Lee, I dare not claim that I have something, but there is one thing particular about me: I am good at critiquing. By means of a little analysis I can discern what is best." Brother Nee learned this lesson over a period of thirty years, and he taught us to do the same. Hence, we too have learned this lesson. This is why, through a little analysis, we are able to discern whether or not a person is right. Because of this we are able to select the best things, while making it very difficult for the erroneous things to come in. For example, when Brother T. Austin-Sparks came to visit us this last time, he made up his mind to bring up the matter of brothers

wearing military hats in the meeting hall. He felt that when the brothers in the military service put their hats on before stepping out of the meeting hall, they were lacking a spirit of respect. When a brother tried to explain the Chinese custom to him and show him that we did not violate the teaching in the Bible, Brother Austin-Sparks said, “The teachings in the Bible are above national customs.” He tried to use that one sentence to suppress us.

After hearing this word, I did not say anything, but neither could I accept it. Our eyes were very sharp, and our sense was very keen concerning biblical teachings. We could not believe that Brother Austin-Sparks’ word was within the boundary of biblical teaching. It seemed that although the teaching in the Bible required “one meter,” his requirement was “one meter plus three centimeters.” Our judgment concerning such matters is exceedingly precise. The Bible says that a brother should not have his head covered when he prays and worships. However, since we had already announced that the meeting had ended, we had met the biblical requirement. The Bible does not have a requirement saying that brothers should not wear their hats after a meeting has been dismissed, or that they must wait until they step outside the meeting hall. Brother Austin-Sparks claimed that the biblical teaching was for a brother to wear his hat only after he steps outside the meeting hall.

Concerning the truth in the Bible, we have learned to not deviate at all. The Bible requires only that brothers not cover their heads while praying or preaching, and we obey it. The Bible does not have requirements concerning where brothers may or may not wear their hats. Hence, we have freedom in this respect. I am not condemning Brother Austin-Sparks. Even if the archangel Michael were to come and preach a message, we would still need to test him. I say strongly that even if Brother Nee were to say something, we would still need to seriously examine it. A person should correct another only according to the teaching in the Bible, not according to his feelings. If Brother Austin-Sparks were objective, he would have confessed, “Perhaps this is their custom and my personal feeling. It may not be the feeling of the East, and it is not the teaching in the Bible.” This is the right kind of attitude. However, he claimed that he made such a comment based upon the teaching in the Bible. This is absolutely inaccurate.

I use this matter as an illustration in order to demonstrate that our acceptance or rejection of certain matters is not that simple. Before we discussed a matter with Brother Austin-Sparks, we first analyzed the matter a

great deal among ourselves. On the podium one morning, Brother Austin-Sparks said that we have made Christ a small Christ and the church a small church. He said such a word because we insist on the ground of the church. We questioned him in a serious way, saying, "The prophet Daniel and Madame Guyon were very spiritual, but where were they?" He was not able to give an answer. His spiritual ministry was very high, and we truly need the supply of this high ministry. However, his spiritual ministry and ours do not match. On that same day I said to him, "Brother, we have had much fellowship with you, but there is one matter we cannot get through." Brother Austin-Sparks asked humbly, "What is this one matter?" I said, "We insist on the ground of the church, but you reject it." He said, "You and I have the same view." Please forgive me for saying this, but his answer was not straightforward; however, neither can it be compared to the hypocrisy of Peter and Barnabas.

In the past thirty years we have learned a serious lesson, that is, to have strict judgment concerning matters. We do not speak about a matter unless we are clear; hence, once we speak about a matter, we must be certain that there is no error. The more we discuss whether a matter is right or wrong, good or bad, the more we win the case.

THE WALL OF THE CITY

BEING FOR SEPARATION AND BUILDING

There was no wall in the garden of Eden, but in the New Jerusalem there is a great and high wall. This wall is a separation. Today there is a need for separation in every city. This is according to God's principle. What came out of the first creation did not have a separation, because there was no lawlessness. In the second creation there needs to be a separation because there is lawlessness. In the New Testament, once a believer is saved, he becomes the materials for the building of the New Jerusalem; however, not every church may have a wall, because the wall is built up through the believers' transformation. According to the record in the Old Testament, the work that the enemy does, as shown in typology, is to tear down the wall of the holy city. When God's people were recovered and returned from captivity, they needed to rebuild the wall of the city. Hence, their enemies attempted to frustrate the building of the wall of the city.

The truth we have spoken of regarding the ground of the church is a matter of building up the wall of the city, the main function of which is separation. One of the functions of the wall is to protect the things of God and keep out the things that are not of God. The work of the church on the earth today must produce a result, and that result is the building up of a wall. What is natural zeal? What is God's abode in man? There must be a wall built up to separate these two matters. Otherwise, when people are on fire for the Lord, they will love the Lord fervently while at the same time burn down His building. If someone gives ten thousand dollars to help the church, we should not immediately say, "Thank and praise the Lord"; rather, we must exercise some discernment.

A lady living in America wanted to offer us twenty thousand dollars. She had a friend who was a sister, and this sister had some fellowship with us. She told us that her friend wanted to give us a gospel van. After much careful consideration and analysis before the Lord, the co-workers wrote the sister a letter, stating that we never directly accept donations from men but would only accept, on God's behalf, men's offerings. Therefore, we told her that we would not accept the gospel van right away but would first consider whether or not her friend had consecrated herself to the Lord. We told her that this is our spiritual exercise and asked her to forgive us.

Later, the same sister wanted to give us some money. I said that everyone should give only before God and that if she wanted to give, she should put the money into the offering box. These situations displeased her greatly. Her friend came back from America, and after some transaction with this sister, she decided to donate the money to a certain denomination. Now she has become one of the executive committee members in that denomination. If we had not considered this matter in the beginning, I am afraid that it would have become a problem among us. It is not a sin to receive people's donations, but man's natural zeal tears down God's building.

We should not quarrel with people while we work for the Lord and release the Lord's truths. When we begin to work for the Lord in a serious way, we need to always be cautious and guard ourselves by building up the wall; we cannot receive everyone or speak loosely. To invite the brother from Hong Kong to give a message on the Lord's Day might seem to be a small thing, but in principle it is a serious mistake. This brother and his wife are meek, have a heart for others, and pay attention to the work among the students. They are

pure, and they themselves believe that they are pure. However, even though he has been delivered from certain things on the negative side, there has been no building on the positive side. The first time he came to Taiwan, he wanted to gain something from us, but the brothers did not allow it. Later, he contacted a certain brother and told him that his students' work was nondenominational. However, based on our standing, we can never give our support to what he is doing. This is the destructive work of the enemy.

We should always pay attention to the building up of the local churches for God's building. On the positive side, we should accept everything that is necessary for the building, and on the negative side, we should be in fear and trembling to maintain the separation, lest things come in that God does not desire.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH AND THE PRINCIPLE OF THE WORK (2)

Recently, a brother who teaches at the National Taiwan University came with his wife to seek fellowship concerning our joining him in a students' work. I would like to fellowship with you brothers concerning the content of our conversation.

When this brother came to us, he told us that he has no problem with us in regard to our inward condition because we love the Lord, are for the Lord's purpose, and want to live for the Lord. However, he also indicated that he is not able to have complete and thorough fellowship with us due to the matter of the local ground. He does not consider the local ground to be a serious matter. Moreover, if we were to disregard this matter, he would not have any problem with us. He said that the problem he has with us is entirely due to the matter of the local ground and that it has become a hindrance to our fellowship. In other words, because we find it difficult to participate in a work that does not take the local ground as a prerequisite, he has found it difficult to have thorough fellowship with us. Nevertheless, I felt to openly fellowship with him because he sincerely wanted to have thorough fellowship with us.

CONSTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE ASPECTS RELATED TO CHRISTIANITY

I felt to clearly present to him the burden within us. First, I pointed out the need to understand the condition of Christianity today. Intrinsically, we are all in unity and are even one because we are in the Lord and are for the Lord. The problem is not an inward matter; rather, it is in regard to what we want to accomplish outwardly.

There are two aspects related to the condition of Protestantism today. On the one hand, Christian workers have done much for the Lord by spreading the Lord's name and the Lord's word to people and by leading people to salvation. Even the Catholic Church has been involved with this temporary matter. However, we cannot deny that there is a negative aspect to their

work—their erroneous truths and mixed practices have led believers astray, causing them to go further and further away from God's purpose. Concerning the matter of fulfilling God's purpose, much of what the Catholic Church has done is in the nature of destroying and tearing down. We all agree concerning this, and there is no room for debate. However, we should also admit that Protestantism has done much destructive work in relation to God's purpose.

Under such circumstances we face a great dilemma. In the work of Christianity, if there were no aspect of destruction or tearing down but only a constructive building up, there would be no dilemma. Since all Christians work for the Lord, surely we should be able to work together. The problem, however, is that in addition to a constructive aspect, there is also a destructive aspect. On the one hand, we want to accomplish the constructive aspect, but on the other hand, we do not desire to be involved in the destructive aspect. As a result, we must have a cautious attitude in our work.

The brother acknowledged that organized Christianity is erroneous and deadened and that in its work there is a destructive aspect in regard to God's will; nevertheless, he still hoped that we would labor with him. Although the purpose of his work is not to help any Christian organization, there are too many considerations that cause us to hesitate. He is asking us to confirm and even encourage his kind of work, but after much consideration we believe that his work may bring in much destruction.

THE LIMITATION OF THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH

We all acknowledge that God in His eternal plan desires to obtain a Body for His Son and a house for Himself. Both the Body and the house show that God has no intention for us to be individual Christians. The Christian life is a corporate life. Both the Christian living and the Christian work are corporate. The practical expression of the corporate life of Christians is their service in coordination.

In the New Testament God set up only one church in each locality as a practical representation and expression of His universal church. We do not question this truth because we strongly believe that it is correct. However, at present the condition of the church in every place is that of confusion and

division. Hence, with regard to serving in coordination, it is difficult to know what to do.

If there were not a destructive aspect and only one church in each locality, it would be no problem for Christians to coordinate and work together. However, at present there is a destructive aspect in addition to many different groups. Consequently, when someone wants to work for the Lord, he needs to consider two aspects. On the one hand, he needs to choose the proper group, and on the other hand, he needs to consider whether the work is constructive.

In which group are we? Since we should not be individualistic, with whom should we serve in coordination? If there were only one church in a locality, we would simply work and serve with the believers there. However, in the present confusing situation we surely need to discern and examine the many Christian groups according to our understanding of the Bible. Once we find the group that is scriptural, we need to work and serve with them. As to whether or not we should participate in any other work outside of this group, we must examine and determine whether that work is constructive or destructive. This examination must be cautious. It is not only a question of whether or not we should participate but whether or not the work is constructive or destructive. There is a big difference between the two.

TWO PRINCIPLES OF EXAMINATION

There are two principles of examination: our person and our burden. First, we need to see who we are; then we need to consider what we want to do. On the positive side, we must see a clear vision concerning God's will. Not only do we need to see God's eternal purpose, but we also need to see God's purpose in this age, that is, what God wants to accomplish today. On the negative side, we need to know the part of Christianity that is constructive and the part that is destructive. We need to see all these matters clearly so that we will know what the degree of our involvement should be. This is not a simple matter. Therefore, whether or not we should be involved in a certain work depends on our person and then on our burden and attitude. What kind of work do we justify, and what kind of work do we condemn? There may be a constructive aspect, but if the destructive aspect is even greater, we must make the choice cautiously.

As the brother teaching at the National Taiwan University indicated, he has a problem related to the ground of the church. We have seen that God's intention is related to the local ground, and we must be firm in this matter. Once brothers and sisters partake of the Lord's table on this ground, something within them requires them to be separated from and not participate in the divisive and destructive work of Christianity. Even though our brother at the National Taiwan University loves the Lord and has the burden to do a particular work for the Lord, he is not clear concerning the local ground; thus, we are hesitant to labor with him.

For the sake of avoiding an argument, we feel to let him make the decision with whom to labor. May the Lord lead him to receive a clear vision of God's eternal purpose and also to see the extent to which God disapproves of the condition of Christianity. At that time we will not only confirm but also encourage him in his work; nevertheless, because this is not yet his condition, it is difficult for us to give him a confirming word. Since the brother has doubts concerning the ground of locality, how can we confirm his work? We do not have the peace to do so, and he also has nothing to say.

WORKING FOR THE LORD REQUIRING OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD'S TRUTH

After our fellowship with the brother, his wife said that although she was not altogether clear concerning the matter of the ground, she was willing to learn to submit to the church and to the authority of the church. Moreover, she was willing to serve and do things under the direction of the brothers. Although she was not clear, she was still willing to obey. Unlike his wife, however, this brother said that he would not submit to the church but would obey only God.

In regard to the authority of the church, our principle is that we do not require others to obey us; however, a person who works for the Lord should always obey the Lord's truths. We should obey God, yet we should also obey His truths. Otherwise, we are not worthy to be the Lord's workers or to work for Him.

To which truth do we refer? We refer to the truth regarding God's desire to obtain a Body for His Son and to gain a house for Himself. Practically, God desires to have a group of Christians in every locality as a corporate expression of the Body of Christ and as His house. We cannot deny this truth. In this light, are we able to affirm that the many Christian groups in the different localities are such an expression? I do not believe that anyone would affirm this. Since we cannot affirm that these Christian groups are such an expression, is it possible to have such an expression? We need to believe that God's word is never spoken in vain. What He says, He will fulfill. Therefore, in principle, when we go to a certain place, we should first look for such an expression. This is according to the truth.

The building up of the church in a locality is for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. We should not think that this is impossible to achieve, simply because Christianity is in a state of great confusion. God always means business, and He never says that He will do anything that He cannot attain. This brother said that the expression of the church can be only temporary and cannot be eternal. This is altogether a rhetorical argument. I have said only that the local ground of the church is *for* the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose; I never said that it *is* God's eternal purpose. Even if we eliminated the word *eternal* and simply said that the expression of the local church is for the fulfillment of the Lord's purpose, we would still need to take care of this matter because it is related to the Lord's purpose.

THE LOCAL GROUND OF THE CHURCH KEEPING GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE GENUINE ONENESS

After discussing these matters with him, the brother was still not willing to submit. He said that God's eternal will is to obtain a Body to be His testimony. In this Body all the members are dependent upon one another. He also said that there is one Spirit in this Body and that no one can divide the Body. He spoke confidently and was right in regard to the positive side. Based on his word, I asked him, "Since this is the case, is there one church in Taipei today?" He said, "As far as the Spirit is concerned, the church is not divided." I responded by telling him that because the Body is one and the Spirit is one, there cannot be division and there is no division. Nevertheless, consider today's situation: Are all the Christians in Taipei one, or are they divided? We

cannot deny that according to the present situation, they are divided. Who has divided this Body? In other words, who has divided the Spirit of God? He could not answer this question.

Ephesians 4:3-6 speaks of the church as the Body of Christ, the substance of which is the "oneness of the Spirit," and it also speaks of the seven "ones" that keep the church in oneness. These seven "ones" are one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. Christians know the truth concerning oneness, but I asked this brother whether or not this oneness has been practically lived out and expressed by the believers in Taipei. He had nothing to say.

Eventually, he told me that he had forsaken organized Christianity. Then I asked him, "Where are you today? Can you say that the Presbyterian Church is right and that you should be in it? Or can you say that the Baptist Church is right and that you should be in it? Where do you put yourself today?" He again had nothing to say but replied with a conventional answer: "I am in Christ." I said to him, "This statement is in the air because it is too abstract. It is true that you are in Christ. But on the practical side, where do you serve God? In which group do you serve? In which kind of coordination do you serve? Where are you practically? With whom do you coordinate in the matter of serving the Lord?" He could not give an answer and was totally subdued in regard to this point.

THE LOCAL GROUND ENABLING GOD'S SERVICE TO BE PRACTICALLY EXPRESSED

As Christians, we should not be independent; rather, we need to serve corporately. Our service should be corporate, and our work should be in coordination. Where should we coordinate? Should we place ourselves in those groups that we consider to be wrong? Where should we place ourselves? Since we have a physical body, we must place ourselves somewhere. Where should we in Taipei place ourselves? If a person says that he is in the universal church, where is the universal church? Is it hanging in the air? It is too idealistic and impractical to say that a person is in the universal church. Practically, the universal church must be expressed in a definite location. Doctrinally, it is correct to say that we are in Christ and that the church is one and has the Spirit as her essence and cannot and must not be divided;

nevertheless, how is this carried out? The only way is to have the local ground of the church.

This brother wanted to coordinate with us in carrying out his work. Since a local church must include all of God's people within its locality, he hoped that he would be able to find co-workers from other groups as well. I told him that what he is trying to do can be likened to a person going to Martin Luther and telling him, "Brother, I think that you are the closest to God's will, and my group is most connected to yours. Hence, I would like to coordinate with you in the work." However, if this person also invited different ones from the Catholic Church to preach at Luther's place, how could they have preached? Would it be logical for a brother to say that Luther was closest to God's will and then invite people from the Catholic Church to come and preach in Luther's group? In his day Luther opposed the Catholic Church. If someone on his side had been invited to preach in the Catholic Church, could that person have justified the Catholic Church? In the same principle, it is a contradiction that the brother from the National Taiwan University does not justify today's organized Christianity, yet he desires to work among them.

THE LOCAL GROUND ENABLING GOD'S TRUTH TO BE PRACTICALLY CARRIED OUT

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He preached in the Jewish synagogues; Paul also preached there (Matt. 4:23; 13:54; Mark 1:39; Acts 13:5; 18:4). However, they did not confirm or strengthen the Jewish way of worship; rather, they urged the Jews to come out of the synagogues. The brother claimed that when the apostles went to the Jewish synagogues, they preached only Christ and not the ground of the church. This is correct. Indeed, the apostles preached Christ wherever they went, including in all the synagogues; however, when some in the synagogues believed in Christ, the apostles did not leave them there. The New Testament tells us clearly that the apostles gathered them together and established them as the church in their locality.

I asked this brother, "Since you labor in the various Christian groups and preach Christ there, when people receive the Christ whom you preach, where should they go?" He said, "They themselves need to receive the Lord's leading." Then I asked, "Where do you think the Lord will lead them? If some were to ask you this, how would you answer them?" He said, "I would not tell them where to go. One day the Lord will tell them." I said, "What do you suppose

the Lord will tell them? Where do you think the Lord will lead them? Do you think that the Lord will lead them into organizations that He condemns?" Eventually, he said, "No, the Lord will want them to come out of such organizations." Then I questioned insistently, "So where will they go when they come out?" For this, the brother did not have an answer.

I then told the brother, "What you have said is too theoretical. We do not say that we should go everywhere to preach the ground of the church. How much do we actually preach the ground of the church? We mostly preach the Lord Jesus as Savior, as Christ, as the Head, as the Lord of all, and as the all-inclusive One. When we allow the Lord to work in us, things definitely happen. When people are enlightened to see what does not match God's will and what is incompatible with what God desires, they leave and come out of those organizations. After these ones forsake these organizations, where should they go?"

I then continued, "You strongly disapprove of the ground of the church. But I would like to ask, If we forsake the ground of the church, where should we go? Should we go to your home?" On the one hand, he acknowledged that what I said was right, but on the other hand, he still disagreed with us, saying that we should not emphasize the ground of the church, or we would become like the Brethren, who claimed that only their ground is right and that the other grounds are wrong. I pointed out to him that the church is built in definite places; otherwise, the church would be something in the air, and we would have nowhere to meet. He said, "As long as there is a piece of land, we can meet there." I said, "The ground of the church is our 'land'; if we sell our 'land' and are without the ground, we will have nowhere to meet."

PAYING ATTENTION TO TRUTH AND PRACTICE AND KEEPING THE PRINCIPLE OF SERVICE AND WORK

Finally, I presented to him the same conclusion that I had spoken at the beginning. We cannot be merely individual Christians; we must be corporate Christians. Today among Christians there is division after division. We cannot accept these divisions. We must choose a place to be in order to serve with other saints. As to whether or not we should participate in a work carried out apart from the local church, we must carefully observe the group that is

carrying out the work. We need to know whether the group is destructive or constructive. This is to care for not only the truth but also the practice.

Furthermore, we are absolutely different from the Brethren. First, the Brethren are exclusive, and we are not. The Brethren think that if a person does not leave the denominations and remains connected to them, he is a "companion of evil." We do not think this way. If a brother is genuinely saved and comes to meet with us, we will receive him and break bread with him, even if he is wearing the robe of a Catholic priest. Second, the Brethren also think that whoever holds a different view in regard to the truth is "heretical" and cannot be received. We, however, pay attention only to the fundamental truths. Thus, we open the Lord's table to all genuine believers; whoever is saved by believing in the Lord can partake of this table.

As far as the work is concerned, we cannot casually give approval to participate in the work of others. If someone wants to have mutual participation with us in a matter related to the work, we must first consider his person. Then we will decide. We do not want our trumpet to give two kinds of sound; once we give two kinds of sound, the work will be in confusion, and the result will not be profitable (1 Cor. 14:8). For example, the brother spoken of earlier breaks bread with us, and we are happy about this. However, he still has some disagreements and different opinions concerning the ground that we consider to be proper. Since his attitude is such, when we calmly consider the matter, we realize that we cannot participate with him in his work. How can we give him a confirmation regarding his view of the work? We have no intention to hurt his feelings. If this brother feels that he should work in other groups, this is a personal matter, and we leave it to him to decide.

On the other hand, if a person is clear regarding the ground of the church and the purpose of God, we will not only give him a confirmation but will also encourage him in the work. Some people, however, have a different opinion regarding the ground on which we stand. We cannot encourage them in the work. Moreover, if the work of a group of Christians was only constructive and not destructive, we would still encourage them in their work. However, the present condition of the work of most groups is in a state of confusion. On one hand, there is building up, but there is also tearing down. If a person is not clear concerning the ground and carries out the work in a negative

situation, we do not have the confidence to encourage him in his work. This kind of consideration is not unreasonable.

A BRIEF DECLARATION OF DEFENSE

While it may be easy for people to affirm that what they do is constructive and that they will not touch anything destructive, they may find that there are practical problems in carrying out their work. We do not want to speak of others' faults, but according to what we know, the background of every group can become a problem in the work. For example, when the brother we are speaking of first came to Taipei, he met in a certain group for a few years. We are very clear about the background of this group. If we had wanted to speak of others' faults, we would have told him a long time ago about the mistakes of that group. However, we waited until recently to share some facts with him, but only because he sought to have fellowship with us.

First, the founder of the group was a classmate of mine. He came from the same province as I. Originally, he intended to take the Brethren assembly as his base for establishing a Christian group in China. In the end, he did not succeed. In 1942 he came to Chefoo from Tsinan, the capital city of the province of Shantung. He cooperated with the Japanese military police to form a Christian organization that demanded that all Christian groups join it. We refused to join. Later, two of their representatives came to see me and said, "Are you ready to be a martyr? Are you ready to sacrifice yourself?" Nevertheless, I stood firm to reject them. When the Japanese military police decided to send some police to coerce me, my former classmate told them that he would see if I could be persuaded to join them, but if I should refuse, they should send the police. What kind of person is this? Why would the Japanese military police receive his suggestions?

Second, after he came to Taiwan, he still used the name Brethren Assembly. Upon learning of this, I inquired of him concerning this designation. He told me that when he came to Taipei, he had searched everywhere and could not find a place that was gathered into the Lord's name; hence, he adopted the designation of Brethren. Was it ethical to do this?

Third, once he preached in Tamsui and said that I had come to Taiwan to establish churches and that because of this, he also came to Taiwan to

establish churches. Now he seeks to copy whatever we do. The group under his leadership also copies whatever we do.

Fourth, he later went to Singapore and told the responsible ones in Singapore that he belonged to the local church. The brothers there were very happy, so they invited him to preach. Later, when the brothers became clear, they closed the door to him. He then established another group. With this kind of history, how can we feel at peace concerning his group? Seemingly, they love the Lord and are spiritual, but we are clear concerning their actual situation, and we surely cannot confirm the work of anyone working with them.

Many of the terms they adopt at present have been used by us in the recent years, and they were not formerly found in the Chinese language. For instance, the term *the coordination of the Body* is used almost exclusively by us. Although such terms are used almost exclusively by us, we would like others to also use them. However, this group opposes us to the uttermost, yet they borrow our terms. If you were directly involved, how would you feel? You can ask them concerning this matter. Did they receive these terms in their prayer or from their reading of the Scriptures? I have seen them do this same thing in mainland China. They imitate us completely without trying to conceal anything.

THE GROUND BEING A VESSEL AND A FOOTHOLD FOR A PRACTICAL EXPRESSION

My conclusion is that the matter of the work is intricate. For example, in a human body, muscles and blood vessels all grow together in a coordinated way. Likewise, the work and the ground are interrelated. We must have a clear vision regarding this. Today it may seem that we always speak concerning the ground, and it may also seem that we are speaking of something abstract. However, if we do not speak concerning the local ground, we will have problems. If we do not pay attention to this matter, Satan will bring in mixture. We cannot be loose concerning the matter of the ground. Once we become loose, we will not be able to accomplish anything.

Let me use an illustration. If I offer tea to people, no one can hold the tea in his hands. A person needs a cup to hold the tea. Nevertheless, it seems that some people are so "extraordinary" that they attempt to drink tea without a cup. In other words, they hold themselves to be so "transcendent" that they consider it unspiritual to talk of the ground of the church or to mention the matter. This kind of transcendence is impractical because it provides no way to hold real spiritual content.

Some people may agree with us on many matters and want to labor with us; however, they may not want the ground. As a result, they remain in their own group. This is not forthright. If they think that their ground is right, they should remain and labor there. If their ground is not right, however, we cannot agree with their way. Our work has come to a turning point. If there is no place to contain the work, the work will not have a future.

Brother T. Austin-Sparks wrote us a letter of praise, saying that we have a condition and situation that cannot be found even in Honor Oak. Although he praised us for our condition, he also sought to disrupt our situation. This is paradoxical. This can be compared to someone appreciating the tea within a teapot while simultaneously trying to break the teapot. Without a teapot, how can the tea be contained? It is useless to do this.

It is difficult to fellowship concerning these matters because the main points are delicate. If we do not pay attention to the ground of the church, we will suffer loss in every respect. I hope that the brothers and sisters will pray for me. I am afraid that if I do not handle the matter properly, the brothers and sisters will not receive the benefit. All the meetings among us must be strengthened. The ground of the church is but the base for the practical expression of the church. When we come together to meet, we must express Christ. Where is Christ? He is in the fellowship, in our loving one another, and in the prayer. Hence, we must be strengthened in these aspects.

There are many brothers and sisters in Taipei who are indifferent. The reason they come to meet with us is that our meeting place is close to their home. They come to the meeting but do not receive an impression concerning why the Lord put them here. Because they do not have such a realization, we must continue to labor. It is futile to fight merely for the ground. We fight for the ground so that the church of God as the Body of Christ and the house of God can be expressed practically. Our prayer meetings should be for fighting

the spiritual warfare and for doing “business.” On one hand, it is like going to a battlefield; on the other hand, it is like going to an office. If the saints come to the prayer meeting and sense that it is plain and boring, this kind of situation is not acceptable.

In 1940 for the first time in China the whole church went out to preach the gospel. The meetings began on Chinese New Year. In the evening of the two days before the gospel meeting, the whole church fasted and prayed. It was the warfare of the church. Those who were there can testify that all the saints came to pray girded at their waist. They put on the whole armor of God and aggressively took the offensive against the enemy. When the day came to preach the gospel, the morale was very strong, and we were as one person.

Let us take a look at the disciples’ prayer in Acts 4. It says that they lifted up their voice with one accord to God in prayer. After they prayed, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness (vv. 24-31). Today the contents of our prayer meetings are not sufficiently rich. Outwardly, it has become somewhat like a Sunday service. This is not right, and God does not bless this. We must deal with the Lord, we must be desperate, and we must labor intensely to turn this situation around.

Although we always pay attention to the matter of the ground of the church, the ground of the church is for the expression of the universal Body of Christ and for the expression of the things in the spiritual realm. We must strive for genuine spiritual experiences. We should not make the local ground just a matter of doctrine; rather, we should stand on the local ground as the base for rich spiritual experiences. This is difficult to realize. The local ground is not merely a doctrine for someone to preach. The Brethren constantly fought over doctrines. All such fighting only makes people weary. Today many of the messages released from the podium allow people to sleep peacefully after listening to them. However, when we release messages, we need to stir people up. Perhaps they may think that they have not gained anything, yet when they go home they will not be able to sleep, because something in them will not sleep peacefully. This should be our attitude.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRINCIPLES REGARDING MEETING IN THE HOMES IN THE CHURCH

THE NATURE AND GROUND OF THE CHURCH

We see clearly from the Word that the function of the church is to be the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 1:22b-23; 4:4, 16). As to its nature, the Body is universal, but as to its expression in definite places on the earth, it is local. Hence, the church has two aspects: a universal aspect and a local aspect. According to its universal aspect, the church is unique; there is only one church. However, according to its local aspect, the church is expressed in different places at different times, representing the unique universal church and functioning as the Body of Christ.

According to the New Testament, there is only one church in the universe, yet it is expressed on earth in different localities. This means that although the church is universal, its expression in this age is local. This local expression, based on the ground of locality, is the local church. Anything bigger or smaller than a locality is not fit to be the ground of the church.

The ground of the church is local and does not change according to the size of a locality. The church cannot have more than one expression in a big locality, or less than one expression in a small locality. It does not matter whether a locality is big or small, there can be only one local church within it. History tells us that in the apostles' time, Jerusalem may have had a population of over one million and that within Jerusalem there was a large number of believers; nevertheless, there was only one church in Jerusalem. In Acts 21:20 James and all the elders told Paul, "You observe, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed." On ordinary days the many saved ones met in different homes. The phrase *house to house* in Acts 2:46 and 5:42 denotes not a single house but many houses. This means that although the believers met in many different homes, they were not divided into many churches; rather, they were still one church. Although the Bible says that they met in many homes, it does not say that these homes were

different churches within Jerusalem. On the contrary, in Acts 8:1 the Bible uses the singular word *church*, not *churches*, when speaking of the church in Jerusalem. This shows that although there were many saved ones and many meetings within the homes, there was still only one expression of the church in Jerusalem. This one expression was for the one testimony on earth, that is, that the Lord's Body is one and has only one expression in each locality. God wants us, the believers, to keep the nature of the oneness of the Body of Christ in every locality.

The New Testament also reveals that although a certain locality may be small, it cannot be joined to other small localities to form a single church. Although there were many cities within the province of Galatia, the churches in Galatia were not joined together to become "the church in Galatia"; rather, they were spoken of as "the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2). Likewise, the seven local churches in Asia were not added together to become one church. They remained seven churches (Rev. 1:4, 11-12, 20). If they had united themselves, they would have lost the nature of the church as the Body of Christ. For this reason the church in a big locality cannot divide itself into many churches, nor can churches in smaller localities join together to form one church. We should not think that because the churches in two or three neighboring localities are small, they ought to join together to form one church. This is not permissible, because there can be only one church in each locality.

For the church to maintain its nature of oneness, it must have only one expression in each locality. The expression of each local church is a miniature, a small local representation, of the unique church in the universe, the unique Body of Christ. In other words, the local church in each locality is a miniature expression of the universal Body of Christ. This is not to say that Christ has many Bodies on the earth; rather, this is to say that Christ has many miniature, or small-scale, expressions and that each small-scale expression is a representation of the unique large-scale Body in the universe. The Bible says that the church is the Body of Christ. Universally it is one, but it is expressed in numerous localities. The Body of Christ in Ephesians 1:22-23 is spoken of in reference to the church in its universal aspect, whereas the Body in Romans 12:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12 is spoken of mainly in reference to the church in its local aspect.

EXPRESSION AND FUNCTION

God makes this kind of arrangement to show that the function of the universal Body of Christ should be the function of the church in any given locality, regardless of its size. We all must see that the expression of the church as the Body of Christ is one. Seeing this will preserve us from being divided. In addition, in regard to the function of the church as the Body of Christ, we need to see that we are all members of the Body of Christ and that we should all fulfill our function as members. In the church life there is a basic matter that we need to pay attention to; that is, the function of the church in relation to Christ is that of a body. Thus, every member of the Body must fulfill his function.

The church is the Body of Christ, and all the saved ones are members of the Body. As a result, for the past few years we have paid much attention to the principle of service in the Body. The principle of serving in the Body is that every saved one needs to fulfill his function as a living member. This principle is crucial. When we come together, we are not merely gathering together as an assembly to express Christ within a certain locality; rather, we are members one of another, each one fulfilling his function, so that the church can be Christ's living Body in practicality. According to the biblical viewpoint, in addition to our own experience and study of church history, there are two necessary conditions that must be met for the accomplishment of this matter.

Growing in Life without Hindrance

The first condition is related to the saints' personal growth in life. The saints are not only saved individuals but also members of the Body of Christ. In order for these members to fulfill their function, they need to grow in life. The brothers and sisters who study medicine can tell us that when a baby is born, he possesses all the members of a body, but initially the functions of these members are not fully manifested. For example, although a baby has eyes, he cannot see clearly; although he has hands, he cannot hold things well; although he has feet, he cannot walk; and although he has a brain, he cannot think clearly. He cannot do these things because he is immature, not because he has a disease. Hence, the baby needs to gradually grow in life until his eyes can see clearly, his hands can hold things well, his feet can walk, and his mind can think clearly. Furthermore, while he is growing, he must not encounter

any serious illness. If any member experiences too much illness, it will not be able to carry out its function.

For the believers to grow without any hindrance is altogether a matter of life. After the brothers and sisters are saved, they are all members; nevertheless, if they fail to grow in life, or if they experience hindrances in regard to their growth, they cannot be expected to fulfill their functions as members. For this reason we need to lead the brothers and sisters in the matter of life, help them grow in life, and deal with any hindrances that arise. This kind of leading is necessary for the brothers and sisters to grow properly, manifest their functions as members, and realize their position as members one of another. In this way Christ will be able to express Himself in their locality, and they will become a miniature expression of Christ.

The subject of Romans is not merely justification by faith. Much more, Romans speaks concerning how we sinners are constituted into the Body of Christ, which is expressed as local churches. Romans 1 speaks of sinners under God's wrath, chapter 2 speaks of sinners under God's condemnation and judgment, and chapters 3 and 4 speak of being justified by God and saved through God's grace. Chapters 5 and 6 speak of the believers' old man and old nature being crucified with the Lord. Chapter 7 speaks of believers still having the flesh and still being under the bondage of sin. Chapter 8 speaks of believers having the law of the Spirit of life, which enables them to live not by their self and flesh but by the spirit. Chapters 9 through 11 are an insertion that speaks of God's choosing. Then chapter 12 says that once a believer has been saved, he becomes a member of the Body of Christ and should practice the Body life. Furthermore, the brothers and sisters who enter into the Body life manifest their functions through the exercise of gifts.

In Romans 12, once a believer consecrates himself (v. 1), he learns to live in the Body and to coordinate with the brothers and sisters as the Body of Christ. This shows that function is primarily related to growth in life. If we live in Romans 3 through 5, even though we are saved and are members of the Body of Christ, our function as members will not yet be manifested. One of us may be an eye, but the function of an eye will not yet be manifested. Likewise, one of us may be a hand, but the function of a hand will not yet be manifested. Thus, we need to grow. At the same time, we need to avoid developing any troubling hindrances but should learn to coordinate and function together with the saints.

Prior to Romans 12 there is no mention of how Christians should serve and live. These chapters show only that Christians were formerly sinners and that they have been justified by God and crucified with Christ in order to live in the Holy Spirit. These may seem to be individual matters. However, the Christian life and living are matters entirely related to the Body. If we truly live in the Spirit, we will immediately see that we are members of the Body (Eph. 4:4). This is the reason that Romans 12 begins by telling us how to serve God in the Body, live the Body life, and function as members one of another. Even the loving of others and the prayer spoken of in verses 9 through 12 are matters in the Body. In other words, loving others and praying are functions of the members of the Body.

The entire Christian living is a living in the Body, and the entire Christian service is a service carried out in the Body. To function as members in the Body is not only to serve but even to live. This is the Christian living and service spoken of in Romans 12 through 16. It is the result of the growth of the Body unto the manifestation of its functions. Hence, if we want the brothers and sisters in a locality to function as members one of another, we must lead them to properly and healthily grow in life.

The Administration of the Church

The second condition is related to the administration of the church. The administration of the church must be suitable so that the brothers and sisters can function as members. If the brothers and sisters have not grown in life or have problems in regard to their growth in life and are unable to manifest their functions, they themselves will be held accountable. However, if the administration and practices of a local church do not allow the brothers and sisters to fulfill their functions, then the administrative system and practices are accountable. To say it mildly, the administration may restrict the brothers and sisters from functioning properly before the Lord; to say it more strongly, the administration may obstruct the work of the Holy Spirit.

According to my observation, brothers and sisters in small local churches usually have sufficient opportunity and a proper environment that enable them to manifest and develop their gifts, unless they do not have a heart for the Lord or sufficient growth in life. In a larger local church, however, it is more difficult to provide brothers and sisters with the opportunity and environment. In a large local church, such as the church in Taipei, there are

so many brothers and sisters who love and pursue the Lord. For this we truly worship the Lord. Even if their growth is not up to standard, we cannot deny that they have a measure of growth. Generally speaking, however, only a few brothers and sisters fulfill their functions because the administration of the church has fallen short.

I dare not say that the administration in Taipei has been wrong, but my personal feeling is that perhaps the system may need to be adjusted according to the present circumstances. In the past our numbers were small, and it was fine for us to be divided into six or seven districts. Now, although our number has increased, we continue to meet in the same number of districts. This has caused the church to gradually come to a halt, and we are unable to go on. This indicates that in the past few years the administration of the church has not been adequate to meet the present need and has been unable to provide the brothers and sisters sufficient opportunity to function. In other words, the administration and practice of the church life have somewhat restricted the spiritual functions and gifts of the brothers and sisters.

Without proper administration the church in a big locality will lose the Lord's presence and enter into confusion. Many saints may even be hurt and withdraw themselves. Hence, in order to maintain a local church in proper order and keep it on the right course, there is an undeniable need for proper administration. The Bible shows that there must be elders and deacons in a church in order for it to have an orderly and systematic administration (1 Tim. 3:1-13). However, we do not have a strict organization, nor do we have positions within the church. In this regard, I can testify concerning the elders in Taipei that every one of them has the intention to help the brothers and sisters. None of them has any intention of establishing a strict organization to control the brothers and sisters, and none of them has any ambition for position. All of them love the Lord and carry out the administration of the church in fear and trembling according to the Lord's Word.

Many of us have served the Lord together during these past few years, and even though there have been some disorderly situations, they have been rare. All of us have the desire to serve and coordinate in an orderly and proper way. However, under our present administration there is unconsciously a restriction that prevents the brothers and sisters from developing their gifts and carrying out their functions. We have been considering this matter for a period of four to five years, and we dare not make a decision quickly. Only

recently have we begun to realize where the problem lies; that is, the size of the district meetings is too big.

The administration of the church should provide the brothers and sisters an opportunity to develop their spiritual gifts and carry out their functions as members. However, according to spiritual principle, the administration should also give the brothers and sisters some guidelines. In order to produce a good condition, we feel that a large church should be divided into smaller district meetings—the more the better and the smaller the better—until all the brothers and sisters have the opportunity to exercise, develop, and carry out their spiritual functions.

PRINCIPLES AND DETAILS RELATED TO DISTRICT MEETINGS

Some brothers and sisters may ask why our meetings are held in districts. First, it is according to the teaching in the Scriptures. In the Bible large local churches, such as the church in Jerusalem, met in different homes, which served as district meetings (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:12). Our problem is not that we fail to practice according to the biblical principle but that our district meetings have become too large. Because every district meeting covers a wide area, we need to readjust so that we may have the proper situation for the practice of the district meetings of the church.

Second, we need to see that the church of God on the earth is a matter of expression and that it cannot be separated from human community. There is only one church because there is only one God. There is only one Head of the church; hence, the church as the Body of Christ can be only one. However, it is impossible for all the saints of God to be one church in respect to time, space, and church administration. As a result, in His Word God gives us the principle of locality. The definition of locality is a place where a human community gathers and resides. Every city forms a place where people gather and reside, and it is the boundary of the local church, as ordained in the Bible.

To state it less precisely, the church of God lodges in human communities, or societies. The church is of God and not of the world (John 17:14, 16). It is separated from the world (15:19; 17:19), yet it remains in the world (v. 15). Today the city of Taipei is a large city, and within it some have been saved and regenerated to become the church; hence, in Taipei there is an expression of

the church. These saved ones, who become the church, are separated from the world by God; nevertheless, due to physical limitations, they continue to exist in communities, living and walking accordingly. Hence, we can say that the church lodges in human communities.

The Bible shows that in God's ordination the unit for the expression of the church is a city, or locality, the same unit in which people gather and reside. For the church there is no greater or higher unit, nor is there a smaller or lower unit. Within a community the basic constituent is the individual. Actually, it is probably more accurate to say that households are the basic unit within communities. This is because the majority of individuals do not live alone but share a house with others. Hence, a city or locality takes the home as its basic unit. As far as the city, or locality, is concerned, the home is a very important unit. In the Bible we see that the local churches were the center of the believers' living and actions. Hence, the churches took the city, the place where people gather and reside, as the unit of their expression. However, these local churches met in many different homes, just as a city, or community, is divided into many homes.

We need to see that there is a difference between spiritual homes and physical households. For instance, there may have been two thousand households of saved ones in Jerusalem, but there could not have been exactly two thousand spiritual homes. Rather, a number of households probably joined together to meet. For example, Acts 12 says that there was a spiritual home in the house of Mary, the mother of John, and that a considerable number assembled together and prayed (v. 12). From this we see that a spiritual home includes not merely those within a single household but also neighboring households; therefore, once a physical home becomes a spiritual home, the number of people included is much greater than those within the household.

We practice the district meetings according to the principle in the Bible, that is, to gather people from one area of a city into a spiritual home. At present there are six district meetings in the church in Taipei. In principle this is right, but in practice there are too many people in each meeting. In other words, it appears that the spiritual homes include too many saints. At present we are trying to change not the terminology or the principle but the practice. According to the findings of our study, we want to subdivide the districts even more. This will be more convenient for the brothers and sisters, and at the

same time it will give them more opportunity to develop their gifts. In addition, we want to broaden the administrative authority by delegating more authority to the various district meetings so that the brothers and sisters may be kept in an orderly condition.

THE CONSIDERATION OF SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Finally, I have some feelings to share with the brothers and sisters. First, it is not enough to merely divide big district meetings into smaller ones; there must also be the Spirit. To have merely the principle but not the Spirit is to have dead regulation. The principle of the district meetings is according to the truth; nevertheless, we must have the Spirit while carrying out the truth. Otherwise, our practice will be merely according to dead letter and doctrine. The truth is like the rails of a train track, and the Spirit is the power that moves the train. Thus, the deep sense within me is that the brothers and sisters need to look to the Lord and be willing to rise up to receive a strong burden from the Lord to open their homes to become spiritual homes.

Today a brother may go to a small locality where there is no church, and he may pray, "O Lord, I am here, and I need to meet and serve." Then he will have the burden to find some saints or lead some sinners to the Lord. After he has found a group of people, they will begin to pray together. In this way they will have the Spirit and be burning within. As a result, they will rise up to follow the way of the truth by meeting together and raising up a local church in that place. In the same principle, there may be a brother whose home is far away from a district meeting; moreover, although he loves the Lord, he is limited in the meeting and does not have much opportunity to function. Because the district meeting is going to be divided into smaller meetings, he may pray, "Lord, I would like my home to become a base, or place, to provide the brothers and sisters with more opportunity to serve You." This is the one thing we are asking the brothers and sisters to do. For this, we need to go before the Lord to pray and ask the Lord to put such a fervent burden in every brother and sister. We need many homes as bases to meet God's need. In these many homes, or bases, the brothers and sisters must inwardly have a fervent burden for the truth to be worked out in an unhindered way.

Second, not every home needs to be opened to become the base of a smaller meeting, nor is every saint able to be a responsible one in a small meeting. We

hope that every brother and sister and not only the responsible ones in the current district meetings will have the desire to tell the Lord, “Lord, our meeting should be subdivided into smaller meetings so that I may have the opportunity to serve You. I may not become a responsible one, and my house may not become the base for a small meeting; nevertheless, I would like to put my shoulders to the task.”

Third, a small district meeting should include no more than two hundred people. Perhaps only fifty will meet regularly; these fifty should then bear the burden to take care of the rest by repeatedly visiting them, seeking them out, recovering them, and stirring them up. If this is the case, I believe that it will bring in a great blessing. Gradually, although the ratio of those who attend the meetings may not be high and the spiritual content may not be deep, the atmosphere of the meetings will be strong. In this way we can arrive at the point where at least seventy to eighty percent of the saints attend the meetings. If the Lord has mercy on us, from now on we will practice in this way: There will be six or seven strong message meetings every Lord’s Day at the main stations for the ministry of the word. All the saints will gather at these six or seven locations to receive the ministry of the word; then on the weekdays they will be in the smaller district meetings, fellowshipping and sharing concerning the help that they received from the ministry of the word, as well as what they have experienced of Christ in their daily life.

Fourth, I hope that the elders and responsible ones in the various districts will try their best to render the brothers and sisters spiritual supply so that such a supply would replace regulation. If there are strict regulations but not an adequate supply, the districts will be like a person who has only skin and bones but no flesh; such a person is ugly and unseemly. We need to have much spiritual supply. We need spiritual supply more than outward administration. I have no intention to rebuke the elders concerning their administration, but I feel that the ratio of spiritual supply to administration is not so proper. From now on, the elders of the whole church and the responsible ones for the various districts need to pursue spiritual growth and provide the brothers and sisters with more spiritual supply, trying their best to replace administration, according to principle, with spiritual supply. In this way the Lord’s blessing will surely increase. The more blessing there is, the more the church will grow; the more the church grows, the more district meetings there will be and the more the brothers and sisters will be brought into function.

LEARNING THE LESSON OF THE CROSS

We do not want a great deal of administration; rather, we would like to give the brothers and sisters more freedom. This freedom is for functioning, not for the indulgence of the flesh. This requires the brothers and sisters to learn the serious lesson of being broken through the cross. Our natural man, our flesh, and our self need to be broken by the Lord. All of us love the Lord and the church, but if our natural disposition, our flesh, and our self have not been broken by the Lord, we will bring in many problems. In the end, although we may desire to do certain things, we will end up doing the opposite. Many times, we would like to help the church and the brothers and sisters; however, in the end what we do stumbles others, and things do not turn out as we desire.

As those who love Him, may we learn to be those who are spiritually rich, those who minister to the church and the saints, and may we learn not to cause the saints to suffer loss or the church to be damaged. This requires that we strongly receive the lesson of the cross. In our being we should have no intention to be the head or to be better than others; rather, we should desire only that the brothers and sisters receive supply through us and that the church be built up so that the Lord's testimony will become brighter and stronger, and more people will be saved. This is what we should all desire and learn to fulfill. If this is the case, I believe that the Lord's blessing among us will be rich and abounding. May the Lord be gracious to us.

CHAPTER FIVE

SPIRITUAL LESSONS CONCERNING HOME MEETINGS

GOD'S INTENTION AND GOD'S DESIRE

I would like to point out two important matters. First, God's intention is for the church to be one. God cannot permit two churches to exist in the universe. God's intention is to have only one church. Moreover, God wants only one expression of this church in each locality. He does not want two or more expressions.

Why does God want only one church in the universe and only one expression of the church within each locality, rather than many churches in the universe and many expressions within each locality? The reason is that oneness is the nature of the church. If the nature of oneness is damaged, the oneness of the church is damaged. For the sake of its nature of oneness, the church must be one at every level of its manifestation. The church must be one universally, and the church must also be one within a given locality, however small it may be.

Second, God desires that every saint in the Body of Christ be a member who has a function and fulfills his function. A saint under normal conditions, unless he fails to grow in life or is hindered in his growth, should be a functioning member, not a nonfunctioning member.

THE DIFFICULTY IN PRACTICE

It is truly difficult to carry out these two matters simultaneously. If we divide the brothers and sisters into many small churches, each with eight to ten people or each covering a small street or alley, then everyone will be able to function. The smaller a church is, the more the brothers and sisters are able to function. Conversely, the larger the church, the more difficult it is for every saint to function. Hence, it seems that God has intentionally given us a dilemma. On the one hand, He wants every member to function, and on the other hand, He wants the church to maintain its oneness and not be divided.

If God's Word were to say that it was right to divide the church into many, it would not be difficult for everyone to function. However, God wants everyone to function, yet He does not allow us to be divided. This creates a problem for us.

The principle of the church not being divided is carried out with relative ease in a small locality, but it becomes quite difficult to carry out in a large locality. If a brother moves to a small city, a smaller place where people gather and reside, it will be relatively easy for him to keep the oneness and not divide, because the number of people is small. However, if he moves to a big city, a place as populated as Taipei, it is not as easy to keep the oneness and not divide. However, God desires that every one of us function and that there be only one church. This is quite difficult for large local churches.

We are heavy in heart these days because even though the church is large, it cannot be divided, and everyone needs to function. Let us use the church in Taipei as an example. In the church there are seven to eight thousand brothers and sisters, among whom one thousand five hundred to two thousand meet regularly. It is truly difficult for every one of these two thousand saints to function and maintain the church's nature of oneness. To practice these two aspects simultaneously is troublesome to us.

LEARNING SPIRITUAL LESSONS

The burden in this chapter is not to fellowship regarding the practice of these two matters; rather, it is to point out God's intention in requiring us to practice both of these matters simultaneously. For example, in a small city there may be only twenty to thirty brothers and sisters. Each one is able to function, and they are kept from being divided. Even if a person wanted to divide this small church into smaller churches composed of just eight to ten people, I believe that the saints would not want to do this. In a big church, however, it is difficult to maintain the oneness and at the same time have everyone function.

Why did God ordain this? What is His intention? His primary intention is that in this difficult situation we would learn spiritual lessons. No matter how big a church may become, it cannot be divided. At the same time, every saint in the church needs to fulfill his function. Because the brothers and sisters are in such a "tight spot," they must genuinely learn spiritual lessons. Strictly

speaking, it does not require that much to learn to be an elder, a deacon, or a full-time serving one in a small locality; however, to be an elder, a deacon, or a full-time serving one in a large locality requires a person to learn many lessons in regard to many matters.

In a large church life we need to be subdivided into districts. If we do not have district meetings, many brothers and sisters will not be able to function. Although it is right for us to divide ourselves into districts, it is not right to divide the church. God allows us to have separate district meetings within the church, but He does not allow us to be divided into many churches within the same locality. Although the saints within one locality compose one church, they may meet in different districts. This is a solemn matter. Recently, the brothers have experienced a sense of heaviness. They do not know how to divide the saints into districts without seemingly dividing the church. The brothers are not sure what to do in order to help the saints in different district meetings and yet continue to maintain the oneness of the church. The more district meetings there are, the more difficult it is for the elders and those responsible for the districts.

Let us suppose that a certain brother who is responsible for a district meeting used to be an elder in a small local church. Because there were only twenty to thirty saints, it was easy for him to serve there. Later, due to his job situation or other reasons, he moved to Taipei. Because he loves the Lord and has some spiritual weight and function, he was asked by the church in Taipei to be a responsible one in a district meeting. However, there is a great difference between being a responsible one in a district meeting in a large church and being an elder in a small church. Things may be simple in a small locality, but they are not so simple in a large locality. One surely needs to be spiritual to be an elder in a small locality. However, in order to be responsible for a district meeting in a big locality, one needs to be even more spiritual. This is because in a small local church, it is possible to make decisions or act in an independent way, but as a responsible one in a district meeting within a large local church, one cannot make decisions or act in an independent way. Whatever the responsible one does, he needs to care for the oneness of the church.

THE ERROR OF CONGREGATIONALISM

Many times the responsible ones in the districts may have this kind of thought: “It seems that because the brothers do not let me make decisions or carry things out by myself, they are not allowing me to fulfill my duty. Since they do not let me make decisions and act independently, they are not allowing me to fulfill my ministry. This being the case, I might as well not be a responsible one in a district meeting.” It seems that if we do not have a position, we do not need to do anything. If there are thirty district meetings in the church in Taipei, and every responsible one takes this kind of attitude, instead of thirty districts we will immediately see thirty churches. This is the practice of the Congregationalist churches and the Baptist churches, and this practice is called congregationalism. Congregationalists advocate that each congregation is a church. They do not practice having one church in a locality with many district meetings; rather, they have many congregations within a single locality. Each congregation is a small church, and they are all independent of one another.

Congregationalism is a practice that came out of private churches, which in turn came out of state churches. Congregationalism is the product of a particular environment, or background. Those in the state churches believed that there should be only one church and that the church should have organization and various ranks. Those with a higher rank ruled over those with a lower rank. Some people, however, felt that this practice was not right, and with the background of the state churches, they conceived of another “ism” and produced another result. They held that Christians in every place should live before the Lord individually; however, for the convenience of meeting, they should come together to form a self-governing congregation. Since they considered each congregation as an independent unit, they naturally believed that there could be many churches in one locality. Congregationalism is very close to the teaching in the Bible, but those who advocated it did not see that the church must take a locality as its ground, not a congregation.

Congregationalism is right in a certain aspect, that is, it advocates that each congregation is independent in administration and lives directly before the Lord; however, it does not realize that there should be only one church in one locality. The truth is that the church in a locality should live directly before the Lord, having its own administration and no organization ruling over it. However, a church should not be divided into several churches within one locality. Regardless of the size of a locality, according to the revelation in the Bible, there can be only one church within a locality.

ENDEAVORING TO KEEP THE NATURE OF THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH

The reason we encounter difficulties is that God's goal is for us to learn serious spiritual lessons. Formerly, big Chinese families liked to have several generations living under the same roof. In contrast, people in modern times like to have small families. Such families are more convenient and free. Two families may love one another, and if there is no relationship in organization or responsibility between them, they will live peacefully. If, however, they both live in a big house with all kinds of relatives, there will be many troubles due to their living together. Although there may be troubles, if the families do not divide, it will force them to learn certain lessons. We may use another illustration. If a woman is married to a man who has no relatives, she will become the queen of a small family; however, if she marries someone in a big family, she will have to learn lessons every day.

The important principle we must learn is the lesson of oneness. Whether we do well and have the Lord's presence after we have subdivided from halls into districts depends not upon how good or bad the arrangement is or how right or wrong the system is but upon whether the saints, the elders, and the responsible ones in the districts have learned the necessary lessons. If we have not learned these lessons, the situation will be dead, chaotic, or rigid.

For the elders of the church in Taipei to be in so many different districts in a large church, they absolutely need to be spiritual. If an elder in a small local church is not that spiritual, it will not have too much impact, but in a large church with many district meetings and complicated affairs, the elders must be spiritual. If not, several negative results may be produced. First, the elders may become jobless, having nothing to do, because everything will be arranged and managed by the responsible ones in the district meetings. Second, the elders may hold on to all the authority and immediately cause a hierarchy to be produced. They may want people to obey their arrangement in everything; thus, they will need to manage and direct everything. Hence, if the elders are not spiritual and focus only on arrangement and management, a hierarchy will surely be produced. Third, the elders and the responsible ones in the districts may have many troubles and disputes with one another. It is important that the relationship between the elders and the responsible ones

be proper. If they have not learned the lessons well or adequately, the result will be either confusion or rigidity in the church.

In the same principle, the more that district meetings are produced, the more the responsible ones need to be spiritual. If they are not spiritual, the following will result: First, the responsible ones may not fulfill their duty and function. This will happen if they think that they should not do anything, because they cannot make any decisions. Second, they may become mechanical by trying to act only according to the elders' decisions, because they think that they should not and cannot do anything without the elders' consent. Third, they may become independent in their decisions and actions and not arrange or manage the affairs of the districts under the elders' supervision. This will produce confusion in the larger sphere of the church.

EVERYTHING DEPENDING UPON LEARNING SPIRITUAL LESSONS

We need to see the aspect of the oneness of the church and the aspect of the functioning of all the members. Locally, the church is one. Since there is only one church, the elders, the responsible ones in the districts, and all the other responsible ones in the church must learn to keep the oneness. In order to keep the oneness of the church, we must learn certain serious lessons. In addition to keeping the oneness, there needs to be a proper practice; that is, not only do we need to function, but we also need to bring all the brothers and sisters into function.

In the constricting environment formed by the need for all the members to function and the need to maintain the church's nature of oneness, we can learn the lessons. We need to be broken and subdued. Whether we are elders, deacons, responsible ones in the districts, or responsible ones in smaller groups, we need to learn the lesson of not allowing any of our actions or attitudes to damage the oneness of the church. We always need to examine ourselves: "Does my opinion or my decision damage the oneness of the church?" In the present situation we have serious lessons to learn. If we do not learn the lessons well, we may end up being unbalanced; either we will not keep the oneness of the church, or we will hinder the manifestation of the saints' functions in an attempt to keep the oneness of the church. We should not be unbalanced; rather, we should take care of both aspects at the same time. We all need to learn the lessons.

If there are problems one day, they will not be the result of the arrangement or the methods but the issue of not having learned the necessary lessons sufficiently. If we have learned the spiritual lessons, nothing will be a problem. In other words, whether or not there are problems depends entirely upon whether the responsible ones are spiritual. The elders will not have problems if they are spiritual, nor will the responsible ones in the districts have problems if they are spiritual.

The condition of Christianity today is that there is no oneness and that the members do not have the opportunity to function. This is contrary to what God desires. People in Christianity say that they desire oneness, but actually they are thoroughly divided. They are divided because the price for oneness is great. For example, it is difficult for three brothers to live together, because they need to keep clear accounts and have clear divisions of responsibility. They cannot continually live in a confused situation. However, if they feel that it is too troublesome to live together, they may decide to live separately. In this way each will have his own living, and everything will be clearly arranged and convenient. For several decades we have been considering the matter of oneness. Today most people have a small family life, and everyone likes this arrangement. However, this is not what God wants for the church. In this matter we should not seek to please men but rather seek to please God. This requires us to learn spiritual lessons.

The open Brethren boast that they do not have disputes among themselves; however, the reason they have no disputes is that once they develop different opinions, they simply separate from one another. This is referred to as "separation without disputation." If we take this way, once we have different opinions, we will not need to argue; we will simply part ways. Since we were originally meeting on one street, some will start meeting on another street. Gradually, when more people are added to them and different opinions arise again, some will remain meeting in their current location, and others will start meeting on yet another street. The result of the continual "separation without disputation" is that eventually there may even be three different groups meeting on the same street. Each will not argue with the other, but neither will they be one with one another. Since they have different views, they think they do not need to stay together. Consequently, they simply start a new group as needed. Although they contact one another, they do not interfere with others' administration, and they even boast that they never

have disputes. Actually, by meeting in this way, they do not need to pay a price, because they are never confronted with disputes.

We need to see two common errors. First, people in Christianity are not restricted by locality and are sectarian because they are not willing to be broken, to have their flesh dealt with, and to learn the necessary spiritual lessons. Second, most people in Christianity do not need to serve because they have turned the service over to a small number of people. Consequently, most people have stopped fulfilling their obligations and charge a few to bear all the responsibilities. The majority have lost their function and have been replaced by a minority. The situation produced by these two errors is not normal and must be corrected. If there is inadequate correction in regard to these two errors, God will not be able to reach His goal, His heart will not be satisfied, and the genuine oneness of the church will not be expressed.

We have decided to break up the bigger district meetings into many smaller district meetings due to the fact that many brothers and sisters do not have an opportunity to function. They have lost their function. In order to enable all the brothers and sisters to take up their responsibility and fulfill their function as members, we want to break up into many smaller district meetings. Doing this involves a number of practical difficulties. For instance, it will be difficult to maintain the nature of the oneness of the church in regard to the management and administration of the church. Although there is a need to break up into smaller district meetings, there is also the need to keep the oneness. It is easy to take care of one and miss the other. However, if either the oneness or the functioning is damaged, the church will suffer loss, and God will not be able to obtain what He desires.

THE DESPERATE NEED OF THE SPIRIT AND LIFE

In order to take care of these two matters, we should not rely on arrangements, systems, or human methods. All arrangements, systems, and methods are supplementary. The Spirit and life are the real need. This is similar to the physical body being supplementary to the spirit and soul. Once the spirit and soul depart, the body immediately becomes worthless. In other words, a good system, arrangement, or method still needs the Spirit and life. Once we are short of the Spirit and life, even if a system, arrangement, or method is good, the result is still a corpse, not a living body.

I hope that the brothers and sisters will see this matter. May the Lord have mercy on us. In the arrangement of the responsibility for the district meetings, the more responsibility a saint has, the more he needs to learn the necessary lessons. The heavier the responsibility he has, the more he needs to receive a strong breaking. In regard to responsibility, we should pay much attention to procedure, but in another sense, we should focus altogether on the Spirit. Procedures are supplementary. In every procedure there must be the Spirit and life; otherwise, the procedure will be dead. When we serve in the church, for the sake of keeping the oneness of the church and avoiding friction, we should try our best to coordinate according to the existing procedures. However, the procedures are not our way. Our way is the Spirit and life. We must learn to live in spirit and in life.

Recently, one of the saints told me, "I feel that I cannot serve now." "Why not?" I asked. He said, "I do not have the way to serve." Again I asked him, "Why not?" He said, "The responsible brothers have made no arrangement for me to serve." On one hand, it is good that he acts according to the arrangement of the church. This is right according to procedure. On the other hand, it is wrong for him to act this way, because it indicates that he is altogether operating according to procedure and not according to the Spirit and life. Toward this kind of brother or sister, my reply is always, "You feel that there is no way for you to serve, but my feeling is that your concept is wrong. You should not consider the arrangement of the church to be your way. Your way must be in the Spirit. If you pray to the Lord and sense a burden to preach the gospel to your friends and relatives, who will prohibit you? If you contact the Lord in the morning and sense that you should go to visit some newly saved brothers and sisters, who will condemn you? If you pray something in the prayer meeting from your spirit that touches everyone's spirit, will they not say Amen? If you are led in the fellowship meeting to rise up and give a testimony, and the brothers and sisters are all supplied, who will oppose? There is only one way of arrangement, and that way is in the Spirit."

However, once we have preached the gospel and saved a number of people, there should be a procedure for handing them over to the church. We should never think that since we have preached the gospel and led some to believe and be baptized, we can then meet with them apart from the church. If we have not been asked to bear responsibility in a district meeting, we should not appoint ourselves as a responsible one. We should not try to establish a fact

and then seek the recognition of the elders and the saints. If we appoint ourselves, everyone will recognize that this is our flesh. If we think that the church is not proper, we should help the church. If we think that the church is not spiritual, we should minister to the church. The church includes each one of us, and we are constituents of the church. Thus, we should help the church and minister to the church.

All spiritual supply in the church of God does not need to be rendered according to procedure. If we sense a need, we should rise up to supply and support it. When there is a flood, there needs to be a channel to let it flow out. A flood cannot be blocked. One who has learned this lesson does not act according to orders passively. Rather, when he has a feeling in his spirit, he preaches the gospel to others and leads them to be saved; when he has the burden to supply others, he ministers to them from the Word. He neither murmurs nor retreats but is simple and pure. Even if the church has not arranged for him to do anything, he saves some and hands them over to the church. Although the church has not given him any instructions, he endeavors to render spiritual supply to the church.

This simple speaking is to demonstrate that the service in the church cannot rely on procedure. If we have truly learned spiritual lessons and fulfill our spiritual function, we will know a proper procedure, and we will not damage the oneness of the church. We should never commit the error of leaning toward either extreme. We should not consider that everything is a matter of procedure and that whatever the arrangement is, we should simply follow. In other words, we preach the gospel only if it has been arranged that we preach the gospel, and we pray only if it has been arranged that we pray. This is to lean toward the extreme of being rigid and dead. We should not act in this way. Likewise, we should not say, “I do not care for arrangement. I just care to do whatever I think is best. If I want to preach the gospel, I will do it. All arrangement is but the human will. I will live in the Holy Spirit and not care about arrangement.” This is the flesh. If we are like this, the church will certainly be chaotic and disorderly. This is a serious lesson for us to learn as we are constricted by the matters of everyone functioning and the need to maintain the oneness of the church. The bigger a local church is, the more difficult the lessons are; however, the more difficult the lessons, the more valuable they are to learn.

THE GLORIOUS OUTLOOK AND THE PRESENT EXERCISE

I truly see a bright future ahead of us. There are many brothers and sisters who have received the Lord's mercy to learn the serious lessons necessary to meet in one accord and to function in serving the Lord. One day there will be a testimony in the universe of several thousand people functioning yet still maintaining the oneness of the church. What a beautiful matter, what a bright testimony, and what a strong expression this will be! There is no problem on God's side; rather, our future testimony depends entirely upon how many of us are determined to learn. We should all be willing to rise up to learn so that we can carry out our function while maintaining the oneness of the church. We should not live according to procedure but be led by the Spirit. In this way a strong testimony will surely be produced. We believe that in these end times God desires to, is able to, and will accomplish this matter. May we be the group of people who allows Him to have a way in us.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POSITION OF THE CROSS

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:3

THE ONENESS OF THE BODY

God desires to gain churches for the local expression of His Body. No matter how large a locality is or how many saved ones there are in a locality, God desires that the saved ones in that place be the local expression of the Body. God desires that we not only maintain the oneness of the church in our locality, bearing a testimony of oneness, but even more that we express the Body of Christ in our locality. In fact, the oneness of the church is the oneness of the Body. Most people, especially medical doctors, readily admit the fact that the best example of oneness is our physical body. Very few things are more one than a body. Although there are many members in a body, the members are one.

Medical students have to spend several years in order to study the human body in depth. After they have diligently studied the human body for a number of years, they realize that it is difficult to commit every body part and detail to memory. There are many parts in a human body, and each part is complicated. Although there are many parts, they function entirely as one body. Since we have a body, we have some realization of the extent to which a body functions as one. If there is something lacking in the oneness of our body, we sense it immediately and are hindered in our movement. Similarly, if something is wrong with the oneness in the Body of Christ, the whole Body is hindered in its movement. When we serve together on the ground of oneness, not only do we need to be one in our condition, but even more we need to express the Body. The brothers and sisters may not have much feeling in regard to this point, but if the Lord opens our eyes to see the Body of Christ, such a seeing of the Body will subdue our whole being.

THE NEED TO RECEIVE THE DEALING OF THE CROSS

If God desired that each one of us be an individual Body, it would have been very convenient. However, God desires that we, though many, become one Body; this is rather difficult for us. When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, only twelve disciples were with Him, and they had quite a number of arguments and disputes. Today there are more than twelve people in the church. In the church in Taipei alone we have more than two thousand people. How can we become one Body? If we desire not to fight but to become one in the Body, one basic issue needs to be resolved; that is, every one of us needs the Lord's dealing. Being dealt with in this regard is not to be dealt with in regard to defects or mistakes but in regard to our person. If the brothers and sisters continue to have the "I" in them, they cannot be members of the Body. If we would be members of the Body, our "I" must go.

To be a member, we must not have the "I." We may use a simple illustration. Suppose a few brothers and I are serving the Lord together, either as elders or as responsible ones in the districts. In order to serve together, we must come together to discuss things. Hence, one day we may need to go to the place where we meet, and one brother may suggest that in order to save time we should hire a taxi. However, I may think that hiring a taxi costs too much and that we can get there by each riding a bicycle. While one party wants to save time, the other party wants to save money. Consequently, there may be an argument among us, and some may end up going by taxi, but I may declare that I dare not ride in the taxi. I may say that I dare not, but actually I am declaring that since my suggestion was not adopted, I do not want to be one with those taking the taxi. To be in coordination means that we need to put aside our own opinion. It is good to go by taxi, by bicycles, or even by foot. None of these ways offends the Lord or damages the Lord's testimony. It does not matter which way we take. While the motive of some brothers is to save time, others may want to save money. In any case, if the brothers decide to go by taxi, I should not have another feeling and should simply go joyfully with the brothers in a taxi. Not only should I not have an opposing attitude, I should not even have any negative feeling concerning the matter.

NOT ARGUING ABOUT SMALL MATTERS IN ORDER TO AVOID DAMAGING THE ONENESS

We should not think that it is a small matter to argue about means of transportation. Actually, from the Lord's perspective everything we do today is small. If we are faithful over small matters, the Lord can eventually set us over more important matters (Matt. 25:21). Often we are severely tested and tried in regard to small matters. Satan often tests us using small matters. In the previous example, I might harbor a thought in my heart that the brothers are wasteful. Due to having a problem and a negative feeling within, I will be filled with the presence of the "I." When I first began to serve the Lord, I was quite young. One day a senior co-worker fellowshipped with me regarding one point that I cannot forget. This one thing has become a help to me over the years. He said to me, "Brother, we have risen up to serve the Lord because we have seen the light concerning the church. Hence, we should not serve the Lord in an organization." At that time we were willing to serve the Lord on a pure and clean ground; thus, we found a small place and began to meet there.

One day we were about to preach the gospel, and an argument arose among us. Why would people such as we who serve the Lord argue so much? Our argument was due to a small matter, that is, whether or not to close or open a certain door. The place we were renting was located next to a street with no walls to separate the houses from the street. The door of the rented place opened directly to the street. One party proposed that we should close the door during the meeting time, but another party wanted to open the door so that it would be convenient for people to come and go. We were all brothers serving the Lord; nevertheless, we could not be one, because one side wanted to open the door, and the other side wanted to close the door.

During that time I went to the meeting hall almost every day. When I arrived at the hall, I would open the door and use two stools to hold the door open. After the meeting began and people started to trickle in, an elderly brother would immediately close the door. What he did caused me to feel uneasy within. Then one meeting would be finished, and after two hours the next meeting would begin. I would open the door again as I had done before, and soon afterward the same brother would close the door. The two of us did not have oneness in regard to this small thing; hence, we were divided over a small matter. This experience became a deep warning to me. Later, a senior co-worker rendered help to me; he said, "Not only is that brother who closed the door fleshly; you too are fleshly. Actually, there is nothing worth arguing about in regard to opening or closing a door. Not only in small matters like this, but even in large matters, there is nothing worth arguing about." Can we

not refrain from arguing with those with whom we serve in the church life? Only when we do not argue will we not offend God.

In contrast, if someone were to stand up and say, “Jesus is not God,” not only should we dispute this, but we should also speak to him in a strong way, saying, “If you do not repent, I cannot serve the Lord together with you.” Because this matter concerns the truth, it is not a small matter like opening or closing a door. In serving the Lord, we will encounter severe tests, particularly in regard to small things; Satan always hides himself in small matters in order to tempt us. Many times it is because of small things that the brothers are not in one accord. For instance, when the brothers go to visit the saints without one accord, one brother will agree only with his own way and another will simply do whatever he wants. In the end no one will do any visiting, and each will say, “Forget about it. If you want to go, you go. But I will do it according to my way.” Such discord is often not in regard to large matters but is related to small matters. Small matters are a serious test to the brothers and sisters and are the source of many of our problems.

When the responsible brothers say that it is time for us to preach the gospel, we may say, “How can we preach the gospel when the spiritual atmosphere is so cold? We should do the work of edification first.” We might think to ourselves, “If they insist on preaching the gospel, they will surely fail.” If one day their preaching proves to be a failure, we might say, “Did I not tell you that this way does not work?” Surely such speaking will satisfy our self and vindicate that our view is higher and our suggestions are better. However, we must remember that in this matter there is no right or wrong; neither is there a regulation or standard concerning how things should be done. We can preach the gospel first, or we can edify first. The Lord Jesus is our Savior. Regardless of whether we preach the gospel first or endeavor to edify the saints first, He will continue to be our Savior. If we preach the gospel now, He is the Savior, and if we preach the gospel two weeks later, He will still be the Savior. If you feel that you should preach the gospel, we thank and praise the Lord. If you feel that you should not, we also thank and praise the Lord. Whether we preach the gospel or not, we still need to come together and pray. Whenever we encounter a situation in which there is a dispute, if we pray together, the result will be that we will follow the Lord’s feeling and allow the Lord’s will to be carried out.

RECEIVING THE DEALING OF THE CROSS SERIOUSLY

Please remember that it is only when we coordinate together to serve, not when we merely unite together, that we are the Body. Only when we are serving together and there is neither "you" nor "I" is there the Body. When there is "you," there is no Body, and when there is "I," there also is no Body. If "I" is here, there is no way to have the Body, and if the life of "I" is here, the life of the Body is absent. We should use all our strength and even be willing to be martyred in order to guard the matters of the Lord's person and the basic truths related to Him. Besides this, we are all brothers and sisters, and there is nothing worth arguing about in regard to our service.

If we are serving with a responsible brother who wants to meet at midnight, we should not argue about it, neither should we have much feeling about it. The Lord Jesus is still the Savior whether we meet at noon or midnight. We should have nothing to argue about. If we are a responsible one, we may fellowship regarding our feeling with the brothers and sisters. However, no matter what the brothers feel to do, we should not argue nor have any feeling whatsoever. This requires that our self, that is, our natural man, be dealt with. We need to receive such a serious dealing. In our coordination in the service, we should not argue. There is no need for us to argue about anything other than the person of the Lord and the basic truths. By the Lord's mercy and His grace, there is absolutely no dispute among us today concerning the Lord's glorious person and concerning the basic truths. If any dispute exists among us, it must be due to the presence of the flesh and the "I." If it were not due to the presence of the flesh and the "I," there would be no opinions for us to argue about.

In our service we desire to serve not only in oneness but also in the Body. The service in the Body comes from growth in life. In order for a locality to experience the Lord's presence and God's blessing, it must manifest the Body in that locality. In the Body there is no difference in rank. No one is higher, and no one is lower. No one is greater, and no one is smaller. Strictly speaking, in the church there is no high or low, and there is no great or small. The Lord Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave" (Matt. 20:26-27). Hence, whoever wants to be great will

be a servant and will learn to serve others. In the Body there is no high nor low and no great nor small. There is only the cross.

THE CROSS PRODUCING THE CHURCH, AND THE CHURCH USHERING IN THE KINGDOM

The entire New Testament emphasizes three major points: the cross, the church, and the kingdom. The cross produces the church, and the church ushers in the kingdom. Without the church, the kingdom of God cannot be ushered in. The Lord said, "Upon 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" (16:18-19). When there is the church, there can be the kingdom. The church ushers in the kingdom. However, we must remember that the church is produced entirely out of the cross. If there is no cross but only the natural man, there is no church. In contrast, if there is the cross and no natural man, there is the church. We must be dealt with by the cross.

If Christians gather together and do not receive the dealing of the cross, there cannot be the reality of the church among them. If we would have the reality of the church among us, the cross must also be among us. The cross must do a severe work within each one of us until we are all terminated one by one. In this way, although we are physically present, the "I" is no longer present. Every "I" is on the cross. Pride is "I," arrogance is "I," opinion is "I," and insisting on our way of doing things is also "I." In the church there cannot be an "I." The "I" must be placed on the cross. If there is an "I," there is no church; thus, "I" must be on the cross. It is through the cross that the church is produced.

Today the resurrection life is in us in the same way as the resurrection life was in Jesus the Nazarene. This resurrection life lives within us, persons of flesh. When our life in the flesh passes through the cross, the resurrection life is manifested from within us, and this results in the presence of God. In this way God's blessing is brought in, full of God's abundance. This is the church of God and the glory of God. In the church the extent of the manifestation of God's glory, the extent of God's blessing, the extent of our enjoyment of God's riches, and the extent of our touching God's presence depend on how much

we have been broken by receiving the dealing of the cross. We should not listen to or speak about this matter as a doctrine; rather, we should experience it day by day in our living.

THE SERVICE IN COORDINATION IN THE BODY

Whenever we are making a proposal, we should sense that the Lord's cross is present. Many brothers and sisters did not argue or fight when they loved the world instead of the Lord and did not care about anything related to the church. They were not interested in anything related to the church, because their attention was focused on the world. Such people certainly have no need to argue or fight. The sad thing is that when they receive grace and turn to love the Lord, they begin to serve the Lord with their opinions, demanding that others do things according to their way. They may have an opinion concerning the way we should read the Bible or concerning how we pray, whether we should pray loudly or quietly. At first they expect everyone to be the same as they are. Actually, no one should expect others to be the same. If we consider each one of us, no one has the same face. Each of our faces is unique. Moreover, some of us are big in stature, and some are small. None of us are exactly the same.

It is a pity that whenever we touch the things of the Lord, we tend to insist that others be the same as we are. Often we do not support or say Amen to those who are different from us, and we do not go along with them. For instance, we may feel that it is time to preach the gospel, but others may talk about having daily fellowship with the Lord and returning to His presence. If this is the case, we might condemn them for being mystics and say that they are taking the way of Madame Guyon. Consequently, a debate may ensue in which we clearly indicate that we disagree with them. Conversely, if we are persons learning to touch the Lord through fellowship, we may think that those zealous for the gospel are fleshly and that we should not take part in their activity. In both illustrations the "I" can be fully seen. If others are talking about fellowshipping with the Lord, although we may feel that this is the time to preach the gospel with zeal, we should say, "Thank and praise the Lord, for years I have not learned this lesson. I pray that the Lord would have mercy on me to open my eyes that I may see. I need to be broken and learn to fellowship with the Lord."

Often when we are serving with others, we may observe them in order to see what kind of temperament and personality they have. If we are a slow person coordinating with a quick person, we may feel that we simply cannot serve with him. We may hold the opinion that a quick person cannot make it into the Holy of Holies and that because there are many curtains within the tabernacle, a person should not move too quickly. In fact, a person who walks quickly may be more spiritual than one who walks slowly. We should not measure others according to these things. These outward matters are all related to the flesh and according to our preference. It does not matter whether a person walks quickly or slowly; the Lord Jesus is still the Savior. When we serve the Lord together, any kind of proposal should be allowed. What matters are not the proposals but whether there is proper coordination. This is a matter of principle.

A brother may say, "The more a certain brother opens his mouth, the less I can say Amen to him, because my spirit does not respond." We need not argue regarding whether or not our spirit responds; rather, we should be concerned about whether or not the "I" within us has the ground. We cannot say that we have never touched the Spirit in another brother's prayers. When we touch God through one of his sentences, we should say Amen. In our coordination of service we must learn to always place ourselves under the cross. The brothers can propose anything as long as no proposal is from the "I," and the brothers can do anything as long as the proposal from the "I" is placed under the cross. Whatever the brothers propose matters, but the proposal from the "I" does not matter. There is no "I" in coordination. If we serve together in this way, our problems will cease to exist, and in all our serving we will be filled with the Lord's presence. There is no need to talk about submitting to authority or walking according to rules, and there is no need to talk about staying within the limit of our authority in our appointed service. There is even less of a need to inquire concerning whether and to whom the elders have granted the authority to decide what to do and what not to do.

Such considerations are important in the political arena and in secular society, but there is no such thing in the church of God. In the church there is only the cross. Every one of us—whether we are an elder, a deacon, or a brother or sister in a district meeting—should take the cross. If each of us takes the cross, there is no need to talk about authority, walking according to rules, the limits of one's authority, or the right procedure for doing things. We

need to see that a condition of harmony, one accord, and oneness is the proper condition of the Body. When each of us takes the cross, allowing the cross to crucify the "I," the Holy Spirit will have the ground, Christ will have the sovereign rule over us, and God's presence and God's blessing will surely be among us. We do not need to exhort the brothers and sisters, because exhorting avails nothing. Neither do we need to help the brothers and sisters to make decisions or resolutions. We need only to share with them that the secret of the church life is to have no "I," no self, that is, to live under the killing of the cross. This is not a doctrine but should be a reality in all our serving.

If the Lord would give us grace, we should learn to serve without the "I." We are laboring and paying a price to serve; however, if we do not receive the Lord's mercy, we may end up taking a man-made, mechanical way to carry out the church life. Only by taking the way of coordination in the Body will we be able to think so as to be sober-minded, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3). It is only in this way that we can endeavor to function in our measure, in exactly the place that is suitable for the power of the Holy Spirit to be released and in which He is able to manifest His gift in every believer. As a result, the Lord's presence, leading, blessing, and riches will be expressed among us. The key to all these matters is receiving the dealing of the cross.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THREE PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE— QUENCHING THIRST, BEING BROKEN, AND FIGHTING THE BATTLE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:1-13

THE PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE IN EXODUS 17

The Bible shows that the service God's people render to Him on the earth is not an individual matter. In other words, we do not serve individually. The service of God's people as spoken of in the Bible is altogether a matter of coordination. It is a corporate service, a service that requires the coordination of many people. Such a corporate service has its problems and involves many details. Although we must be coordinated in the service, each one of us has our own distinct personality. As a result, we will have problems. In facing these problems, we need to see that according to the Bible, God's people must pay attention to the principles related to three matters in their service. These matters provide us with some principles, but they do not cover every detail in the service.

Exodus 17 does not speak directly concerning serving God; however, in this chapter the goal of the children of Israel was to arrive at the foot of Mount Sinai so that they might begin to serve God. Hence, the basic matters that they encountered and the things that happened to them are very similar to what we face in serving the Lord today. Although they were surely heading toward the goal of serving God, and God had even said that they would serve Him (4:23), they were not inwardly clear concerning the goal. The children of Israel did not arrive at their destination immediately after leaving Egypt; rather, to leave Egypt was only the beginning. They still needed to advance further in order to serve God.

THERE BEING NO SERVICE WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The first problem that the children of Israel encountered in their journey was that they became thirsty. A thirsty person cannot carry out any work, much less take a journey. Spiritually speaking, a thirsty person cannot serve God or walk in the way of God. If we would serve God, we need to quench our thirst. To quench our thirst we need living water. In our service today, thirst is a common condition. Such thirst is an indication of the lack of the Holy Spirit inwardly. The most basic need in our service is the Holy Spirit.

As we are practicing to have meetings in the districts, the number of districts will increase, there will be more service for the brothers, and the brothers will come to know one another more deeply and have more fellowship with one another. To carry out the practice of meeting in the districts, the basic requirement is the presence of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:46 we can see the basis for the practice of meeting from house to house. There were many meetings in the homes of the church in Jerusalem. Although there is a basis for meeting in this way, we should not have merely an outward practice without having the Holy Spirit within. Because the church in Jerusalem had the Holy Spirit inwardly, they could practice meeting from house to house outwardly. It would be dangerous and worrisome to have only an outward practice of meeting from house to house and not have the Holy Spirit inwardly.

If our inward being is thirsty, we will not be able to go on. If we are thirsty within when we begin meeting in the districts, our inner condition will affect the condition of the district meetings, and the district meetings will not last long. In order to have a proper condition in the meetings and to continue meeting steadfastly, we must pay attention to the matter of our thirst, that is, to the inward filling of the Holy Spirit. We must see that without the Holy Spirit, there is no service. We may have methods for carrying out the work, principles for conducting ourselves in life, and a system for handling the workers, but we may not be serving God. Even if we have the best system or method according to the Bible, without the Spirit it is religion. The best way to serve God is by the Spirit. All the principles and examples given to us in the Bible must be coordinated with the inward leading of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus said, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness” (John 4:24). Worshipping in spirit and truthfulness is related to every service in the church life, because the highest and fullest meaning of service is worship. We cannot serve merely by relying

on a method of dividing into districts, the arrangement of the meetings in the districts, and the assignment of responsibilities in the districts. We must realize that worship is a matter in spirit.

In order to practice meeting in the districts, we truly need the Lord's grace. The brothers and sisters love the Lord, are willing to receive the Lord's commission, and have a heart to serve the Lord. Moreover, the saints are in fear and trembling, endeavoring to go on so that they may not hinder the Lord's business. The saints' heart and sense of responsibility are adequate, but the strength of the supply of grace is short. With regard to this, we need to see clearly that the sufficient power or supply does not come from us; rather, we need the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the grace that we have received in the past is not sufficient for us to continue to lead the saints in the service. The sufficiency we are speaking of is what the Bible calls "growth." Our ability to grow depends on the Holy Spirit, not on what we are. The Holy Spirit is our Head, and the Holy Spirit is our growth.

THE OUTWARD ARRANGEMENT WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE INWARD OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

At this juncture all the saints responsible for the districts must have specific prayers asking the Lord to quench their thirst. As those serving the Lord, our thirst must be quenched so that we can continue to serve. We must have the Holy Spirit. Then we can render help to others. It is best that two or three responsible ones come together to pray in order to freshly consecrate themselves, wait before the Lord, look to the Lord, and make a vow. We cannot rely upon methods, arrangements, and systems. If a person has a spirit and a soul, his body can be useful; however, without a spirit and a soul, his body would become a terrible thing. Similarly, when we serve in the coordination of the Body, we must have the Spirit and be strengthened in our spirit. Then our service will be living. If there is no Spirit but only arrangements for the elders and responsible ones, these arrangements will be similar to a corpse. Any arrangement without the Spirit is worthless. No one likes a corpse. If, however, there is the Spirit and there is also an outward arrangement, our service will be valuable. Our service must be carried out in the Body and with the Spirit.

Conversely, if there is only the Spirit without the Body, our service will be dreadful. We need to take care of both aspects. We do not agree with those who are super spiritual, neither do we agree with those who emphasize only outward methods. The Holy Spirit within needs to be matched with an outward method, principle, or arrangement. The Holy Spirit and an outward method, principle, or arrangement need to go hand in hand in the service. The light we see concerning these two matters is accurate according to God's word. Hence, we must be careful and responsible before God. We have spent countless hours in His presence observing, waiting, and praying. We rely on the Spirit. We must pray and cry out to the Lord, asking Him to give us the Holy Spirit. Our service must have the Spirit. Only when the problem of our inward thirst is resolved will we have genuine service.

PASSING THROUGH THE BREAKING OF THE CROSS

In Exodus 17:1-3 the children of Israel did not have water to drink; thus, their thirst needed to be quenched. In order to have their thirst quenched, Moses had to strike a rock (v. 6). As they were heading toward their goal of serving God, they encountered a number of problems. In this incident Moses needed to use a staff to strike the rock. This is the principle of the cross. Moses had to strike the rock in order for the rock to be cleft and for the living water to flow out to quench the people's thirst. This demonstrates a principle: Whenever we want to experience the living water, we must pass through the breaking of the cross. We should not expect to serve after an effortless outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Genuine service is a service of the Spirit, a service that comes out of the cleft rock. Christ needed to be broken and cleft, and we also need to be broken and cleft. When Christ was cleft, the living water flowed out. Likewise, we also need to be cleft in order to allow the Spirit to pass through us and flow out of us.

After receiving God's commission, the saints responsible for serving the Lord must prostrate themselves before Him, asking Him for the Holy Spirit. When we ask the Lord for the Holy Spirit, we must prostrate ourselves before Him to receive His breaking. We need a heart that seeks Him, waits on Him, and looks to Him. We should not expect that a power will come upon us instantaneously. Rather, we should ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us, show us the problems we have, the source of any rebellion, the dealings that we

need, and the areas in us that need to be broken. When we accept this breaking from God, we will have a genuine infilling of the Holy Spirit. When our person is broken, the Holy Spirit will flow in and flow out of us. If we desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we must receive the breaking of the cross. We must all take this way. Without a new revival and a new breaking, we cannot have a new service. We should not think that the Holy Spirit will come after we pray for two hours. Rather, we should pray that the Lord would enable us to see the part of our being that is the rock and the part that is the living water. When we receive such a breaking, the Holy Spirit will follow.

To quench thirst we need the Holy Spirit in our service; that is, we need to receive the living water. Thirst is an indication that the rock has not been cleft. As soon as the rock is cleft, living water will flow out. A rock that is not cleft means that there has been no breaking; hence, there also is no living water. We all must receive the breaking. God told Moses to strike the rock so that water would come out of the rock for the people to drink (v. 6). In our prayer we must see one way and one goal; the one way is the way of striking the rock, and the one goal is to be broken. Prayer causes us to see that we need to be struck and that we need to be broken. As soon as we receive the breaking, the Holy Spirit will flow.

AS SPIRITUAL WARFARE, SERVICE REQUIRING THE LIFTING UP OF OUR HANDS IN PRAYER

It is wonderful that immediately after the children of Israel drank the living water, they fought against Amalek. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for *service* can also be rendered "warfare" (Num. 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43). Every spiritual work, every spiritual service, is a warfare. We must always remember that in the universe there is both God and Satan. God wants us to serve, but Satan wants to destroy the service. The goal of the children of Israel was to serve God, but they encountered problems on the way. These problems included Egypt and Amalek. Egypt signifies the world, and Amalek signifies the flesh. When we desire to serve the Lord, many of the problems we encounter come from "Amalek." Often the Amalek we encounter is the brothers and sisters with whom we serve. This kind of flesh cannot be rejected by human effort or human methods.

As we are practicing district meetings and as we are serving the Lord in the districts, we will likely encounter men's flesh; that is, we will encounter Amalek. The responsible brothers and sisters should never use fleshly methods to reject the flesh. Instead, they must learn one thing: We can never deal with men's flesh by our flesh. This will only bring in problems. Rather, we deal with Amalek by fighting in prayer. Exodus 17 does not use the verb *pray;* rather, it uses the expression *lifted his hand up.* Moses told Joshua, "Choose men for us, and go out; fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand" (v. 9). Moses asked Joshua to choose men for the battle, but he himself went to the hill to lift up his hands. This means that we should reject fleshly methods. Instead of laying our hands on other people, we should lay our hands on God. There is no other way to deal with the flesh. We cannot depend on our natural life or act in accordance with man's views. There is no alternative. The only way is to put our strength, our hand, on God through prayer. "When Moses lifted his hand up, Israel prevailed; and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed" (v. 11). Victory or defeat depends entirely upon lifting up our hands or letting down our hands.

SERVICE NEEDING SUPPORT AND COORDINATION

If we consider the portrayal in Exodus of a person praying by lifting up his hands, we will realize that it is altogether a picture of coordination. Joshua fought the battle with a group of chosen men, who were under his command; this was one part of the coordination. Meanwhile, Moses prayed by lifting up his hands; this was the other part of the coordination. When we put these two parts together, we see total coordination. In addition, when Moses lifted up his hands in prayer, he was not able to hold them up for long. He needed people to support him; that is, he needed others to coordinate with him. Thus, Aaron and Hur supported his hands with one on one side and one on the other side. Thus, Moses' hands were steady (v. 12). This is proof that Moses lifted up not only one hand but both hands. When Moses lifted up his hands, he needed Aaron and Hur to support him. In the same way, when we serve together, we need both support and coordination.

Without the support of the brothers and sisters, the responsible ones in a district will not be able to do a good job. Often they may pray for the church to

the extent that their hands become heavy, and they become exhausted and are unable to stand in prayer. At this point they need the support of the brothers and sisters. If the brothers and sisters support them, they will be able to stand and continue to pray with fighting prayers; however, if the brothers and sisters do not support them, they will fall down, and their prayer will not continue. Hence, these praying ones need everyone's support. The brothers and sisters must not look at the responsible ones' weaknesses, shortcomings, and inadequacies. If these ones have any shortage, they need some to make up the lack and support them. Even God's servant Moses needed others to support him in the warfare against Amalek. Joshua needed Moses' prayer, and Moses' prayer needed Aaron and Hur's support. This is a complete picture of coordination. I hope that the brothers and sisters will see these three points: We need to receive the impartation of the Holy Spirit to quench our thirst, we need to receive the breaking of the cross in order to receive the impartation of the Holy Spirit, and we need to learn to depend on the Lord and support one another.

We should not think that we are a Moses and have no need of others. In fact, Moses needed Aaron and Hur. Moses, Aaron, and Hur needed to coordinate together. On the one hand, those responsible in the districts need the support of those responsible in the smaller groups. If those responsible in the groups merely look on as disinterested bystanders, it will be as if they are Amalek. Those who do not support others become the flesh. On the other hand, the responsible ones in the districts also need to learn to coordinate with others. They should not think that since they are the responsible ones, they can do everything by themselves. We should not forget that they need others' support and that without others they will definitely fall down. There is nothing to be proud of in regard to being a responsible one, and there is nothing to feel lowly about in regard to being a supporting one. This is the key to coordination. Coordination depends on our submitting ourselves in the Lord's presence to pursue Him, allowing Him, as well as others, to point out our deficiencies.

SERVICE NOT BEING AN ARRANGEMENT IN DEAD LETTERS BUT A LIVING COORDINATION IN SPIRITUAL ORDER

We must see that serving in the Lord's presence is altogether a matter of coordination; it is not a worldly movement. In our serving, it is not proper for us to do absolutely nothing until the responsible ones make a decision or give instructions. At the same time, neither can we freely make decisions without consulting the responsible ones. The former is to serve according to dead letters, whereas the latter is to serve in the flesh. Neither is right. What is right is that we receive the Holy Spirit, the breaking, and the coordination. When we are in a proper condition, we will realize deep within that we need to be coordinated with others. If we are an Aaron or a Hur, we will see that our position is to support others.

In my experience of learning to serve during the past twenty to thirty years, there have never been any problems among the co-workers. This is because we have each seen our place in God's arrangement, and each of us knows where we should be and what part we should fulfill. In Taiwan God has blessed us and His presence has been with us. We are learning to coordinate and to know our place. We are tired of the prejudices of different backgrounds, we absolutely avoid speaking corrupt words, and we are disgusted even more with walking according to the flesh. We rejoice to see every brother and sister inwardly receive the breaking and coordination. We know who we are and where we stand. We know whether we are a Moses, an Aaron, or a Hur. Spiritual coordination is by no means an arrangement in letter or a set of regulations in an organization. It is altogether a matter of the Spirit, a matter of spiritual order. We should never turn the spiritual order into letters or regulations in the manner of a worldly group or organization, which is very much of man. We are not an organized group, and we should not be under the control of an organization. Instead, we must have the coordination of the Holy Spirit inwardly. I hope that we will see this spiritual fact and continue to learn this lesson.

In regard to our practice, some of us may be part of a group of responsible ones, who meet in a certain district. One day, someone whom we have previously not met may come to our meeting and fellowship with us. Later, we may find out that he is truly a believer and that he has been saved through another Christian group. Consequently, he may not have much understanding concerning our meetings or our present situation. When he inquires about our meetings, someone may tell him the schedule for all the meetings from Monday through Lord's Day, and then he may indicate that he would like to come to the Lord's Day table meeting. In this situation, some saints might tell

him that he cannot yet break the bread with us, because it is necessary to first ask for instructions from those who are responsible for the district meetings, and they, in turn, need to ask for instructions from the elders. When everything is made clear after passing through multiple layers of instructions, he can then break bread with us. To reply in such a way is to behave completely according to organization, that is, according to dead letters. This is not our way. We do not need to help him understand all the rules and regulations; instead, we should prepare him spiritually for the table meeting and welcome him, giving him encouragement that is full of life. We need to give him an encouraging confirmation.

Every person who is truly saved will want to fellowship with the brothers and sisters. To break bread is to fellowship; the purpose of breaking bread is for us to fellowship with the Lord and to testify for the Lord before the enemy. We need to have a life of testimony and a life in resurrection; such a testimony will cause us to have sweet fellowship with others. For instance, we may say to a newly saved brother, "Brother, we break bread because we have the Lord's life, and we live by the Lord's life." We should have some brief spiritual fellowship with him. Fellowship is to introduce and to receive. When we have spiritual fellowship with a new one, and when he receives help from us to come to the table meeting on the Lord's Day, we can tell the responsible brothers in the district that he is truly saved and able to participate in breaking the bread. If a responsible one were to say, "If you bring someone to the Lord's table without my permission, you are not keeping the regulations of the church" we can then have further fellowship with this responsible one. In our further fellowship with the responsible one, we can testify that in our fellowship with this new one, we touched the Lord's grace, and we are willing to introduce him to the brothers and sisters. In this way the new brother will spontaneously be received into the fellowship. This is entirely not a matter of procedure but a matter of spiritual reality.

If every saved brother and sister lives in such a spiritual reality, there will be spiritual order. It does not matter whether or not we are called a "responsible one"; we still need to live in the spiritual reality. If we conduct ourselves merely according to our "designation," we have failed. Likewise, if a brother feels that he has full authority to make decisions without caring for the elders, he is being fleshly. We are the church. As the church, we bring new ones to know the church, and we bring them to meet the elders. If the elders' attitude is, "How could you receive people and let them take the Lord's table

without our approval?" this is Amalek, that is, the expression of the flesh. Concerning the receiving of new ones, the elders should be full of joy and lay their hands on them to bless them in spirit.

For the sake of having further contact and convenience in service, we should obtain the new ones' addresses, asking them to fill out an information card. During the Lord's table every new one should be introduced to the brothers and sisters in a good way. When we introduce new ones, we should not follow the way of business corporations that have a set of outward procedures but no Spirit within. Bringing the new ones to know the elders and asking them to fill out an information card is not a dead method or regulation. When we do this, we should allow the living Spirit a way to move. We must find a suitable time to introduce the new ones to the elders so that the elders can introduce them to all the brothers and sisters. This is not a mere formality. When the new ones are being introduced to the saints, if time permits, we can even ask them to give a little testimony in addition to their name.

We need to learn to live in spiritual reality, progressing forward according to the practices of the church, that is, neither following dead regulations nor doing things without restraint. There is no rank in the church; there is only a spiritual order. We should all learn to live in the spirit, each one functioning in his measure. We should hold to this principle not only in the matter of receiving others but also in all other matters. We should not depend on regulations or organization. We should touch the spiritual reality, living according to the practices of the church. In this way we will give the brothers and sisters a deep impression that we are living and not dead. When the brothers and sisters contact the responsible ones, they will receive a living supply. Moreover, when they contact the elders, they will receive the same living supply. After several such contacts, the brothers and sisters will surely be influenced.

The way we practiced the church life in the past was not wrong; however, because most of us are used to working in offices, we have made many items of our service formal. Even the way we talk about baptism has been formal and not very living. Our original intention was to make everyone living without any formalities. We must always have a view that regulations should be hated but that doing things without restraint should also be condemned. Every one of us needs to learn to be in the spiritual reality, accepting God's arrangement in coordination and knowing whether we are a Moses or an

Aaron. We should know that when Moses lifted up his hands in prayer, it was Aaron's support that enabled Moses' hands to be steady. In this way we will experience the Lord's overwhelming blessing, and every meeting will be full of His presence.

We are not building up the church for ourselves, and we should not feel that this church or that church is ours. If God has had mercy on us in making us channels of blessing that transmit blessing to others, we should not recruit people and make them our following. We should all learn to maintain the one testimony of God on the ground of the local church while carrying out the ministry of the church for the sake of Christ, His Son. We all need to pray, asking God to help us receive the Holy Spirit, receive the breaking of the cross, keep to our measure willingly, and have spiritual coordination. All these are reality in the Spirit.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW TO LEAD THE MEETINGS AND THE SERVICE

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thes. 1:3

OUR ACTIVITIES IN CHURCH MEETINGS BEING OUR SERVICE TO THE LORD

In this chapter we will fellowship concerning how to lead the meetings and the service. Meeting in the districts has a very important purpose; that is, it enables the saints to take part in the service. The activities in the church meetings can be considered as the service that a Christian renders to the Lord. This is an important matter. If a Christian is not active in the meetings, he must be a dead Christian. In other words, he is a Christian at a standstill in regard to service.

From our experience we know that if a person lives in the presence of God, his condition in the meetings will be living. Even though this is not the only indication of a person's condition before the Lord, a living Christian will be active in the meetings. For this reason we need to pay attention to how active the brothers and sisters are in the meetings.

The record in Acts reveals the initial condition of the church, and from it we have gained much light concerning the activities of the saints. First Corinthians 14 also speaks of the activities that the saints carried out in the meetings in the early days. Later, the church began to lose the Lord's presence as well as the power of the Holy Spirit and fell into the hands of men and the scheme of the enemy. As a result, the church became organized Christianity, and the saints ceased to be active in the meetings.

Because of the desolation of the church, the activities of the church fell into the hands of a small number who were given clerical authority. Hence, not only the Catholic mass but also Protestant worship services are conducted by clergy, such as priests, pastors, and ministers. These ones do everything, whereas the majority of the saints do not have any responsibility or function

in the meetings. In other words, the saints attend services, listen to sermons, and watch others and thus become completely passive. This is a degraded situation.

We have been looking to the Lord to recover one thing in the church; that is, whenever the brothers and sisters come together, all would serve God. In this way a small number of saints will not replace the majority in worship and service. The only exception is the ministry meetings. In such meetings the ministers have a message to speak to God's children for their edification; thus, either one brother or a few brothers need to bear this responsibility, and the rest of the saints need not carry out many activities during the meeting. However, in all the other church meetings, such as the Lord's table, the prayer meeting, the gift-exercising meeting, and the Bible-reading meeting, every saint should be active. The reason that we have smaller meetings in the districts is to provide the brothers and sisters with an opportunity to be active under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

A FEW MATTERS TO WHICH THE RESPONSIBLE ONES IN THE DISTRICTS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION

The larger a meeting is, the more afraid the saints are to release their spirit because their spirit is more likely to be suppressed. If the saints are divided into smaller meetings in the districts, they will be able to release their spirit easily. I hope that the responsible ones will understand that this is the purpose of meeting in the districts. How then should they facilitate this purpose? First, everything depends on what is in their heart. Some responsible ones are afraid and do not know how to be active in the meetings. Thus, they dare not pray or speak. Because of their fearful heart, they hope that others will do something for them. This is not right. On the other hand, some like to speak in the meetings. They formerly did not have the opportunity, but after becoming responsible ones, they seize every opportunity to be active in the meetings. This also is wrong. Both errors should be avoided.

We must have a proper heart. It is not a matter of fearing activities or of loving activities; rather, it is a matter of realizing that all the brothers and sisters in the meetings should be active. Our heart's intention is often

revealed through our spirit. If some of us are afraid to stand up and speak in the meetings, when we rise up to speak, we may want to give the impression that we are not afraid but rather love to speak. This is dishonest. Such a dishonest heart kills the spirit of service in the brothers and sisters. However, if we love to speak in the meetings, it will suppress the spirit of service in the meeting. Both tendencies damage the spirit of a meeting.

Second, before every meeting, the responsible ones should have a proper heart of service. They should pray, "Lord, we pray that You will revive the spirit of all the brothers and sisters who are coming to the meeting so that they will not only come to a meeting but will come to serve You. May they not only come to the meeting, but may they come to break bread and to pray." The normal condition is for us to come to the meetings to pray, fellowship, read the Bible, use our gifts, and break bread. Hence, the responsible ones should pray before each meeting that the Lord would enable the brothers and sisters not only to come and meet but even more to come and pray, serve, break bread, fellowship, read the Bible, and use their gifts. The responsible ones should pray that the Lord would cause all the brothers and sisters to have a living spirit and be prepared in their spirit for the meeting. They should not come merely to listen to others pray and watch others be active.

Third, they should explain to the brothers and sisters that even though there are responsible ones in the home meetings, the responsible ones are not pastors or teachers taking care of the activities in the meeting. The meetings are for everyone to serve and bear responsibility together. The responsible ones should not do everything for the saints; rather, every brother and sister should be active. If there are some who do not understand this point, we should explain it to them. If there are some who are worried, we need to help remove their fear. For instance, if there is a prayer meeting, we should use a little time at the beginning to tell the brothers and sisters that they should not be concerned about whether or not the content of their prayer is organized, the words they use are spiritual, or their tone is gentle. We should also tell them that they should not expect the meetings to always be orderly and that they should not wait to open their mouth until their speech is polished enough to impress others. When we help the saints in the meetings, we should not correct or criticize too much; rather, we should lead, instruct, and explain. We should do this once or twice. After a period of time has passed, we can again remind and encourage the brothers and sisters to exercise their spirit in the meetings.

Fourth, the amount of responsible ones' activity in the meetings should be appropriate. If they do nothing in order to provide the brothers and sisters with an opportunity to be active, they are wrong, and they will kill the spirit of the meeting. However, if they become overactive because they are concerned that the lack of functioning may kill the spirit of the meeting, they will bring in an atmosphere in which they do everything and others have no need to do anything. For this reason the responsible ones need to be very wise. They should function but not in the place of others, and whenever they function, they should incite others to also function. Their functioning should kindle a fire so that others are caught on fire.

Two situations are often seen in a meeting. The first situation involves the responsible ones always giving others an opportunity; this attitude is wrong. Another situation involves the responsible ones assuming that they have to be active because the saints are not active. This also is wrong. The responsible ones should be wise in a meeting, knowing when and how to act appropriately, even kindling the fire in others. When some people pray, they open up the prayer for others to follow, whereas when other people pray, they close the door to others. The responsible ones need to learn and exercise in these matters.

Fifth, the responsible ones should fellowship and help the saints individually. For instance, they should not force a certain brother to open his mouth to pray or to choose a hymn in the Lord's table meeting; instead, they should observe this brother and see how his spirit is before God. If his spirit is kindled with a burden to choose hymns, even though he does not know how to do it, they can fellowship with him and teach him, encouraging him to be prepared for the next Lord's Day. This can be compared to a little child who is learning to walk and needs assistance from others. All the above points require the responsible ones to practice and exercise.

THE MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH BEING TO HELP THE SAINTS USE THEIR GIFTS

How should we meet? The meeting we have for exercising gifts often does not reach the level described in 1 Corinthians 14. A gift-exercising meeting is not a meeting for bread breaking or for giving messages. It is a meeting where

all the saved ones come together to exercise their spiritual gifts. If a person has a prayer, a testimony, or a psalm, he can use his gift in the meeting. More than twenty years ago we hoped that our fellowship meeting would reach the level of everyone using their gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 14. In practice, however, as the years went by, it became more and more difficult to attain this goal in the fellowship meeting; hence, we had a heavy burden inwardly and felt that we needed to change the meeting. We saw that in order to have a gift-exercising meeting, we must pay attention to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The meeting for using the gifts in 1 Corinthians 14 is inseparable from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Hence, we need to lead the saints to pursue both the infilling and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

When a meeting has fallen into a deadened and downward situation, it means that there are no gifts and no way to use the gifts. This is due to the brothers and sisters not experiencing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The use of gifts requires the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Surely this requires exercise. First Corinthians 14 is an exercise. Such an exercise should begin with the responsible ones. This means that when the saints come together, they need to exercise according to the grace and the gifts that they have received. This requires that all the responsible ones exercise in this matter.

The responsible brothers should take the lead to exercise and bring such an atmosphere of exercise to the meetings. In this way all the brothers will gradually have some gifts. When a brother stands up and reads a portion from the Bible, there will be much light and people will feel happy. Then when another brother stands up and gives a word of encouragement, the saints will be inwardly lifted up. In order to have such an atmosphere in the meetings, the responsible ones need to take the lead to exercise.

We must maintain the purpose of meeting in the districts. The meetings in the homes are entirely according to the nature of the church and not according to the nature of a ministry meeting. If our intention is to give a message, there is no need to divide up the meetings into districts. Meeting in the districts is not for a minister of the word to release a message to God's children; these meetings are absolutely in mutuality and for the whole church. If we feel that we have a message to release to God's children, it is right to release it in a ministry meeting. In the district meetings, however, there must be an opportunity for all the saints to serve. I hope that God will have mercy on us and cause us to see that we are not serving merely as individuals but

that we need to enable the brothers and sisters to serve together. The district meeting is not for one person to speak while the rest listen. This meeting is for the brothers and sisters to serve together.

An entire district meeting should be used to help the brothers and sisters serve together according to the five points mentioned above. If a brother intends to give a message in the Bible-reading meeting on Saturday, it is wrong. He is changing the nature of the Bible-reading meeting to that of a ministry meeting. Instead, the intention of the Bible-reading meeting is that all the saints read the Lord's word together. They need the Lord to have mercy on them, to give them light, and to pour out His Spirit upon them so that they can be bold and open their mouths to read the Word in a released way. If we have such an intention, we will pray accordingly, and we will help the saints to see that each one of them is responsible to open his mouth to speak God's word.

Furthermore, we need to be wise in how we begin a meeting so that people's spirit will be opened up, and we will be able to lead the meeting in a living way. For instance, we must take care of the fact that a certain brother is moved by the Spirit to speak something. If we help him a little, he will be able to speak next time. Practicing in this way for three or four weeks will create an atmosphere among the saints so that when they come together, each one will immediately open his mouth to speak. Thus, the purpose of our meeting in the districts will be fulfilled.

We should never think that the saints do not know how to function and that we should take their place and do everything for them. The saints have heard enough messages. Now they need practical exercise, practical help, in order to practice the things that they have heard. They do not need one man speaking and the rest listening. Instead, the responsible ones need to take the lead and help the brothers and sisters to use their gifts and exercise according to what they have heard. We should not expect this work to proceed quickly, nor should we expect it to take shape within a week. This is impossible. This kind of work is a cultivating work that requires a long time. A flower or a plant requires more than one or two days of watering. Some flowers require six months of cultivation before they blossom, and some trees require two to five years of cultivation before they bear fruit.

A meeting in a home is like a garden. We cannot expect leaves to sprout after we pray only a few times. Likewise, we need to cultivate the meetings, helping the brothers and sisters to use their gifts. Perhaps after six months our “little garden” will sprout leaves or bloom. Eventually, the meeting in the home will become a beautiful garden. In other words, when all the saints come together, they will use their gifts. Everyone will speak, one for three minutes, another for five minutes, and still another for seven minutes. All will speak in a fresh way.

Right now the need is for the responsible ones to take the lead to practice perfecting the saints, watering them, and helping them to grow. Gradually, the saints will receive this way of meeting with joy and want to participate even more. The saints will enjoy coming to the meetings and will also bring others. Our gospel has not been effective because we have not been able to hold and support the new ones. We were able to give birth to new ones, but we could not raise them up. This was not because we did not love the Lord or were not capable but because we lost the supporting and holding ability.

Our present endeavor is to make our meetings smaller in order to increase our ability to support and hold. We do not need to preach the gospel to more people. Instead, we should find those who can feed others. Preaching the gospel fervently is no longer sufficient. We need to aggressively find those who can hold and support others. If we want to beget children, we need to prepare a home for them.

I hope that the responsible ones will not remain in the theory but will put everything into practice. If we succeed in this exercise, all the ones who attend the meetings will be supported. Then it will not be difficult for fifteen hundred people to support an additional fifteen hundred. After six months we will have sixty homes and five thousand saints meeting. Then our baptisms will be fresh, and under such circumstances there will be strong support for many new ones. For this reason we must render practical help in all the districts. All the responsible brothers and sisters should help the saints practically rather than merely giving them messages.

CHAPTER NINE

THE EYES OF THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES AND THE MOVING WHEELS

Scripture Reading: Rev. 4:6, 8; Ezek. 1:9, 12, 15, 17-21

Whenever the Bible speaks of the four living creatures, it is to show the kind of condition we should have before God in our service. In this chapter we will fellowship concerning the condition we should have in our service based on two items seen in Revelation 4 and Ezekiel 1, that is, the eyes of the four living creatures and the moving wheels.

EYES BEING RELATED TO GOD'S MOVE

Eyes are for seeing. Revelation 4:6-8 speaks of "four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind...around and within." This means that the four living creatures are transparent on all sides and that they are able to see within, without, and all around. Ezekiel 1:15b and 18b-19a say, "I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures...And the rims of the four of them were full of eyes all around. And whenever the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them." These verses show that the eyes of the four living creatures are upon the moving wheels, indicating that the four living creatures move by the wheels. Revelation shows that the four living creatures are full of eyes around and within, but Ezekiel says specifically that the rims of the wheels are full of eyes. Hence, the rims are the key to the move of the four living creatures. Their move is entirely dependent upon the turning of the rims. The turning rims being full of eyes mean that seeing and moving are altogether related. It is not possible for us to move without seeing.

The existence of the four living creatures, as recorded in the Bible, is a fact, and it is crucial that we see what the four living creatures symbolize spiritually and that we receive an impression of the four living creatures. The picture of the four living creatures is similar to an impressionistic painting; it illustrates the kind of service that God desires. When we read about these four living creatures, we need to see God's intention. He desires that those who serve Him have eyes and that their eyes and their move be joined together.

The rims are on the outer part of the wheel and are full of eyes; therefore, when the wheels turn, the eyes also turn. This means that a person who serves God must first have eyes and then rims. In other words, he must be able to see, and then he can move. In the book of Ezekiel the wheels refer specifically to the move of the four living creatures. The wheels indicate the swiftness of their move (10:13). The greatest characteristic of these four living creatures is that their move is specific, swift, and agile (1:14).

The four living creatures go straight forward in four directions; they do not turn as they go (vv. 12, 17). Their move is straight and not crooked, yet they move in every direction. Even though they move straight forward, their move is not in only one direction but in four directions. In other words, if they move toward the east, they can still move toward the west, the north, or the south. Even though they do not turn, they are able to move in all four directions. This is a very particular matter.

NOT ADHERING TO ROUTINES IN THE SERVICE

These few points indicate how our service to God should be. The first point is concerning the eyes. A person who serves God cannot live in a foolish, confused, and blind way; instead, he should be bright, alert, and sharp. The Epistles written by the apostle Paul demonstrate that he was bright, alert, and sharp. He was like the four living creatures, full of eyes around and within. As such, he could see the condition of the church in Antioch, the church in Corinth, the church in Ephesus, and the church in Colossae. He was able to see the threat to the church from teachings mixed with Greek philosophy (Col. 2:8); he was also able to see the danger of the believers being distracted from God's economy by the preaching of the Judaizers (Gal. 1:6-9). Moreover, he was able to foresee problems related to the errors of some believers' individual actions and the things that the leading ones needed to guard against before they actually occurred.

In Paul's Epistles we do not see a person who adhered to routines and was inflexible; rather, we see a person who adapted quickly to changing circumstances. For instance, the Epistle to the Colossians is different from the Epistle to the Ephesians. The letter he wrote to the church in Ephesus fit their situation, and the letter he wrote to the church in Colossae fit their situation. He did not adhere to routines. Since the church is the Body of Christ, we

cannot take care of it by adhering to routines; otherwise, we will be like a blind person trying to lead others. In Paul's letters he spoke to Timothy in one way, to Titus in another way, and to Philemon in yet another way. The books of Romans, Hebrews, and Galatians are not all the same. These examples indicate that Paul was a person full of eyes. He was clear in matters concerning the saints and the church. It did not matter whether a situation was corporate or individual. He was full of insight into the matter. This is what it means for the four living creatures to be full of eyes around and within. In our service we must have eyes, and we must be alert. We must be wise, and we must understand people's actual situations.

According to my observation, those of us who serve full time do not have the condition of the four living creatures. We may be able to see, but we can see only one aspect or one point. We cannot see all the aspects and all the points. We are not like the four living creatures, who are full of eyes and can see all sides. Such seeing is lacking in our service. Although it is good to abide by rules, we should not adhere to routines in our service.

Every serving one should learn to understand the timing and situations related to different matters. Many serving ones still do things step by step, sticking to old routines while being faithful in their service. This may be good, but it is not sufficient. We need to be full of eyes. We need to know the saints in the place we are serving, and we need to know their condition. We need to have a deep understanding of their actual situation. We should not rigidly hold on to the old things and old ways.

From practical experience, businessmen know that even though they made money yesterday by doing business in a certain way, they may lose money today by continuing in the same way. Farmers have the same experience. A farmer may have slept peacefully yesterday, but he may not be able to do so today. In northern China when the wheat is first ripening, there is no time to sleep. If the farmer delays the harvest by one day, much of the wheat will fall to the ground and be lost. Opportunity must be grasped. Some farmers may think that they can wait a few days once the wheat has ripened; however, if they wait, much wheat will be lost. In order to seize an opportunity, we need to recognize the opportunity. We cannot simply continue to do the same thing every day. Neither can we do something one way in the springtime and do it the same way in the fall. It is good to follow proper routines, but we must also

recognize opportunity. If we do something one way this year, we may not do it the same way next year. If we stick to a routine, we may suffer loss.

Consider what would happen if all the serving ones in the church in Taipei adhered to a routine. Surely the church's condition would be dead. The church in Taipei has been established over a long period of time, and all the services have been arranged; hence, the most crucial need is to strengthen the spiritual side. First, the church needs the living word. Second, the church needs to be built in a living way. Third, the individual saints need to be built up spiritually. We cannot take care of these three needs in a routine way, because there is nothing routine in regard to these needs.

We need to see that spiritual supply and spiritual building up are what the saints lack the most. I have been to several meetings in different districts. Every meeting I went to gave me a feeling of famine. The dishes on the dinner table were nothing but leftovers, without many nutrients. I am afraid that the church is suffering from hunger. If a person is hungry, he will easily become sick. Please remember that life always swallows up death. Whenever life is gone, death will surface, and the most serious death comes from human opinions and human views. Whenever there is a lack of God's word, God's opinion and God's view will be torn down. None of the meetings I attended were able to satisfy people with the word; instead, all the meetings gave people a sense of hunger. The brothers and sisters who came to those meetings must have felt hungry, because they came to the meeting but were not supplied.

It is pitiful if we, as full-time serving ones, can sit in that kind of meeting and still be at peace, have no burden, adhere to routines, and think that we have fulfilled our duty. Such an attitude indicates that we are serving blindly; that is, we cannot see the need, our eyes are not bright, and we do not know how to seize the opportunity. Presently, we are not lacking in serving ones, but even though we have so many serving ones, the supply is obviously short.

As full-time serving ones, we have more time, and we have received more perfecting in life and truth than most saints. If we cannot supply the ministry of the word, how can we expect other brothers and sisters to rise up and function? We can never shirk the responsibility of ministering the word. This responsibility is ours. However, among all the full-time serving ones in Taipei, not many have received the burden to minister the word to the saints. Most of

the serving ones are doing their jobs in a regular way and feel that it is good enough to be faithful to what they do. In the eyes of the saints, however, this is absolutely not enough.

When I sit among the full-time serving ones in a meeting, I often feel sorrowful, not because they have done something offensive but because they have not given the saints food. Nevertheless, the full-time serving ones sit there and are peaceful, meeting after meeting. Inevitably, a question arises within me concerning whether their inward being is bright and sharp. If the apostle Paul were to observe such a situation, he would have said something. None of us should go to prayer meetings, bread-breaking meetings, and fellowship meetings and watch the time and the meeting go by tastelessly yet inwardly have no feeling. This is an indication that we have no eyes. If we were full of eyes, we would feel that this situation cannot continue.

We must receive the burden to pray to the Lord and be dealt with by Him. If we are in a certain district meeting, we should take responsibility for the meeting in that district. Nobody else can carry the load. If we do not bear it, who will? We need to bring in food and water to give the saints the nutrients that they need. This has to do with our inward feeling and our eyes. We cannot sit around indifferently and be at peace. After all, we have eyes and can see. Even though it is painful to be a person with eyes, feelings, and a keen sense, we cannot be without these items in our service. We should not be able to tolerate seeing the saints come to the meeting but not receive a supply. We cannot say, “I have done all that I am supposed to do. The elders arranged for me to serve in a certain matter, and I am serving accordingly. They assigned me a message, and I gave it. It is not my business how the saints receive it.” We cannot have such a transcendent attitude, considering that this is only God’s business, not our own. We must learn to be sharp and not live a life of ease.

According to the statistics of the last several weeks, there were approximately sixty saints coming to each of the district meetings. If over the next few weeks, the numbers begin to gradually drop, this will indicate that the saints are not receiving the supply. After four or five meetings many may stop coming altogether. We should not be insensitive to such a situation. If we are insensitive, we are like a piece of brick or wood without any light. We need to sharpen our senses in the meetings. We should not sit in comfort. All of us need to pray and to endeavor to deal with the problem of our spiritual famine.

Such a problem is not the business of only a small number of elders or co-workers; it is the business of all of us. The most dangerous thing facing the church at the present time is a lack of food. The saints are suffering from hunger, from famine. They are poor and weak. We cannot imagine the kind of problems such a situation will generate. This is a serious problem.

The serving ones cannot be persons without eyes and feelings. Even if we must set aside our other responsibilities and deal only with the present famine, it is necessary to do this. According to my observation of the present famine, we still have sufficient health to protect us, but I am concerned that we may become weak to the extent that all kinds of sicknesses will surface. We need to see that the great need in the church is to nourish the saints.

Whenever the saints come to a meeting, they are coming to a feast in order to eat and receive a supply. As serving ones, we should consider what we are offering on the table and whether the food is sufficiently nutritious. We need to consider whether or not there is sufficient food and drink in the meeting. We must have feelings in regard to this matter. We cannot allow the meetings to continue in the present manner. We should not think that this is the elders' or other people's business. We should have the feeling that it is our responsibility if the saints are suffering from hunger.

The serving ones should prepare food for the saints and supply them with food. At present this is the greatest need. We need to learn how to supply food and how to seize the opportunity to use our time to prepare the food. If we do not know how to seize this opportunity, even if we had more time, we would not be able to meet the need of this famine. Our situation now is one of famine. In regard to the building up of the saints, the ministry of the word, visitation, and spiritual supply, we are in the midst of a famine. We are short in all these aspects.

If we look at the statistics of attendance, we will see that our service is questionable. This is because there is not an adequate supply for the saints. We have adhered to routines and affected the saints negatively. The church in Taipei has fallen into such a serious famine that we should focus on this one thing. We need to see that there is a spiritual famine here. We should supply the saints with the ministry of the word. This is a most urgent need. It cannot wait and must be done aggressively. In every meeting we need to supply the saints with the ministry of the word.

Before a table meeting on the Lord's Day, those responsible for the districts as well as the full-time serving ones must pray to the Lord Jesus, saying, "Lord, we cannot let the saints go home hungry." If we have the feeling that we cannot let the saints go home hungry, this means that our eyes are sharp, that we are "full of eyes around and within." We must have feelings regarding the things that we see. If our eyes are sharp, our sharp eyes will control us in our move. We must have a sharp feeling and then move by following the eyes that are upon the rims of the wheels.

OUR MOVE NEEDING TO HAVE A DIRECTION AND BE MULTIDIRECTIONAL

There are two basic principles for our move: one is that our move must have a direction, and the other is that our move must be multidirectional. The four living creatures go straightforward in four directions without turning (Ezek. 1:17). They are not without a definite direction; rather, they go straight ahead, yet they are able to move in every direction. This means that when we move, we must have a goal, a direction, without preference and without turning according to our will. However, we should not move in more than one direction. We cannot say, "I only care about one matter; I do not care about any other matter." Likewise, we cannot say, "I am taking care of visitation, so I cannot give a message or preach the gospel." If this is the case, we are not like the four living creatures. We are "one-directional"; that is, if we can go east, we cannot go west.

Every serving one should learn to have an aim, a direction, and to be multidirectional. Even though our particular direction may be to preach the gospel, we may discover that when we are speaking in a meeting the attendants need edification, not the gospel. When this occurs, we should change the meeting to take care of the matter of edification. This is what it means to have an aim but to also be multidirectional. It may be that we are responsible for giving messages, but we should also be able to visit people. Perhaps we work with young people and students; nevertheless, we should also be able to speak with older saints and render help to them. Our focus may be to work with young people, but we should also be able to work in other areas. We must be able to cover multiple directions and be flexible in our work. We should be able to give a message as well as visit someone. We

should be able to preach the gospel as well as edify others. If we are persons who pay attention to the inner life, we should also be able to encourage others to preach the gospel. This is what it means to be multidirectional instead of "one-directional."

According to their disposition, some brothers do not like to talk. If such brothers desire to serve the Lord, they need to allow themselves to be broken in this matter. Other brothers like to talk when they meet people; however, this too is natural and fleshly. We should follow the sense of the spirit to either keep quiet or speak. Often, however, we are quiet because we are afraid that we will not supply others or we feel that we cannot speak well, not because in our spirit we feel to be quiet. Hence, in order to train ourselves to be able to supply others, we cannot have an indifferent attitude. We should let the responsibility that we bear press us, just as Paul was pressed: "Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?" (2 Cor. 11:29). Many brothers and sisters are coming to the meetings. If we do not supply them, who will? We must do our best to make up the lack. God will open up our stuttering mouth and give us the gift of speaking, and the Spirit will grant us grace.

If we do not turn on the faucet, the water company cannot supply us with water. Similarly, we are often unable to supply others, because we are accustomed to not opening our mouth, we adhere to our routines, and we are set in our ways. Wherever the Spirit goes, the wheels follow. We should not make a rule that we will not open our mouth in the meetings. Although we should have a direction for our service and should not turn at will, we must also be multidirectional. The requirement of being multidirectional is a difficult lesson for us to learn. Actually, to adhere to a routine is to be presumptuous. After our presumptuousness has been broken, we will receive a great deal of perfecting. If there is a need to give a gospel message, even if we have never learned to give a gospel message, we have no choice but to give a gospel message. If we pick up certain matters, we will learn. In the same way, if we always give gospel messages, yet there is a need for edification, will we be willing to meet the need? If we are not willing, who will do it? Surely this is our responsibility, and we must learn to pick it up.

SEEING CONTROLLING THE MOVE

We must realize that seeing controls our move and that this move has a direction and is also multidirectional. The book of Ezekiel shows that the

Spirit determines the direction of the move of the four living creatures. All four sides of the living creatures have wheels, but the movement of the wheels is not decided by the wheels themselves. The movement of the wheels is determined by the Spirit (1:20). For this reason we need to learn to do everything. We should learn how to preach the gospel, how to edify others, and how to visit people; however, the Spirit determines the direction in which we move. Each of us should have a wheel for giving messages and a wheel for visiting people in their homes. All these wheels must be moving. Then these wheels will turn in whatever direction the Holy Spirit moves. The wheels are on four sides, but the direction is determined by the Spirit.

If the Spirit wants us to speak, we should not say, "My wheel for speaking never turns." If we do this, we will frustrate the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit says, "Go and speak a message," we should not say, "I am used to contacting people. I am not good at giving messages." From Paul's Epistles we can see that he labored in many directions. Even within one letter he covered numerous matters. In the beginning of Ephesians 4 he spoke of keeping the oneness of the Spirit (v. 3), but toward the end of the chapter, he spoke of many details in regard to how believers should walk. The Spirit worked with him, and in him we can see many examples of moving in multiple directions and having eyes all around. Every brother and sister should have eyes all around and be able to move in four directions so that wherever the Spirit moves, we can follow. We should have wheels, and our feelings should be sharp. If our service is like this, the church will be living, and there will be rich food with which we can supply others.

In our service we need to learn to be keen in our perception, and we also need to have wheels on all four sides, not wheels that move in only one direction. We must have the wheel of gospel preaching, the wheel of edification, the wheel of visitation, the wheel of speaking, the wheel of not speaking, the wheel of listening, and the wheel of prayer. We must have wheels for all directions. Although the Holy Spirit may not mobilize the wheel on one side, it should always be ready.

Finally, all those serving in the ministry of the word must prepare living material that can meet people's needs. For instance, if we are giving a message on a Lord's Day, we must seek the Lord concerning the condition of the people to whom we will be speaking. We must find the supply that they need. If we seek the Lord in this way, the material that we prepare will be

living. I do not encourage the brothers to read too many reference books. These books are precious, but they are not worth much, because they are not living. If a child is thirsty and asks for a glass of water, it is useless to put a pearl in front of him. We need to supply people according to their need. We need to spend time in the presence of the Lord in order to know the condition of the saints and to obtain words that will deal with their condition. Such words will be living; hence, we do not need to search reference materials in order to find content for a message. To do so is to have no eyes and no wheels. It is not only dead; it is also useless.

If we see a need, we should not feel at peace; rather, we must pick up the responsibility for the meetings in our district. We should not simply show up for the meeting on time and call a hymn occasionally. That is not to bear responsibility. We must seek what message to give in the meeting and what burden to pray for in the prayer meeting. We also need to seek how to help the saints with respect to their family situations, their physical health, and the problems related to their career. According to my observation of the church life, although there may be some visitation, no one is taking care of the work. Messages are given in the meetings, but no one is really meeting the need. Likewise, although there are responsible ones in the church, no one is taking care of the real need of the church. If a saint is sick, loses his job, or has marital problems, we should seek to shepherd him and help him. However, we are short of people taking care of these matters. Not only do we not know how to do it, no one is doing it. How can we still feel at peace?

Our condition can be compared to someone who has a business but has no feeling after losing money for six months. The whole church is suffering, but some of us have no feeling. Some think that since they have been assigned to be the responsible one in a certain district, if no one speaks in the meeting, they should, and if no one gives a report, they should. Even their visitation is out of obligation. When they see someone in distress, they feel obligated to help. That is all. They do not spend time in the Lord's presence seeking concerning people's situations, neither do they have a genuine concern for them. To serve out of the ordinary love that people have for one another, in the same manner as those in Protestantism or Catholicism, is not sufficient.

If a couple is going through a trial, we should have eyes and a sense regarding their situation. We should then activate the wheel of prayer to pray for them, seeking the Lord as to what to do. When we pray for them, the Holy

Spirit will come in and lead us. Then when we visit them, we will be able to render practical help to them. Not only will they touch our love in the Lord, but they will also receive supply from our inner being and be built up. The Holy Spirit within them will bear witness to this building.

Some of the brothers in the various districts are in their thirties and have recently become married. These ones have a heart for the Lord, yet no one has visited them. They have not found the supply in the church to meet their need. We need some to have a feeling regarding this situation and create a "wheel," seeking the Lord as to how to serve these brothers who were recently married. We do not need to ask the elders; rather, we must first have eyes. Then when the Holy Spirit moves, we will follow Him immediately and render solid help to these ones. As a result of receiving such help over a period of three to five months, these ones will never forget the leading that was rendered to them.

We must be alert, having many eyes, and we must have multidirectional wheels, waiting for the command of the Spirit. Such service is living. The church today needs such service. If we are this kind of a worker, no place can limit us. It will not matter whether we are in a large church or in a small district. Wherever we are, we will be able to supply the saints. Moreover, it will not matter whether the Holy Spirit leads us to speak to a big group or a small group. Today our service depends on whether or not our eyes are bright. In all these things we should learn, and we should practice. Our wheels should turn whenever the Spirit leads us.