

LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Six

A Good Minister of Christ

SC Hymns: 912

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 4:6-8, 15-16; Ezek. 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:6; S. S. 4:11

- 1 Tim 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.
- 1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- 1 Tim 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.
- 1 Tim 4:15 Practice these things; be in them, that your progress may be manifest to all.
- 1 Tim 4:16 Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things; for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.
- Ezek 3:1 Then He said to me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.
- Ezek 3:2 So I opened my mouth, and He gave me that scroll to eat.
- Ezek 3:3 And He said to me, Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your inward parts with this scroll that I am giving you. And I ate it, and it was like honey in my mouth in its sweetness.
- Ezek 3:4 Then He said to me, Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.
- 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.
- Rom 15:6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- S. S. 4:11 Your lips drip fresh honey, my bride; / Honey and milk are under your tongue; / And the fragrance of your garments / Is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

I. First Timothy 4:6 says, “If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed”:

- A. A good minister of Christ is one who serves people with Christ, ministering Christ as Savior, life, life supply, and every positive thing to people.
- B. If we would minister Christ to others, we ourselves must be nourished; a good minister of Christ does not merely teach others about Christ but ministers Christ into others as food—
Matt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1-4; John 6:57, 63.
- Matt 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."
- Jer 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, / And Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart, / For I am called by Your name, / O Jehovah, God of hosts.
- Ezek 3:1 Then He said to me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.
- Ezek 3:2 So I opened my mouth, and He gave me that scroll to eat.
- Ezek 3:3 And He said to me, Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your inward parts with this scroll that I am giving you. And I ate it, and it was like honey in my mouth in its sweetness.
- Ezek 3:4 Then He said to me, Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

- C. We need to lay before the saints the things with which we have been nourished by the Lord through the ministry; we need to present the saints with the riches, the groceries, the Lord has shown us from the Word; let us first be nourished ourselves and then minister this nourishment to all the people of God.
- D. We need to minister the riches of Christ as spiritual food to others that they may be nourished and grow in life; the word of God is likened to milk and solid food, which are for nourishment—Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 2:2; 1 Pet. 2:2:
- Heb 5:12 For when because of the time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you what the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God are and have become those who have need of milk and not of solid food.
- Heb 5:13 For everyone who partakes of milk is inexperienced in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant;
- Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the full-grown, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil.
- 1 Cor 2:2 For I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified.
- 1 Pet 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,
1. The words of the faith are the words of the full gospel concerning God's New Testament economy.
 2. The words of the good teaching are the sweet words that contain and convey the riches of Christ to nourish, edify, and strengthen His believers.
- E. As members of the one Body of Christ, we should aspire to be good ministers of Christ who "speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10) "with one accord" and "with one mouth" (Rom. 15:6):
- 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.
- Rom 15:6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
1. "We have to learn the high peaks of God's present revelation and learn to speak these things...I would encourage all of us to pick up this high commission: to go out with...God's up-to-date vision to move with God for His high peaks of the divine revelation that will consummate His eternal economy"—*The Triune God's Revelation and His Move*, p. 98.
 2. The saints who have been raised up by the Lord's up-to-date ministry have a taste for this ministry, and this taste is the controlling factor in the Lord's recovery; those who have been raised up by this ministry will reject a taste that is contrary to it; this means that if you speak something contrary to the taste of the Lord's recovery, your speaking will be rejected, and you will suffer loss—cf. Psa. 34:8; 1 Pet. 2:3.

Psa 34:8 Taste and see that Jehovah is good; / Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.

1 Pet 2:3 If you have tasted that the Lord is good.

II. A good minister of Christ sacrifices himself and puts himself aside in order to keep the absoluteness of the truth; the truth cannot be entrusted to a person who walks according to his feelings; a man must stand on the side of the truth to oppose himself:

- A. The condition of an individual has nothing to do with God's truth; what you are personally cannot affect what God's truth is, because the truth is like an immovable pillar—1 Tim. 3:15.
- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

- B. Some people lower down the truth a little when they are wrong, and they lift up the truth a little when they are right; this means that they are like elevators, and the truth goes up and down with them; only those who have dealt with themselves are able to maintain the truth.
- C. If we can take the truth as the unique standard, and we have the courage to admit that we are wrong, new light will come to us; if we do not sacrifice the light, the light will uplift us; blessed are those who can go along with the truth.
- D. On the one hand, a man cannot preach the truth unless he has the experience; on the other hand, a person has to know that the truth has nothing to do with him; if a man is brought to a point that he can no longer withstand God's word, if he does not sacrifice the word, and if he finds the word condemning him, he will receive the light; this is the secret to receiving revelation.

III. A good minister of Christ, as a good steward of the varied grace of God, speaks oracles of God for the glorification of God, the expression of God (1 Pet. 4:10-11; Eph. 1:6); he does not seek his own glory to express himself (1 Thes. 2:6; John 5:41, 44) but continually exercises his spirit to reject the self, not preaching himself but exalting Christ as Lord and considering himself as a slave to serve the believers (2 Cor. 4:5; Lev. 14:9 and footnote 1; 1 Cor. 10:31; Isa. 43:7).

- 1 Pet 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
- 1 Pet 4:11 If anyone speaks, as speaking oracles of God; if anyone ministers, as ministering out of the strength which God supplies; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.
- Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved;
- 1 Thes 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.
- John 5:41 I do not receive glory from men.
- John 5:44 How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that is from the only God?
- 2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.
- Lev 14:9 And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his ¹hair; he shall shave his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair. Then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water, and he shall be clean.
- note 1 The hair of the head signifies man's glory in self-display; the beard, man's self-assumed honor; the eyebrows, man's excellencies, merits, and virtues issuing from his natural birth; and all the hair of the body, man's natural strength and ability. The shaving off of all the hair and the bathing in water equal getting rid of the self with all its glory, honor, excellencies, merits, virtues, strength, and ability through the "razor" of the cross. When we have nothing and are nothing, we shall be clean (cf. Phil. 3:7-11).
- 1 Cor 10:31 Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
- Isa 43:7 Everyone who is called by My name, / Whom I have created, formed, and even made for My glory.

IV. A good minister of Christ ministers life and serves the saints according to the principle of the tree of life, not the principle of the tree of right and wrong (Gen. 2:9; John 10:10b; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:10-12; 1 John 5:12, 16a); in his ministry he keeps the following principle and rule of conduct according to Paul's pattern in facing the problems in the church in Corinth—"We should concentrate on Him [Christ], not on any persons, things, or matters other than Him. We should focus on Him as our unique center appointed by God, that all

the problems among the believers may be solved” (footnote 2 on 1 Cor. 1:9).

- Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- John 10:10b ... I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
- 1 Cor 15:45b ...the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
- 1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
- 1 John 5:16a If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. ...
- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called ²into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

V. A good minister of Christ helps the saints to think the “one thing”: the *one thing* in Philippians refers to the subjective knowledge, experience, and enjoyment of Christ; the *one thing* is the pursuing of Christ to gain Him, lay hold of Him, and possess Him—1:20-21; 2:2, 5; 3:7-14; 4:13.

- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,
- Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,
- Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
- Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.

VI. A good minister of Christ is like the Lord’s loving seeker described in Song of Songs 4:11—“Your lips drip fresh honey, my bride; / Honey and milk are under your tongue”—cf. Exo. 3:8:

- Exo 3:8 And I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

- A. Honey is sweet, and it restores the weak and stricken ones (Psa. 119:103); milk feeds the immature ones (1 Pet. 2:2).
Psa 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! / Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

- 1 Pet 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,
- B. The sweetness of honey and the nourishing milk under the tongue of the Lord's loving seeker indicate that she has stored up the riches of the Lord as her spiritual food; she has stored so many riches within her that food seems to be under her tongue, and she can dispense this food to the needy ones at any time—Psa. 119:11; Col. 3:16.
- Psa 119:11 In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You.
- Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.
- C. Her indwelling treasure of the Lord's sweet and nourishing words is not produced overnight; it comes from a long period of gathering, inward activity, and careful storage; this is the unique possession of one who is taught by God with the healthy words of the healthy teaching of God's economy—1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3.
- 1 Tim 1:10 For fornicators, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever other thing that is opposed to the healthy teaching,
- 1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,

VII. The revelations that the prophets received were the burdens that they received; without burden, there is no ministry of the word, no prophesying, for the building up of the church—Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 15:1; Zech. 12:1; Mal. 1:1; Acts 6:4; 1 Cor. 14:4b:

- Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the kings of Judah:
- Isa 2:1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:
- Isa 13:1 The burden concerning Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw:
- Isa 15:1 The burden concerning Moab: Indeed in a night it is devastated
- Zech 12:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah concerning Israel. Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him,
- Mal 1:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel through Malachi.
- Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.
- 1 Cor 14:4b ... but he who prophesies builds up the church.

- A. Our burden is to release God's revelation to man, and God's revelation is released through the words of revelation that God gives to us—2:11-16.
- 1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.
- 1 Cor 2:12 But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God;
- 1 Cor 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words.
- 1 Cor 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.
- 1 Cor 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
- 1 Cor 2:16 For who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.
- B. When we minister the word of God, our concern must be whether we have God's speaking, not the topic of our speaking; in order to have God's speaking, the one who ministers the word must have a burden—Mal. 2:7; S. S. 8:13-14; Eph. 5:26-27.
- Mal 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the mes-senger of Jehovah of hosts.
- S. S. 8:13 O you who dwell in the gardens, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it.

- S. S. 8:14 Make haste, my beloved, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices.
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.
- C. Those who minister the word must bear people's condition before God, sense their condition, and know what God wants to speak—Exo. 28:29-30.
- Exo 28:29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- D. The greatest problem in the ministry of the word is not having a burden from the Lord; without a burden, all our activity will be dead and ineffective; with a burden, we will be living and flourishing:
1. Having a burden deals with us the most; if there is a burden, the self decreases and is dealt with, because there are things that our burden will not allow us to do, and there are areas that will require our being dealt with before we can release our burden.
 2. If we serve according to obligation instead of serving with a burden, such service will cause us to lose the Lord's presence—Mal. 3:14; Deut. 4:25.

Mal 3:14 You say, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge and have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?

Deut 4:25 When you have brought forth children and grandchildren and have languished in the land, and you have spoiled yourselves by making an idol, the form of anything, and have done that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah your God so as to anger Him;
 3. Whenever our service becomes a matter of fulfilling an obligation, our service has already degraded.

VIII. In order to be a good minister of Christ, we must aspire to have the following organic characteristics:

- A. We must love the Lord to the uttermost to be filled with Him and overflow Him into others with the resurrected Christ as our authority—Psa. 18:1; 91:14; 97:10; 116:1-2; 119:140; John 21:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 4:16, 19; Num. 17:1-10; Matt. 19:26.
- Psa 18:1 I love You, O Jehovah, my strength.
- Psa 91:14 Because He has set His love upon Me, I will rescue Him; / I will set Him on high, because He has known My name.
- Psa 97:10 O you who love Jehovah, hate evil! / He preserves the souls of His faithful ones; / He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
- Psa 116:1 I love Jehovah because He hears / My voice, my supplications,
Psa 116:2 Because He inclines His ear to me; / Therefore I will call upon Him all my days.
- Psa 119:140 Your word is very pure, / And Your servant loves it.
- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.
- John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.
- John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.
- 2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- 2 Cor 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.
- 1 John 4:16 And we know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

- 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.
- Num 17:1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,
- Num 17:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and take from them rods, one for each father's house, twelve rods from all their leaders according to their fathers' houses; you shall write everyone's name upon his rod.
- Num 17:3 And you shall write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi, for there shall be one rod for the head of each of their fathers' houses.
- Num 17:4 And you shall place them in the Tent of Meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you.
- Num 17:5 And the rod of the man whom I choose shall bud, and I will put a stop to the murmurings of the children of Israel against Me, which they murmur against you.
- Num 17:6 So Moses spoke to the children of Israel. And every one of their leaders gave him a rod, one rod for each leader according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods, with the rod of Aaron among their rods.
- Num 17:7 And Moses placed the rods before Jehovah in the Tent of the Testimony.
- Num 17:8 And on the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony, and there was the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi: it had budded; it even put forth buds and produced blossoms and bore ripe almonds.
- Num 17:9 And Moses brought out all the rods from before Jehovah to all the children of Israel, and they looked; and each one took his rod.
- Num 17:10 Then Jehovah said to Moses, Put back the rod of Aaron before the Testimony to be kept as a sign against the rebels, so that you may put an end to their murmurings against Me, and they not die.
- Matt 19:26 And looking upon them, Jesus said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.
- B. We must maintain our victory in Christ by having a revived living and a labor in shepherding—Rev. 3:18-22; Hosea 6:1-3; Rom. 6:4; 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-4.**
- Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.
- Rev 3:19 As many as I love I rebuke and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent.
- Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.
- Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.
- Rev 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
- Hosea 6:1 Come and let us return to Jehovah; / For He has torn us, but He will heal us, / And He has stricken us, but He will bind us up.
- Hosea 6:2 He will enliven us after two days; / On the third day He will raise us up, / And we will live in His presence.
- Hosea 6:3 Therefore let us know, let us pursue knowing Jehovah: / His going forth is as sure as the dawn, / And He will come to us as the rain, / As the late rain which waters the earth.
- Rom 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.
- Rom 7:6 But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.
- 1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
- 1 Pet 5:1 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed:
- 1 Pet 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- 1 Pet 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- C. We must abide in the fellowship with the Lord daily and hourly—1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14.**
- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- 2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- D. We must be praying persons—Col. 4:2; Gen. 4:26; Lam. 3:55-56; Rom. 10:12-13.
 Col 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,
 Gen 4:26 And to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of Jehovah.
 Lam 3:55 I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, / From the lowest pit.
 Lam 3:56 You have heard my voice; do not hide / Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.
 Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
 Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- E. We must enjoy the Lord in the Word early in the morning to have a new start of each day—Psa. 119:147-148.
 Psa 119:147 I anticipated the dawn and cried out; / I hoped in Your words.
 Psa 119:148 My eyes anticipated the night watches, / That I might muse upon Your word.
- F. We must walk by and according to our spirit, which is mingled with the divine Spirit—Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
 Gal 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
 Gal 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
 Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
 Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
- G. We must live Christ for His magnification by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ—Phil. 1:19.
 Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- H. We must build up a habit of speaking Christ to all kinds of people daily in season and out of season—Acts 5:42; 8:4; 2 Tim. 4:2.
 Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.
 Acts 8:4 Those therefore who were scattered went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel.
 2 Tim 4:2 Proclaim the word; be ready in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.
- I. We must be ones who deal with our sins thoroughly—1 John 1:7, 9; Psa. 51:1-9, 17.
 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 Psa 51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; / According to the greatness of Your compassions blot out my transgressions.
 Psa 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, / And from my sin cleanse me.
 Psa 51:3 For I do know my transgressions, / And my sin is before me continually.
 Psa 51:4 Against You and You alone have I sinned, / And I have done what is evil in Your sight. / Therefore You are righteous when You speak; / You are clear when You judge.
 Psa 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, / And in sin did my mother conceive me.
 Psa 51:6 Behold, You delight in truth in the inward parts; / And in the hidden part You would make known wisdom to me.
 Psa 51:7 Purge my sin with hyssop, and I will be clean; / Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
 Psa 51:8 Let me hear gladness and joy, / That the bones which You have broken may exult.
 Psa 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins, / And blot out all my iniquities.
 Psa 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; / A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
- J. We must be filled with the essential Spirit inwardly and with the economical Spirit outwardly—Acts 13:52; Eph. 5:18; Acts 4:31, 8; 13:9.
 Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

- Eph 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,
 Acts 4:31 And when they had so besought, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.
- Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders,
 Acts 13:9 But Saul, who is also Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him
- K. We must accumulate the experiences of Christ (Phil. 3:8-10, 12-14) and keep a rich storage of the Lord's word (Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:11, 15; John 8:31; 15:7; 1 John 2:14).**
- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
- Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.
- Psa 119:11 In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You.
 Psa 119:15 I will muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.
- John 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples;
- John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.
- 1 John 2:14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.

IX. Whenever we minister God's word, the primary thing is for us to exercise our spirit; a good minister of Christ builds up a habit of exercising his spirit unto godliness to live Christ in his daily life—1 Tim. 4:6-8, 15-16; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 12:11; John 4:23-24:

- 1 Tim 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.
- 1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- 1 Tim 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.
- 1 Tim 4:15 Practice these things; be in them, that your progress may be manifest to all.
- 1 Tim 4:16 Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things; for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.
- 2 Tim 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
- 2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
- Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
- Rom 7:6 But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.
- Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

- John 4:23 But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him.
- John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.
- A. We saved ones have the capital to live the Christian life and the church life; this capital is our God-given spirit—2 Tim. 1:6-7; 4:22.
- 2 Tim 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
- 2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
- 2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
- B. Godliness, a living that is the expression of God, is the issue of the divine dispensing for the divine economy, and this dispensing depends on the exercise of our spirit to live Christ in our daily life for the corporate manifestation of God in the church life—1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:15-16; 4:7-8; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; *Hymns*, #493, stanza 5.
- 1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things
- 1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.
- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory.
- 1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- 1 Tim 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.
- 2 Tim 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
- 2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.
- Hymns*, #493, stanza 5
- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lord, teach me how to exercise | My spirit now to contact Thee, |
| That in Thy Spirit I may walk | And live by Thy reality. |
- C. The word *exercise* implies forcing; if we Christians want to be strong and want to grow in the Lord, we must force ourselves to use our spirit until we build up a strong habit of exercising our spirit—1 Tim. 4:7.
- 1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
- D. We must exercise our spirit to employ and enjoy the entire blessed Trinity by praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping ourselves in the love of God, and awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ in the day of His victorious appearing so that we may become the totality of the eternal life, the New Jerusalem—Jude 19-21.
- Jude 19 These are those who make divisions, soulish, having no spirit.
- Jude 20 But you, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,
- Jude 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

A GOOD MINISTER OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 4:6-16

In 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul uses the expression *a good minister of Christ Jesus*. A minister of Christ is one who serves others with Christ, ministering Christ as Savior, life, life supply, and every positive

thing to people. He differs from the teacher of the law and of other things (1:7, 3).

LAYING THESE THINGS BEFORE THE BROTHERS

A minister of Christ does not mainly denote a minister who belongs to Christ but a person who ministers Christ to others. He is one who serves people with Christ. For example, if we say that a man is a serving one of a particular meal, we do not mean, of course, that he belongs to the meal. We mean that he serves others with that meal. In like manner, although it is true that a minister of Christ belongs to Christ, the main thought here is that he serves others with Christ, ministering Christ to them. Not only does he belong to Christ, but he serves Christ to others.

In today's Christianity there are a great many ministers who belong to Christ, but very few of them minister Christ to others. To be a minister of Christ does not primarily mean to preach Christ, teach Christ, or tell others about Christ. The main significance of this term is ministering Christ to others.

Verse 6 of chapter 4 confirms this understanding of the expression *a good minister of Christ*. Here Paul says, "If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed." By *these things* Paul means all that he has covered thus far in this Epistle. Just as a steward lays different courses of food before guests at a dinner, so a good minister of Christ should lay "these things" before the believers. Furthermore, Paul's use of the term *being nourished* indicates that his concept is that of supplying life to others. It is significant that here Paul does not say "being taught" but "being nourished" with the words of the faith. If we would minister Christ to others, we ourselves must first be nourished. Being nourished with Christ, we will have Christ as food, as life supply, to minister to others. The words *being nourished* give us the ground to say that a good minister of Christ does not merely teach others about Christ but ministers Christ into others as food. Others should be able to testify of us that we have nourished them with Christ.

Throughout the years my aim in the ministry has been to nourish the saints. No doubt I have passed on a good deal of knowledge. But I can testify that in every message, I exercise my spirit not just to pass on knowledge but, while I am giving forth a certain kind of knowledge, to supply something nourishing to the Lord's people. My desire is to minister the riches of Christ as food that the saints may be nourished. Recently, many have written me letters telling how they have been richly fed with Christ through the messages.

If you have a heart to care for others in the Lord's recovery, you should not give them mere teaching. Whenever you fellowship with others concerning Christ, you may give them some knowledge. But while you are teaching them, you need to exercise your spirit to minister spiritual food that they may be nourished. If you do this, you will be a good minister of Christ.

With Paul and Timothy we see an excellent pattern. As we have pointed out, Paul told Timothy to lay "these things before the brothers," referring to the things that he was writing in this Epistle. However, before Timothy could lay these things before others, he first had to feed on them himself. He had to digest them, assimilate them, and allow them to saturate his inner being. Then he would be able to lay them before the brothers. Today we should follow Timothy's example and lay before the saints the things with which we have been nourished by the Lord through the ministry. How wonderful the church life would be if we all did this! However, if we turn from the ministry and seek to produce something different, we may give place to different teachings. It was not Timothy's intention to teach anything different from what Paul taught. Rather, he would lay before the brothers what he had received from Paul.

At this point, I would like to say a word concerning my burden in putting out the Lifestudy messages. The aim of these messages is to produce groceries for the local churches. My burden is not mainly to "cook" these spiritual groceries; it is to produce them and supply them to the churches that every local church may be a well-stocked supermarket, filled with a variety of nourishing foods. If the leading ones in a local church lay before the saints the riches contained in the Life-studies, the saints will be abundantly nourished. I have received many letters testifying that this has happened.

It is a fact of history in the Lord's recovery that any church that follows the ministry is strong and blessed. But those churches that neglect the ministry and try instead to do something on their own have become a failure. However, in saying these things, I wish to make it very clear that I by no means insist that the churches or the saints read the Life-study messages. To repeat, my burden is to produce groceries. The churches and the saints are free either to use them or to disregard them. But if the saints cast away the nourishment found in these messages, I wonder what they will feed on. We are what we eat. If we eat the "groceries" produced in today's religion, we will be part of religion. Let me say in frankness and honesty that the leading ones need to take "these things" and lay them before the saints that they may be nourished.

Paul's expression *if you lay these things before the brothers* is very significant. We need to be impressed with the fact that this also is part of the Bible, the Word of God. I do not charge anyone to lay my words before the saints. It is not my practice to charge the churches to do anything. Representatives of hundreds of churches can testify that I do not charge them to do things. I do not even know many of the things that take place in the church in Anaheim, where I live. I am very glad that the elders take action regarding many things without letting me know. This is a strong proof that I am not a pope. Very much to the contrary, I am a little servant of the Lord, a farmer burdened to produce groceries for the saints. Far from charging the churches to do anything, I simply long that they feed on the spiritual riches the Lord has given us. Do not lay Witness Lee's teaching before the brothers. Instead, present them the riches, the groceries, that the Lord has shown us from the Word.

I am deeply burdened by the fact that many who love the Lord Jesus and seek Him have been deceived and frustrated. We must find a way to share with them the spiritual riches the Lord has provided us. Many who truly love the Lord are starving. We must take up the burden to supply them with food. We all need to be good ministers of Christ, serving others with His riches. Let us first be nourished ourselves and then minister this nourishment to all the people of God.

We would emphasize that being nourished is for the growth in life. This is a matter of life, and it differs from merely being taught, which is a matter of knowledge. To minister Christ to others requires that we ourselves first be nourished with the words of life concerning Christ.

BEING NOURISHED

In verse 6 Paul specifically speaks of "being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching." The words of the faith are the words of the full gospel concerning God's New Testament economy. The focus of God's economy is not the image in Daniel 2 or the four beasts in Daniel 7. If you want to see the focal point of God's economy, study the books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. We need to be nourished with the words of the faith, God's economy, found in these books.

According to 1 Timothy 4:6, we should also be nourished with the good teaching which we have closely followed. The words of the good teaching are the sweet words that contain and convey the riches of Christ to nourish, edify, and strengthen His believers. Actually, the words of the faith and the words of the good teaching refer to the same thing. If we would teach others, we ourselves must first follow these words closely. Following them closely and being nourished with them, we will then be able to feed others. For example, if a mother does not know how to nourish herself properly, she will not know how to feed healthy food to her children. Through her own experience of being nourished, she will know what food is best for her children. This illustrates the fact that as good ministers of Christ, we must first be nourished ourselves with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which we have closely followed, and then we will be able to nourish others.

REFUSING PROFANE AND OLD-WOMANISH MYTHS

In verse 7 Paul goes on to say, "But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness." The Greek word for *profane* means "touching and being touched by worldliness, contrary to being holy." If we would exercise ourselves unto godliness, we must refuse

profane and old-womanish myths. Much of the teaching and preaching in Christianity today falls in the category of old-womanish myths. We should forget these myths and come back to the pure word of the Bible. In the so-called services among Christians today, there is a great deal of profane, secular, and worldly talk. People discuss politics and how to be successful in business. All of this is profane talk, comparable to old-womanish myths.

EXERCISING UNTO GODLINESS

Refusing the profane and old-womanish myths, we should exercise unto godliness. Such exercise is like gymnastics. The words *unto godliness* mean “with a view to godliness.” Godliness is Christ lived out of us to be the manifestation of God. Today this very Christ is the Spirit dwelling in our spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 8:9-10; 2 Tim. 4:22). Hence, to exercise ourselves unto godliness is to exercise our spirit to live Christ in our daily life.

In 1 Timothy 4:7 Paul uses a Greek term referring to gymnastic exercise with respect to exercise unto godliness. We know from 3:16 that the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, is great. By our spirit with the indwelling Spirit, we must exercise ourselves unto this goal, unto the expression of God.

In 4:8 Paul continues, “For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.” The words *a little* denote a few things, to a small part of our being, in contrast to *all things*. *All things* refers not only to one part of our being but to all parts—physical, psychological, and spiritual—both temporal and eternal. The promise of the present life, a life that is in this age, is like the promises in Matthew 6:33, John 16:33, Philippians 4:6-7, and 1 Peter 5:8-10. The promise of the coming life, a life that is in the next age and in eternity, is like those in 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:7, 17; and 21:6-7. A promise like that in Mark 10:29-30 is of both the present life and the coming life.

Once again, I would urge you to refuse all profane and old-womanish myths. Even talk about doctrines such as eternal security can be nothing more than an old-womanish myth. People may come to us after a meeting and say, “I have been to the meetings of the church a number of times. But I have not yet heard a message on eternal security. What do you think about this?” Others may want to discuss the seventh-day Sabbath. This also is to talk of old-womanish myths.

In applying the matter of old-womanish myths to the talk common among today’s Christians, I am following the principle established by Paul. Here in 1 Timothy the old-womanish myths probably refer to Jewish myths. Those with a background in Judaism were familiar with many myths. In the same principle, those who have spent years in Christianity also know many myths. Some come to us and ask about healing, speaking in tongues, prophesying, and even the lengthening of legs. I have known many persons who spoke in tongues but who did not exhibit godliness in their daily living. We must be a living testimony of those who refuse the old-womanish myths and who continually exercise themselves unto godliness.

It is of crucial importance that we exercise unto godliness. Inwardly, we need nourishment, and outwardly, we should have godliness. From within we should be nourished with Christ, and then we should have a living that is the expression of God. (*Life-study of 1 Timothy*, second edition, pp. 69-74)

THE FIRST PROBLEM—NOT HAVING A BURDEN

The greatest problem in the administration of the church and the ministry of the word is not having a burden or, we can say, not receiving a burden or not paying attention to a burden. It is possible for elders to administrate the church without a burden. Those who minister the word may also do so without a burden. The discharge of our burden when we minister the word does not depend on how well we speak. If our only desire is to speak well in order to touch people, our speaking will be without a burden. Likewise, an ability to administrate the church does not discharge one’s burden. It is not a matter of how well we can administrate but whether our administration is effective and can touch people.

For example, when people come to a meeting, there may be the need to release the word. We must seek the Lord concerning what we speak and concerning the issue of our speaking. It is not a

matter of how well we speak, the logistics of our presentation, or whether the saints are touched; rather, it is a matter of what will be produced in the saints. If some are not yet saved, we should receive a burden to bear their souls by the Lord's grace in order to sow the seed of salvation into them when we release the word. Our burden is salvation, not the release of a dynamic word. If they are saved but do not love the Lord, our burden should be for them to love the Lord. If they love the Lord but are not willing to give themselves to the Lord and receive His dealing, our burden should be for them to willingly give themselves to the Lord and be dealt with by Him. This is the ministry of the word with a burden.

Otherwise, our Lord's Day message meeting may easily fall into the condition of the so-called Sunday service. Every week someone is assigned to release a message in order to maintain the meeting. After the meeting, everyone goes home, eats lunch, rests, and returns in the evening for the bread-breaking meeting. This is a Sunday service. In this situation those who minister the word must receive a burden. We need to know the condition of those who come to listen to a message. They might not have any feeling concerning their own condition, but we need to be clear and full of feeling concerning their condition. They may be able to sit and listen peacefully week after week, but we cannot speak peacefully week after week. We need to receive the burden to "disturb" and "trouble" them so that even if they come to the meeting peacefully, they will be inwardly disturbed when they leave.

If we are not concerned that our speaking does not produce any effect in those who listen, we do not have a burden. This situation indicates that those who speak and those who listen are in a routine. This is the condition of degraded Christianity where the congregation routinely listens to the pastor, and the pastor routinely preaches to the congregation year after year. This should not be our practice. The ministry of the word should enlighten those who hear. When we minister the word every Lord's Day, we should "trouble" people to the extent that they have no peace. This is what it means to have a burden.

If the listeners are lukewarm, even though they may listen peacefully, those who minister the word should not be at peace. They should go before the Lord, and let Him take away their peace, even to the point of losing sleep and not eating until they receive a burden from the Lord. Then their speaking will enable the Holy Spirit to work in the listeners. Only this kind of speaking is the speaking of God. Brothers who minister the word must have a burden, not merely doctrines, logic, and examples. Ministering the word in this way is intolerable; it is an offense to God, and it is a sin in His eyes.

Receiving the Burden to Speak God's Word in the Ministry of the Word

In Isaiah 13:1 the Chinese Union Version says that the prophets received inspiration when they spoke for God. The Hebrew word for *inspiration*, however, means "burden." Man needs to receive a burden. We cannot neglect this responsibility and think that God has not given us a burden. The Epistles of Paul clearly show that he received burdens. When someone in the church in Corinth committed the sin of fornication, Paul did not simply condemn the sin or stop praying for the one who sinned. He received a burden from God to bear a responsibility and commission for the church (1 Cor. 5:1-13). Paul did not preach doctrines in his Epistles; instead, he was burdened to fellowship concerning certain matters, so he was able to touch people's feelings.

There is a danger that the ministry of the word in the church in Taipei may become the same as the preaching of sermons in Sunday services. When we minister the word of God, our concern should be whether we have God's speaking, not the topic of our speaking. In order to have God's speaking, the one who ministers the word must have a burden. People may have a negative reaction or be stirred up when they hear a message that is spoken with a burden, but they cannot deny that it is God's speaking. This kind of message can help people and solve their problems. A message that sounds nice but is void of God's speaking cannot touch people, turn them inwardly, or satisfy those who are hungry and thirsty, because they are not the words that God wants to speak even if they are from the Bible.

Therefore, speaking should not be easy or cheap. We cannot speak simply because we have prepared a message. One who ministers the word should bear people's condition before God. He bears the responsibility of knowing their needs. He needs to sense their condition and know what God wants to speak. The help we have received from training cannot replace the burden that is within us. The

danger is that the burden has been replaced so that we are short of revelation and spiritual burden.

Being Desperate for People's Situation to Preach the Effective Word

Fifty-two weeks a year there is a message meeting in the church in Taipei on the Lord's Day. Do the brothers who minister the word fast and pray before ministering the word? Of course, there is no regulation that requires the brothers to fast and pray, as this would be useless. The brothers need to understand that bearing the word of God is equal to bearing the souls of man. The saints come to the meetings week after week to listen to our speaking, so we must bear them. If there is no change in them after three months, we should not be at peace. This can be compared to a merchant who is unable to sleep peacefully when he has no business for two weeks and who is unable to eat when there is no profit after three months. He will be full of sorrow and concern.

Many brothers and sisters with businesses come to me. Although they simply sit without opening their mouths, I can sense the heavy burden within them and realize that they have encountered difficulties in their business. Are the brothers who speak sorrowful for the souls who have not changed in three months? A store owner who has no customers would be unable to continue working, considering everything to be fine. He would consider the situation and find a way to change the situation. How can those who minister the word continue as usual when there is no profit? We should not consider that it is sufficient merely to speak from the podium week after week.

When Brother Nee began his work in Foochow, he fasted and prayed every Saturday for the gospel meeting on the Lord's Day. He considered before the Lord what to speak and how to speak. He considered what word the sinners needed to hear. Since he fasted and prayed with a heavy burden, his words were always very effective and were later published as messages. Many who are used by the Lord bear a burden in their ministry of the word. When Peace Wang was young, she had a successful revival work. She always knelt before the Lord and spent a long period of time weeping and grieving for sinners. Therefore, when she stood up to speak, her words were always living and operative.

Serving with a Burden

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

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

Discerning between the Service of Responsibility and the Service of Burden

The elders in all the churches must come before the Lord to receive a burden and to see if all the home meetings in their localities are satisfactory. We must have a concern for the condition of the

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

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

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

Serving with a Burden Causing the Self to Be Dealt With

Children will never be successful in their studies if they study only for their tests. If they have a burden, their studying will change. A brother may give a message merely out of obligation, because it is his turn to speak. However, giving messages is not a matter of obligation but of burden. We may speak for half a year, but those who listen might not receive anything, and our speaking will be in vain. If we have a burden, our messages will not be ineffective. Our messages should "trouble" people so that they have no peace, and they are stirred up to love and serve the Lord. In this situation, our being will be touched by God. There is no need for the self to be dealt with if we give messages that are out of obligation. However, in giving a message out of a burden, our self must be dealt with.

Working from nine to six as an employee is a matter of obligation and does not require any dealing. However, we would work differently if we had our own business. Our laziness would be dealt with because we would rise earlier to work. The attitude of a waiter or clerk toward customers might not need to be dealt with. However, a person who owns his shop will adjust himself in order not to offend his customers. Instead of being dealt with, some brothers seem to have more problems because they serve out of obligation, not burden. If there is a burden, our self decreases and is dealt with. It will not increase, because there are things that our burden will not allow us to do, and there are areas that will require our being dealt with before we can release our burden. Hence, having a burden deals with us the most.

A young man who is not burdened with a family can be carefree in his living. However, after he is married and has children, he will know the meaning of being diligent and disciplined. A child can spend his parents' money freely without self-control. But when he is older and lives on his own, his spending is budgeted. He will be more careful when he goes shopping. Spending his parents' money was one thing, but spending his own money is a burden. It seems as if the brothers in the churches serve according to obligation as employees in a company. They do not seem to have much burden. Such service is dangerous and will cause us to lose the Lord's presence.

Everyone Receiving a Burden and Serving the Lord according to Burden

Everyone who serves the Lord must receive a burden and have a burden. This also applies to the sisters even though they are not involved in the church administration or in giving messages. If the sisters fellowship together and visit people simply because it is time to do so, they are doing so out of obligation. The sisters should seek to know the result of their fellowship and visitation. They should

know the condition of the sisters under their care. They should not say, "As long as the Lord works in them, they will be all right, but if the Lord does not work in them, there is nothing we can do." We must receive a genuine burden.

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

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

Some say that it is easy to lose their burden after a period of time. However, those who have been shown mercy receive burdens continually. It is a serious problem if our burden disappears after we have worked for some time. However, a Christian can continue to work out of obligation even though he has no burden, because his conscience will bother him if he stops working. Whenever our service becomes a matter of fulfilling an obligation, our service has already degraded. Genuine service is not a matter of obligation but a matter of burden; burden always goes beyond obligation. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1957*, vol. 2, "The Administration of the Church and the Ministry of the Word," pp. 233-240)