

**BEING A VESSEL UNTO HONOR, A FULLY EQUIPPED MAN OF GOD,
BY BEING EMPOWERED IN THE GRACE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS
TO FULLY ACCOMPLISH OUR MINISTRY
IN THE UNIQUE MINISTRY OF GOD’S ECONOMY**
(Lord’s Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight
“Fully Accomplish Your Ministry”

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Tim. 4:5d; 1 Tim. 1:12;
2 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 4:11-12; Col. 4:17

Acts 1:17	For he was numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry.
Acts 1:25	To take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.
2 Tim 4:5d	... fully accomplish your ministry.
1 Tim 1:12	I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry,
2 Cor 4:1	Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
Eph 4:11	And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
Eph 4:12	For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Col 4:17	And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.

I. In the eyes of the Lord there is just one ministry—2 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 4:12:

- 2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- A. Speaking of the need of a replacement for Judas, Peter said that Judas “was numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry”—Acts 1:17:
1. The apostles prayed for the Lord to show them clearly the one whom He had chosen “to take the place of this ministry and apostleship”—vv. 24-25.
Acts 1:24 And they prayed and said, You Lord, Knower of the hearts of all, show us clearly the one whom You have chosen of these two
Acts 1:25 To take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.
 2. As used in verses 17 and 25, the word *ministry* refers to the ministry that bears the testimony of Jesus—v. 8:
Acts 1:17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry.
Acts 1:25 To take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.
Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
 - a. Though the apostles were twelve in number, their ministry was uniquely one—*this ministry*, a corporate ministry in the principle of the Body of Christ.
 - b. All the apostles carried out the same ministry to bear the unique testimony of the incarnated, resurrected, and ascended Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all.
- B. In 2 Corinthians 4:1 Paul says, “Having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart”:
1. The ministry in 2 Corinthians is the corporate ministry of the New Testament ministers:
 - a. All the ministers have their own portion of the ministry.

- b. In this corporate ministry Paul had his portion, Peter had his portion, and Timothy had his portion—2 Tim. 4:5d.
2 Tim 4:5d ... fully accomplish your ministry.
- c. When we add all the portions together, we have “this ministry,” which is the New Testament ministry.
- 2. The many ministers have one ministry—the ministry of the new covenant for the accomplishment of God’s New Testament economy.
- 3. All the apostles’ works are to carry out this unique ministry, the ministering of Christ to people for the building up of His Body.
- C. Second Corinthians 3:6 tells us that God has made us “sufficient as ministers of a new covenant”:
 - 1. The Spirit, the ultimate expression of the processed Triune God, imparts the divine life, even God Himself, into the believers and the apostles, making them ministers of a new covenant.
 - 2. Hence, their ministry is constituted with the Triune God of life by His lifegiving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b.
1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- D. “I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry”—1 Tim. 1:12:
 - 1. In this verse Paul does not say, “He appointed me to my ministry.”
 - 2. Paul says that the Lord appointed him to the one unique, corporate New Testament ministry.
 - 3. We all should praise the Lord that by His mercy and grace He has appointed us to the corporate ministry that builds up the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12, 16.
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

II. Although the foregoing verses reveal that the ministry in the New Testament is corporate, certain other verses indicate that the ministry is also personal:

- A. Acts 20:24 refers to Paul’s personal ministry because Paul speaks of the ministry which he had received from the Lord; the ministry in this verse is the personal ministry:
Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
 - 1. Paul’s ministry was his being; he and Christ had become one—Eph. 3:17a; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 3:8-9; 4:1.
Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...
1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
2 Cor 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?
2 Cor 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.
2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
 - 2. What he preached was what he was; he ministered his very being to others.
 - 3. Paul was one with Christ and had been constituted of Christ; thus, his ministry was a ministry of the Christ who had been constituted into his being.
- B. Acts 21:19 definitely and clearly refers to Paul’s personal ministry: “He related one by one the things which God did among the Gentiles through his ministry.”

- C. Colossians 4:17 says, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it”; Archippus had a ministry, and in the same principle, we all have a ministry.
- D. In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul charges Timothy to fully accomplish his ministry:
 2 Tim 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelist, fully accomplish your ministry.
1. For Timothy to fully accomplish his ministry was for him to fill up the full measure of his ministry.
 2. This ministry denotes the ministry of the word, which is to minister Christ in all His riches (Eph. 3:8) to both sinners and believers for the building up of the Body of Christ (4:11-12).
 Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
 Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
 Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
 3. Such a ministry is desperately needed to counter the trend of decline, as prophesied in 2 Timothy 4:3 and 4.
 2 Tim 4:3 For the time will come when they will not tolerate the healthy teaching; but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears,
 2 Tim 4:4 And they will turn away their ear from the truth and will be turned aside to myths.
- E. Because the New Testament ministry is the service of the Body of Christ and because the Body has many members, every member has his own ministry—Eph. 4:11-12:
 Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
 Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
1. According to the members, there are many ministries; however, according to the Body as a whole, there is just one ministry—1 Tim. 1:12.
 1 Tim 1:12 I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry,
 2. Our personal ministry should not be separate from the corporate ministry.
 3. The Body has a corporate ministry, and all the members of the Body have their individual ministries.
 4. As we have seen, all the ministries of the members of the Body added together equal the corporate ministry—Eph. 4:12.
 Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- F. There should be the same speaking from different angles—1 Cor. 1:10:
 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.
1. There is a need for many to be raised up to speak the same thing from different angles.
 2. We believe that the Lord will raise up many more to carry out the unique ministry—2 Cor. 4:1.
 2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
 3. We all have a part in this ministry, which is the one ministry with different functions, different angles, and different aspects—Eph. 4:11-12.
 Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
 Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

4. We are not following a man or imitating anyone; however, we are ministering the same thing.

III. “For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ”—v. 12:

- A. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers (v. 11) are for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry mentioned in verse 12.
Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- B. The many gifted persons in verse 11 have only one ministry, that is, to minister Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ; this is the unique ministry in the New Testament economy—2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12.
Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
1 Tim 1:12 I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry,
- C. The perfecting of the saints is unto the work of the ministry, and the work of the ministry is unto the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12, 16.
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- D. “This is the Lord’s recovery, this is our commission, this is our burden, and this is our ministry. How blessed we are to have a part in this ministry!”—*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1978, vol. 3, “Truth Messages,” p. 323.*

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY

In this chapter we will consider the truth concerning the ministry in the New Testament economy.

ONE MINISTRY

In the eyes of the Lord there is just one ministry in the New Testament age. Speaking of the need of a replacement for Judas, Peter said that Judas “was numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry” (Acts 1:17). The twelve apostles were all in “this ministry.” This indicates that there is one unique ministry in the New Testament. Years ago, I did not see this. But because of the controversy regarding receiving the ministry of others, I have spent time to study the pure Word regarding this matter. My eyes have been opened to see that the twelve apostles were all in “this ministry.” Therefore, when the apostles prayed about a replacement for Judas, they asked the Lord to show them whom He had chosen to “take the place of this ministry” (v. 25).

Some may argue that “this ministry” is limited to the twelve apostles. But Ephesians 4:11 and 12 say, “He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.” Verse 11 is related to the whole period of time from the apostles until the Lord’s second coming. In God’s New Testament economy there are many apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. Throughout the centuries there have been thousands of them. Nevertheless, all of them have been given for the perfecting of the saints to the work of the ministry. Notice that verse 12 does not say “the work of the ministries” but “the work of the ministry.” Although

there are thousands of gifted persons, all are for the work of the one ministry.

During the New Testament age God's unique intention is to build up the Body. God created the universe, formed man, and accomplished redemption all for this. For this one purpose, God has one ministry. God does not have two operations in this New Testament age; He has one operation with one ministry.

The ministry in the New Testament economy is a corporate ministry, a ministry that includes thousands of gifted people. Therefore, in 2 Corinthians 4:1 Paul says, "Having this ministry." Paul does not say, "I have this ministry" or "We have these ministries"; he says, "Having this ministry." Paul, his co-workers, and the other apostles all had this ministry, the one ministry in the New Testament.

In 2 Corinthians 3:6 Paul says that God "made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant." The ministry is the service; all the ministers are the serving ones carrying out this service. The many ministers do not have many services but one service, one ministry.

I like Paul's word in 1 Timothy 1:12: "I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry." In this verse Paul does not say, "He appointed me to my ministry"; he says that the Lord appointed him to the one unique, corporate New Testament ministry. We all need to praise the Lord that by His mercy and grace He has appointed us to the corporate ministry that builds up the Body of Christ.

PERSONAL MINISTRY AND CORPORATE MINISTRY

Although these verses reveal that the ministry in the New Testament is corporate, certain other verses seem to indicate that the ministry is personal. In Acts 20:24 Paul says, "I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God." This verse refers to Paul's personal ministry because Paul speaks of the ministry which he had received from the Lord. Hence, the ministry in this verse is the personal ministry.

Acts 21:19 definitely and clearly refers to Paul's personal ministry: "Having greeted them, he related one by one the things which God did among the Gentiles through his ministry." Other verses that seem to refer to personal ministry are 2 Timothy 4:5 and Colossians 4:17. In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul charges Timothy, "Fully accomplish your ministry," apparently encouraging him to fulfill his personal ministry. Colossians 4:17 says, "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it." This evidently points to Archippus's personal ministry.

In considering the verses that speak of personal ministry, we need to realize that all the believers are members of the one Body. As a whole, the Body has one corporate ministry, not many ministries. Although there are many functions in the Body, the ministry in the Body is one. For example, when I speak, my whole body speaks: my eyes, nose, ears, arms, fingers, legs, and feet are all involved. Therefore, my speaking is my body's ministry. This ministry is corporate. However, each part of my body also has its own ministry. The mouth speaks, the hands make gestures, and the feet render support. But when the ministries of all the members are added together, they total the unique ministry of the body. This example indicates that the many ministries of the members of the Body are not separate ministries but part of one corporate ministry.

The New Testament ministry is uniquely one and corporate. But because this ministry is the service of the Body of Christ and because the Body has many members, every member has its own ministry. Thus, according to the members, there are many ministries; however, according to the Body as a whole, there is just one ministry. Your ministry should not be separate from the corporate ministry. The Body has a corporate ministry, and all the members of the Body have their individual ministries. As we have seen, all the ministries of the members added together equal the corporate ministry.

THE MINISTRIES IN THE DENOMINATIONS

Regarding this matter of the ministry, we need to be clear both about the truth in the Bible and about the situation of today's Christianity. Originally, during the time of the apostles, there was one

Body with one ministry. But due to the degradation of the church, the divisions and denominations came into existence. Now every division has its own so-called ministry. The Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, the Episcopalians, and the Pentecostals all have their own ministries. The ministers, pastors, and preachers in the various denominations are working to build up the denominations, not the Body. Because each is building up his own denomination, he cannot work together with others.

We can have nothing to do with the denominations. In the Lord's recovery we are for the recovery of Christ as life and everything to us for the building up of the church. For the fulfillment of God's purpose in His recovery, we need to go back to the beginning, back to the pure Word. In the New Testament there is one unique ministry. From the time of the apostles until now, this ministry has not been terminated. I believe that we are the continuation of this ministry. I am happy to say that I am in this ministry, that I am part of this ministry. We are in the unique ministry according to the New Testament economy.

NOT RECEIVING MINISTRIES THAT DAMAGE THE BODY

At the time of the apostles there were no denominations. Because of the degradation of the church and the existence of many divisions, there apparently are now many ministries. Can we in the Lord's recovery, who share in the unique ministry, the continuation of the ministry of the apostles, accept the ministries of the denominations and divisions? No, we cannot. If we accept them, the recovery will be damaged. The proper ministry, the ministry according to God's New Testament economy, is for the building up of the Body of Christ, but the other ministries are for the building up of the denominations. Because this is the case, we cannot receive the ministries that build up the denominations.

When I was in Taiwan, some denominational missionaries told me that they appreciated the work of my ministry and that they wanted to invite me to speak to their people and to help them. They also suggested that I invite them to speak to us. How would you reply to such a suggestion? The correct way to answer is to say that Brother Lee and his co-workers have been commissioned by the Lord to build up the Body of Christ. However, those in the denominations are building up the denominations. We are not burdened to do this. Rather, our burden is to continue the ministry in the New Testament for the building up of the Body. Because the ministries of those in the denominations are for the building up of the denominations, we cannot invite them to speak to us. If we were to give place to such ministries, the Body would be damaged. This is the reason we cannot receive those ministries. We admit that there is something genuine in them, but as a whole their goal is to build up the denominations. This is a frustration and an opposition to the building up of the Body.

Regarding this matter of the ministry, we need the Lord's shining. We need to go to the Lord and open ourselves to Him. If we do this, the light will shine upon this teaching concerning the ministry, and the teaching will become the truth, the reality, to us. From the time the Lord made me clear about this matter many years ago, I have never been distracted from it, because the shining of the light is so bright. The light shines upon all my steps; therefore, I cannot help the denominations. Furthermore, we cannot invite those in the denominations to speak to us and thereby cause damage to the Lord's recovery. Because the ministries of those in the denominations are for a purpose other than God's eternal purpose to build up the Body of Christ, we cannot cooperate with them. We can neither help them nor receive help from them. Some may think that we are narrow-minded for taking this stand. Actually, we are not narrow-minded. However, the light regarding the ministry is shining upon us; we cannot deny that we have seen it. Because of this light, we cannot change in this matter.

SPEAKING THE SAME THING FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES

Some have said that the Lord's recovery is a one-man show, that here there is room only for the ministry of Witness Lee, not for the ministry of anyone else. This is absolutely false. This is not my intention nor is it my practice. In the Lord's recovery I do not like to see one brother ministering all the time. For example, during the summer training in 1964 and 1965 I invited a certain brother to share with me in the ministry. Eventually, he gave up the recovery; but we did not give him up. We have also

invited other brothers to participate in the ministry. Our intention is to have a good number of brothers ministering. However, all who share in the ministry need to minister the same thing.

When I say that we all should minister the same thing, I mean that we should speak the same thing according to the way of the New Testament. The four Gospels speak the same thing, but they speak the same thing from different angles. We cannot deny that there are differences between Matthew and Mark or between Luke and John. Matthew wrote from the angle of the kingship; Mark, from the angle of service; Luke, from the angle of redemption through the proper humanity; and John, from the angle of Christ's deity. In the Gospels we have four biographies of one person; one person is viewed from different angles. I hope that many will be raised up to speak the same thing from different angles. This one thing is the recovery of Christ as life and everything to us for the building up of the local churches.

Some criticize the brothers by saying that they are nothing but tape recordings of Witness Lee. This is not true. I hope that in the coming years many of the young people will speak of Christ for the building up of the Body. I have no intention of being the only one to minister. On the contrary, I expect the Lord to raise up many more to carry on the unique ministry. We all have a part in this ministry, which is one ministry with different functions, different angles, and different aspects. You have your part, and I have mine. When we have all the functions and aspects, we have the ministry of the Body.

Some who have left the recovery accuse us of not accepting their ministry. But their ministry is a ministry of undermining and damaging the Lord's recovery. How can we possibly accept the ministries of those whose intention has been to undermine the Lord's recovery and to overthrow the basic matters of life, including the cross? I say this not out of any personal feeling but out of a concern for the truth. I have no personal enmity whatever toward these ones; however, I cannot accept their "ministry," which tears down rather than builds up.

We need to be clear about the truth regarding the ministry, about the situation of today's Christianity, and about our practice. Our practice is according to the truth in the New Testament. We are glad to see different brothers share various aspects or angles concerning Christ as life for the building up of the church in His riches. I recognize that I am very limited. Nevertheless, by the Lord's mercy, I am doing what I should do. Now I expect that others will minister the same thing from different angles. I certainly do not want anyone to copy me, and I do not want to be surrounded by "yes men." What an insult to say that the brothers are "yes men"! I repeat, many brothers need to stand up to minister concerning Christ for the building up of the Body. How wonderful it would be if many did this!

THE BLESSING OF SPEAKING THE SAME THING

When I was a young man, I loved the Bible very much, and I spent as much time as I could studying it. The last thing I did before going to sleep at night was read a portion of the Word, and the first thing I did upon waking in the morning was read another portion. For seven and a half years I was under the Brethren teachers, who taught me how to interpret the parables, prophecies, and types. How I loved their teaching! Eventually, I met Brother Nee, and through him I came to know life, the Spirit, Christ for my experience, the church, and the Lord's recovery. All these things became truth to me and caused my entire Christian being to be revolutionized. After a church had been raised up in northern China through my ministry, I visited Brother Nee in Shanghai and stayed with him for a period of months. At the end of that time, he told me that he and the co-workers felt that I should come with my family to Shanghai and work there with them. From that time onward, my speaking was always in the line of Brother Nee's ministry. I knew that he had been raised up by the Lord to bring in the recovery and that I had to be one with him in the ministry. Therefore, I preached whatever he preached, although not like a tape recorder. I was absolutely one with him, and I spoke the same thing as he. I have no regrets about this because it has been the cause of great blessing to me and to the churches.

We need to be clear that we are not following a man or imitating anyone. However, we are ministering the same thing from different angles and in different aspects. By doing this the riches are

manifest; yet we have a glorious oneness. This is the one ministry, which encompasses many ministries. We all are ministering Christ as life and as everything for the building up of the local churches. This is the Lord's recovery, this is our commission, this is our burden, and this is our ministry. How blessed we are to have a part in this ministry! (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1978, vol. 3, "Truth Messages," pp. 317-323)