

《Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery(Vol.1)》

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PREFACE

Volumes 61 and 62 of The Collected Works contain messages given during Watchman Nee's visits to Canton and Hong Kong between 1949 and 1950. They are compiled from notes of Weigh Kwang-hsi and his wife, Mrs. Weigh Lin Yitian. Most of the messages were spoken by Watchman Nee. Some of them were spoken by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee together.

These two volumes have been divided into two sections. The first section contains the record of five times of fellowship with co-workers in Canton in August of 1949 and one time of fellowship with co-workers in Hong Kong on November 21, 1949. These records are contained in chapters one through six.

The second section covers the period between February 2 and March 11, 1950. Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were both in Hong Kong during that time conducting service meetings, conferences, and private fellowships together. The record of their sharing is contained in chapters seven through forty-five. Watchman Nee arrived in Hong Kong in January of 1950, and returned to China on March 12. Witness Lee arrived in Hong Kong on February 16 and left on April 1 for Taiwan. During their stay, these two brothers rendered much help to the church in Hong Kong. Volumes 61 and 62 of The Collected Works only include the record of the meetings in which Watchman Nee attended and spoke. Concerning this period of time, Brother K. H. Weigh remarked, "In the past it had been a rare occurrence for these two brothers to visit the same church at the same time. Their ministry issued in a great revival in the church in Hong Kong. Previously there had been about three hundred in the meetings. As a result of the revival the number increased to between two and three thousand. There was a special blessing upon the church in Hong Kong" (Vol. 26 of The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, p. 449).

The content of these meetings includes handing over oneself for the preaching of the gospel, release from the bondage of money, the whole Body rising up to serve, spiritual ministry, and arrangements concerning various aspects of church service. Every chapter is weighty in content and fresh in revelation.

Since the messages in these two volumes were released at a time when Watchman Nee's ministry was in its mature stage, we have named these two

volumes "Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery." They form the final volumes in this series of The Collected Works of Watchman Nee.

**TALKS WITH CO-WORKERS
FROM HONG KONG AND CANTON,
AUGUST 1949 AND
NOVEMBER 21, 1949**

CHAPTER ONE

**A TALK WITH CO-WORKERS
FROM HONG KONG AND CANTON**

(1)

Date: Monday evening, August 29, 1949

Place: Canton

CONCERNING FEELINGS

**Learning Not to Go Along with
Too Many Feelings**

Chou Kang-Yao: I am very conscious of myself when I stand on the platform, and I am not able to overcome this feeling.

Watchman Nee: We have to learn to deny living according to feelings. Our feelings may be right some of the time, but in essence they are deceptive. We should not look for truth among deceptions, because we can never find it. Satan can speak some truths, but we have to reject everything that comes from his mouth because in essence he is a liar. Even when he speaks the truth, he speaks it for the purpose of deceiving others. We have to calm down our feelings completely. This requires the breaking of the outer man.

The spirit is surrounded by the soul, just as a hand is surrounded by a glove. A glove must be empty before a hand can get into it. If a glove has something in it, how can it receive a hand? Similarly, if our mind, emotion, and will are filled with thoughts, feelings, and opinions instead of being empty and available, when the spirit needs to use them, it will find itself bound. Under such circumstances, it is hard to have right judgments.

In order to have right judgments, we need to "let this mind be in [us], which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). This means to have the mind of Christ. We can only improve in judgment when we take the mind of Christ as our own. In order to improve our utterance, we have to be enlightened within. Our inner being has to

shine with light. Only then will our judgments be accurate. We treasure accurate judgments, but such judgments come from practice, not from gift.

If the foot is wearing the shoe, the foot will feel very comfortable. But if the shoe is "wearing" the foot, no one can take a step forward. The shoe must fit the foot; no one can trim the foot to fit the shoe. If feelings are improper, the spirit cannot be free, because the spirit will be bound by the feelings. Rather than being directed by the spirit, the soul will be directing the spirit.

The Feelings Must Match God's Light

Lo Yi-xin: Since the work started in Canton, I have felt quite useless within myself. I cannot do anything, and I do not know how to begin any work. On the one hand, I am afraid of making mistakes. On the other hand, I am afraid of being counted as unfaithful in my responsibility. I feel that I need a mentor, a teacher to guide me. I am willing to learn and follow.

Watchman Nee: Your feelings should be strengthened. Your condition is different from Brother Chou's. He has too many feelings and should learn to deny them. You do not have enough feelings. Although you have some feelings, they are not strong enough. Our feelings should match the light we receive from God. Once we realize that we are truly weak, we will be conscious of our real impotence. If the Lord grants us a little light concerning what we are, we will receive great profit; this profit will be more than what we could learn by ourselves in twenty years.

What we really need is light. If light increases, we will see our weakness in a clearer perspective. We will be humbled to such an extent that no weakness will be a barrier to us. When we have not learned our lessons well enough, our feeling of weakness can be a hindrance to us. But once our weakness breaks out and spreads like leprosy, then we are healed. When our feeling of weakness is light, it is a hindrance to us; we feel that we can still do something and that there is still something about which we can boast. When the feeling of weakness overwhelms us, however, this feeling will no longer constitute a hindrance. God's power is manifested when we are down to our weakest point. Actually, not many people understand Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12:9. Psalm 4:1 says, "You made room for me when I was in straits." The feeling of weakness must reach a stringent point before we find "room" being made for us. It takes at least three to five years, perhaps even eight to ten years, before we can understand this. We cannot be impatient. God has to bring us to the valley of weakness before we can be brought to a spacious land.

What is death? It is being weak to the uttermost. We can know about the crucifixion with Christ without knowing the meaning of weakness. In such a case, crucifixion with Christ is merely a doctrine. There is no such thing as knowing death without knowing the meaning of weakness.

You can go on the same way as you have in the past. You do not have to ask the Lord to make you stronger. On the contrary, you should ask the Lord to increase your feeling of weakness so that you can be brought to a spacious place. May God show you not only your powerlessness but His gracious power as well.

THE NEED TO BE STRICT AND DESPERATE IN GOD'S WORK

James Yen: For the past few months I have not learned anything. My personal walk and my work in the past have been merely a kind of outward pursuit. As our brother pointed out in Kuling, I only have a kind of emotional appreciation; there is no real consecration. When I am not working, I fall into passivity and laziness; but when I work, I am condemned. What is the way to my deliverance?

Watchman Nee: My advice is for you to keep on working, because the more you hold yourself back, the more there will be leaks and holes. The real lessons a person learns do not come from retreats or "spiritual" meditation; a man cannot wait until he has improved before joining the Lord's work. It never works this way. If we want to wait until we have reached a certain standard, we may find that we have less and less in our hands as time goes on. We advance by learning and working from our present position; we do not attain a certain standard and then begin to work. I hope that you can be desperate. Forget about the feeling of condemnation. If you look at yourself you will leak and drift further. You must not wait. Once you wait, you become more lax. You have to gird up yourself. Everyone who was used by God in the past centuries was a strict person. There should not be any lethargy in the Lord's work.

Brother Ke-san is responsible for the work in Foochow. Some do not feel happy about this. They even ask, "Why has he been appointed as a responsible one?" He has his virtues, however. He never stops or rests. He is very strict with himself. While others fall, he remains standing. We all know that his physical health is not good. We may apply the cliché, "He does not have enough food to last another day," to others, but with him we can say, "He does not have enough energy to last another day." He is a man whose energy does not extend beyond

the day. He works beyond his own measure; nevertheless, it is because of him that the leadership in the Fukien region has been established in the past year.

Brother Witness is also strict. It is not easy for him to be knocked down. He is willing to pay the price, to be desperate, and to not spare himself. He often says that a man cannot make the excuse that his health is poor. Whatever he wants to do and whatever he says he will do, he always gets done. If one way does not work, he finds another way. He is so desperate that he is not discouraged by anything.

I advise you to learn from these two brothers. Apply yourself to the work in a desperate way. Do not wait. The more you wait, the emptier you will become.

BEING STRICT IN THE WORK

AND RELAXED IN FEELINGS

Mrs. Yen: The Lord has opened the way for me to do more visitation recently, but I feel that I do not have any co-worker to coordinate with me. Various limitations in the environment and a sense of inadequacy within have limited me from rendering much practical help to others. When I do not visit, I feel condemned. When I do visit, I feel very weak. Recently, I have seen that I am short of obedience. I love to argue and reason, and every time I argue and reason, I find myself unable to submit.

Watchman Nee: Your condition requires two different dealings. What I mean is this: In conducting your work you have to be strict, but in dealing with your feelings you have to be relaxed. If you become tense in your feelings, you will bring suffering to yourself. If this frigidity is pushed to the extreme, no one will be able to touch you. When a rubber band is not fully stretched, there is room for more stretching, and it does not give any noise when plucked. If it is fully stretched, however, it will make a sharp noise the minute it is touched. No one will be able to stretch it further; it will break immediately.

Since the Kuling training, it has become manifest that you are a person who reacts quickly. You have to learn to trust in God and believe in Him. When something happens, do not be anxious. Do not worry too much and do not consider too much. You also must help Brother Yen be more strict in the work and less tense in feelings. When feelings become too tense, our endurance goes down, and our capacity for more burden is reduced.

What is endurance? In the world endurance is expressed in an inward stiffness and outward stoicism toward the slightest stretching. But true endurance leaves more ground for inward stretching by men or by the environment. If you are too

full of your own feelings, you will not have room to accommodate others. You have wasted too much of your feelings on yourself and have left nothing for others. If you can be more reserved in your feelings and do not use them all up, you will find it easy to endure.

THE BREAKING OF THE OUTER MAN FOR GOD'S WORD

James Yen: Can a person receive God's word and at the same time promises from Satan?

Watchman Nee: Even when we have God's word and promises, we cannot say immediately that this is God's speaking. We have to learn to continually touch God's speaking. Every time we gain some experience, we learn something and acquire some spiritual feeling. Every experience will increase our spiritual perception and make us more accurate in touching God's word.

Only those whose outer man is broken can touch divine things accurately. If the outer man is not broken, a person cannot be entrusted with spiritual things. The outer man is always a frustration. All problems hinge on an unbroken outer man.

A man of prayer seeks God's will, is broken in the outer man, and is reliable in his spiritual perception. The trouble with us is that we have our outer man—our thoughts, emotion, and will. The spirit does not have a body of its own; it does not have a mind, emotion, and will of its own. When it needs to express itself, it does not have a mind, an emotion, or physical strength of its own. The spirit depends on the mind, emotion, and will of the outer man to express itself. Hence, the spirit is restricted by the outer man. Our spirit cannot be released apart from the outer man. The trouble often is that our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak. In order for the spirit to come out freely, the outer man must be in subjection. The outer man must cooperate with the spirit in this way. Otherwise, when the spirit calls for the emotion, the latter may spin around in its own orbit and not respond to the spirit. The breaking of the outer man is a fundamental experience of a servant of God. We have to see God's revelation and receive His shining. When the outer man is broken, the spirit will no longer suffer any frustration. Many people speak many words in their prayers, but their understanding falls far short of T. Austin Sparks's prompt answer: "Everything depends on the breaking of the outer man."

In Matthew 17, the disciples asked the Lord why they could not cast out the demon. They could not understand why the Lord was able to do this in an instant. The Lord answered, saying, "This kind does not go out except by prayer and

fasting" (vv. 19, 21). Yet the Lord did not have to fast and pray; He cast the demon out right away. He could do this because His outer man was broken already.

During one visit with Miss Barber, I heard a loud noise coming from downstairs. It interrupted our fellowship. Miss Barber asked me to listen to the noise and the desperate cry. She asked if I knew what it was all about. I said that it sounded like someone praying. She laughed and said, "There is no need to spend so much energy to force God to do something. What is the use of outward commotion when the inner being is not touched at all?"

Fasting prayer is a means through which the outer man is put to rest. If the outer man is broken, there is no need of fasting prayer. This prayer merely removes the frustration that is associated with the outer man so that the inner man can be released. Fasting prayer is like crossing the Jordan. Even when water has flooded both banks of the river, we can still ask God to part the water and open up a way (Josh. 3:14-16). If the outer man is broken, there is no need to go through many steps for the inner man to be released.

Question: Can a man know if he has any amount of brokenness? Is the extent of brokenness the same eventually for every person?

Watchman Nee: Brokenness is a fundamental experience for everyone, but it is also a progressive experience. There is always a line that we can trace in this process. The main thing in this process is shining and revelation from God. When God in His mercy shines on us and reveals Himself to us, we will know. Is the extent of breaking the same eventually in everyone? Of course not! The amount of breaking mainly depends on the lessons each person has learned before the Lord. On the one hand, the breaking of the outer man depends on our consecration. On the other hand, it depends on the amount of work God has done in us. We must give ourselves to learn the lessons before we can have the proper experience. Only those who learn their lessons are able to render help to others.

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

Miss Lin Wei-shi: In the past I had many things to say when I prayed. Now I have very little to say. I am confused about God's will. My work supplies little life to others. I find it difficult to stop, yet I find myself too weak to work.

Watchman Nee: There are several steps towards knowing God's will. At the beginning of the Christian life, when a man seeks to know God's will, he may

have a strong consciousness that God's will is this or that, but this is not altogether reliable. In the second step, God breaks down this so-called consciousness of God's will so that he begins to learn to trust by a faith that is independent of his own feelings. He has the faith that he is always in God's hand and that he will not be wrong under God's keeping power. He does not have to struggle to avoid making mistakes. If God is the preserving One in him, he will be right whether or not he feels that he is right. No matter how he turns, he can never depart from God's will. He is free from his own feelings, but there is still a long way to go. In our experience we should not be as foolish as a mule, but we should be like a maidservant looking at the hand of her mistress. Yet there are times when we have to go on like a mule. We have to exercise our faith at such times. The reins are in God's hand; He will check us and guide us. We cannot move by ourselves; we have to trust in the Lord all the time. We believe that we are in God's hand. If God does not allow it, we will never take the wrong path.

When a man learns to fly a plane, he must follow instructions blindly. If the instructor tells him to go up, he goes up. If the instructor tells him to turn left, he turns left. If the instructor tells him to turn one degree to the right, he turns one degree to the right. The instructor sees everything and knows how to fly. The student only needs to trust and obey. When he steps off the plane, he may say to himself with sweat on his brow, "I could have spared myself the suspense if I had made these judgments myself." But even if he knows the instructions, he still has to be fully at home with all the parts and instruments before he can fly the plane according to his own sight. Before that happens, he can only trust his instructor.

We have to learn to trust in the Holy Spirit's restraint. God can never be wrong. We may think that God is wrong in putting us in a certain environment, but eventually we will see that nothing is wrong. As long as life is released, nothing can be wrong. Any kind of environment can release God's life. This was Paul's experience. Whether he was in prison in Rome or in dire circumstances like those described in 2 Corinthians 11, he could equally claim that the Lord's grace was sufficient for him (12:9). Christ was manifested in him, whether through life or through death (Phil. 1:20).

FEELINGS AND FACTS

Miss Lei: In the past I felt powerful when I spoke for the Lord, but now I do not feel that I have anything within me. I feel weak, and I do not have much to say when I pray.

Watchman Nee: This is not a problem. You only need faith. I believe you are very clear within that you do not have a problem in reality. You are merely going through a transition. Having nothing to say in your prayer may mean that you do not need to say much. Perhaps you only need more faith. You feel weak as if you are nothing. Perhaps God is reminding you that you need more faith. This faith will enable you to pray less strenuously.

A Christian should not be bound by his own feelings. He may feel that he does not fare better by praying and that he does not fare worse by not praying. Actually, prayer makes a great deal of difference. When a man knows God more, he will ignore finicky and fleeting feelings. We are communicating with the eternal God. We should not care for fleeting feelings. The facts are objective, while our subjective experience can be wrong. For example, every day we see the sun rising from the east and setting in the west. Actually, the sun never rises from the east or sets in the west. It is our subjective perception that tells us this. If we do not believe in the objective facts and pay attention only to the subjective experiences, we cannot be Christians at all.

If a scientist only pays attention to what he sees and ignores the facts behind a phenomenon, he is not qualified to be a scientist. The same can be said of a Christian. A Christian has to learn to constantly free himself from subjective feelings throughout his life. He should only believe in objective facts. We have to know that the objective things that our spirit touches are real, while the subjective feelings may not be real. We have to know facts and should not be led away by feelings. What is contained in Christ's salvation are facts. If we follow our feelings, we will find the way long and tortuous. We may search for years and still not find the way. If we do not see the facts, it will be hard for us to get out of this rut.

We have to realize that the objective facts do not change, but our feelings change. Christ's salvation ushers us into a life in Christ, a life of objective realities. Humanly speaking, the feelings that we possess seem very reliable, but they change; they are not really reliable. We need the spirit, and we need faith. These two things interact with objective facts. Through faith and by the spirit, we touch objective facts and thus are not easily shaken. This requires the breaking of the outer man. If the outer man is not broken, it will be easy for us to live in our feelings and hard for us to find rest.

Let me give you a simple illustration. Suppose I have a need, and I want a brother to help me. To solicit his help, I first try to offer him something as an "incentive," using financial support by deceit as an enticement. I may "feel" that there is nothing wrong in this, but such a "feeling" is altogether wrong. As soon as I touch my conscience, I will know that I am wrong. The conscience is a function of the spirit, and the spirit touches objective facts. The facts are in Christ, in the Bible, in the Holy Spirit, and in God's word. Truth is not in feelings. If I am wrong, I am wrong, whether or not I feel that I am wrong. It is wrong to judge things by what we feel.

Our rights and wrongs are found in the Bible. Our life and walk are based on the Holy Spirit. Our history and facts are rooted in Christ. We have to learn to touch these things. With many things, it is not a matter of good or bad, but of being in the Holy Spirit. A good thing is not necessarily life unless it is done in the Holy Spirit. What use is something if it is not done in the Holy Spirit? Without the Spirit, the result is only death. Whether or not something is good should be judged by God's Word. We should ask whether it is according to God's Word instead of whether it satisfies our reasoning. As soon as we live in our reason, we quench all expressions of life.

The extent to which a person lives in spiritual reality is inversely proportional to the extent to which he lives in his feelings. The more we live in spiritual reality, the more we will be free from living by our feelings. There is no need to analyze too much whether or not we are living in spiritual reality or in our feelings. As a rule of thumb, we should ignore our feelings altogether when we are not clear.

On our part, we should not live by our feelings. On God's part, He will break our outer man. All feelings and deception come from the outer man. As soon as the outer man is broken, these deceptions no longer frustrate our inner man, because the inner man is able to take care of itself.

The fundamental lesson we have to learn is to not listen to the outward feelings, but to simply live in the Holy Spirit and in the facts. We should say "Amen" to whatever the Bible says about our life in Christ. Believe that it is true. I may be in Hong Kong physically, but I should have the sense that I am living in the heavens. I only know Ephesians 2, which says that we are raised up together with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies (v. 6). I do not trust in my feelings. I reject my feelings. If we persist in this for three or five years, our feelings will wither and fade away. Once these feelings subside, the facts will gain ground. The more we ignore our feelings, the less momentum they have

and the less they can assert themselves. The more we pay attention to our feelings, however, the more we will be beaten down. We should not pay attention to these feelings. We should only lay hold of the facts. In conclusion, your question is a big one. It is not easy for you to ask, and it is not easy for me to answer.

Lo Yi-xin: If a Christian is put in a painless environment and still feels pain, is this pain just his feeling?

Watchman Nee: Since the Bible says that a Christian should rejoice always, we should learn to not have any painful feelings. We should be free from painful feelings. It is not a matter of whether or not the environment is painful. It is a matter of God's Word. Whatever God's Word says, we should be. His Word says that we should be anxious for nothing and that the Lord is near. Even if the environment is painful, we should still rejoice.

Sister Tseng Wen Su-chi: It is easier to neglect personal prayer than corporate prayer. What should we do?

Watchman Nee: We cannot skip personal prayer just because it is easy to do so. We should still have private, individual prayers. As for corporate prayers, I hope that the co-workers can come together to pray once a day. They should also come together to read the Word.

CONCERNING SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE

Question: In my work, I find that there often is the need but that I lack boldness. What is the root of my problem?

Watchman Nee: Whether or not our work is a success or a failure depends on whether we bring a proper atmosphere to a place or whether the atmosphere in a place affects us. The church in Canton has its own atmosphere. The church in Hong Kong also has its own atmosphere. When we move from Hong Kong to Canton, do we allow the Canton atmosphere to get into us, or do we bring our atmosphere to the church? This is not a performance. We are not drumming up a certain kind of atmosphere purposely. Such promotion is false. Yet at the same time, we cannot passively allow the local atmosphere to affect us. Otherwise, we will be subdued. We have to carry a spirit of freedom with us wherever we go, yet we should not pretend or perform.

The human body needs fresh air in order to live and move freely. Spiritually speaking, we also need fresh air to feel free and refreshed. Whenever I go to a new place, I always check the spiritual "air" in that place. I try to find out whether

the atmosphere is fresh and living. In order to have fresh "air," we have to learn to not offend the Holy Spirit. We must also learn to not offend the atmosphere that is brought in by Him. It is a serious thing to offend the Spirit or the atmosphere brought in by Him.

We may find that a place has some needs, but feel weak and unable to do anything about them. As a result, the Holy Spirit will not have a spiritual atmosphere in which to release Himself, and this will cause the "air" in that place to be contaminated. If we ignore our feeling of weakness, the Holy Spirit will secure a proper spiritual atmosphere to release Himself. When the atmosphere is right, it is easy to work. Therefore, the first thing we should do when we get to a place is to bring in a proper atmosphere, an atmosphere of the Spirit. Then we can work freely. Let me repeat, however: This is not a performance.

The first thing we should do when we get to a new place is to ignite the fire of the gospel. We must be armed with a gospel spirit. These things are greatly related to the spiritual atmosphere of a place. In the gospel meetings in Hankow, we had six to eight hundred attendants every day. Brother Lan Tsi-yi reported that as soon as a person stepped into the meeting, he felt a different atmosphere; it was totally different from the world. Many people were subdued the very first day. They confessed their sins with weeping and pleaded for salvation on their knees. We must have a gospel spirit before we can light the gospel fire, but there must be a proper atmosphere before we can light the fire. If the atmosphere is wrong, it is hard to ignite the fire. Our efforts only add to the weight of the burden. We have to ask God again and again to show us if we have offended the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit in any matter. Whether or not we can ignite the gospel fire is a serious matter; it is a test from the Lord. This test will show us that nothing can be done in a casual way. Before we do anything, we must first ask whether or not we have offended the Spirit's atmosphere.

Let me give another illustration. In one gospel conference, a brother was the song leader during the second meeting. He did not sing well, and the songs were out of tune. Yet the atmosphere of the meeting was wonderful, and dozens and even hundreds of people confessed their sins. On the sixth day the brothers decided to ask this brother to take over the whole meeting. This time it was a failure. He offered a long prayer, and he conducted the singing himself. Afterwards he gave a long message. In the end he sang, gave the altar call, and invited the new ones to write down their names. The result was a fiasco. One

brother reported later that only fifteen minutes of the entire meeting had a right spiritual atmosphere.

We must never say or do anything that offends the spiritual atmosphere. When I first was saved, I conducted a ten-day gospel campaign with some co-workers of mine. I learned many things from that campaign. There were many good confessions from many sinners. Even four beggars were saved in a genuine way. Not only do we need the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit in our gospel preaching; we need it in maintaining the church and the work. There is much to learn in this area.

Miss Betteridge: I have an inward burden to work for the Lord, but I am overwhelmed by the environment. I do not have a co-worker to work together with me, and I cannot find anyone that can pray with me in one accord. As a result, I have become cold and dead.

Watchman Nee: The few of you in Hong Kong bear a great responsibility. I would like to mention one thing about the meetings in Manila, Singapore, and Hong Kong: The atmosphere in these places is wrong. It has never been right. The meeting in Amoy is a little better. Sometimes the atmosphere is right, and sometimes it is wrong. Whenever I passed through the above three places, the atmosphere always was wrong. The co-workers in Hong Kong have to bear the responsibility for turning around the atmosphere. In Hong Kong the atmosphere makes everything cheap; no one pays much attention to spiritual things. A spiritual thing may be very precious in another place, but in Hong Kong, it becomes cheap. This despising attitude gives me a serious doubt as to your knowledge of the spiritual atmosphere among you.

What is an atmosphere? One sister came to Kuling last year. This year she came again. She said, "I feel that God is very near to me in Kuling. The spiritual things are very weighty and precious here. But once I return to my own locality, I no longer feel that God is so near to me, and the spiritual things are not as precious. Since I am back in Kuling, I sense the nearness of God and the seriousness of spiritual things once more." Brother Kaung is here. Please forgive me for saying a frank word. The work in all of south China is somewhat frivolous. Man's natural tendency is to be frivolous. For this reason you should not be loose. You should not do anything to encourage others in the direction of frivolity. If you cannot do this, you will find as you work in Southeast Asia and in Hong Kong that you may serve others with a bowl of bitter herbs, but they will not feel that they are bitter at

all. They may even think that you are serving them a dessert. If a man is not serious about spiritual things, he will destroy what you have built up the minute you leave the place.

One Shanghai brother returned from Hong Kong to Shanghai and said, "Our brothers in Hong Kong are somewhat like members of the YMCA." This may be too much, but it does speak somewhat of the tendency of that place. We are Christians in Christ, and we have to maintain our distinctive characteristics; we must not pick up the local flavor. Rather, we have to overcome it. We have to take the strict way. We should not make others feel that we are basically the same as them. We have a few brothers here who are very good brothers. As long as we can bring them into a proper spiritual atmosphere, all problems will be solved. In order to have a spiritual atmosphere, we have to bear a heavy responsibility. The co-workers must come together to pray at least two or three times a day. We should not be loose. Study the Word together in one accord. If the fellowship among the brothers is lacking, we cannot expect the ministry of the word to be strong.

THE WAY TO WORK—PERFECTING OTHERS

In conclusion, the basic need of the work in Hong Kong is for the co-workers to come together more to pray and to study the Word. Next, they need to produce men and perfect them. In addition to the regular church meetings, we have to pick out three to five relatively mature ones among the brothers and sisters. Every week we have to be with them for three to five times to cultivate and perfect them. We have to spend the time to perfect them one by one. This means that, in addition to the church meetings, we have to produce men to do the same things that we are doing. The Lord Jesus is our good pattern. He did not set up any church Himself; He only produced twelve men, and then later seventy others, to do the work of preaching. Eventually, one hundred twenty people were perfected. These ones brought in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in one accord at Pentecost. The church was produced, and in a short time, three thousand and then five thousand more were gained.

In perfecting others we have to pay attention to sanctifying ourselves. In three months' time we will see that all the ones we are perfecting will be just like us.

Whatever our work may be, the same requirement applies to the person doing the work. We have to be strict and disciplined. This is the only way we can produce anything. We have to be strict in everything. Otherwise, there will be no hope for our future. The book of Matthew has twenty-eight chapters which

basically speak of how to be a disciple. We have to do our best to learn to be a disciple.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VISITATION

Visitation is an important work. In visiting others, we should not talk about our family affairs, much less the family affairs of those we are visiting. It may not be that damaging if they bring up such things and we merely listen. But if we talk about such things, this will not bring in any profit, either to us or to them. We are not making visitations like social workers in the YMCA. We visit men as servants of the Lord. We should not speak about worldly things, but instead, we should give them spiritual food. Perhaps we should sit down to read the Word with them or pray with them. After I was saved, a brother frequently came to see me. Every time he came he read a chapter of the Bible with me, and then he gave me a word of encouragement and exhortation. This stirred up my interest for the Word. If anyone is hurt by anything, we can do our best to render him some help, but we should avoid social visitations. The church is a place with enough gossip already. If we add more, we will easily ruin its spiritual life.

In visiting others, we should never try to answer their spiritual questions too quickly. The purpose of visitation is not to solve spiritual problems. Do not go with the intention of expounding the Bible. If you are not sure of certain things, just say in a simple way that you do not know. You should ask the others to go to the Lord more and seek light and revelation. Give them a spiritual touch.

It is better to visit in coordination with a few. If we cannot find a partner, we can still go alone, but we have to be on the alert that we are bringing men to the Lord all the time.

CHAPTER TWO

A TALK WITH CO-WORKERS

FROM HONG KONG AND CANTON

(2)

Date:Tuesday evening, August 30, 1949

Place:Canton

THE CONDITION OF THE BODY

AND THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Mrs. Weigh: I feel weak physically all the time. This frustrates my spiritual walk. What should I do? How can I know the resurrection power of Christ?

Watchman Nee: Your problem does not lie in your question. You have to realize that the life of Christ which a Christian expresses is not limited by time, environment, or conditions. A healthy person can manifest the life of Christ through his health. A normal person can manifest the life of Christ through his normal condition, and a sick person seriously ill in bed can also manifest the life of Christ through his trying condition. True spirituality is not affected by any kind of condition at all. It is wrong to think that a person only can live a proper spiritual life when everything is in order. If there is no hope, one should not cherish unreal expectations. You do not need to wait for your health to get better to live the life of Christ. A busy mother does not have to wait until all her ten children are grown up before she pursues a spiritual walk. A busy shopkeeper does not have to wait until he is the boss of his business before he can serve God. A single man does not have to wait until he is married to serve the Lord without distraction. By the same token, those who have a wife should not think that it is easier to live the Christian life by being single. Some have good health, yet they do not manifest the life of Christ. This shows that expressing this life does not require a certain, set environment. One can express the life of Christ in strength, in weakness, or in a normal condition. Some people think that they have to wait for the environment to change for the better before they can live a proper spiritual life. This is wrong. This is like those who say that they will believe in Jesus only if their circumstances change for the better. They say they will believe if they sin less or if they become more moral. We would exhort such ones not to wait; they can believe in Jesus in spite of their present condition. Enoch walked with God for three hundred years and begot sons and daughters (Gen. 5:22). The Lord Jesus also told us that those who will be raptured will not be taken at the time they are reading the Bible or praying but while they are in the field and grinding at the mill (Matt. 24:40-41). These verses show us that there is no need to have a new environment or a certain set of conditions to express the life of Christ. We should not cherish false hopes or think that we can live a spiritual life only when our environment is perfect.

Today the Lord is sovereign over our physical condition. Whether our condition is good or bad, His intention is that we express His life through it so that this life will prove to be victorious over everything. The so-called discipline of the Holy Spirit is carried out in this condition. The Lord's intention is that we do our best to express His life in the midst of these very circumstances. You are physically weak and cannot be too active, but you should not be condemned in your

conscience. Outward activities can decrease, but your fellowship with the Lord and your contact with Him should not decrease. Your touch with God cannot diminish in any way. If you are so weak that you cannot make it to the meeting, simply stay at home as long as you are clear within that this is right. You must be persuaded and convinced within yourself. Paul said in Ephesians 2 that God has raised us up with Christ and seated us together with Christ in the heavenlies (v. 6). This word means that a believer receives a transcendent life. It would be wonderful if God granted you the grace of a sanguine and healthy body. But if He does not give you a healthy body, and instead leaves you as you are, you should humble yourself before Him. This is the discipline of the Holy Spirit, and it is upon you so that you will learn to express the transcendent life of Christ.

Hebrews 6 says that God's children can have a taste of the power of the age to come (v. 5). Indeed, today we should enjoy God's divine healing. However, we should believe Him even when He does not heal us. The Lord Jesus did not promise to heal Paul's thorn. Instead, He promised him sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:7-9), which is actually the resurrection power of Christ. One can only experience this sufficient grace when there is a thorn.

Generally speaking, it is easy for a new believer to experience healing through prayer. This is not because his faith is greater than that of more mature ones; it is because the Lord wants him to know Him as Lord. A long-time believer, however, may not receive healing so readily. In fact, often it is very hard for him to receive healing. This does not prove that his faith is small. It merely means that the Lord has a higher standard for him. This is like the experience of leading men to salvation; it is easy for a new believer to witness for the Lord and to bring men to Christ. It is hard for a long-time believer to do the same. Like the disciples, he has to pray earnestly for ten days before he can lead someone to the Lord (Acts 1:14).

In some cases, healing depends on the atmosphere at the time. During a time of revival, outward miracles usually accompany God's presence, and it is easy to experience healing. For example, immediately after Pentecost, Peter and John healed the lame man lying at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful (Acts 3:1-8). Even their shadow became a means of healing to others (5:15-16). However, God's salvation not only heals the body. It mainly heals man's soul and spirit so that he can have a rich entrance into God's kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11). Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons were able to heal people (Acts 19:11-12). Yet when Timothy was sick, Paul did not send his handkerchief or apron to cover Timothy's

stomach. On the contrary, he advised Timothy to use regular means (1 Tim. 5:23).

CONCERNING THOUGHTS

Brother Kaung, is there something that you want to say?

Brother Kaung: I do have something to say. But you do not have to be limited to my question. You can cover as wide a scope as possible in your answer. First, there are many contradictions in my personal life. On the one hand, I do not believe I am very active in my thoughts. On the other hand, I do think quite much. Now I am learning to read the Bible continuously without trying to think too much. Second, I feel that I am not that much on fire for the work.

Watchman Nee: There is a big difference between accepting and not accepting God's breaking. Human power is limited. A man does not have an unlimited capacity to think. Sometimes your thinking can bring you to a dead end; you hit the wall and do not know how to go on. The reason you feel this way is that you have exhausted your mental energy without realizing it. If a man spends too much time on one thing, he will not have time to think about other things. This is the reason we repeatedly emphasize the need for the outer man to be broken.

Often the problem with thoughts is not in the mind but in the heart. This is because the heart controls the mind. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it are the issues of life." We can say that our heart represents our very self. A man's thoughts are directed by his heart. When we say that a man has a problem with his thoughts, we are actually saying that he has a problem with his heart. A bad heart is the cause of sickness in the mind. It does not help to deal with the thoughts alone; this will only take care of the symptom. The basic solution is to deal with the root. Once the heart is right before God, the thoughts are right.

At the time of our regeneration, we were given a new heart and a new spirit by God. The new heart gives us a new life and new inclination to serve God. But through neglect, our heart sometimes becomes evil again; it loses its purity before the Lord. Our heart controls our mind. When the heart goes astray, the thoughts follow.

In Matthew 12:34 the Lord Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Rash words are unhealthy, but in reality it is not the words themselves that are unhealthy; rather, it is the heart that is sick. Some sisters realize that their words are not right; they try to deal with their words. But it is not

enough for one to merely hate his or her own words. It is useless to try to deal with words per se. Such a sister must be willing to deal with her heart. Once her heart is dealt with, the problem with her speaking and her words will go away. The same can be said about our thoughts. A little leaf can block the ray of the sun. A little sin can cover up God's light and turn the heart astray. Once the sin of the heart is dealt with, everything will fall into place. The mind is controlled by the heart. It is impossible for the heart to be in one condition and the mind to be thinking about something different.

After one's heart has been dealt with, he has to learn to control his thoughts. A servant of God must have a high power of concentration. He cannot waste his thoughts carelessly. Miss M. E. Barber once said, "When Satan takes over our thought life, he takes over our whole life." There is a limit to the amount of mental energy we can expend. If we allow our thoughts to wander and roam unchecked, we will find that we cannot focus our mind when we are called to serve in prayer. Satan will seize the opportunity to inject fiery darts into our mind through the outward events. We will fall into Satan's hand and be defeated. If our outer man is not broken, we will always react to outward stimuli. We will feel that thoughts are always frustrating us and that we are always being drained away. When we try to serve as a minister of the word, we will find our thoughts failing us. We will fail not because we have too much to say and do not know how to say it. We will fail because our thoughts are too poor. We should not think that our problem is that we are not smart enough. The real reason is that our outer man is not broken and our mind is not under the control of the spirit.

After we bring our thoughts into focus, there is still a need to get into the thoughts of God's Word. The breaking of the outer man enables us not only to focus our thoughts but also to enter into the burden of the Spirit. If we have not touched the burden of the Spirit, all our thoughts summoned together will not qualify us to be used by the Spirit. Once the outer man is broken, there is no more self activity or subjective thoughts. Then we can touch the burden in the Spirit, and the life and power contained in God's Word will flow out through our speaking.

SPIRITUAL FIRE

Concerning the second point, that is, spiritual fire, I would like to say this: Fire relates to supply. Individually, it depends on our consecration. Corporately, it depends on fellowship, or the supply in the ministry. If there is no problem with our personal consecration, it may be God's leading that we should seek His

supply. Corporately speaking, the matter of fire relates to fellowship. Without fellowship there is no fire. When we are in fellowship, we touch the fire. This is not a matter of gift, but of ministry. Where there is ministry, there is fire. Ministry is corporate. There is more in ministry than in individual pursuits, but we will cover this later. First, consider the individual aspect. Individually, we only need to check our consecration. If there is a problem with our consecration, there is a problem with the spirit. There must be an absolute consecration. Otherwise, there is no fire.

Fire is from the Lord. The Lord casts this fire on earth. This fire is also the gospel. It enables us to serve, to withstand persecution, and even to sacrifice our lives. On the personal side, fire depends absolutely on our consecration. The amount of consecration we offer on the altar determines the intensity of the fire. If consecration is lacking, the fire will not come. Therefore, we cannot hold back anything in our consecration.

Consecration, in turn, comes from light. We consecrate to God according to the light we have received. We can only consecrate according to what we have received, according to what our spiritual eyes can see. The light we see comes from our fellowship with God. Through constant fellowship, God shines on us and grants us revelation. When we are under His shining, we see His demand and consecrate ourselves to Him voluntarily. Then God sends down His fire to take up our consecration. Hence, fire comes from God and is communicated to us through consecration; we do not light the fire ourselves. This is the fire on the altar. Once the sacrifice is on the altar, the fire comes. Consecration is not a one-time act, but a continual act. In the beginning we do not know what we should consecrate. Gradually, we receive more light, and we consecrate more, and our consecration becomes more absolute. The stronger our consecration is, the greater is the fire on the altar. Consecration follows shining. The amount of shining we receive determines the degree of consecration we render. Our consecration must match the light that God has given us.

Individually, when we put everything on the altar, the fire comes. Between the light and the fire, there is the need of consecration. If consecration follows the light, immediately there is fire. The stronger the consecration, the easier it is for the fire to start. Once the fire starts, others will catch it easily. If our next-door neighbor's house is on fire, it is easy for ours to catch fire. This fire will turn even hard wood into hot flames. If a person tries to fan a spark before it develops into a flame, the fire will be killed. However, the more rubbing and friction there is, the

easier it is to catch a fire. This is the reason we have to rub each other until we are red-hot. The hotter we become, the more fire there will be. If we are cold, fanning will only quench the fire; it will not build the fire.

No one should seek for fire. As long as we have enough consecration and as long as we have enough friction, we will have the fire. If the spiritual pathway is too easy and relaxed, the fire of the gospel will be extinguished. The more we go on in the spiritual pathway, the more we should not consider ourselves as experienced or matured. If we think that we have consecrated enough, we will quench the fire on the altar. In the Old Testament God commanded that the fire on the altar must not go out day or night (Lev. 6:12-13). The entire life of a Christian, from the time he first believes to the time he goes to the Lord, must be accompanied by fire.

In Mark 8:35 the Lord said, "Whoever will lose his soul-life for My sake and the gospel's...." This is not only for the Lord's sake but also for the gospel's sake. Paul was an apostle who was consecrated for the gospel's sake. He said, "And I do all things for the sake of the gospel that I may become a fellow partaker of it" (1 Cor. 9:23). The more he advanced in his spiritual life and the deeper his life took root, the more the fire of the gospel burned in him. Paul said that he was a called apostle separated unto the gospel of God (Rom. 1:1). The gospel not only includes saving sinners from hell, but every aspect of God's gospel, including salvation, sanctification, justification, the church, etc. The gospel covers a wide scope. Paul said that he was the foremost among sinners, yet he was called to be a pattern to other believers (1 Tim. 1:16). He also said that he was less than the least of all saints, yet he received grace to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel (Eph. 3:8). These verses show us that the Lord has called us for the gospel.

I have to shout aloud that we need to bring in a gospel spirit. This is the only way for the brothers and sisters to go on. Unless we have this spirit, our preaching will be like children playing with toys. In Foochow the fire of the gospel has been ignited. The church not only must preach the gospel but must touch the gospel spirit. In order to touch the gospel spirit, the only way is for us to have a fresh consecration.

The author of the book Seen and Heard, Mr. M'Kendrick, was a miner. He did not even attend an elementary school, but he was a totally consecrated person. Within him was the gospel fire. His heart was filled with a burning zeal for saving souls. Once, while he was on the platform, he could not utter a word. As he

looked around at the unsaved people sitting before him, he began to cry, and tears rolled down his cheeks like torrents. In the end he only shouted a word or two. God's Spirit filled the entire congregation. All were convicted of their sin and waywardness. We should not be afraid of shouting. John the Baptist shouted in the Gospels. The Lord Jesus also shouted. The apostles shouted many times in Acts. Although Brother M'Kendrick did not have much education or gift, he had the gospel spirit, and countless numbers of people were saved through him.

A young person may not have the gift of Moody, Finney, or Spurgeon, but he can learn to be a M'Kendrick. A young brother may not necessarily have the gift of the gospel, but he must have the spirit of the gospel. In church history God raises up great evangelists only once in a long while. But every lover of the Lord should and must have a gospel spirit.

On the one hand, we should increase our gospel preaching. On the other hand, we should increase our consecration. Our consecration cannot stop. Once we stop our consecration, the spirit of the gospel will stop. In order to recover the gospel, we have to recover consecration. Both things have to be absolute in us. Our foolishness lies in the misconception that we are behind the early church only in the power of the gospel; actually, our consecration comes far behind the early disciples as well. May the fire of God's gospel continue to burn in us. May it ignite you and me first. May the church not become a hindrance to the world's salvation, but a channel through which the Lord is dispensed to the world.

EVERYONE WORKING ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE THAT HE HAS RECEIVED FROM GOD

Brother Weigh, do you have any problem?

Brother Weigh: I have three questions. First, I feel that my spiritual condition does not match what I know, what I teach, or what I have heard. Second, I feel that it is very hard to have some spiritual weight or worth. In the past, I was satisfied as long as I had a work to occupy me or a platform for me to speak. For example, when the church in Hong Kong began to meet in the new building, I was very satisfied. Now I feel that I am not able to meet the demand. Of course, I must admit that Hong Kong is not a place where an ordinary person can work, but I should not live in the realm of my own concepts. Third, I do not feel that I have the ability to take the lead in the work of the entire south China region. It would be better to find some stronger brothers to come and take the lead in the work here.

Watchman Nee: First, let us talk about the work here. Let me point out that while ability has some relationship to work, the correlation is not absolute. The work belongs to God, and God works according to His own principle. His principle is to use whatever is available. In using men, God can only use those who are available, not those who are not available. We should not expect some who are not available to come. If a local church only has blind, lame, and deaf ones, we should be satisfied that such ones would rise up. The Lord has given a gift to every saved person. Even the blind, lame, and deaf have one talent. It is a matter of how to draw out their talents. Perhaps a few people in the church have five talents, but we almost have to wait for a hundred years before we can come across a few of these great gifts. However, if we add five one-talented ones together, we will have the same amount of gift as the five-talented one. Today our job is to stir up all the one-talented ones. We have to draw out everyone's portion.

There are more people here than in northwest China, but geographically, northwest China is much larger, and it is much harder for the saints to take care of the need there. For this reason you should not expect very gifted co-workers to come. You should work as much as you can with the people you have. Basically, you do not need able, strong, and gifted co-workers, but brothers who can lead and get things started. No one should be slothful in zeal. All must work together in one accord in coordination. I have a few suggestions. First, the co-workers should never neglect prayer. Second, they must come together to study the Word. Third, there should be suitable arrangements in the work. Fourth, you must be strict and severe with yourselves in the work. Do not be loose. Once you are loose, others will become loose as well. You have to be relaxed in your person, but strict and serious in your work. This is how you can go on and how you can have enough serving ones to meet the need. The service of the church is a corporate service. No one worker can single-handedly raise up the whole church.

We should not do a work like Christianity, in which one worker is sent to a specific place to work. Some of our co-workers should receive the burden from the Lord to travel and make visits within certain districts. The trouble in the past was that the workers who were visiting were not broad enough in their heart. This is wrong. When we go to a place, our heart should be there inasmuch as our body is there. But there are some co-workers who do not put their heart into where they are. This is one of our problems. We have to correct this. At any rate,

the Acts of the Apostles starts from chapter one, not from chapter thirteen. Jerusalem is our proper guideline in the work. We should have a center for our work, and the local ones should rise up to serve.

BEING ABLE TO PERFECT OTHERS

In order to raise up the one-talented ones, instead of letting their talent remain hidden in the earth, there is the need of perfecting trainings and spiritual education. We need prayer meetings and Bible-study meetings that perfect men. In perfecting the saints, we should not select just the ones who are in high positions, who have money, who have worldly experience, or who are competent in the world. Instead, we should choose those who have spiritual perception, spiritual understanding, and who have made spiritual advancements. Moreover, they have to be consecrated. There is a brother in Shanghai who is not very capable, but he has spiritual perception, and his understanding is perfect. He is actually more qualified than many so-called experienced ones. The way to judge a man is to see if he is consecrated, if he has spiritual perception, and if his heart is perfect. Some are willing to consecrate in this way, but they are not very smart. Among those who meet these qualifications, we have to select a few. We have to work on them particularly. Sometimes we have to work on them together, and sometimes we have to work on them separately. They all must be able to do better than us. It does not matter if they do not do well in the beginning. After a few times they will improve. The fallen mentality thinks that only we ourselves can do a job, but we have to perfect others to do it and help them to do it. Perfect a few, and then charge them to help others to do the same. The four Gospels show us clearly that the Lord did not commit Himself to everyone; He only committed Himself to the twelve disciples. The twelve then committed themselves to the hundred and twenty, who committed themselves to three thousand. First John 1:3 says that the disciples have fellowship with the apostles who have fellowship with the Father and the Son. This is the principle. We have to learn from the example of the Lord Jesus and the apostles.

If there is an agricultural seminar, it is difficult to ask the president of the country to be the chairman. If there is a symposium of doctors, it is difficult to ask the governor of Hong Kong to be the chairman. Even if these dignitaries came, they could only sit in the last row. Likewise, it would be difficult for us to actively participate in a worldly convention. If we join them, we could only be passive spectators. However, in spiritual matters, we cannot deny that we have learned

more things than some other brothers and sisters. They may be more capable and experienced than we are, but they have to sit in the back to listen to us. Paul charged Timothy to take the lead in Ephesus, and he reminded him to not let others despise his youth in particular, knowing from which ones he had learned (1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:14). We should never measure a man according to worldly standards.

In summary, we have to find men who are perfect in heart and who have spiritual understanding. Do not worry about their age; pay attention to their consecration and spiritual perception. If a man does not have spiritual perception, he is of little use in the work. We can perfect a few people one at a time, or we can gather them together and teach them as a group. Paul not only edified the church; he also raised up a few individuals. He wrote to the church in Corinth, but he also wrote to individuals such as Timothy and Titus. He not only traveled among the churches to teach God's kingdom, but he picked out Titus, Timothy, Philemon, and Onesimus, and he perfected them one by one.

We can gather brothers and sisters in the countryside to Canton and Hong Kong and train them in the fifty-two lessons for new believers. We can do this in two trainings, with each training being two weeks in length. After they are trained, they can be sent back to the countryside to work.

The principle in God's work is to involve ourselves in the work first and then involve others in the same work. If we do not take care of these two steps, we have failed and have come short of God's standard. We cannot say that we have done enough as long as we have worked hard ourselves. We cannot say this. Paul not only worked himself, but he stirred up others to join him in the work. In his Epistles to the Corinthians, we can see that he was pushing others to do the same work. We have to arrange some work for other brothers and sisters to do. We cannot be the only ones who are busy all the time. This approach is ineffective. In a hundred years everyone sitting here will be gone. If no one is perfected to continue our work, what a loss this will be to God! We have to use every means to make others work. We have to learn to take them by the hand in our work. We have to learn to deal with them and gain them. The way is to work, visit, and preach the gospel together with them. We admit that we are all inexperienced in this area. We have to be in fear and trembling, and we have to be very exercised before the Lord.

No one can be careless or loose in perfecting others. We should not think that we know everything. We should not think that we can be a teacher by simply reading

textbooks. There was no school for training prophets; all the prophets were raised up by God individually. We can only say that we do not know that much. We are here learning, and we are hoping to bring men to God so that God can have a way in them. We have to be in fear and trembling. We should not order others to do this or that lightly. Instead, we should take the lead to work together with others. It is very presumptuous to think that only we can do something and that no one else can do it. The people that the Lord has given to us are more than what we need. Every one of them is useful. We should not be presumptuous, loose, or careless. However, we should not hesitate to make decisions for fear of making mistakes.

We have covered the matter of leadership before. Leadership does not depend on ability. Rather, it depends on: 1) much prayer and diligent study of the Word, 2) the capacity to perfect others and raise them up, and 3) making everyone useful. The way ahead lies on our shoulders. If we are faithful to the Lord, He will get through in us, and the brothers and sisters will have a way to follow us.

HELPING ALL THE ONE-TALENTED ONES TO SERVE

Can we help all the brothers and sisters rise up to serve? If we can, we will not have any problems. Even if we have more people, we can still handle them. Who can withstand the church when the entire Body rises up to serve? Five can chase a hundred, and a hundred can chase ten thousand (Lev. 26:8). If we can raise up all the one-talented ones, we can absorb as many people as are given to us.

Those who are hard and stiff are hard inwardly; outwardly they can be very soft. This is the reason it is not easy to perfect a person. When a person volunteers to serve, he carries with him both his outward and inward attributes. Those who are gifted are usually hard and stiff. We cannot open the door just to outward attributes while ignoring inward attributes. If we do, we will make it hard for others to go on. It takes much work, labor, and prayer to perfect one person.

Brother Weigh's personal problems cannot be dealt with quickly. I would consider it very quick indeed if they are dealt with after five years. It may take eight or ten years for some people. Time is a big factor. We should not think that hearing something and understanding it is the end of the story. We have to ask the Lord for much mercy.

CHAPTER THREE
A TALK WITH CO-WORKERS
FROM HONG KONG AND CANTON

(3)

Date: August 30, 1949

Place: Hong Kong

CONCERNING THE WORK

Concerning the key issues related to the work, the first thing I would like to speak about is the coordination among the co-workers. First, the co-workers have to come together to pray much. Second, they have to spend time to study the Word together. Third, the co-workers should meet with the responsible brothers at least once a week to fellowship about the affairs related to the church.

In principle, the best way to have the bread-breaking meeting is by districts. The districts should come together once a month at the most.

If workers have a financial need, they should not look to man's hand. Perhaps they should look for a part-time job. This is what some people are practicing in the mainland today. At present, the government of the People's Republic has introduced the so-called "Common Policy." It points out four main classes of people: 1) small bourgeois, 2) farmers, 3) nationalistic bourgeois, and 4) workers. These four groups are combined together to run the government. This is the so-called "coalition government of the four classes." It is an imitation of the principle of having all things in common as described in Acts. There is no party and no special interest group. The whole nation is involved in production, and all the products go to the state.

In order to meet by districts, we have to look for suitable places. Once we find a suitable place, we can rent it. The church can rent the living room for meeting, while the brothers and sisters can rent the rooms for boarding. We can have prayer meetings, bread-breaking meetings, young people's edification meetings, and gospel meetings.

Due to the change in political conditions, there is an overabundance of civil workers and bureaucrats in Hong Kong. All of them do not work on the Lord's Day. Therefore, the best time for us to preach the gospel is on the Lord's Day. I strongly support using the Lord's Day morning as a time for preaching the gospel. This will deliver us from the habit of attending a so-called Sunday-morning service. Workers of the Lord should not be afraid of having too many people.

Rather, our fear should be that the people will not come. If more people come, we can start a new meeting in another place.

The workers should have the proper concept that they are not professional preachers; they do not receive a regular salary. The Bible never says that God's workers should receive a salary from anyone. The church does not pay me to do the work of preaching. I am called by God, and I can only look to Him for His provision. This was Paul's way when he said, "If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Cor. 9:17). The work of a worker is to fulfill the ministry he has received from God, and this ministry is always for the church. The church is not for the ministry; rather, the ministry is for the church. A worker should not work with the intention of bringing the church under the control of his ministry. On the contrary, a worker should serve under the church. Whether one is an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a shepherd, or a teacher, all work is for perfecting others with the goal that all the brothers and sisters would be able to do what the gifted ones can do (Eph. 4:11-12). Today there are four thousand people who have turned to the Lord in Tsingtao. A few workers cannot possibly visit them all. Others must be perfected to do the job.

In Shanghai there are now over seven hundred brothers and sisters who are unemployed. Even at ordinary times there are two to three hundred unemployed ones. Perhaps the recent turbulence is actually an interim period that the Lord has provided for us to mobilize the unemployed ones to visit the new believers.

If we do not preach the gospel to those who are under eighteen years of age now, it will be hard to work on them after four years. The embryonic stage of the gospel in China was from 1918 to 1922. During this period, the Lord raised up many young lovers of Him in China. Most of them were under twenty years old. I was saved in 1920 at the age of seventeen. Four years later, I would have been in America for my studies. In preaching the gospel, we should not decide how old one should be before he can believe in the Lord. With the political situation changing by the minute, we have to be on the alert even more. The years of 1948 to 1952 may be another period of witnessing the Lord's revival. If we miss this time, it will be hard for us to make it up later.

In the Soviet Union the number of believers increased thirty times during the twelve years between 1918 and 1929. During the same time period, Russia's history became very turbulent. Similarly, I am asking you to do the seemingly impossible during this hour of trial. Throughout history, Christians have always

been the ones who seized every opportunity to make gains for the Lord. They have always accomplished impossible tasks.

In the mainland, the People's Republic is discouraging gospel work. We are doing our best not to stir them up. We work quietly on people one by one. The Lord has placed the gospel work of China in our hands. If we work harder and stronger, sooner or later He will gain this land.

We should try our best to obey, labor, and work with our hands. We should pray much for wisdom from the Lord. Time is short. We do not know when we will lose our opportunity. Everywhere in Southeast Asia there are religious restrictions. British law in Singapore does not allow anyone to preach outdoors. Preaching the gospel in Malaysia is a criminal offense, with the government emphasizing its respect for the religious freedom of the Malaysians. We do not expect these governments to give us any help. Therefore, do not stir them up. We should not do anything to purposely demonstrate our zeal. Instead, exercise wisdom.

In east China, the number has multiplied a few fold in Nanking. Among all the provinces in China, Chekiang has the most promising work; the number of churches there is in the hundreds rather than in the tens.

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING CHURCH AFFAIRS

We need to speak two things in relation to church affairs. First, we have to be watchful of the leading brothers. Do not let them take matters too lightly. Second, meetings should be held weekly because a week is a unit for a Christian.

CONCERNING THE RESPONSIBLE BROTHERS IN THE CHURCH

Brother Hsu is a very good brother. Brother Liao has good recommendations from many sources, but I do not know him and therefore cannot say anything about him. Brother Chien loves the Lord very much, but his experience is not deep enough; it needs to take deeper root. Brother Chen is young but is pure before the Lord. Brother Ku has a good disposition. He does not have a hot temperament, and he is meek. It is easy for him to get along with others. But while he is a friendly person, he cannot exercise such friendliness in managing the church. He is short of one thing—strictness. Everyone who bears responsibility for the management of the church has to be strict. Moses was meeker than any person who lived on earth (Num. 12:3); yet at the same time, he was very strict. When he saw the people worshipping the golden calf, he did not wait for another word to smash the stone tablets. He forced the Israelites to drink

of the ground powder from the golden calf and called upon the Levites to kill their own brothers (Exo. 32:19-29). All the responsible brothers have to be strict.

I do not know that much about the spiritual perception of Brother Shang. Has his understanding increased during the past few years? He is also a pure person, a good man. Unfortunately he is short of spiritual understanding. Today if anyone is short of spiritual understanding, he cannot be a responsible brother. Whether or not a man can easily change depends on the amount of spiritual understanding he has.

A responsible brother should not hold everything in his own hands. Rather, he should learn to assign responsibilities and to supervise the brothers and sisters in their work. He should not monopolize everything.

The responsible brothers should come together at least twice a week. First they should be together one day per week to let the brothers and sisters know that at least they are available. Second, there should be a co-workers' meeting in which the co-workers fellowship about going on in the work and about problems among themselves. The co-workers should take care not to relax in the matter of Christian fellowship. Problems among people and with things should be dealt with and taken care of in a thorough way. No procrastination should be allowed. Every meeting should begin with prayer and end with prayer. The ending prayer should be a prayer that leads to some kind of solution. Arrangements and charges should be made concerning those who are rebellious.

Business affairs, once they are made clear after fellowship, should be assigned to the brothers and sisters for execution. Be high in your expectation of the brothers and sisters. It is better to be high than to be low. If the standard is too low, the result will be low even if the standard is attained. Learn from A. G. Gordon, who said that one should put a nail on the wall as high as possible. The responsible brothers have to set a high expectation for the saints. If they do not, the saints will never advance. Business affairs should be based on whether or not it is right to do something, not on whether or not it is hard to do it.

THE CONTENTS OF THE MEETINGS

The Christian meeting is a meeting gathered in the Lord's name. The church is the ekklesia, which means "the called-out assembly." A congregation of pew members is not the church. Such a congregation only provides a taste of a Sunday- morning worship service. Unfortunately, I think the meetings in Hong Kong somehow have developed such a taste. Perhaps Hong Kong has picked up

the tradition of the past generations. Sometimes its meetings are almost the same as a congregation of few members. This is the reason we have to change the Lord's Day morning meetings. Do not allow the brothers and sisters to sit quietly in the meetings; this is the same as not coming to the meeting at all. In the meetings, it is true that the brothers and sisters should not express their own opinions, but neither should they wait for someone to come and help them. Everyone should remember when they come to the meeting that they are coming to serve the Lord and serve the saints. They should not come with an attitude of only listening to a sermon.

Next, you have to help many people to function. Everyone should use his one talent. We should not wait for a strong speaker to come. Actually, when a church is weak, it hardly matters whether or not there are strong speakers. Only when the functioning ones in the church are so few does everything depend on speakers. All we need is a strong bread-breaking meeting and prayer meeting; there is no need to always have speakers. The issue is what takes priority. The speaking platform is clearly not the priority.

How the next generation fares depends on how this generation behaves. If God has a way among us, those who will be saved will not be like the ones we see today; they will be better. If you are faithful in Hong Kong, you will make the believers in Hong Kong the same as those in Kuling. In Kuling, unless one sheds tears and gives up his worldly possessions, he is not considered genuinely saved. The important thing is not how others criticize us, but how we are before the Lord.

Every Lord's Day morning we should preach the gospel. This should last for only thirty or forty minutes. The gospel message should be short. Once it is long, there will be no time to draw the net, and the fish will all jump out of the net. We have to capture the listeners with the Spirit of the Lord. Those who only have a burden to explain doctrines are in the realm of the mind; they cannot break down the strongholds in others' minds.

In our preaching we speak to men's minds, yet our main goal is to capture them with our spirit. You can follow the Kuling training in many things, but never in the length of its messages. You should not think that you can extend your time indefinitely as long as you are explaining the teachings clearly. You have to learn to subdue and conquer others with your spirit. If you are merely speaking to others' minds, you will waste much time, and the result will not be that good. The

rest of the brothers and sisters also should learn to support the preaching with the release of their spirit.

The bread-breaking meeting should be conducted in the districts. The more we divide, the easier it will be to grow, and the more opportunity there will be for others to serve. If we do not subdivide our meeting into districts, the priesthood will be confined to just a few people.

There is the need of a new believers' meeting. All the saints should be treated as new believers in the beginning. Give them lessons. If a brother or sister cannot come, someone has to go to him or her to make up the lesson. If no one makes up the lesson with them, they will not be sustained. In making up the lessons, be thorough and careful. Do not be careless. You have to speak in such a way that they will want to come the next time. Unless you can do this, they will think that coming is optional, and your work will be very loose.

The workers should be careful and diligent. This is especially true in Hong Kong. If we are not careful, we will not get anywhere even if Hong Kong is blessed with many people. The present condition in Hong Kong is very precarious. The condition of the gospel is not proper, and the condition of the church is not proper. Consider, for example, the way the new believers' meeting is conducted. It is not serious enough. You are happy as long as the message is released. How can others receive the blessing if this is the way you work? Do you expect to see any fruit at all? If you want remaining fruit, you have to labor in the new believers' meeting in a genuine way. Everywhere in China the new believers' meeting is the strongest meeting. In Hong Kong it is the weakest meeting.

Hong Kong should be a place to produce people and money, but it seems that we have labored in vain here. Neither people nor money have been produced. This is because we have neglected the truth. Our words and our actions do not match. Some are able to preach a message on consecration, but they are not able to take the lead in consecration themselves. You have finished your fifty-two lessons for new believers already. What can you give to the new ones next time? May the Lord pardon our shortcomings, and may He shine on us. May He grant us sufficient grace to offer up everything we have to secure His blessing.

CHAPTER FOUR
A TALK WITH CO-WORKERS
FROM HONG KONG AND CANTON

(4)

Date: Wednesday evening, August 31, 1949

Place: Hong Kong

CONCERNING THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE

One can study the Bible alone privately, but he also can study it corporately with the brothers and sisters. The co-workers in particular should spend time together to study the Word corporately. Every time they do this, they should spend at least three hours together.

The Keys

Compiling and Translating

One of the ways to study the Bible is to take a portion of the Word and compile and translate it from scratch. In translating each word, one has to compare the existing Chinese versions word for word. We can consult the writings of a few Bible teachers: Dean Henry Alford's word study, Stephen's New Testament in Greek, Young's Concordance, Newberry's Bible published by the Brethren, and F. G. Grant's and J. N. Darby's expositions.

If we are not careful and serious in our study of the Word, we can easily build a message upon a wrong translation of a word. In Romans 1:1 Paul said that he was called by God to preach the gospel of God. In Philippians 1:16 he spoke of the defense of the gospel. In Galatians 1:6-9 he pointed out that those who preached a different gospel should be accursed. Therefore, we should never consider God's Word in a light way; neither should we consider that anyone can expound it at will or preach the gospel from it. Paul told Timothy that the church is the pillar and base of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15) and that this truth is concerning God's divine economy (1:4). The cross, life, faith, truth, and teachings are all included in the gospel of God, which is revealed in the Scripture. The gospel of God encompasses all of God's communications with man. Paul was separated for this gospel, yet he was only a slave. God keeps His enterprise under His own hand. This is the reason Romans 11:34 says, "Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor?" God's gospel is God's entire divine enterprise. Paul was a slave in this enterprise. We are called by God to be slaves as well. Therefore, we should not be so presumptuous as to expound the truth by ourselves. If we do, we will become God's counselor.

Word Study

The second way to study the Bible is by word study. We have to study every word and phrase in every passage carefully and thoroughly. Consider Romans 1:1. Expressions such as Christ Jesus, slave, called, apostle, separated, and the gospel of God require special attention. We have to find out how many times these expressions are used and under what circumstances they are used. We have to find the Scripture references and teachings behind these expressions and organize them a little. This will give us a basic and clear understanding of the use of these expressions. With the word separated, for example, we can note the process through which God separated Paul:

- 1) Separated at birth from his mother's womb (Gal. 1:15).
- 2) Separated to be a vessel at the time of salvation on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:3-19).
- 3) Separated for the work in Antioch (Acts 13:2).

In some cases, the expressions Jesus Christ and Christ Jesus are used interchangeably. However, we should not think that they are the same thing. This work is time consuming. Do not take any expression for granted. If we can dig into a few dozen of these expressions, we will have some foundation in the knowledge of the Bible.

Synthesis

The third way to study the Bible is by the way of synthesis. Through synthesis we can trace a line through the Bible. There is a central line in the divine revelation. God's revelation to man comes in many portions and in many ways (Heb. 1:1). It comes a little here and a little there. Every time God's revelation comes to us, it is more advanced than the previous times. Therefore, we have to study in the way of synthesis. We have to find the complete revelation of the entire Bible through synthesis. At the end of the Bible, God's revelation is fully completed.

In order to study this way, we have to acquaint ourselves with the divine arguments presented in the Bible. The Holy Spirit has His own line of argument. Paul said that one has to exercise his spirit as well as his understanding in discerning spiritual things (1 Cor. 14:15). Hebrews 5:14 says, "But solid food is for the full-grown, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil." In order to study the Bible, our faculties must be exercised. Only then will we be able to discriminate between good and evil. In Philippians Paul told us that he not only preached the gospel,

but he was also given to the defense of the gospel. If a man is not properly trained in his understanding, he will be short of arguments and words as soon as he is challenged. The gospel was powerful in Paul, but in us it is poor. This is because our understanding is not fully exercised.

We can only synthesize topics that are similar in nature. Those that do not belong to the same group cannot be synthesized together. If we try to synthesize unrelated topics, we will confuse the truth. For example, the four Gospels record the earthly life, ministry, and words of the Lord Jesus. In reading His words, we have to differentiate between commandments and exhortations. We have to differentiate words of righteousness from words of grace (cf. Heb. 5:13). The Epistles were all written by the apostles under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, yet they are not all God's commandments. With God's Word, it is not simply a matter of taking it or leaving it. Paul did not have God's commandment, yet he still spoke God's word (1 Cor. 7:25, 40). Paul could do this because he had been constituted by God through many years. Although he argued and reasoned with the church in Corinth, his word still became a revelation to the church.

We cannot wander through the Word mindlessly. We have to follow a definite line. In reading Paul's Epistles, it is very important that we follow his divine arguments and capture his thoughts. The thoughts governing Paul at the time he wrote his Epistles are the thoughts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 7:40). If we gloss over everything indiscriminately, we will not understand what we have read even after studying it.

The problem with us today is that we are too poor in utterance. There should be an abundance of utterance in the church. In order to be rich in utterance, we have to spend time to study the Bible.

Bible Versions and Reference Books

To study the Bible, one needs good translated versions and reference books. The Chinese Union Version is one of the seven best versions in the world. It is based on the best version of the Greek text. There are several versions that are good for comparison. Of the Chinese translations for reference, the best version is the Wen-Li Union Translation. In many cases, its translation of single-syllable expressions is better than that of the Chinese Union Version. Concerning the Lord's resurrection, it makes a distinction between resurrection, fu-hwo, and raising up, fu-chi. Another version which is also acceptable is the Joseph Shi translation. The translator was a converted Jew who aimed at providing a good translation for the Chinese. He studied Chinese and finished this version all by

himself. It was published over twenty years ago. The expressions he used are not the best; they are somewhat awkward. But the translation is very accurate. Reference books can be read as one has the time. But we must exercise discretion in choosing which ones to read. Some expository reference books are not that common, and they can be quite deep. For example, Darby's Synopsis of the Books of the Bible renders help to some but is a damage to others. The flow of the Holy Spirit is always advancing. Such reference books should be studied only with proper fellowship. This fellowship will provide the proper protection and safeguard.

CONCERNING PERFECTING OTHERS

Our main work lies in perfecting others. Paul said that we have to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom (Col. 3:16). He also said that we should present every man full-grown in Christ in all wisdom with much labor (1:28-29). After men are saved, we have to select some seeking and advanced ones to give them some perfecting. We have to bring them on until their problems are solved. We have to walk with them, go over the fifty-two lessons with them, and nurture and perfect them.

Let us learn from Paul's example. His ministry was not a general one; it was very specific. No ministry in the church should be general. Actually, there is no general ministry. There is only one unique ministry, the New Testament ministry (2 Cor. 3:6-11). God speaks in the church and to the church, but His speaking is not for everyone. In the New Testament there are general Epistles to all the churches, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistles of Peter. There are also Epistles addressed to specific churches, such as the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to the Colossians. There are also Epistles to specific individuals, such as the Epistles to Timothy, the Epistle to Titus, and the Epistle to Philemon. Paul wrote not only Epistles but messages. These messages are ministry-oriented; they are for the fulfillment of the stewardship which God committed to him. Some words are for one group of people, while other words are for another group of people. Paul was all things to all men and spoke different things to different people (1 Cor. 9:20-22). Some letters were to be read to more than one church (Col. 4:16). Other letters were addressed to individuals. Some commandments were given to the whole church (1 Cor. 11:16). Other commandments were given to individuals. If one applies the scope wider than it was intended, problems may arise.

CONCERNING THE EDIFICATION OF NEW BELIEVERS

The new believers' edification must be closely supervised. If the co-workers are inwardly living and burdened, they can closely supervise the new ones. We must also train a group of more advanced ones to be assistant tutors. These tutors should also be under the supervision of the co-workers. They should follow the leading brothers, first to be edified themselves, and then to edify others. The way to monitor the new ones is to build up various levels of checks. There are leaders, co-workers, and then tutors. The leading ones should check on the co-workers. Each co-worker should check on five tutors, and each tutor should check on ten saints. In this way no one will be left out. You have to make the new believers' edification meeting very living. This is the life pulse of the church. I have often said to Brother Witness that our gospel will come to a standstill if the new believers' meeting is not living. When a new one is not properly edified after coming to the church, he will become a burden to the church. However, if the new believers' meeting is good, the church will be solid, and there will be the sustained impact of the gospel.

We should do our best to mobilize everyone for the work of edifying believers. If the work of the church is carried out by all the members, the church will find itself going on in a proper way. But if we are the only ones who are working, and no one else is perfected to work with us, sooner or later we will be exhausted even if we have the proper way. The more the saints are involved in the work of edifying the new ones, the more the church will be revived. If only a few are working, these few will be overburdened to the point of exhaustion. I have tried visiting over thirty people a day. Such exertion can kill a man inwardly. Some may say that they cannot take care of anyone. They may say that they are not capable. But even if they cannot do it, they still have to do it. It is better to do something than to do nothing. Although one may encounter many difficulties, the more he learns, the more he will find the key. Two months ago, Foochow was facing some real difficulties. Some were dead, and others were immobile, but others have experienced a genuine change.

CONCERNING GOSPEL VISITATION

Gospel visitation is also an important work of the church. We have to pay attention to a number of points: How do we knock on others' doors? What should be our attitude when we meet others? How should we conduct ourselves in our speaking? How should we respond to different kinds of people? How should we

respond when we have the answer, and how should we respond when we do not have the answer? What should our manner be? How long should we stay in someone's home? (It should be half an hour at the most.) The responsible brothers have to consider these things. When we meet the gospel friends, we can say, "I am coming to you on behalf of the church; the church cares for you and has heard that you have believed in the Lord Jesus. We are very happy about it. The church has sent me to visit you." The visiting ones do not necessarily have to pass on any teaching; they can simply give their own testimonies. If the friends have some problems, there is no need to answer everything. Just say, "I myself have believed in the Lord for only two months. I am also a learner." If many people can rise up to do this work, there will be less idle ones in the church (cf. Matt. 20:1-10).

For visitation, there is the need of training. The trainers and the leaders must pray and consider much. Before assigning brothers and sisters to the visitation work, they should seek the Lord. They should know how to lead the saints in this work. When they encounter difficulties, they should fellowship, pray, and seek solutions. The same is true with the overseers. If the visitation work is done in a hurry and if the visitors are not exercised before the Lord, it will be easy to offend others. It may even cause problems. However, if it is conducted in a careful way, everything will be covered adequately.

A WORD OF EXHORTATION

The brothers have to bear responsibility for carrying out the above points. You have to consider much before the Lord and pray much before making any assignment. You have to be strict before the Lord. If you are strict, you will not be careless. You have to present all the things before the Lord one by one. If you want to work at all, you have to work properly, systematically, and in a dedicated way. Do not be loose. Do not think that any way is just as good as another as long as it is done by the spirit. This is wrong. In addition to exercising your spirit, you have to work according to the right principles. The most important principle in the work is not being slothful in zeal. Those who are slothful will not accomplish anything. I hope that none of you will be slothful. If God grants mercy and adds more people, you will feel that twenty-four hours are not enough to do your work.

MEETINGS FOR BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Every week you have to schedule a meeting for business affairs. This meeting is harder to conduct than a message meeting. Sometimes one does not know how he can release his burden through the fellowship. If the burden remains locked

up inside, it becomes a condemnation to the conscience. If there are too many affairs to take care of in such a meeting, the burden becomes correspondingly heavy. For this reason you have to come together to pray first. You have to open up your spirit to cast your care on God. Your spirit has to be unfettered. Then you must consider carefully and think through everything before God before discussing it. The meeting for business affairs should be separated from the meeting for Bible study. Do not mix the two things together. They must be separate. Do everything with a single heart. A man is limited in his mental capacity. Even the combined effort and energy of a few people are limited. This is the reason you must work with singleness of heart. You must study the Bible with singleness of heart, and you must fellowship about business affairs with singleness of heart. If you mix these two things together, you will accomplish nothing.

THE MEETING FOR EVANGELISTS

In addition to these meetings, there is sometimes the need to have a meeting for evangelists. Before and after every such gospel meeting, there is the need of thorough prayer, fellowship, and evaluation. If you do this, the church will become powerful in the gospel.

CHAPTER FIVE

A PRIVATE TALK

WITH BROTHER K. H. WEIGH

Date:August 31, 1949

Place:Canton

Weigh Kwang-hsi: Concerning Mrs. Yuan, I can say that she has never cooperated with us. I did not know her very well before and did not try to deal with the issue. She not only is uncooperative in her speaking, but she also has the problem of being doubled-tongued. I cannot trust her. In the past, she always stood with Mrs. Chow and Mrs. Lin to oppose me.

ONE

Watchman Nee: In the future, if anyone testifies of trouble from her, I will deal with her in a severe way. Based on Matthew 18, it is best to discuss this matter with two or three. If we have the testimony of more than two people, we can deal with her.

TWO

Concerning the sisters' meeting: Presently it is not necessary for the sisters' meeting to be held on the ground of the church. The sister co-workers can conduct fellowship meetings under the auspices of their personal work.

THREE

Concerning Mrs. Nee [Editor's note: Watchman Nee's mother]: Her being accepted into the work in the Hong Kong and Canton regions is a mistake on the part of the co-workers. You have not stood firmly on your ground. We have fellowshiped about this matter before, and we have made a public announcement that co-workers who do not have a letter of recommendation should not be accepted into the work. You should not give her the ground to work just because she is my mother. We are here to follow the teaching of the Bible, not the leadership of man. Paul clearly charged the church in Corinth to cover the sisters' heads; the sisters should not teach. Here, however, there is a sister who has broken the principle. She is tolerated because she is the mother of So-and-so. I am quite angry about this.

FOUR

Hong Kong should still be the center of the work for the entire south China region. In the future, when we find more potential for development in the work in Canton, we can move the center to Canton.

FIVE

Prayer is for dealing with our mistakes; it is not to change God's will or to force Him to do anything. God is our Father, and He is more than happy to give us good things (Matt. 7:11). However, He is also holy and righteous. He disciplines us according to His holiness and righteousness so that we can participate in the same (Heb. 12:7-10). When God does not answer our prayer, it is because He does not want to spoil us or because we are wrong in some areas and in need of confession and repentance. Sometimes God does not have to have a reason for not answering our prayers. He wants to show us that He is God and that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He sits on the throne, and He will grant mercy to whom He will grant mercy. This will lead to a knowledge and an adoration of His very person. Remember the Lord Jesus' word that we should not think that we can change God's mind by many words and much repetition. This is what the Gentiles do (Matt. 6:7). We need to examine ourselves before praying regarding God's will.

SIX

The next generation in the church will be determined by the conduct of this generation. Everything hinges on us. Whether or not we can make the next generation like those in Acts 2 depends on how we of this generation conduct ourselves. The issue is whether or not we are willing to humble ourselves. The recovery can stop in us, or it can break forth from us. If God has a way through us, the next generation will produce better Christians. Therefore, our responsibility today is very great before the Lord.

SEVEN

Concerning the use of separate small cups for the Lord's table: First, it is hard to make a definite judgment on this matter. Second, this is a minor issue. Did the disciples pour wine into smaller cups, or did they all drink from the same cup on the night the Lord Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and gave it to the disciples? It is hard to say. Nothing in the divine record tells us about how the first church took the cup to remember the Lord. This is a very minor issue. This is the reason the Bible does not say anything about it. It does not want us to pay too much attention to this matter. Of course, we have to take care of others' consciences. We should not insist on one way. The Lord has not delivered us out of the world, but out of the evil one (John 17:15). In the same way, He has not delivered us out of bacteria, but out of sickness.

CHAPTER SIX

FORSAKING EVERYTHING FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE

Date: November 21, 1949

Place: Brother Cheng's house, Hong Kong

FORSAKING EVERYTHING FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE

The church accomplishes much more and produces more results during times of trial than during times of peace. The darker the environment, the brighter the church shines, and the more thriving it becomes. This is because the church receives from the very transcendent life of the resurrected Lord. The more this life is placed in a difficult and trying situation, the more resilient it becomes. The persecution of the church in Smyrna represents the persecution of the church under the Roman Empire. History tells us that the result of that persecution was a proliferation of Christians. God never contradicts His own will. Similarly, His life never contradicts its own law; it never yields to persecution. God has no intention to spare His church from persecution. He only has promised that the church

would be built on the rock—Jesus Christ, and that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). The gospel is powerful because the Lord Jesus has resurrected from the dead, bringing life and incorruption to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10).

As a consequence, the Lord challenges men to leave their possessions and relatives "for My sake and for the gospel's sake" (Mark 10:29). He did not say "for My sake" only, but "for My sake and for the gospel's sake." Without the Lord's life, the gospel is empty. The gospel is the proclamation of the victorious and resurrected life of the Lord Jesus. If a man believes in the gospel, that is, if he believes in the risen Christ, he has life in him. The Lord spoke this word after He met the rich young ruler who went away in sorrow (vv. 17-22). He thought that the Lord Jesus' demand was too high and that no man could fulfill it. This was not only the thought of the rich young ruler; it was also the thought of the disciples. They asked, "Then who can be saved?" The Lord answered, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God" (vv. 23-27). This passage clearly shows us that we cannot give ourselves to the gospel unless we give ourselves to the Lord. In order to be for the Lord and for His gospel, however, we have to forsake everything. This is impossible with men. After receiving the resurrection life of the Lord through faith, however, we can and will do it happily.

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

THE REASON THE GOSPEL HAS LOST ITS IMPACT

Today the gospel has lost the impact it had at the beginning. This is because no one is forsaking everything. Many people say that their time, money, and all are for the Lord, but it is hard to find one or two in a hundred who really mean what they say. The rest only say this with their mouth. In reality, everything is still theirs. The gospel has lost its initial impact because of this. Being a Christian is a secondary profession to many people; their primary profession is not being a Christian. The order of things has been reversed. Paul clearly said, "For the love

of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Christ died and resurrected for us so that we may no longer live to ourselves but to Him. But how many people are living to the Lord today? Many people are Christians in name, but they really live in the same way as the world. The world seeks fame, fortune, position, and education. These Christians seek the same. They glorify their pursuit by saying that they are pursuing these things for the Lord's sake. Actually, their Christian confession is a secondary profession. The gospel has lost its power because Christians today are short of a full consecration and do not practice their Christian confession as their primary profession.

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

At the time of the Lord Jesus' ministry on earth, those who believed in Him were called disciples. They were not called doctors, merchants, laborers, or teachers. After the church came into being, there were only Christians in the church, not doctors, merchants, laborers, or teachers. Perhaps you will say that Luke was a doctor. Indeed he was, but he was a doctor on the side. When we read the Gospel of Luke and Acts, we have the impression that Luke was Paul's co-

worker. We do not have the impression that he was a doctor. Paul said that he was an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Since he was an ambassador, he did not have a second occupation. Paul called Luke a doctor because Luke took care of him (Col. 4:14). This did not refer to his profession but to his work of caring for Paul. In reading Acts, we only find Luke as a co-worker of Paul; no attention is paid to the fact that he was a doctor. He did not have the air of a doctor with him. Similarly, in reading the New Testament, we do not have an impression that Paul was a tentmaker. He was an apostle appointed by God. He was a worker of God. Today many Christians have lost their flavor as disciples. Their mind is full of commercial thoughts. All the time they think about making more money. They make the money but lose both their testimony and the power of the gospel.

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

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

OUR PRIMARY PROFESSION—BEING A CHRISTIAN

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

give themselves wholeheartedly to the gospel. If we all have the same interest, every problem will be easily solved.

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

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

Today there are two kinds of systems in the world. One is capitalism, and the other is communism. Capitalism protects private ownership; everyone can accumulate wealth for himself. Communism practices the sharing of all things in

common. No one has any private possessions, and everyone gives up everything for the good of the state. The communist way appears to be similar to the Christian way, but it does not have the life of God, and it is not easy to carry out this practice. D. M. Panton wrote about democracy and socialism in one of his expositional writings. In the image in Daniel, the ten toes are made of iron and clay. Panton interpreted the iron as referring to dictatorship which will "stiffen up" to become fascism. The clay refers to democracy which will degenerate into communism. Therefore, clay refers to the communist party today. Since the time of Martin Luther, the Brethren have been the champions of orthodox interpretations of the image in Daniel, telling us that iron refers to dictatorship while clay refers to democracy. Prior to the Brethren, interpretations on the iron and clay focused on the incompatibility of the mixture. Other teachers emphasized their interrelatedness. For example, G. H. Lang said that dictatorship brings in democracy, while democracy in turn creates dictatorship. The clay of democracy is too weak to meet the challenges of crises, and so power goes to the hand of a few or even one person. The result is a fascist dictatorship or communist autocracy. An example of the former is Napoleon during the French Revolution, and an example of the latter is the Soviet Union which evolved into communism from the instability of democracy. Mr. Panton is the first person to interpret clay to mean communism. Communism extols sharing all things in common. Karl Marx borrowed this concept from Acts. It would be a shame to Christians if one day the communists would turn around to teach Christians about sharing all things in common, selling everything and distributing to everyone according to his need. A proper Christian does not accumulate riches for himself; rather, he forsakes everything to take the Christian confession as his primary profession.

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

THE PRINCIPLE OF OFFERING

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

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

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

FORSAKING EVERYTHING TO USHER IN

THE IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL

In the Old Testament God told the Israelites, "Bring the whole tithe to the storehouse that there may be food in My house; and prove Me, if you will, by this, says Jehovah of hosts, whether I will open to you the windows of heaven and pour out blessing for you until there is no room for it" (Mal. 3:10). If we withhold what we should offer to God, God's church will be poor. If we hold fast to what we have, how can we expect God to answer our prayer? Today there are two million people in Hong Kong. If one tenth of the population were Christians, we would have two hundred thousand believers. The church cannot receive the blessing of the power of God's gospel because we have held back the tithe which we owe. Throughout history, every time the church experienced a revival, there were men

in the spirit of Pentecost who sold their all and forsook everything to follow the Lord. J. N. Darby, Miss Groves, John Wesley, Count Zinzendorf, and many others took this way. They chose the way of voluntary poverty and forsook everything to follow the Lord. The result was great revivals in the church.

In Revelation 6 a white horse came forth when the Lord Jesus opened up the first of the seven seals. The one who sat on the horse had a bow in his hand (vv. 1-2). Verse 2 only speaks of a bow, but not an arrow. The arrow has been shot. This is the reason it says that he went forth conquering and to conquer. The white horse and its rider refer to the Lord's gospel. When the Lord ascended in victory, the arrow was shot. The result was much conquering and much more to conquer. Today we have the arrow in our hand. If we do not shoot it, the gospel will not continue in its victory.

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

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

Brother Hwang said that it is easy to earn back the two mites that the widow dropped into the treasury, but I would say that at least that woman had the faith at the time to drop them. It was not easy for her to offer even that little. Unless

our faith in God is strong, we will not dare to drop our coins into the treasury; they will remain hot in our hands for a long time.

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

MEETINGS, CONFERENCES, AND

PRIVATE FELLOWSHIPS,

FEBRUARY 2—MARCH 11, 1950

CHAPTER SEVEN

A TALK WITH CO-WORKERS

(1)

Date:February 2, 1950

Place:Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

REVIVAL AND HANDING ONESELF OVER

When I came to Hong Kong this time, I felt unhappy about the lack of advancement in the church here. During the past decade war was raging everywhere, but Hong Kong has been affected by it very little. Yet today there are only one to two hundred saints in Hong Kong. The flame of war has not touched this place, but neither does it seem as if the flame of revival has either. I am a little disappointed about the progress of revival in Hong Kong.

We have to be clear that in order for the church to have a revival, it has to follow God's ordained laws. There are laws behind everything in the universe. All creatures are after their kind (Gen. 1:24). Even sin and death has its law (Rom. 8:2). There are also laws governing revival. According to my observation, the problems lie solely with the co-workers. In order for the church to be revived, our co-workers must be first revived. They can then influence the leading brothers and eventually all the brothers and sisters. How can we be revived? The way is to hand ourselves over. The co-workers must first hand themselves over; they must take the lead to consecrate themselves.

The degree of our consecration is based on the amount of light we have received. The amount of shining we receive determines the extent of consecration we render. In this aspect the elders should not fall behind the young ones; they should not be behind in consecration. Admittedly, the older brothers and sisters may not be able to match the young people in evangelism, zeal, or

energy, but they should not say that they cannot match the young people in consecration and love for the Lord. If they do, this is an admission that they have received less light and grace than the young people.

LEADERSHIP

In God's church there is the eldership. Among God's workers there is the leadership. Many people think that these positions are determined by age and gift, but they are not determined by age or gift. They are determined by a man's consecration before God. The amount of consecration we maintain before God determines the degree of the manifestation of our position before Him. This manifestation is our only qualification to take the lead among the churches or the workers. Those who are willing to pay the price to deal with themselves will find that others have less of a need to deal with them. If we have God's light, we can take the lead and others will follow us; they will not rebel. Even though everyone has handed himself over, everyone's spiritual condition is different. If we are willing to cut ourselves deeper, the life that flows out will be richer, and others will receive more supply from us.

The extent to which we hand ourselves over will be the extent of the riches we receive from God. It will also be the extent to which we can render direction and help to others. J. N. Darby was an Anglican minister in 1825. By 1827 he gave up his clergy robe, and by 1831 he forsook all to follow the Lord. His obedience opened the floodgate to God's light. After him Kelly also forsook all to follow the Lord. When I was young, I received much help from Miss Groves who also forsook everything to follow the Lord. Today we should not broaden the narrow gate. We should not be like the Pharisees, who closed off the gate to the kingdom of the heavens, yet they would not go in themselves and would not allow others to go in either (Matt. 23:13).

ADVANCEMENT IN CONSECRATION

Brother Chu Chen once occupied a certain position in a certain denomination. Later he received God's light and saw His way. He gave up his position and started a small coal shop. Although he worked hard, he was joyful because he obeyed. He became stronger in his consecration. His spiritual condition advanced, and he ascended to a higher plane.

We may owe others in many things, and we may even owe others in spiritual things, such as our love one for another (Rom. 13:8). However, in consecration

we should owe nothing. In consecration we should only advance; we should not step back.

Many times the elders are affected by their past experience when they deal with the matter of consecration. They carefully weigh everything. They are not like the young brothers and sisters who consecrate themselves with a burning zeal. It is true that the elders need to make some decisions and arrangements with regard to the saints' consecration, but if the elders only move according to experience and caution out of a fear of being too extreme in their consecration, they cannot serve as elders. We should not be afraid of being too extreme. How many extreme things have we done in the past? Why are we so afraid of being extreme when it comes to the matter of consecration alone?

DEALING WITH SPIRITUAL FEELINGS

All of us have to go through dealings in our feelings, but how should we deal with our feelings? If a man has not dealt with a matter thoroughly, he will not have proper feelings concerning that matter. For example, one man in the Anglican Church by the name of H. C. Moule was touched deeply with the matter of baptism. He picked up a proper feeling for the matter of baptism. Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis, however, who was very spiritual and who rendered many people, including myself, much spiritual help through her writings, was prevented by her Quaker background from having a right feeling concerning the matter of baptism. She has not passed through any dealing in this matter. Concerning our feeling for every spiritual thing, we have to inquire of the Lord, and we have to open ourselves to His dealing. In the matter of consecration, we have to ask the Lord, "Have I fully consecrated myself? Is there any area that I have not yet consecrated?" The same thing can be said about our obedience. We should ask the Lord, "Is there any area in which I am still disobedient to You?" If we do not have any preconceived idea about a matter, the Lord will give us the light and we will develop a proper feeling. Brother Yu left the matter of his son's salvation completely to the judgment of the church. Although he did his part in preaching to his son, he did not make any judgment on the matter. Some people think that since they have given physical birth to their son, they should be responsible for their second birth as well. They want to monopolize both births. But if they do this, they will damage their feelings before God.

We should be tender in our feelings. We should always stand on the ground of a learner. If spiritual authority is not on our shoulder, we should be humble to learn all the more. Isaiah prophesied of our Lord's time on earth, saying that He had

the tongue of the instructed (50:4). How humble the Lord was! He did not stand on the ground of a teacher. He did not speak His own words but the Father's word (John 14:10, 24). We have to learn from the Lord's example. When we speak, we should say that we are not speaking from ourselves, but we are quoting Brother So-and-so.

THE WORK SHOULD BE CONCENTRATED IN ONE PLACE

Presently the work in south China and Southeast Asia should be concentrated in one place. Hong Kong should be the center. However, we must have a breakthrough in Hong Kong before we can move on to Manila or Singapore. I feel that it is too early for some co-workers to work in these two places. Doing so would reduce our strength. Once our strength is reduced, our work becomes burdensome. The principle of God's work is first the one accord and then the concentration of our efforts in one place. When we combine forces together, the result will be great. According to the principle of the Bible, five men can chase a hundred, while a hundred can chase ten thousand (Lev. 26:8). When the first church was raised up, all the apostles were together in Jerusalem. After the church in Jerusalem became strong, the believers moved out for the spreading of the gospel.

MINISTRY

When one delivers a message, he is speaking for God. It is important to have a strong spirit instead of good arguments. For this reason, our speaking should not pay too much attention to rational analysis. The basis of God's ministry of the word is His revelation in the spirit. A minister of the word has to stand on the right ground; he has to be in spirit before he can minister the word to others.

When I was at Honor Oak, I fellowshiped with Mr. Austin-Sparks about the matter of the ministry of the word. We discussed the one unique ministry and the many ministries in the Epistles to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 3:8; 1 Cor. 12:5). I said that perhaps the two passages in the Bible that will be the last to be fulfilled are the building up of the church, the Body of Christ, in Ephesians 4 and the church becoming holy and without blemish in Ephesians 5. God's work today is to build up the Body. Hence, there is the need of the one unique ministry that builds up the Body of Christ. In this Body there are many ministries that are for the perfecting of the saints. These are the ministries that the members of the Body receive from the Head for ministering to all the members. We have to learn to take our stand and be restricted by the Body.

CHAPTER EIGHT
A SPECIAL TALK
ON HANDING ONESELF OVER

Date: Evening, February 2, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

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

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

Having seen the world's fair beauty,
Lord, I would be blind once more,
Lest I lose the loving Presence
And Delight I knew before.
2. Dawn and sunset, star and moonlight,
I can see in paradise,
But while here on earth His mercy
For my blindness will suffice.
3. I no more would be delivered
From my thorn, but look for grace,
While within the veil His glory
Shineth brightly on my face.
4. In the deep dark night, His beauty
I by faith, not sight, may trace;
He was ridiculed and hated,
Yet I see His glorious face.
5. Sun and moonlight far surpassing,
Clouds and Milky Way o'erspread,
Is the glory all transcending
Shining from His thorn-crowned head.

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

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

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

The Degradation in Catholicism and the Loss of the Truth

Roman Catholicism reached its zenith during the Middle Ages. During that time the truth expounded by the church became distorted; it became very different from the teaching found in the four Gospels and in Acts. In the four Gospels, while the Lord Jesus was on earth, He not only emphasized deliverance from sin but also emphasized deliverance from money (cf. Luke 16:19-24; 19:16-26). The Acts of the Apostles is a book on the teachings of the apostles. These teachings exhort men to flee from money, on the one hand, and from sin, on the other hand. The Christian foundation is built upon deliverance from these two things. If a man continues to live under the bondage of sin as a sinner, he cannot be a proper Christian. In the same way, if he continues to live under the bondage of money, he cannot be a proper Christian. In order to serve the Lord, a man must first be delivered from sin and money on the negative side. In the fourth century

the world was brought into the church. It was no longer poor; it became very rich. Within the church, there was a gradual turning away from the teachings taught by the Lord Jesus and the apostles at the beginning.

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

God's Recovery Work

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

Since Luther's time God has been recovering His truths one by one. First, the church saw the need of turning away from sin. All the spiritual giants in church history, such as Moody, Spurgeon, and Finney, paid attention to turning men away from sin. They said that in order to receive salvation and become a Christian, one had to be sincere. He should not lie, debauch, or commit adultery. But the church has never been bold enough to proclaim, as the Lord Jesus proclaimed, that one should forsake everything to follow the Lord. I am not saying

that there have been no real followers of the Lord. Thank the Lord, there has never been an interruption in the line of true Christians. First, we have St. Francis of Assisi. He was the son of a rich man, but he sold all of his possessions and gave to the poor. He began to practice a life of voluntary poverty. Later in Moravia God raised up Count Zinzendorf. He was a nobleman, but he opened up his estate to receive saints from everywhere. The result was the establishment of the Moravian Brethren. After this there was Sister Eva, a German, who also took the way of voluntary poverty. In the last century the Brethren were raised up by God. Among them many truths were recovered. Many leading brothers among them, such as Darby and Kelly, practiced voluntary poverty. They forsook everything to follow the Lord. This is the reason the Lord could have a way through them. In 1922 when I was just saved, I saw this truth and I began to practice forsaking everything to follow the Lord.

The Lord's Recovery in China

In the light of the entire history of the church, we can say that today is our day. In China many of God's children have risen up to take this way. More and more Christians are rising up and forsaking all. In the past the church did not have the courage to preach this truth. It did not have the boldness to tell men that they have to forsake everything to follow the Lord, that unless they forsook everything, they could not be proper Christians. In 1943 the Holy Spirit began a great work in Chefoo. Many brothers and sisters obeyed the move of the Holy Spirit and offered up everything for the Lord. Later Shanghai followed and then Foochow. I hope that today Hong Kong will follow. To be a Christian, one must be a Christian in accordance with the truth of the Bible. To serve the Lord, one has to be absolute; it is useless to be otherwise. In singing the hymn about Dara, we can sense the joy within her. The most foolish thing is to be a half-way Christian. Such a one does not have the joy of the world (John 15:19) or the joy of the Lord in his spirit. He wants to have a little of the world's joy and a little Christian joy. He is not absolute, and he does not grow.

No One Can Be a Good Christian without Absolute Consecration

Why must a child of God hand himself over completely and forsake everything? This is because this is the only way to be a proper Christian. Many people do not have many problems in other areas, but they have a problem with their consecration. Today many Christians have hundreds and thousands of problems.

Actually, the root of their problems is only one thing—a lack of consecration. If a Christian does not have a problem with his consecration before the Lord, he will not have a problem with anything else.

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

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

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

Lord told the disciples to forsake everything for His sake and for the gospel's sake (Mark 10:29).

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

A THOROUGH LIQUIDATION, TERMINATION, AND DEALING

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

A brother in Shanghai was in the business of selling comic books. He could earn seven thousand People's yen a day. He depended on this business for his living. His books were worth over eight hundred thousand People's yen. For many years he kept his occupation. When filling out the personal data card from the church, he would leave the "occupation" column blank. If anyone asked him about his occupation, he would dodge the question. One day the Lord touched him and would not let him go. He felt that he had to deal with this matter. He went to the brothers and spoke with them. He was willing to hand himself over, and he

asked the brothers and sisters to burn the books for him. When Brother Chang Yu-zhi heard this, he praised the brother and promised to burn the books for him. When I heard about it, I stopped him. I asked the brother to burn the books himself. This is like Abraham killing Isaac; he had to do it with his own hands.

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

Hating Mammon like Hating Sin

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

church did not have silver or gold; it only had the name of the Lord Jesus. Today we have to go back to the very condition at the beginning.

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

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE MONEY THAT HAS BEEN HANDED OVER

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

For the Gospel

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

When we forsake everything and hand over all, we should use the money first for the gospel.

For the Poor

The second use of our money is to take care of the poor around us. The Lord said that we have the poor with us always (John 12:8). In Matthew 19 the young ruler asked the Lord how he could inherit the kingdom. The Lord told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor. The Lord wanted him to dispose of his possessions and give them to the poor around him and then to follow Him (v. 21). St. Francis of Assisi saw this truth, and he sold all that he had and gave it to the poor. He vowed to live a poor life. Count Zinzendorf was a nobleman. He was very rich, but he opened up his estate to receive the believers. Helping the poor is a principle as well as a requirement in the Bible. The Lord always cares for the poor. However, the purpose of caring for the poor is not just for the sake of the poor themselves. The main purpose is to make us poor so that we can be free from the power of mammon. A Christian should not be an accumulator of mammon and wealth. He should only be one who is rich in faith, and one who enriches others (James 2:5; 2 Cor. 6:10).

For the Brothers and Sisters

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

HANDING OVER OUR ENTIRE BEING TOGETHER WITH OUR POSSESSIONS

Handing ourselves over does not merely mean offering up our whole person; it also means offering up all our possessions. We should not make the mistake of thinking that we only need to give our hearts to the Lord. Many people make the mistake of thinking that giving everything to the Lord means offering their heart to Him. Many people preach this way. They exhort men to give their hearts to the Lord, but they dare not preach on giving the body to the Lord. We have opened up a big back door if we cannot preach a total consecration, including ourselves and all that we have, instead of just pledging our heart to Him. The most practical consecration is one in which we give our bodies to the Lord. Romans 6:13 says that we have to present our members as weapons of righteousness to God. Romans 12:1 also says that we have to present our bodies a living sacrifice. In

both instances, the word body refers to the tangible physical body. If a man comes to us and says that he will give us his heart and hands, which would you take? I would choose the hands. The heart is too arbitrary; it is not easy to pin down. If we can lay hold of the body, we will know where the heart is.

WHERE THE TREASURE IS, THERE THE HEART IS

We say that we are giving our heart to the Lord, yet our mammon is in the bank. First, let us consecrate the mammon in our bank, and then the heart will follow. Only the Lord can see our heart, because only He is the one who searches the inward parts and the hearts (Rev. 2:23). This is the reason the Lord said that where a man's treasure is, there is his heart also (Matt. 6:21). It is very easy for us to set our heart on the things above. All we have to do is to send our money there. It is impossible for our heart to be set on the things above while our mammon is in the bank below. Every man's heart is set on the earthly things because his mammon is on earth. The Lord never tries to eradicate the root of sin in us. Similarly, He never asks us to give up mammon to love God. He only says, "If your heart is truly after God, you have to place your mammon on God's side. If you bring your mammon to God, your heart will truly love God." The Lord does not ask us to give Him our heart, but He does ask us to bring Him our money. Our mammon must be deposited in heaven first before our heart will go to heaven. When we say that we want to hand ourselves over, we have to bring our heart and mammon to God at the same time. Let me shout this again: The Lord does not say that we should not love mammon and love God instead. Rather, He says that we should send our mammon to heaven. This is because our heart follows our mammon. Not only does the world's heart follow mammon, even a Christian's heart follows mammon. Our heart will always go where our mammon is.

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

his in another place—heaven. This is the only difference between a Christian and a person in the world.

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

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

What Does It Mean to Hand Over "All"?

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

HOW TO HAND OURSELVES OVER

How do we forsake everything? How do we hand ourselves over? In the Gospels we only see individuals forsaking everything. They sold their all and gave it to the poor; they did not give it to the church. This is because, in a strict sense, the

church had not been established. In Acts the church was formed as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At this time the forsaking of all things became related to the church. At Pentecost there was a proper arrangement for everything that had been handed over to the church. The disciples sold their fields and possessions, and placed the proceeds at the feet of the apostles. The apostles then disposed of them and distributed them to everyone according to need (2:45). The church became involved. It was not a random selling; everything was done for the good of the church.

The church has to be bold to speak, and it has to be bold to act. The apostolic churches did not teach about selling one's all. The disciples acted this way spontaneously. The result of this giving was a great revival. This pattern is recorded in the Bible. The church should now be bold to preach this, but it must back up this preaching with the proper arrangements. When the brothers and sisters hand themselves over, they should do so in coordination with the church. They should not follow the examples in the Gospels. It should not be a random and haphazard giving. Rather, the handing over should be done with much arrangement. Some have handed over their factory or business to the church, but the church cannot conduct business or run a factory. Therefore, under the church's direction, some businesses are returned to your hand. You must manage these businesses yourself, but you should feel that the boss has changed. The Lord through the church is now your boss, and you should not take any profit for your own use anymore.

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

This kind of handing ourselves over will give us a "joy of poverty." It will give us a joy that we have never tasted before, the joy of "not having." Many have tasted

the joy of "having," but when we hand everything over, we will taste the joy of "not having." It will be the same joy as the joy of "not having" sin. I hope that the brothers and sisters will all take this way.

If sin does not go away, the gospel will not go out, and if money does not go away, the gospel will not go out either. Mammon must first go away before the gospel can go out. The going away of mammon is only a way for our love to go out. It is not easy for me to ask someone to consecrate his heart. It is, in fact, impossible to exhort anyone to just consecrate his heart. The heart can be offered up, but it can be taken back in an instant. Our heart is at our own disposal. It is not easy to tell a person to "love the Lord your God from your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole strength and with your whole mind" (Luke 10:27). We are here to urge ourselves to send away our mammon. When we do this, our heart spontaneously will go where our mammon is. Once we hand over everything, our heart will go out with it. If we do not first send our mammon to the kingdom, it will be hard for us to enter the kingdom. Luke 18:24 shows us that it is difficult for those who have riches to enter the kingdom. The Lord told the young ruler to send away his mammon. If he had sent his mammon away to heaven, he would have entered the kingdom spontaneously.

THE CONSECRATED ONES LEARNING TO COORDINATE IN THE CHURCH LIFE

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

respond and go. We do not wish to see personal choices here. We do not want to exercise personal freedom.

Some Chekiang brothers and sisters have migrated from Hangchow to the Yi-Yang region. The Communist Party commended us for this. Recently a group of brothers in Shanghai followed in their footsteps. They did not move there by choice but for the sake of the gospel. There are over two hundred people now living in straw tents. Some saints from the church in Chefoo moved to the northwest some time ago. A Christian lives on the earth for the Lord. Everything is for the Lord and for His gospel. We should be able to find more than just the Christians of past generations forsaking everything for the gospel. In the coming days, we also have to forsake everything for the gospel. Either we will not do it at all, or we must do it properly. We do not want unbelievers to laugh at us. For the sake of the prospering of the gospel, we are willing to go to any length. The responsible brothers have no interest in interfering with your personal business. This only adds to their burden of management. This is not something that we want to do, but we are forced to do it for the gospel's sake. Today there are still brothers and sisters in Shanghai who are ready to be sent to the northwest. They do not want the gospel to stop because of them.

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

He requires that we forsake everything. The leading brothers must go on in a proper way and not have any reservations within. Only then will we be able to lead others on.

You do not have to be afraid. Brother Qu, Brother Lee, and other elder leading brothers are walking ahead of you and taking the lead among you. You have to be led to the point where you realize that no further progress will come unless you sell your all. To be a Christian we have to act decisively. It is meaningless and senseless to be a half-way and indifferent Christian. Brother Witness Lee once said that the church's channels have to be dug deep before water will flow abundantly. We can say the same thing about consecration. The more we consecrate, the more the blessing will come, and the more we will see men saved. The more hesitation we have, the less useful we will be. In every place many saints have experienced this. Once a child of God hands over his all, the gospel breaks forth. When the disciples sold their all in Acts, God added to them daily those who were being saved (2:47). If there is not a single soul in Hong Kong who wavers, who is held back, who keeps his body and possessions, and who lives for himself and if everyone is willing to rise up to serve under the church's direction, I believe there will be great hope in Hong Kong.

WE HAVE TO BE THE LORD'S WAY

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

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

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

A PRAYER

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

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

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

Lord, we ask again: Reveal Your shining face to us. Teach us to forsake everything and to have a change in concept and valuation towards everything.

May we be blind to the world and to mammon, and may we have a high and glorious valuation of Yourself and Your gospel. Be merciful to us. Amen.

CHAPTER NINE

FORSAKING EVERYTHING TO SERVE GOD

Date:Evening, February 3, 1950

Place:Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

THE GLORY OF SERVING GOD

Among God's children today, there is the thought that service to God is a favor to Him. Let me ask: Do we see the shining face on the throne? Unless we see God's glory on the throne, we cannot forsake everything. The world is lovely, and mammon is precious! Everyone is intensely interested in money; no one can forsake it. If we have seen His glory, however, we will be like Paul who regarded everything as refuse in comparison to the excellency of Christ (Phil. 3:8-9).

Brother Ma, do you know the Lord? Brother Chu, do you feel that you have given yourself to the Lord's service too soon or too late? The world has only pain, bitterness, and regret to offer to men. It is more than worthwhile for a Christian to forsake the world to serve the Lord.

We are here to speak about total consecration. Some feel that this is too much, but these ones have not seen the glory of serving God. They want to go back to the world at every turn. The Israelites who did not see the excellency of the promised land wanted to go back to Egypt at every turn. Once we sense the glory of serving the Lord, we will be able to lead many by the hand even though we may be young men ourselves. Paul was a young man when he was called Saul. He persecuted the church and thought that he was serving God. He asked for letters from the high priest to bind the believers. Yet God's glory came to him, and he fell down. Through this experience, he began to know the meaning of serving the Lord.

Perhaps we consecrated ourselves with tears. Even while our tears were still wet, our heart was filled with joy. The deepest joy is the joy that is accompanied by tears. We should feel ashamed that we have not given Him enough. We should feel ashamed that we have not given Him the best. We can never give Him too much. This revelation alone will change the color of everything in our life. It will change our taste. We are not doing this to join a crowd. It is by God's grace that our offering is accepted. This is the meaning of knowing Him in resurrection. This is what motivated the early church to consecrate itself.

Some people think that they are doing God a favor when they drop a little money in the offering box. Little do they realize that it is God's mercy that our offering is accepted. I know two young brothers who are somewhat clever in worldly ways. Each of them has some small achievements. They are very proud. They think that their service to God is a favor to Him. I heard them say once, "I could have gained a high place in society, but I have given myself to serve God!" When I heard this, I said, "You are wrong. During the past two thousand years of church history, countless people who were better than you have given themselves to serve the Lord. They knew the preciousness and the glory of serving the Anointed One. They never felt that they had done themselves an injustice by serving God. On the contrary, they thanked God for His great mercy for sending down His fire to consume the service of a sinner like them. O blind ones, the day will come when the One to whom you offered yourselves in contempt will be exalted in glory as the Christ of God. Think carefully about who is doing whom a favor!"

Even if we have to kneel, crawl, or prostrate ourselves before God, we have to plead for service. His acceptance of our consecration is His mercy and grace. Consecration is God's grace to us. It is God granting us a favor by accepting us. We have to bow down our head and say, like Mephibosheth, "What is your servant that you should look upon a dead dog like me?" (2 Sam. 9:8). God is so great. He is the Lord of the universe. What a wonder that creatures as lowly as we can serve Him. O proud ones who can boast in anything, you cannot boast in front of God; this is the wrong place for boasting.

Let me illustrate my point with a story. I have a friend who is also a brother. During the war he was in Chungking. One day General Chiang invited him for a meal. He was very excited when telling me about the dinner, and he was very honored. Two months ago Mr. Mao wrote him a letter and asked him a question. He came and told me that General Chiang's dinner and Mr. Mao's letter were highlights in his life that he would never forget. Let me say that God is far greater than Mr. Mao and General Chiang. Are we doing Him a favor or is He doing us a favor by allowing us to serve Him? Everyone who knows God will prostrate himself in the dust and beg to give his all to God in adoration and worship. It is God's great love and mercy to allow us to serve Him. We should thank Him. We have not done Him a favor. It is a matter of Him receiving our consecration, not a matter of us being generous enough to give ourselves. The honor is on us, not on Him. Serving the Lord is our glory, a tremendous glory!

We hope that in these days many brothers and sisters will learn to press themselves against the Lord and say, "This is what little I have. Please send down Your fire to accept it." This is the time for us to forsake everything. It is inexcusable for any of our co-workers to have fear or to keep back anything. Anyone who tries to deceive or who has impure motives will be like Ananias and Sapphira. Our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). No man can deceive such a Lord. We have to offer up everything wholeheartedly and in all sincerity. We have to serve God with our whole soul and our whole mind.

OUR CONSECRATION SPEAKS OF OUR VALUATION OF THE LORD

Our consecration speaks of our valuation of the Lord. The more we treasure the Lord, the more we will give our all to Him. We all have something that we treasure. Handing oneself over does not merely mean handing over treasures but handing over all. In the past the church was too timid; it only dared to ask the saints to offer their treasures. Today the church should no longer be timid. It has to proclaim boldly to the saints: "We have to offer up everything to the Lord. When we do not know Him, we only offer up our treasures. When we know His glory, we will say to Him, 'Not only am I offering my past and present treasures; I am offering everything I will have in the future. Please accept them.' " If we try to hold anything back, our inner being will feel suffocated; we will not be comfortable unless we consecrate. Our consecration speaks of our valuation of the Lord. It shows how much we are willing to pay for the Lord. In Judas's eyes the Lord was worth only thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave (Matt. 26:15; Exo. 21:32). To the world, our Lord is a slave. It is willing to pay thirty pieces of silver for Him and no more. How much are we willing to pay?

Allow me to tell a story. After the war all the brothers and sisters were struggling with a mean living. At that time a brother proposed marriage to a sister, and they became engaged. The brother came to me and said, "I am getting married. I have never asked anyone for anything in my whole life. Now I am asking for help for my wedding." He needed a large sum of money. I asked, "Presently, everyone is tight financially. Is not this sum a little too large?" He answered, "To me, it is too little." Of course, it was seven or eight times more than what other brothers would spend. He thought for a long while, and then answered me in a very emphatic way, "To me, nothing is too much to spend on her." I had nothing to say. I gave him what he asked for. Two months later, I found myself preaching

to him about selling all and offering everything to God. Thank God, he heard my words and did sell everything.

Many times we feel that we are not doing enough even when we offer everything to God. We feel that we are not doing enough when we lay our all, our life, and even our blood on the altar. This is like the brother who loved his fiancée so much that nothing was too much to him. If we really treasure the Lord, nothing will be too much or too expensive to offer to Him. We would not be ashamed to pour out our most cherished and precious treasures on Him. He is worthy of our total abandonment. Is our valuation of Him so high that it transcends everything?

ON BEING AN ABSOLUTE CHRISTIAN

If we want to consecrate ourselves, we have to do it absolutely. We have to forsake everything to follow the Lord. One brother in Shanghai only had two dictionaries. These were his total possessions; he had nothing else. When he heard the message on forsaking all to follow the Lord, he went home and asked his father if there was anything in the house that belonged to him. His father answered that the two dictionaries were the only items. He took the two dictionaries and handed them over to the church. It is not a matter of consecrating more or less; it is a matter of consecrating one's all. When the poor widow offered up her two mites, the Lord's heart was touched (Luke 21:2). The Lord praised Mary's consecration and said that she had done what she could (Mark 14:8). For the gospel and God's house, we have to offer up everything. Either we do not become a Christian at all, or we have to be such a kind of Christian. We cannot hold back anything. This is what it means to be absolute. A brother in Shanghai once said, "It is getting harder and harder to be a Christian. When others slap our cheek, we have to turn the other cheek." Actually, this brother does not know the Lord. He does not know how to exult in Him. His only reaction is to grit his teeth. It is a suffering to him. If we turn our right cheek immediately to those who slap our left cheek, we will go home full of joy. But if we remain in ourselves, hesitating to strike back only because we think this is what a Christian should do and keeping our anger within, we will only suffer. Only those who abandon themselves in an absolute way will find joy. If both of our cheeks are slapped, we will exult in the Lord. We will feel that we have been given the honor to demonstrate the proper Christian standard and measure. We have to be a Christian absolutely. We should not only deny everything; we should deny ourselves. Once I was sick with tuberculosis. Even now I still have trouble with my heart. If we do not deny ourselves, we can never be happy. Today a brother

is here. Suppose we try to help him beyond our capacity. Suppose we help him until we hurt, until we start digging into our own necessities. When our hands become empty, we will kneel down and praise the Lord. We will not need to plead for God's mercy. Such a consecration will fill us with joy for a whole month. The Christian joy is not merely a joy on the surface but a joy in the heart.

Brother Philip Luan was a very good giver. After he became a Christian, he closed down his tobacco factory. One brother tried to borrow a hundred dollars from him, but he only had twenty dollars. He went home, pawned the only blanket he had, a Russian-made one of top quality, and scraped together a hundred dollars to give to the brother. When his wife returned, she found that the blanket was gone. Brother Luan comforted her, saying, "We are giving it away to the Lord. We are the Lord's slaves. We are here to serve the Lord. It is only right that we offer up everything to Him."

Paul testified to the Corinthians that though he was poor, he enriched many (2 Cor. 6:10). He also said that our Lord Jesus was rich but had become poor for our sake so that we would become rich because of His poverty (8:9). Our Lord denied Himself to make us rich. We can touch the same reality in the self-sacrifice of Paul.

An absolute consecration will fill us with joy. We cannot say that it is wrong for Christians to have reservations, but we can say that a consecration with reservations invariably comes short. We have to be a Christian absolutely, definitely, and thoroughly. This is the only way to be filled with joy. This kind of joy is unknown to the Gentiles. I hope to see Christians in Hong Kong full of praises in their mouth and joy in their heart. The more absolute we are, the more we will be filled with joy inwardly.

This is the reason the Bible always puts trials and joy together. I do not know what Paul's ordinary tone of voice was, but I do know that when he sang in the prison cell, even the prisoners and the angels inclined their ears (Acts 16:25). When a person willingly takes up the suffering of relinquishing all for the Lord, how great will be his joy and how lofty will be his tune! Perhaps he will suffer much ridicule from men. Perhaps even Christians will say to him, "I have been a Christian for thirty years. I have never done what you are doing. Perhaps you have a problem with your mind. Perhaps you have gone mad!" He has to answer them, saying, "Lovers of the Lord down through the ages have done this. Brethren in the last century like J. N. Darby, Sir Bennet, William Kelly, and many other leading brothers forsook their all within a single day. They gave up

everything to follow the Lord." Griffith Thomas praised the Brethren for being the best among all God's children in rightly dividing the truth. D. M. Panton said that the Brethren movement far exceeded the Reformation in its influence. It was a common practice among hundreds and thousands of these brothers to give up everything. Some gave up their nobility. Others gave up their position, their degree, or their possessions. Their consecration brought in the church's revival. From them we have inherited the knowledge and assurance of God's salvation, the judgment of sin, the truth about the position of the church, the practice of forsaking all to follow the Lord, and other things. Of course, we have gone on and have become clearer concerning certain things.

The tide of the Spirit is forever onward. This is true not only of the truth concerning salvation and the position of the church but of the practice of forsaking all. What Brother Witness Lee did in Chefoo in 1943 was a strategic move of the Holy Spirit. It was a move of the Spirit, and no one could withstand it. All the brothers and sisters poured out their hearts and gave up their possessions, sometimes with tears and sometimes with laughter. As a result the truth was uplifted and recovered, and a revival was brought in. The work of the Holy Spirit was so strong that many brothers and sisters were compelled to offer their all. They could not have any peace otherwise.

THE WAY OF THE CHURCH TODAY

Consecration is not only a personal matter. It is the way of the church today. We are clear about a person's individual position and his way, but how should the church go on? In the first century the apostles as a body forsook everything to serve the Lord. In the four Gospels the apostles dropped everything to follow the Lord individually. Then at the beginning of Acts three thousand and then five thousand people were saved. The church life began, and the believers followed the example of the apostles to forsake everything to follow the Lord. The whole church forsook everything (2:44-45; 4:32-35). Later the church became degraded. The clergy-laity system was formed, and the clergy monopolized all spiritual things. The laity, composed of secular men and women, became lax. However, the church did not lower its expectation concerning the apostles. It expected the clergy to suffer, to forsake all, and to deny the world. We all know that Catholicism forbids its priests from marrying. The less human they are, the more they are qualified to bear spiritual things. This is a wrong concept. Paul's word on presenting the body as a living sacrifice is for the whole Body (Rom.

12:1); it was not addressed to the apostles alone. Today everyone expects a preacher to be poor, and everyone expects the co-workers to suffer, but no one expects the ordinary believer to be the same. This, however, is not the truth of the Bible. It is a fallen concept of the church. When the church moves on and advances, it will find that forsaking everything is not the exclusive business of the apostles but a practice that belongs to all the believers. In the past many people have had the concept that the workers should be particularly poor and suffering, that they must forsake everything before they can be considered a servant of the Lord. Today we are welcoming everyone to join the co-workers' lot. In other words, we should take the way of life and the way of service of a worker; we should live and serve accordingly. This is the way the church has decided to take today.

All of us should rise up and be workers. This means that all of us have to be servants of God. Our worldly occupation is only for maintaining our livelihood. We may have different occupations, but we are all servants of the Lord. Everything is offered up to the Lord and to the church. The church may assign you to be a businessman. A person cannot live two or three times above the standard of a co-worker just because he is a businessman. This is absolutely wrong. Just as we expect a co-worker to be frugal, we have to be frugal. We have to make a resolution never to buy anything carelessly. We have to save all we can and limit our spending. This applies to every brother who has handed himself over. In the past there might have been a difference between the co-workers and those who were not co-workers. We can no longer have this distinction.

A minister of the word cannot keep back any word for himself. Similarly, a moneymaker cannot keep back any money for himself. Holding back the Lord's word and having reservations is a cheating in the Lord's ministry of the word. Paul, David, John, Daniel, Ezekiel, and others never hid the word in their ministry of God's word (cf. Acts 20:27; Col. 1:25). A minister of God's word has to share His word with the church. Similarly, those involved with the ministry of mammon should share their mammon with the church; they should not keep it for their own use. From now on we should save as much as possible and sell whatever we can sell, but we should not force unbelieving parents, wives, or husbands to go along. We can only practice this ourselves. Under all possible circumstances, we should save as much as we can save and sell as much as we can sell. I do not advise that we eat poorly on purpose; this will ruin our health. That is not wise. We should sell what we can sell but not deprive the body of its necessary

nutrition. We must take good care of our body. If we have the potential to use our body for another thirty years, we should use it for this time. It should not waste away in two or three years. Other than this consideration, we should save as much as we can save and give away as much as we can. Give up everything for the saints' and for the gospel's sake.

HOW TO SELL ONE'S ALL

We must take time and place into consideration in selling our all. In the Gospels we find individuals practicing this. In Acts the saints sold their belongings themselves, placed the proceeds at the feet of the apostles, and put them at the disposal of the church. In reality they placed them before the seven deacons (Acts 6:3). Once the church comes in, there is the need of arrangements. But these arrangements are not made by natural men but by men of wisdom chosen by the Holy Spirit. With proper arrangements, things will not be handled rashly. The Holy Spirit will exercise His control in this matter. We request that you write down all that you have on a piece of paper and give it to the church. Let the church decide what to do. Some things need to be sold. Other things do not need to be sold. The church will make the decision. The church asks you to submit a list, not because it wants to claim the items on the list, but to facilitate the responsible brothers in making proper arrangements. You should not keep anything according to your choosing. If the brothers and sisters say that you should keep it, you should keep it. Your two hands have to be empty all the time. After you have handed your possessions over, if the church says that you should sell something, it will return the items to you and ask you to sell them. The teaching in Acts is that all the consecrated ones did the selling themselves. The teaching in the Gospels is also for every individual to do the selling himself. This act of selling affords a very good training to the seller; it is a great lesson to him. Let me give another illustration. A brother in Shanghai bought eight hundred mus (a measure of land, equal to approximately 733 square yards) of contiguous farmland in the course of ten years. He spent much time and energy acquiring it. When he handed himself over, he dealt with the land two and three plots at a time because he reckoned that he had acquired them two or three at a time. If I had been the one selling it for him, I would have disposed of the whole property all at once. I realized that this brother was still not firmly persuaded in his heart. He submitted his list of consecration, but his heart was not in it. I asked him to come to me, and I told him to sell his land. He could not part with it and

eventually decided to keep it. Eventually, all eight hundred mus were confiscated by the Communists. I am asking you to do the same thing now: Whatever you have built up with your own hands should be sold by your own hands. This is like Abraham being asked to slay his own son. This will teach you a very solid lesson. Today many people are like Nebuchadnezzar, who built the great city Babylon with his own hands. They dare not tear down their own building; they want to hand it over to God and let God tear it down. God will never do this, however. He wants us to tear it down ourselves. Abraham obeyed God and offered up Isaac. God wanted Abraham to slay Isaac with his own knife. Isaac was Abraham's son; God did not want to slay Isaac for him. A man does not have many chances in his life to learn such a lesson.

One sister had a fondness for jewelry, such as pearls and bracelets. She handed them over to the church and asked the church to sell them for her. I told her that the church would not sell them for her but that she had to sell them herself. This was the only way she could be free from money and material possessions. From now on the church will not sell or auction things for the saints.

When Brother Witness was preparing the building of the meeting hall in Shanghai, many sisters offered their diamonds, rings, jade, etc. Many brothers offered paintings and calligraphies which they had collected. A high price had been paid for these items. They were worth quite much at the time of their purchase, but they could not be sold for twenty percent of their value. Some could not be sold for more than a fiftieth of the purchase price. One diamond worth five thousand dollars was sold for less than five hundred dollars. Another item worth twelve hundred dollars was sold for only twenty dollars. The brothers and sisters who sold their jewelry and paintings began to realize how much they had wasted the money that God had blessed them with. This is the only way we can realize the rapid depreciation of worldly possessions. Only eternal things have eternal value. Only items that have been consecrated to God retain their value. Paintings and calligraphies quickly become cheap. We have to take up the knife and do the killing ourselves. Only by doing it ourselves will we realize how easily we are deceived. This will teach us a lesson to not be so foolish again. This is the only way we can learn. If we invest our hard-earned money into these objects again, we will be the most foolish people. When we hand ourselves over to God, we are building upon an unfailing and unfaltering foundation. Our spirit will no longer be bound, and we will transcend everything.

When we overcome the bondage of money and material things and we rise above the entanglement of everything, the whole church will rise up to preach the gospel. Now the workers are preaching. When that day comes, the church will be preaching and the church will be serving. There will no longer be just one or two persons serving as full-timers. The whole church will be the Lord's servants. That will be a glorious day. I hope that day will come soon.

HOW TO GO ON AFTER SELLING ONE'S ALL

How should we serve in the church after we have sold our all? We have to submit to the careful arrangement of the older, leading brothers who make decisions under the control of the Holy Spirit. These brothers should also give clear advice concerning proper occupations. We want all the consecrated ones to be able to work together, even for the gospel migration. In the past our occupation was for our personal interest and livelihood. In the future we hope that we will offer up our occupation to God for the accomplishment of His gospel. We hope that we can say that any occupation is acceptable as long as it benefits the gospel. We have no choice of our own. We do not want to take our own way. Rather, we will go where the gospel goes. If we can do this, we can send some to Sinkiang province or to Tibet. If the whole church can send out five thousand, ten thousand, or even fifty thousand people, how much the Lord will bless His church! If everything we have is offered up for the gospel, the church, and the Lord's service, the Lord and the gospel will have a free way through the church. Brother Liu was a very good doctor. He and his wife were sent to Yi-Yang. They had a good place to live in Chung-Shan Hospital. When they arrived in Yi-Yang none of the walls of the saints' houses were made of solid material. They did not even have tiled roofs; many lived in tents. Brother Liu and his wife did the same. They did not have their own choice. His job at Chung-Shan Hospital was not bad, but for the sake of serving God, they chose to live in these unbearable conditions. Thousands of people throughout church history have forsaken everything for the sake of serving the Lord. Brother Liu and his wife gave up their good living and moved to Yi-Yang for one purpose only—to join the other brothers and sisters in serving our God.

FORSAKING EVERYTHING TO SERVE OUR GOD

I hope that no one in Hong Kong will hold back anything. I hope that everyone will be absolute and forsake everything to serve our God. We must be this kind of people before God will allow us to serve Him. We have to be clear about what we

are doing here. I do not believe there is another force as powerful in preaching the gospel as the whole Body rising up. Yet there are not many places where men dare to say that they will forsake everything to serve our God. Actually, no one wants to say such a thing. A man is willing to say such a word only after God has worked on him and dealt with him. Brother Witness, Sister Wang, and myself have considered this matter for many years. We dared not say this word because we felt that we had not been dealt with enough. Today we have not lost our sanity when we say such a word. The Lord has brought us to a point that we cannot hold back this word. We have to realize that we have to bear the responsibility for what we are saying here. Indeed, this is not something that we love to speak in ourselves. I know the consequence of saying such a thing. But this is the only way we can serve our God. No cheaper way will work. Let me say this again: Only those who have forsaken everything can serve our God. I know the serious responsibility I am bearing for saying such a word. Perhaps you would rather be a spectator in this meeting, but we have to fulfill our responsibility. I can only say what Paul said to Agrippa when he testified that he was not insane. He had not lost his mind. This is the way that God has put in front of us.

If we take the way God has laid before us, the glorious church in Ephesians 4 and 5 will be before our eyes. May God open our eyes, and may such a glorious day be hastened through our absoluteness.

PRAYERS

Brother Weigh: Lord, in Hong Kong everything is loose, but everyone has a tight grip on mammon. Everyone is building up his Babylon and Jericho. These are the things the world boasts of. But You will destroy them all. How easy it is for us to follow the world. Unless You deal with all these things by Your mighty power, Your great glory, and Your love, we will have no way to go on. Lord, grant us the grace to willingly destroy what we have built and to give ourselves to You entirely for Your service.

A sister: Lord, apart from the cleansing of Your blood, no one can be accepted by You. Unless we consecrate ourselves absolutely to You, we are not qualified to serve You. May Your glorious face on the throne attract us once more so that we can run after You.

Brother Luk: Lord, grant us a persevering faithfulness. We want to put this word into practice immediately. We do not want to have any compromise from our head to our very toes.

Watchman Nee: Lord, do a work in Hong Kong as You have never done before. Clear out the situation here entirely. We want to give ourselves to You unconditionally and gloriously. We desire to consecrate ourselves to You absolutely and thoroughly. In the past we built up many things for ourselves. Work in us today to destroy them all. Clear out everything until nothing is left. Work on us again and again. Have a way among us and then have a way here in Hong Kong. May we see the whole Body rising up to serve in Hong Kong, and may many other places follow in its footsteps. We consecrate ourselves to You. We offer ourselves to You so that You will have a way to go on in the church. When You have a way to go on in the church, the gospel will have a way to go on in Hong Kong. Be merciful to us and be gracious to us. Send us the heavenly fire. Accept our offering so that Your gospel will have a free way among us. Amen.

CHAPTER TEN

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

Date: Evening, February 4, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

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

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

Of all the prophecies in the Bible, only two raise apprehensions within me. I do not know if you have ever been apprehensive about them. They are Ephesians 4 and 5. It seems as if these two chapters will never be fulfilled. Ephesians 4

speaks of the church being built up and growing into the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (v. 13). It seems very hard for the church to reach this state. But there is more. There is Ephesians 5. It seems that this chapter is not as hard to attain to as the previous one, but the requirement is certainly more stringent. In this chapter we are told that when the Lord comes back, the church will be without spot as far as its very nature is concerned and that it will also be without blemish. This means it will not have any mark from previous wounds and sicknesses. The church will also be blameless. Even if it is presented before all men and is subject to open scrutiny and criticism, no one will be able to find any fault (v. 27). The church will be so prepared that it will become absolutely blameless. I must ask the Lord to forgive me for saying this word: Today we can only look at the church with our eyes closed. Once we open our eyes, we will see many areas in which the church is not blameless. We can only give it a score of fifty out of a hundred. Some people are not willing to give it even a score of five. Moreover, the church will be without wrinkle. A wrinkle is a mark of oldness. There was a time when there was no wrinkle on our face, but now wrinkles have appeared. This means that we have grown old. After two thousand years the church must still be young; it must still not have any wrinkle. This is truly the hardest thing to achieve in the whole Bible.

During the past five hundred years, there have been gradual recoveries in the church. The church was once steeped in idol worship; even images of God Himself were made. There were images of Christ, images of Mary, and images of God. Worshipping images means that the church tolerates sin; this is degradation. I have spent four to five years studying Ephesians 4 and 5. Every time I came across these passages, I shook my head and prayed, "Lord, this is impossible." I admitted that I could not climb that high; my heart could not believe what I read. The church was wonderful at the beginning; it was indeed powerful, but what about now? It seems as if it has become desolate. However, during the past two thousand years, the church has been advancing as well. From Catholicism to Protestantism, there was clearly a recovery in the revelation of God's Word. Truths were recovered, such as justification by faith, sanctification by faith, Christ as our life, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and others. Even teachings on faith and prayer were recovered. There was also the recovery of gifts, not to mention the recovery of the power of the Holy Spirit to cast out demons. But before 1923 no one knew the church. Preachers did not pay attention to the church; they only paid attention to revival meetings. One revival

meeting saw two thousand five hundred persons saved, but only sixty-six people were willing to be baptized. Many people thought that it was enough to be saved and to go to heaven; they did not think that it was necessary to be baptized. Everyone wanted to take the easy way. They did not pay attention to the matter of the kingdom. But thank the Lord that there were still some who were concerned about the matter of the church. This shows us that God has been taking the way of recovery. Why do we have to hand ourselves over? Why do we have to consecrate in an absolute way? It is because God's children must stand on His side before the church can move on to perfection. The church must pay the price to gain God's riches before Ephesians 4 and 5 can be realized and before the Lord can find a way to come back.

NOT CHANGING GOD'S WILL, NOT LOWERING HIS STANDARD

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

word will become a stumbling block to their perfection in God. In other words, we cannot change any commandment that God has ordained in the Bible. Selling one's all to follow the Lord is an ordained way that God has revealed in His Word. But in China during the past one hundred years, no one dared to say such a thing except for the "Jesus Family" (Je-Su-Chia-Ting). No one dared to talk about forsaking all to follow the Lord. When we preach the gospel to others today, do we tell them that they can be rich and at the same time live a Christian life? We have pursued perfection in the past, and we have obeyed the Lord in many things. Why should we come short in this one thing? Can we be victorious in many things yet fail in this one thing?

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

Today we can only speak for those who are most desirous of obeying the Lord. We cannot speak for those who do not want to obey or who are thinking of taking the easy way. We have to speak for those who want to pay the price, who want to take God's way today. If we make allowance for those who do not have a heart for the Lord in everything, we might as well be the YMCA. Why call ourselves the church? If we want to call ourselves the church, we cannot skip any commandment of the Lord. If God finds another church that is absolute for His will, He can easily set us aside. Our failure is a small thing, but our failure can delay God. It is easy for God to raise up other people, but that would take a

dozen or so years or even a few decades. In order to give God a way to accomplish His will, we have no alternative but to give our all. We do not have the right to change His commands. Among all the commandments of God, one commandment says that we should be delivered from mammon. We should not be bound by mammon. If God says that we should forsake everything, we have to follow. We are His slaves; we dare not change His will. We are not qualified to change His will. As slaves we have to carry out whatever God says. Where our treasure is, there our heart is also. We cannot serve Him and mammon at the same time. Therefore we have to send our money to heaven. It is impossible for our treasure to be in heaven and for our heart to remain on earth. God's will is the most crucial thing to us who are His slaves. We have to try to understand His will fully, and we have to strive to meet His demand with no reservation.

THE CHURCH'S PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S RETURN

The Need for Maturity

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

Forsaking Everything to Meet the Lord's Demand

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

what we have; He wants us. He wants us to offer ourselves to Him, to give ourselves to His gospel, to His will, and to the gaining of sinners' souls. Brother Witness often says that as soon as money leaves the church, souls are added from the world.

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

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

HANDING OVER EVERYTHING, SERVING THE LORD IN COORDINATION

Handing ourselves over does not necessarily mean that we will become poor. Handing over everything is different from merely living in poverty. When we hand ourselves over to God, we are not only giving Him our money but our time and future as well. The cheapest and most shallow consecration is the consecration of the heart. Heart consecration alone does not cause any pain. If we have not offered up our time, body, and future, we may say that we have consecrated everything, but in reality everything is still in our own hands. The young people may say that they have consecrated themselves, but their consecration has not touched their education or their future occupation at all. Today when you hand yourselves over, the church may send you with five or ten other saints to a school where there are no believers at all. You will not only study in the school

but also bring people to the church. If some do this, perhaps fifteen or even a hundred people will be saved by the end of a term. In the church in Shanghai, some have handed themselves over, and they have been sent to study at Nanking Central University. In the coming days every consecrated one will need a change in his future and occupation. He will go to school for God; his education will be merely a sideline.

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

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

that everyone felt he should no longer remain in his job. He prayed about it and felt that he should leave. He was making a good living as a manager. Now his salary is only one-fifth of what it used to be, but he has become very useful in the gospel. He has a good testimony before the brothers and sisters. He is no longer giving himself to his factory but to serving God.

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

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

THE WHOLE CHURCH RISING UP TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A TALK WITH CO-WORKERS

(2)

Date: February 5, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

ONE

Doing things with all sincerity and honesty does not necessarily mean that this is obeying God's will, nor does this necessarily please the Lord. For example, a

husband may want his wife to prepare a bowl of porridge for him. All he needs is a bowl of porridge, but his wife may prepare eggs with fried rice because she is worried that her husband does not have enough to eat. She has a good heart, but she is not acting according to her husband's will.

The most sober thought that a Christian faces is that he can follow the Spirit, but he can also grieve the Spirit. If he is led by the Spirit, he will know God's will. The only reason that a Christian does not know God's will is that he is grieving the Spirit.

TWO

Selling one's all has to do with what we want to do; it has nothing to do with whether or not the Spirit is willing. In Acts 5 Peter told Ananias, "While it remained, was it not your own? And when it was sold, was it not under your authority?" (v. 4). This shows that selling one's all is entirely in one's own hand; it is not a demand of the church or of the Holy Spirit. Of course, the Holy Spirit moves in man, but the final decision is man's.

THREE

Different members of our body have different functions. Some act quickly; others act slowly. Some are manifest in their function; others are hidden in their function. Some members are outward; while others are inward. These different functions are adapted to different feelings and reactions. In order to touch God, to serve Him, and to understand His will, we have to exercise our hidden, spiritual organs.

The purpose of handing ourselves over is to be dealt with in our very person; it is to make us sensitive in our spiritual feelings. The purpose of handing ourselves over is not to show others how absolute we are. The conscience is a spiritual organ; it is also the first function that manifests itself in our Christian service. Paul said that he served God in his spirit, that is, in a pure conscience (Rom. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:3). The purpose of handing ourselves over is to have a pure conscience so that we can serve God in all sincerity.

CHAPTER TWELVE
HANDING OURSELVES OVER
FOR THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL
BY THE WHOLE BODY

Date:Monday, February 6, 1950

Place:Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

THE CHURCH BEING GOD'S GOAL
AS WELL AS HIS MEANS

Christians are God's goal, but they are also God's means. Today, we also have to see clearly that the church is God's goal as well His means. Ordinarily, if an object is a goal it cannot be a means, and if it is a means it cannot be a goal. However, God makes His goal and His means one and the same. What do we mean when we say that Christians are God's goal? God's goal is to redeem us. Once God redeems us, He has reached His goal. It is God's intention and goal that we be saved, but God does not stop there. He wants to use us to save others. First, we are God's goal, then we should place ourselves in His hand and allow Him to use us to save others. In this way we become God's means. To God, we are His goal, and to the world, we are His means. If God does not use us, He will have no way to spread the gospel.

Today every one of us can say that we are God's goal. We have no argument about this. The issue today is that God wants us also to be His means. Do you have a problem with this? God can use many people to be His goal but not many people can be His means. Although they are saved, God cannot get through in them. As a result, He cannot reach His goal in others.

When the early apostles forsook everything to follow the Lord, their goal was not to go to heaven, but to bring others to the same salvation. They were not only God's goal but also God's means to bring others to salvation. God used other men to gain us and to accomplish His goal in us. Today we should do the same. God first made us the goal and then the means. Do we want to be God's means? God wants to use us in such a way that He can promptly say, "I want to save a certain person, and he only needs to come in contact with you." How many people today can say that they are God's means? If God finds any reservation, any frustration, or any blockage in us, He cannot reach His goal of saving others through us. As a result, many sinners will not receive any blessing from us; they will not hear the gospel from us nor will they be saved through us.

God does not have many means on earth today. If He wants to save fifty thousand people here in Hong Kong, He does not rely on fifty thousand isolated means. No, God does not work separately one by one. He has established the church and has baptized everyone into one Spirit. The many members have become one new man, one Body. They can no longer be separated; they are all fitly joined together. When we were saved, we were saved individually one by one. When we spread out as God's means, however, we spread out as the Body. When we were saved we became living stones. When we spread out, we are coordinated as a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5). In other words, God's means is the corporate Christian—the church, not the individual Christians. Let me say a direct word to you tonight. What is the church? In order to save the world, God has instituted a body, an organization, or you may say a group of people, and has made it the very means whereby He saves the world. Our sole purpose of living on this earth is for the gospel. We do not save a few souls here and there when we feel like it. God joins all the believers together into a harmonious whole, like a body, and uses it to preach the gospel and to save others.

THE GOSPEL BEING THE CHURCH'S ONLY COMMISSION AND PROFESSION

The church has only one commission on this earth—to live for the gospel. Please do not take this word in a light way. The church does not exist on this earth for any other purpose. It does not exist for jobs, education, or its own future. The church exists for the gospel of God, but how many brothers and sisters remember that they do not live for their business, family, living, and future, but for the gospel? When we were saved, God gave us not only a new life but also a new profession, which is the preaching of His gospel. On the day we were saved, not only did our old life die, but our old profession died as well. The basic problem with many brothers and sisters is that though their life has changed, their professions have not changed; they are still pursuing their former resolves. They want to be ahead of others, earning fame and riches. Some young people have not yet entered a profession, yet they are already dreaming of the day when they will be a great doctor or a famous engineer. If a Christian does not experience a change in his profession, he cannot become God's means. This is the reason we want the brothers and sisters to hand themselves over. We can call this a handing over, or we can call this consecration. We are for the fact, not

the terminology. The Bible says that every saved person is changed in his life as well as his profession; he has become a preacher of the gospel.

Many of the co-workers have the wrong concept that some people are specially called by God to be workers. Some of us think that we change our profession because we have acquired some kind of gift, but this is wrong. The Bible does talk about different gifts, but the Bible does not say that Christians have different professions. We have the same life, and we have the same profession. I have searched through the whole Bible. I cannot find one case where a person has a new life but does not change his profession. We may think that it is enough for our life to change, but this is wrong. Our profession must change as well. When I was saved, I became God's goal. When I changed my profession, I became God's means. I, my very person, became His way. The profession that God assigns for a Christian is dedicated entirely to the gospel. God has not only given us a new life; He wants to use us as His means to save others. The Bible shows us that God did not give this new profession—the proclamation of the gospel—to individuals only. The spreading of the gospel cannot be achieved by one man alone. God's commandment concerning the spreading of the gospel is for the whole church. Please remember that in sending out the disciples for the gospel work, the Lord did not say "go," singular, but "go," plural (Matt. 28:19). In the Gospels the Lord sent the disciples out two by two (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). When there were more people, He sent out groups of more than two. For example, in Acts we see Peter and John and we also see Paul and Barnabas. In Samaria we see Peter and John (8:14), but in the visit to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea, we see Peter with six other disciples (10:23-24; 11:12). More than two joined him. In Antioch the first apostles who went out were Paul and Barnabas (13:2-3). Later many others joined them (15:39-40). The church exists on this earth for the gospel.

I would like to consider one question with the brothers and sisters today: What is the church? What should the church be likened to? The church is the means of God; it is God's means to reach the world with the gospel. Protestantism has given us good as well as bad examples during the past one hundred and forty or fifty years. It drew men's attention to the revivalists or evangelists. It sent many people to foreign lands, but these efforts can be likened to the garment hawkers on the streets of Chungking or Shanghai during the war: Everyone was selling his own wares. The result was isolated cases of revival. The Bible, however, does not show us a scattered preaching of the gospel. The Bible says that the

whole church gives itself to the Lord for the gospel. The church is God's means; individuals here and there are not God's means. The church spreads the gospel, not one or two individuals doing isolated evangelistic work. What is the place of the church in God's plan? In God's plan, the entire church on earth is God's way, His means. The church exists on earth for the gospel. The church has only one profession—the spreading of the gospel. Every Christian receives a new profession after he is regenerated—preaching the gospel. It is not a matter of individuals preaching the gospel in an isolated fashion, but the church preaching the gospel in coordination.

We do not need to talk about this matter to those who are not saved. Once we are saved, we have to see clearly that God has changed our profession. We are not to serve individually. We all have only one profession now, which is to preach the gospel. In the past, Protestantism only encouraged men toward a kind of individual and isolated evangelism. It was good, but not good enough. Today God's way is for the whole Body to rise up in one accord to preach the gospel. For this, the church must coordinate together before it can preach the gospel. Without coordination, it cannot preach the gospel.

SELLING ONE'S ALL—IMPOSSIBLE WITH MAN BUT POSSIBLE WITH GOD

In Luke 18 the Lord told the young ruler that he had to sell his all to follow Him before he could inherit eternal life. The young man thought the requirement was too high, and he left in sorrow. After this the Lord told the disciples that it is difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom (vv. 18-25). Let me explain this a little more in detail. Not only is a camel too big; even a mouse is too big to go through. The real issue here is that entrance into the kingdom is hard not only for a rich man but for any man who depends on himself. Only God can do this work. During the past two thousand years, thank God, many camels have passed through the needle's eye. The mistake of the young ruler was in trying to do it by himself. His mistake was not in loving his riches but in his thought that God could not do it because he himself could not do it. We all love money; none of us can give up everything. If God becomes the source of our faith, however, even a camel can go through the needle's eye. This is the gospel. We think that it is impossible with man, but we have forgotten that it is possible with God. No man can go through the eye of a needle; no man can hand

himself over, but God does not say that we have to do it by ourselves. He says that we can do it by Him. If we call on Him for help, even a camel can go through the needle's eye. We know that we cannot do it, but it is wrong to think that God cannot do it.

It is true that everyone loves money and that no one is willing to forsake everything. However, what is impossible with man is possible with God. This is the reason we find Zaccheus in Luke 19. We know that it is easy for a young man to become excited. When he is burning, he can throw away his money easily, but an old man has handled money for many years; he knows what money can bring him. It is hard to change an old man. Mammon is like opium; if we only take a little of it, we can drop it easily, but if we take a great deal of it, it will be hard to shake the addiction. The more we take, the harder it is to be free from it. The Lord said to Zaccheus that He would go into his house that very day. Most people would object to such a move and think, "Lord, You are an outsider from another town. You do not know Zaccheus. You have been fooled by him." But the Lord ignored such thoughts (vv. 1-7). To everyone's surprise, Zaccheus stood up and said, "Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much" (v. 8). Zaccheus only caught a glimpse of the Lord's glory, and everything he had was gone. He saw one glimpse of Christ, and he forsook everything to follow Him that same day. This is surely a camel going through the eye of a needle. When the Lord saw what Zaccheus had done, He said, "Today salvation has come to this house" (v. 9). If Zaccheus had tried to do it by himself, he would not have succeeded, but salvation came to his house, and he did it. In comparing verse 5 with verse 9, we can see that salvation refers to the Lord Jesus. The young man in chapter eighteen had his eyes set on man. This was the reason he could not go through the eye of the needle. The old man in chapter nineteen set his eyes on the salvation of the Lord Jesus. This is the reason he was able to go through the eye of the needle. It is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, but during the past two thousand years, countless numbers of people have done this, emerging from the other side to serve the Lord. If a man truly wants to follow the Lord and truly trusts in the Lord, the Lord will enable him go through the eye of the needle.

THE WHOLE CHURCH ENGAGING IN THE GOSPEL ENTERPRISE

Zaccheus's story is in the first half of Luke 19. In the second half, we see God's kingdom being likened to a man of noble birth who charged his ten slaves to do business. In the first half of Luke 19, we find the money being stripped away. In the second half of the chapter we find the Lord putting the money back in our hand and charging us to do business. He did not give to one or two slaves, but to ten. Ten signifies perfection; it refers to all the slaves. In other words, the entire church is involved in the business of the Lord's gospel. The Lord used the parable of a man doing business to show us the kind of work the church is doing on earth today. The church is in the gospel enterprise business. We have only one kind of merchandise in this business—the gospel. The gospel is our goods. All ten slaves should be involved in this enterprise, and they should work in one accord. Some brothers may be in the fabric business. Others may be in the soap manufacturing business. In reality, however, everyone is in the same gospel business. God does not call ten unrelated merchants to do different "retail" gospel enterprises; He wants the whole church to be involved in one gospel enterprise. His heart is not for many retail businesses.

The Lord wants the whole church to be in His gospel business. Whoever does not join this work will be disciplined. As long as one among the ten has a different opinion or adopts a different way, he will receive the Lord's rebuke (Luke 19:20-26). There was something basically wrong with our work in the past. We claimed that we were serving as the Body, but in reality each one was taking his own way. Each person was doing what was right in his own eyes. We preached the gospel a little when we had the time. When our conscience bothered us, we preached a little to ease our conscience. We can no longer go on in this way. The whole Body has to give itself to the gospel enterprise.

In order to be involved in this gospel enterprise, on the negative side, we have to be free from our own little centers. In the past we were concerned only with our own job and our own living. Now we have to be delivered from this realm. Moreover, we have to hand over everything that we have because where our treasure is, there is our heart as well. If we say that our heart is in heaven but our treasure remains on earth, then we should say to the Lord, "Your Word is not trustworthy!" Is our heart or the Lord's Word more trustworthy? Our treasure must first go to heaven before our heart can be there. The Lord said that no man can serve two masters. The Lord wants us to be free from our material possessions because He wants our hearts to be truly in heaven on the one hand, and He wants us to invest the treasure that we have offered up in the gospel enterprise

on the other hand. If we do not put in our share of the investment, the gospel enterprise cannot take off. If we are only concerned about our own investment, our own mammon, while allowing the gospel enterprise to go unattended, the gospel will never spread out over the earth. For every business there must first be the investment. From the first day that we are saved, we have to flee from money and forsake everything for the gospel. On the positive side, we have to offer up our very person. The forsaking of everything is not a deep lesson; it is a make-up lesson. As soon as a man is saved, he should offer up himself (Rom. 6:6, 12-14). In the past we did not have a good consecration. This is the reason we have to make up now. Handing over oneself is offering up one's very person, to be followed by his job and all his possessions. Whether we are a student or an office worker, we have to offer up our occupation and put it at the gospel's disposal. Some brothers and sisters have to change their occupation. In the past they were for their own living. Now they have to be for the gospel. Their occupation is no longer their top priority. The gospel should not rank behind other occupations in importance. Rather, secular occupations should be behind the gospel in importance. Perhaps some brothers and sisters should change their occupation.

In the coming days all the brothers and sisters have to lay their future aside. They should coordinate together. Even where we live should be decided by the gospel; we should not choose a city simply because we want to escape from war. Some moved to Hong Kong for the sake of escape, but we are here for the gospel. In Acts 8 the disciples preached the gospel while they were running away from the persecution. Escape was the secondary issue. We have over two hundred brothers and sisters who have migrated to Yi-Yang. Outwardly, they can give many reasons for going. Actually, everything they do is secondary. These brothers and sisters banded themselves together into one community only for the purpose of spreading the gospel.

One must be this kind of Christian before he can live a happy life. The most unhappy person is one who is neither hot nor cold. He cannot love the world, but he finds it difficult to give up the world. He knows he should not remain a weak Christian, and he feels condemned when he takes a step toward the world. The Lord calls such a Christian salt that has lost its taste (Matt. 5:13). Today we can say that we are starting a shareholding company or a cooperative. Everyone has handed over his money to the company, and everyone is engaged in the production of the company. From now on, we will no longer seek the world, fame,

or our own profession. We are here only for the gospel enterprise. Ten or twenty years from now, when worldly goods become worthless, our business will be booming. When the entire church rises up to preach the gospel, the Lord's coming will be near; He will be at the door. If we cannot do this, we will delay the Lord's coming for a long time. Hence, when we hand ourselves over, we are not handing over just our money, but our occupation, our dwelling, our time, and our future. We will do everything that is beneficial to the gospel.

THE WHOLE BODY COORDINATING TOGETHER TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

Today the Lord's way is for the whole church to coordinate together to preach the gospel. God does not want to take the way of individuals; He wants the corporate service of the whole church. When I was young I had many dreams and ambitions. I wanted to be a famous person of some sort. After I was saved, I saw that Paul was ambitious to please the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9). I also wanted to please the Lord by becoming an evangelist or a revivalist. Eventually, I saw that the Lord's desire in this end time is that we be coordinated together. His desire is for the whole church to rise up to preach the gospel together. In the past perhaps we had the ambition to be an evangelist, but the Lord's intention is not for us to be zealous for the gospel by ourselves; His intention is for the whole church to rise up to preach the gospel together. Today the Lord wants the church to preach the gospel. If the church preaches the gospel, the gospel will spread throughout Hong Kong. If we offer up everything, it will not be hard to save everyone. Therefore, we have to hand over our all and put everything under His direction through the church. Whatever our position may be, our goal is for the "enterprise" to prosper, not for us to become rich individually. This is the responsibility of everyone. The whole Body has to rise up to bear the testimony of the gospel, to do the work of preaching. It is most unfortunate today that some people want to be independent servants; they want to take the individual way. Let me repeat that the service the Lord wants is church service. The evangelism the Lord wants is church evangelism. This is the reason we have to work in coordination and in one accord. Hong Kong is a highly developed commercial city. It is hard to spread the gospel in such a place, but if we offer up ourselves to the Lord together, it will be easy to spread the gospel throughout this city. I admit that Hong Kong is a loose place, a difficult place, but when the church rises up to preach the gospel, anyone can be saved easily. Who can withstand the

preaching of the whole church? It is hard for individuals to preach the gospel alone. It is much easier for the whole church to rise up to preach. I hope that no one will misunderstand this, and I hope that no one will take his own way.

We expect that everyone will hand himself over. We hope that not only our money, our occupation, and our future but our very person will be consecrated. Our primary occupation is the gospel; everything else is secondary. For two thousand years, the Lord has never changed His standard concerning His followers. He has never broadened the way of the gospel; He has never allowed anyone to have his own freedom to come and go. It is fallen Christian preachers who have changed the standard of the Lord. The Lord never said that a man can spend six days to love mammon and make money and then come to a worship service on Sunday. Today the church has to be recovered to its first state. We must not only offer up our money in a passive way; we must live for the gospel and the Lord in an active way. The requirement of the gospel is high. The Lord has given us everything, and today His demand is for our everything. He has shed His blood and given His life for the gospel. If we only take the passive way, it will be hard for us to follow His footsteps. We have to break through in the positive direction. This is the way to go on. If we have any reservation or passivity in us, we will not be able to go on. May the Lord be merciful to us.

PRAYER

Brother Weigh: Lord, we confess that we have been loose in Your service for many years. We have not been absolute. May Your great love grant us mercy and grace. Lord, You have sacrificed Your life and blood to accomplish salvation. Today we cannot be so light and easy with the gospel. May You gain our very person and possessions. Do not let any one of us go. May none of us be a spectator, a bystander, or an observer. May all of us here bear the responsibility of not allowing ourselves to be loose. May we all follow Your footsteps in an aggressive way. Gain us completely and have a free way among us. Amen.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HOW TO HANDLE THE ITEMS

THAT HAVE BEEN HANDED OVER

Date: Tuesday, February 7, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

PRAYER

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

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

Watchman Nee: The gospel is a work that the Lord has assigned to the church. The church exists on the earth for the gospel. The entire New Testament shows us clearly that the responsibility of the church is to preach the gospel. Last night we went one step further and saw that the preaching of the gospel by the church means that the preaching is not done by just a few people. We do not preach when we are hot and stop when we are cold. It is not a preaching in which each person takes turns being burning and preaching by himself. The whole church has to rise up to preach in coordination. Evangelism is a matter of the whole church. The whole church has to further the gospel of God in one accord. The church has the responsibility of joining hands together to preach the gospel. The church is the Body of Christ; it is always active. Therefore, the gospel should always be moving; there must not be any lull. In the early church, we find men who handed themselves over. Today we should see men doing the same thing, not just in ones and twos, but as a whole. Everyone has to offer up himself as well as his all. If only a few offer up themselves, or worse still, if none offer up themselves as in the past, the gospel will never reach the uttermost part of the earth.

DEALING WITH THE ITEMS THAT WERE HANDED OVER

Tonight we will address the brothers and sisters who have handed themselves over. We are not going to give a message. Instead, we would like to have a talk with you. We want to say something on the negative side as well as something on the positive side. Presently, we have a good number of saints who have handed themselves over. I hope that you can testify to the other brothers and sisters how you have willingly forsaken everything to follow the Lord. We want to make suitable arrangements concerning the items that have been handed over. We want to do this according to the Lord's heart. We do not want to make mistakes with the things that have been handed over. We hope that we can

make proper arrangements. We should address two matters—first the things that have been handed over and then the very persons who have handed themselves over, including what to do with their future. There are two groups of people among those who have handed themselves over. One group is the brothers and sisters who have been holding a job in the world for a number of years. The other group is the young brothers and sisters who are still in school and have not touched many of the things of the world yet. A man goes through only a limited number of crises in his lifetime. If he fails to gain something beneficial through these crises, he will stumble and falter before the Lord. We will make some arrangements concerning their future. Our hope is that they will be brought into coordination and that their way ahead will be straight. Tonight we will deal with the items that have been handed over.

Sister Cheng

Sister Cheng is a student. On her consecration slip she consecrated her whole life to the Lord. In the items that were handed over, she included three U.S. dollars and a few dresses. Sister Cheng, you are living with your parents at home. Do they have a problem with your consecration? God does not want us to steal or rob for Him. The heaven, the earth, and everything therein are His. He does not need us to give Him anything. Whatever is in your house that you do not have a full right to dispose of should not be offered to God. Even if you are giving these things to God, He will not take them. Concerning your personal clothing, you should go home and discuss this matter with your parents. You can sell one or two of them and give the money to the poor. You have handed over your belongings to the church. Now the church hands them back to you to be placed under your trust. These things are no longer yours.

Voluntary Poverty for the Gospel's Sake

More than one student is sitting here. I will say something to the young people as a whole. In all the Gospels God requires that we love the sinners and the poor from the bottom of our hearts. This is the reason the Lord said in Luke 4:18 that the poor have the gospel preached to them. In this world there are many poor people. We are not as poor as those who are genuinely poor. In the past we could say that we were the middle class, but there are not many people who now belong to the middle class anymore. There are many people who are much poorer than us. As we preach the gospel to them, we will find a great difference between us and them. This will make our preaching ineffective. A Christian must

learn to take the way of voluntary poverty before he can preach the gospel effectively. We have to volunteer to become poor. We have to volunteer to forsake everything. Please remember that our Lord Jesus was rich but was made poor for our sake (2 Cor. 8:9). When our Lord came to preach the gospel, He became poor. If we do not become poor, we cannot preach the gospel. Today you are becoming poor for the first time for the Lord's sake. This is a sanctifying time for you. Tonight you are standing on new ground.

Building Up a Character of Giving

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

Learning to Buffet the Body

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

Budgeting Our Need and Offering Up the Rest

Those who are living by their parents' income should learn to do one thing: They should find out before the Lord how much they actually need every month. They have to find out how much they need for pocket money and how much they need

for food and for other uses. They must make an accurate calculation. From our youth we have to decide for ourselves the maximum amount we can spend. Before we spend any money, reckon carefully. While we are students, we should learn to budget every item of our expenses and then offer up the excess. There should be such a covenant between us and the Lord. If our parents give us more, we should offer it to the church for the gospel work in inland regions or for the poor.

Sister Bau

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

Sister Yang

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

John Wesley's Example in Spending

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

Sister Chan

Among the items that you have handed over are seven skirts. Is this not too much to give them all away? If you only have seven skirts, I hope that you would give away the one you most loved. That is all you need to do. I do not wish to see

you giving away too much. Handing ourselves over is for the purpose that others will not be in want. But if that will leave us in want, then the time for handing over has not yet come.

Saving Everything We Can for the Gospel

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

Sister Nee

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

Sister Yang

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

Brother Yu

I read your list yesterday. Many young brothers and sisters loved the Lord very much when they were students, but when they started to work they became different. In my youth in Fukien, sixty-six brothers and sisters were baptized. Later, I corresponded with Mr. D. M. Panton. In my first letter to him, he told me that Miss M. E. Barber had written to him and had told him that it would be a miracle if six out of the sixty-six remained after ten years. At that time I could not take this word. I thought that these sixty-six brothers and sisters were not ordinary people; they were the pride of their generation. Today, when I count, I find that only four, not six, remain of the sixty-six. At that time we were all poor students, but we did our best to save. By saving ten cents, we could print a hundred gospel tracts. By saving a dollar, we could print a thousand tracts. However, in looking back, I can see that many of them were poor involuntarily; they were forced to take this way. Once they took up a job and earned some money, their thought turned to their own replenishment. The more they acquired things of this world, the more they wanted to acquire. The more they took in the world, the more they wanted to take in. It is like an opium addiction; the more one takes, the more he is addicted. In the end he is unable to quit. You have to learn to consecrate yourself voluntarily from the bottom of your heart; no one should force you to do it.

Miss Lei

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

The Principle of Selling or Giving Away the Offered Goods

The principle the church exercises concerning consecrated items is to return them to you for you to sell them. The church will not do the selling and giving away for you. This is because the church wants to stay away from criticism or slander. The church can find a place for you to sell your things, or it can inform you where there are needs and who has needs. But the church will not do the selling or giving away for you. You have to do the selling and giving away

yourself. When I return to you the things and ask you to sell them yourself, I am showing you where the things have gone. This is to prevent Satan from bothering you or lying to you one day by giving you the thought that the church has cheated you. Paul said that we should exercise foresight for what is honorable in the sight of man (2 Cor. 8:21). I hope that we will all be clear about this principle.

Brother Sun

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

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

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

made tents; he did not engage himself in wholesale tent trading. Pure commerce easily corrupts Christian character. I hope that you will stay away from pure commerce, and involve yourself in some form of production instead.

A COVENANT OF CAREFUL SPENDING

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

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

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

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

things and give these away. In this way they will learn not to love mammon and the things of this world.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A FELLOWSHIP WITH YOUNG BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Date: Wednesday, February 8, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

It is a glory to the Lord to see young people being saved and coordinating in the church life for the gospel. The book of Numbers shows us that those who are over twenty years of age are qualified to fight, while those who are between thirty and fifty years old are qualified to serve and work within the tabernacle (1:3; 4:3). This shows us that the young people are particularly precious in God's eyes. Here I would like to mention several frequent causes of failure among young brothers and sisters. Then I will point out how they should serve before the Lord.

FREQUENT CAUSES OF FAILURE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

First, let us consider the frequent causes that lead to failure among young people. We can look at three areas: 1) travel, 2) marriage, and 3) occupation.

Travel

Travel includes moving, changing schools, and taking trips. After a young person is saved, he is generally under the protection of the church and his family. This is very good. His normal sphere of activity is around his school and home, but when he has to go away for an extended period of time, he should take care of all the pitfalls along the way. He has to clearly identify all the traps and must guard himself from falling into them. It is wonderful to stay at home. Day by day he can learn to contact God. He can find the right place to study the Bible and to pray. On a trip, however, he can easily take in loose thoughts if he is not careful. If he does not move around, nothing will happen, but once he moves around, he will find that his journey becomes an opportunity for him to indulge in sin. He will see many new things and new sights, meet many new people, and come in contact with many new customs and habits. This kind of travel subconsciously opens the door for relaxation to come in within him. He will dare to do many things which he would ordinarily not dare to do. He will dare to visit places which he would ordinarily not dare to visit. I want to mention this matter to the young people in particular because most old people like to remain and settle in their old places,

while young people like changes. Very often, however, they get into trouble when changing places. During the past twenty or thirty years, I can remember many young brothers and sisters who fell because of changing places. Therefore, we must not be quick and loose in changing places. We have to ask the Lord to preserve us with His grace. We have to apply ourselves to good habits now so that we will be able to maintain these habits when the changes come.

Whatever we do, it is best to keep the principle of two by two. This is a good pattern that the Lord Jesus left for us (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). We should do everything in coordination, always with two people and perhaps with three or four. We need companions while we are going through changes. This will keep us in the Body. If we go to any place alone, we are going as an individual. But if two go together, we are not going as two individuals, but as the move of our local church. Do not underestimate any change or move. Many experiences in our human life are triggered by little changes in our environment.

This is true in the case of sisters choosing a school. It is very unsafe for anyone to choose a school that is not being attended by another saint. If you want to go to a new school, it is best to find one with at least two saints in it. Many young people fall into snares by acting independently. For your own protection and for the protection of others, find some companions whenever you make a move. In this matter, you have to remember before the Lord that consecrating yourself does not merely mean offering up material possessions, but being coordinated together, acting in the principle of the Body, and acting upon the ground of the church.

Marriage

The second matter is marriage. Before speaking about this, let me relate some facts to you. Marriage is a very important matter. In looking back over the past thirty years, I realize that marriage has brought about greater changes to young people than travel. Before you are married, your parents treat you as a child; you do not have many responsibilities, and you do not have to take care of a family. Many Christians enter marriage without a proper concept and a readiness for responsibility. As a result, they fail in their Christian life.

Marriage and family are the beginning and source of God's blessing. At the same time, you have to remember that they are also the beginning and source of looseness. When a man is single, it is easy for him to serve the Lord zealously, but once he is married, he enters a new world. Changes begin to come, and he

begins to relax. Marriage is a blessing from God; it is also the beginning of human happiness. At the same time, you have to remember that marriage is also the beginning of relaxation for many people. For this reason, you have to have the proper attitude before and after marriage. You should have only one aim for getting married—to serve together with your spouse, which is always better than serving alone. In looking for the right person to marry, the first condition is that you both have to like each other, and your dispositions should match. Each should be able to bear the other's weaknesses and shortcomings. You should not be distracted by other factors before you are married. Pay attention to whether or not you can coordinate together in spiritual service. Second, after you are married, you always experience a psychological change. This change is many times greater than the change that accompanies travel. Once you are married, there is a pit right next to your house; you have to prepare for days of danger. During the first two or three months, do your best to control your mind; do not allow it to become loose. After the first two or three months, the danger is less acute. You must always maintain your balance psychologically. You have to learn to control yourself in your psychology.

Third, never despise your spouse before the Lord. Many brothers and sisters discover after they are married that some characteristics of their spouse are intolerable; they despise these characteristics. At such times, you have to learn to worship God. Do not become agitated in your mind. Always remember that God has given you a "match," not a "sweetheart." You have to learn to serve in coordination with your spouse, and not nit-pick or rebuke.

Occupation

The third frequent cause of failure among young people is their choice of occupation. When a young person begins a career, his first month's salary must be treated with great care. When the first month's salary falls into your hand, whatever its amount, you sense power rising within your mind. There is nothing in this world which cannot be bought with money. Some can even buy the human soul with money. Once you have money, there will be many things you want to buy. This is a great, psychological change and a temptation for dissipation. Therefore, I exhort you to learn to guard against the power of money. You should be conscious only of the power of the Christian life. Always remember that we live on this earth for the gospel, for coordination with other brothers and sisters, and for serving the Lord.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MATERIAL GOODS AND MONEY

When these three things occur, many people become loose and dissipated. Actually, all three have to do with money and material possessions. In travel, one is always tempted to buy special things. After marriage, money is a means of pursuing a couple's happiness. When a man does not have a job, he is careful about the money he receives from his parents, but once he starts earning his own money, he begins to act according to his own preferences and forgets the vow he made before the Lord. Man always seeks to exchange material things for his own and others' happiness. He is always inclined to act according to what pleases his heart. As a result, the more he acquires, the less he is satisfied. His interest and concern will be sucked into the material things. Month after month, he will plan more purchases. With these three things, the first few months are the most dangerous period. If you do not handle these changes properly, you will fail miserably.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OVERSEERS

The elders and the older brothers in the church bear a great responsibility over these young brothers and sisters. You have to change their attitude toward money. Every time they reach a turning point, you have to remind them. The fathers and the co-workers in the church are the overseers. The work of the overseers is to exercise oversight. This means they have to perch on high to observe how others act. Before anything happens to a person, you have to see clearly, accurately, adequately, and far-sightedly. You have to anticipate the changes that will happen to a young person and intercede for him, exhort him, and teach him ahead of time.

CONCERNING SCHOOLS

Trying the Best to Not Study in Catholic Schools

The brothers and sisters who are in school should try their best to not attend Catholic schools. The Lord's intention is that we do not touch the Catholic Church at all. He has no intention that we change its religion. A Christian does not have this responsibility. In Revelation 2 and 18, the Lord does not charge His believers to call those in the Catholic Church to repentance. Instead, He charges the many sons of God to separate themselves from it and to not defile themselves with its sins. The church in Thyatira in Revelation 2 and the great Babylon in chapter eighteen signify the Catholic Church. It is clear that Christians have no

responsibility to change Catholicism. Their responsibility is to depart from it. God hates to see His people worshipping idols. Idolatry is a great sin in the Bible. Every king in the books of Kings was judged according to whether or not he had gone in "the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sin by which he caused Israel to sin" (1 Kings 16:26), which was idolatry. The first and second of the Ten Commandments deal with idols (Exo. 20:3-6). God hates Catholicism. No sin of idolatry is greater than that practiced in Catholicism. It has made idols out of the Lord Jesus and God. There is also Mary; it has made an idol of the mother of Jesus and has made her a god. Catholics are among some of the hardest people in this world to get saved. If any of you are studying in a Catholic school, please go home and discuss this with your parents. See if you can change schools before the next term. If you cannot do it this next term, try the next one. You must have the desire to cut off any relationship with Catholicism. Of course, if the present situation does not allow you to change schools, do your best to refrain from its worship. You have to find three or four companions and fellowship together often. Never try to argue with your teachers. All you need to do is turn away from them.

The Catholic Jesuits start schools everywhere. Their intention is to gain people through education. If you look into the situation, you will notice that they never stand on the street to preach the gospel. If you study in their schools, however, you will pick up the Catholic religion after three or five years. You may say that many nuns in the Catholic Church are quite good and quite compassionate. But please remember, they are not approved by God, no matter how good they are, as long as they do not forsake idolatry.

The Principle Governing the Selection of Schools

In selecting a school, you have to choose one that is being attended by at least one or two brothers and sisters. This does not mean that the Lord will not bless the preaching of a single brother or sister; he or she may bring many to salvation. In the majority of cases, a single brother is swallowed up by his surroundings. Ultimately, the church has to search for him after he becomes lost. It is rare for one brother to break through in one school, but it is common for one school to swallow up one brother. The young people must go to school in coordination. I believe many of you brothers will be elders and deacons in the future. Therefore, you have to exercise great care and deliberation in your actions. Do not study in a school by yourself.

The Principle Governing the Selection of a Career

Some of you have decided to stop at a high school education. These ones have to learn to work with their hands. In the future you have to find a job that gives you more freedom so that you can devote time to serve the Lord. Perhaps you can work under other brothers and sisters who are running a business. In any case, your time must be free. You must not be a slave to mammon. In this way you will not neglect the government's mandate on contribution to production since you will be working with your hands. At the same time, you can devote much time to serve the Lord as well as offering up your earnings for His use.

Concerning Daily Necessities

Some of you have too many possessions. You should learn to give some of them to the poor and be moderate in buying what you need. This does not necessarily mean that you have to be thrifty in everything. For example, if you need a coat, you can buy a good one. There are many material things which we cannot be without; we should just find those that satisfy our needs. If we buy impulsively, we will want more when we see a better one. In the beginning a simple matter like choosing the right coat can become a problem; when we walk into a department store and see thirty or fifty different colors of the same merchandise, we will want more. There are many styles, and our heart will want one of each. There is no limit to our lust for possessions.

CONCERNING HANDING ONESELF OVER

Taking Care of Others' Needs

In Shanghai I told some Communist members that Christians are saved in an inward way. We give up the world, but not because of outward coercion. We are not like the people in the world who become poor after their material goods are confiscated; we voluntarily free ourselves from the bondage of material things. Tomorrow night I hope you will prepare a list and bring the pocket money your parents have allotted to you. Find the minimum amount that you need to spend, then hand over the rest. I hope everyone will be faithful to do what they should.

There are twenty-seven to twenty-eight assemblies in northern Kiangsu. During the past eight months, none of the brothers and sisters there had the chance to even get a bowl of rice. The more fortunate ones ate bean cakes, while the less fortunate ones ate grass and tree bark. Since I know the situation in all the places, I feel grieved and even angry when I see some brothers and sisters caring only for themselves and having no thought of saving. Please forgive me for saying this. In Hong Kong bean cakes are sold to Taiwan for fertilizer, but in

northern Kiangsu only the most well off can afford to eat bean cakes. I do not know how you can eat your rice in peace when you hear this. This situation is happening not only in northern Kiangsu. In one or two months, more than half of the brothers and sisters in the church in Nanking will have nothing to eat.

I pray that God will free us from all kinds of considerations over so many things. I pray that we will only hand ourselves over. We should let other brothers remember our own needs. Paul told the churches in Asia who had supplied the lack of other churches that these churches eventually would fill up their lack as well (2 Cor. 8:14). The brothers and sisters never imagined that they would face what they are facing today. In the same way, we never know what we will face tomorrow. I hope that we will remember them as brothers. I hope that we will hand ourselves over to fill up their lack. Before you handed yourselves over, I spoke with reservation. But now that you have handed yourselves over, I do not have any reservation; I am not afraid of suspicion.

Some of you may have the thought of helping these ones, but think that you have too little. Please do not calculate what you can do, because you are not the only one who has handed yourself over. When you hand yourself over, you are not doing it to please man, but to please the Lord.

In the Principle of Coordination

Today God is taking the way of the church. Everything should be done in the principle of coordination. My heart rejoices to see that, under God's grace, we can coordinate together, not only in preaching the gospel but in offering up our money and time. We should not choose our field of study carelessly as we did before. Rather, we should choose subjects that are related to businesses that the saints have and concentrate on these professions. In the coming days, these professions will afford us an unfettered occupation to support ourselves. After three or five years, many brothers and sisters will be prepared to be sent to other places in China for the gospel. First, we should gospelize the strategic places, and then we should move out to the surrounding towns and villages. How different is this kind of preaching from the individual preaching of one or two persons that we experienced in the past!

Presently, there are over five hundred assemblies in China. We have close to seventy thousand brothers and sisters. If we pool our efforts together for the gospel enterprise, instead of working independently here and there, this will create a great impact! In the past our co-workers did not like to work in coordination. Now they have to learn the lesson of coordination. They should

take the lead in this matter, but this work does not belong to the co-workers alone; everyone has a part in it. We should not think that we only have to offer a little money or material goods. This work is the responsibility of all of us. If the Lord is gracious to us, I hope that many brothers will rise up, including older ones, and forsake everything to serve in coordination in the church.

The Whole Body Preaching the Gospel

Presently, the highest interest the bank pays is forty-five percent. If we can have a fifty percent increase in our gospel, every brother and sister will bring in half a person in a month. This means that every two months we will bring in one person. In two months there will be one hundred forty thousand saints in China. In four months we will have two hundred eighty thousand saints. This means that in a few years' time, the gospel will spread throughout all the big cities in China. If our preaching is isolated, we will never meet the need of the gospel in today's world. The whole church has to rise up to preach in coordination. May the Lord ignite the flame in China, and may it grow and spread. May the church be as absolute as the early church in preaching the gospel. This fire will then spread to the West. We can procrastinate no longer. If we do not take this way, our independent gospel work will not get us very far in ten or twenty more years.

In 1928 there were four hundred thousand Protestant communicants. By 1948 the number only increased to four hundred eighty thousand. In 1928 there were eight hundred thousand Catholics. By 1948 the number increased to 2.3 million. What are we Protestants doing? Why has our number increased so slowly? This is truly our shame! Today the Chinese population grows at the rate of two persons every five seconds. The number that we bring in cannot even match the rate of birth in China. Protestantism has been in China for over one hundred twenty years. After a century and a half of preaching, our number is still only five hundred thousand. Of this number, many are nominal members. When we compare ourselves with the early church, we cannot help but be ashamed!

It is indeed foolish for God's children to not give themselves in a desperate way in this age. Please forgive me for saying a seemingly angry word. We all think that the present political climate makes it hard for the church to preach the gospel, but how do we know that this situation is not sovereignly arranged by God? How do we know that this is not for the purpose of turning the church to the Lord's will? What the Lord could not gain through His calling, perhaps He is gaining through the environment. If the Lord cannot move His children through

love, He can turn them through chastening. The rebuking rod often will do what the voice of love cannot do. If we do not learn to coordinate together for the gospel in the present situation, God may allow the devil's hand to move further, and the situation of the church may worsen still.

Consecration and Coordination

Our consecration must be specific. The more specific our consecration is, the better it is. Consecration of the heart is an abstract thing. We can say that our heart is consecrated, but in actuality, our heart may still be with us. Our heart can only be truly on the altar when our entire body and our possessions are on the altar.

Romans 12 is the clearest, most absolute, accurate, and definite passage in the entire Bible on consecration, and it speaks of coordination at the end of the chapter. If a man is not willing to consecrate himself, how can he be coordinated with others? We should not think that we are consecrating when we offer up a little money and material goods. Consecration means offering up our entire person. Only this will bring us into coordination with the brothers and sisters. If we hold back anything for ourselves, we are merely practicing a kind of individualism. If we are so individualistic, how can we coordinate with others? In order to coordinate with others, we have to deny ourselves and live in peace with all men, if possible (v. 18). Many people, however, drop their countenance, become angry, or murmur over a little money. They argue and squabble until their faces turn red over what belongs to them. When we hand over everything, it is easy for us to coordinate with the brothers and sisters. Coordination is spontaneous.

When the church in Foochow handed itself over, its number multiplied manyfold. Chuenchow had been meeting with the same number (around ninety) for many years. A few months ago the leading brothers handed themselves over, and within a month the number increased by ninety-six. Now there are ninety-nine candidates who are preparing to be baptized. There are still four hundred others waiting to be interviewed.

Handing ourselves over will afford the brothers and sisters a way to get into the gospel business in one accord. Many people are willing to put their whole heart into a secular business but are very indifferent about the gospel. They work mindlessly and do not apply any seriousness to the work. We can only give our whole heart to the work when we have handed ourselves over.

Handing Oneself Over

Bringing in the Power of Explosion

I hope that one day we can break open Hong Kong with explosive power. We do not have to wait for a big co-worker to come to do the job. We have to hand ourselves and all we have over and coordinate together to preach the gospel in oneness. No one should be for himself. Everyone should offer up everything for the gospel. Let me shout this into our ears: We cannot crave one single thread in this world, while asking the other brothers and sisters to give up the world or to see the vanity of this world. We cannot love money ourselves, while telling them to love the Lord. If we do not hand ourselves over, we cannot demand others to sacrifice their life. Perhaps some will feel that this is a bit too extreme, but in this matter, it does not hurt to be extreme. We have been extreme in many things in our life. Should we be careful to stay within the bounds when it comes to our consecration to the Lord? If we have never been extreme once, we will never be able to lead others to do the same.

Making Friends with Mammon

We must not hesitate in handing ourselves over. Once we procrastinate, our mind will come under the attack of Satan. Some may think that we are mad when we hand over our possessions. Actually, this is not madness; this is the gospel. The demand of the gospel is so great that it calls for our very life. In this world only two kinds of people are willing to give up their possessions. The first are the mad and insane. The second are those who sacrifice for love. We hand ourselves over because we love the Lord. We do not care about criticism. We only care for the Lord's commands. If we do not uphold this truth, we will end up suffering. Always remember the Lord's word that we have to make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness (Luke 16:9). Once we hand ourselves over, we will have a share when the church gains people through the gospel. We will be blessed. If we do not hand ourselves over, we will not have a share even if the church gains many people.

Today the Lord's timing is ripe. Whether or not we are actually doing the preaching, we will have a share in the Lord's work as long as we hand ourselves over. Thank the Lord. Once the gospel breaks out, we will see the Lord's blessing. Perhaps when that day comes we will no longer be here, but our offering will still be here. Today brothers everywhere are adding their share to the work. I hope that we all will join them. Once this flame is ignited, it will never go out. I hope that the flame in Hong Kong never goes out.

Handing Over Being the Responsibility of Every Brother and Sister

Handing over oneself is not just a responsibility of the co-workers. It is a responsibility that is on all of our shoulders. We have gathered too much for ourselves, yet our eyes are always on the purse of the co-workers. Criticism and gossip about this and that co-worker often come to my ears. I have to say a word for the co-workers. These workers are God's workers; they are not your workers. If you can be God's counselor, you can manage the co-workers' purses. If I say this word to the co-workers, it is not worth much, but it is good for you.

If all of us, young and old, will consecrate our all, the cheap way with us in the past will be gone once and for all. We have to make up our mind to have a share in the gospel of the church. We have to hand over our occupation, our time, and our money for the gospel. This is the only way to bring in the power. The Lord will not be satisfied until we preach the gospel this way. The only thing that will satisfy the Lord is for the entire Body to be consecrated. The only thing that will satisfy us is this very same thing.

Our handing over will satisfy the Lord, and it will satisfy us. Time is short. The Lord's coming is near, yet the responsibility of the gospel is still great. Many places in China still have not heard the gospel. If the church does not rise up together to preach the gospel, the Lord will delay His coming.

I hope that from this day forward we will drop all dissenting thoughts. Let us abandon all care for ourselves. We should have only one profession—preaching the gospel. We should have only one goal—letting all sinners hear the gospel. If we do this, it will not be difficult to gospelize Hong Kong and all of China.

CONCLUSION

The handing over that we are speaking about is more demanding than just offering up all of our possessions. Handing ourselves over means offering up our entire being, including our time and occupation, for the coordination. Our eyes are not set on our wealth. Our God is not a poor God. He is the God of everything. We expect the Body to rise up to preach the gospel; the church should rise up to preach the gospel. When the church rises up to preach the gospel, we will be perpetually short of meeting halls. One meeting hall will not be enough; even ten meeting halls will not be enough. Today we are seeing the light. It is not a matter of eight or ten being called to forsake everything to preach the gospel by themselves. All the brothers and sisters have to rise up to preach

the gospel together. Today this fire has started. I hope none of us will run away from this fire.

PRAYER

Brother Weigh: Lord, some of us have come to Hong Kong as travelers. Some have come as refugees. We have become loose because we have been greatly influenced by the Babylonian environment around us here in Hong Kong. For all these years the church has not been absolute enough to rise up to preach the gospel together. Forgive us and grant us the grace. Lord, You have come to cast a fire upon the earth. You said this when there was a baptism awaiting You; Your spirit was pressed! You have gone through that baptism, and Your life has been released. The fire has been released, and it has been burning during the past centuries. Today in China this fire has started in Chefoo, Shanghai, Foochow, and Chuenchow. Now we ask that You start this fire in Hong Kong. Start it within all the brothers and sisters. May Your love and mercy continue their great work. Today, we have to catch up with You or else we will be cast aside. May Your great love and mercy enable us to catch up. Amen.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A FELLOWSHIP

WITH THE WORKING SAINTS

Date: Thursday evening, February 9, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

DISPOSITION OF ITEMS OFFERED BY THE STUDENTS

First, let us make some arrangements concerning the things the students have handed over. A few sisters have handed over some small jewelry. They should follow Peter's instruction and get permission from their parents before selling them. They should not be unrighteous in claiming their parents' goods as their own. At the same time, we have to realize that these things bring absolutely no profit to a Christian. We cannot bring these things to heaven. Once they have their parents' permission, they can sell them.

A young brother handed over more than two hundred books. I advise him not to buy any more books. It seems as if he has indulged himself in this habit. If he does not deal with his love for books, he will hand over what he has now, but he will buy more later.

In principle, you should pick out items that you are particularly fond of and dispose of them. This may hurt a little, but it will do tremendous good. In asking

you to dispose of these things, you are being tested. You will see how much this hurts, and how deep it cuts. The more pain you feel, the more reluctant you will be to give them up, but this will build up your Christian character. In three or five years, you will have the constitution of the Holy Spirit, not just His life. The constitution of the Holy Spirit wroughts Christ into our whole being. Thus, we become one with Christ. Christ as our life is the basis of the Spirit's constitution; it enables Christ to live within us on our behalf. The constitution of the Holy Spirit is the maturity of this process; it enables Christ's disposition to become our disposition. This constitution work is like embroidery; it embroiders Christ into us. There may be pain, but Christ will be constituted into our being.

In regard to the other items, I will say a word on behalf of the church. The church is happy to return these things to you for your own use, but your feeling toward them should be different. When you look at them, you should realize that they are given to you by the church. Do not use them carelessly. A Christian must learn poverty while living on this earth. He has to learn to own nothing, to have nothing that he can call his own. We are heavenly citizens. On earth we are merely strangers and sojourners (Heb. 11:13). We should not settle down in this place. We will ask the older brothers and sisters to make proper arrangements for your schooling. I hope that the church will have a detailed arrangement of the items that have been handed over.

A FELLOWSHIP WITH THE WORKING SAINTS

Not Being Involved in Pure Commerce

Every Bible student has to agree that, according to the Bible, God has no intention for a Christian to engage in commerce. I believe all of you are clear that the first case of commerce was with the prince of Tyre. Ezekiel 28:16 says, "By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned." The word merchandise refers to a kind of free commerce. This is the first mention of commerce in the Bible. The last mention of commerce is with Babylon in Revelation 18. The prince of Tyre was the beginning of profiteering through trade. He was also the beginning of transgression. The prince of Tyre is a type of Satan. When we come to the great Babylon, we find the peak of development in commerce. Babylon's origin is Babel. The most severe judgment from God will be brought against Babylon because it will be the consummation of aggrandizement by trade and the epitome of sin. Revelation 13 speaks of the mark of the beast. Without the mark no one can trade (vv. 16-17). Hence, if pure commerce disappears, the mark of the beast will become useless.

The more highly developed commerce becomes, the more useful the mark of the beast will be.

One of the fifty-two lessons that we released in Kuling for new believers deals with the proper occupation God has ordained for a Christian. It is an occupation in which one works with his own hands, producing and manufacturing by his own labor. It should not be a kind of pure trading. If the church does not engage in some mode of production, a Christian will not be able to find anything to do in the church, in which case he will have to go to outsiders for work. Because some brothers cannot find the right occupation in the church, they are forced to engage in pure commerce in the secular business world. Sometimes they are forced to lie and cheat. Soon their hearts become corrupted. In the future we have to do our best to help the brothers make the right choice; we have to show them the clear way. Perhaps some brothers should start some businesses and hire some brothers to work for them.

The Principle of Managing a Business

How should we manage a business to secure the Lord's blessing? According to Acts 2 and 4, we have to divide to all according to each one's need (2:45; 4:34). This sounds like a matter of simple arithmetic, but in order to register what everyone has handed over and what everyone needs, there are many works and numerous procedures. The "dividing" is a very complicated task. In Acts the apostles were too busy with the ministry of the word. They were forced to select seven men full of wisdom and the Spirit to be the deacons, and they assigned the work to them (6:2-4). There is the need not only of wisdom but of the fullness of life to carry out this work. If one only has wisdom but not the Holy Spirit, his arrangement will be like a "business plan" in the world.

The Habit of Living in Equality

The peak of the church life is when things are distributed to everyone according to his need. We should do our best to give away what we have. It is embarrassing for some brothers to have good things while others do not. It is a shame for me to have something while others do not. Please give me the liberty to say something. Let me relate my experience of handing myself over. There are things that I like to buy when I have a little money in my hand, but I always feel condemned when I have something and my co-workers do not. The first time I came to Hong Kong, I bought a Dilet shaver. This kind of shaver is very common today, but at that time it was a famous name brand, and it was quite valuable. I

came from a small place and considered it worthwhile to pay a little extra for it. The second time I came to Hong Kong, I bought eight shavers of the same kind. I wanted to give them away to my co-workers. After I bought the shavers I realized that I could not go away without buying the blades too, and I bought eight blades as well. It makes me uneasy to think that I have something while the co-workers do not. At that time the church did not have the practice of handing over everything. It was not common to do such a thing then.

It is not good for us to have something while other brothers do not. It is somewhat of a shame. Although we cannot make every household the same, at least we need to have the same heart. I want everyone to have what I have. We need to develop this habit. Bringing the whole church into the practice of Acts 2 and 4 is not that simple; it takes a great many arrangements. However, we should always be moving in this direction step by step. We do not want to go to the extreme.

Arrangements for the Co-workers

We need to make some arrangements for the co-workers to relieve them from anxiety over their own needs. We can consider each co-worker as one unit. Whether or not a worker is famous and whether he is great or small, we should count him as one unit. Spouse and children are counted as half a unit. Dependent parents are also counted as half a unit. I hope that the brothers who are managing businesses will do the same with the saints working under them.

Practicing Equality in One's Business

During the past few months, the profit from the pharmaceutical factory in Chungking was distributed according to units. We could do this because all the workers were brothers and sisters and all of them had handed themselves over. Now the factory in Canton is going to do the same. All the employees in these factories receive the same remuneration because they are brothers and sisters, even though their position, rank, and responsibilities are different. From the manager to the cook, all receive the same treatment. We cannot do this with the Gentiles. If a corporation consists only of brothers and sisters and if every one of them has handed himself over, there is no problem in equalizing the remuneration. Otherwise, as soon as we practice such an equalization, some will become lazy.

The brothers and sisters who migrated to Yi-Yang are also practicing distribution according to each one's need. Some need to get married, and the rest make provision to give more. Some are sick, and the rest make provision to supply

more clothing and daily necessities to them. For a few months, all of them had less than a dollar for pocket money. Some brothers work more than their assigned hours; they dare not be lazy. The other brothers step forward and volunteer to replace them. Every brother is concerned that the others would not become over-burdened. Laziness is nonexistent because there is brotherly love. Instead, everyone is afraid that others are doing too much. Everyone sacrifices beyond the point of just denying the self. If anyone thinks that he can be lazy and slothful as long as he has money, he is not acting like a Christian; he does not walk worthily of the name of a Christian.

When a brother and a sister get married, everyone pours out over and above what he can give. Everyone does everything he can to provide the new couple with a happy, new family. This testimony has won the approval of the local government. Originally the county government was very suspicious. They always sent Communist cadres to inspect us. Now they have passed a law to protect us. Visiting members within a radius of two hundred and fifty miles have told us that it would take them twelve years to catch up to what we are doing.

If a business only consists of brothers and sisters and if all have handed themselves over, this business should be conducted after the model of Yi-Yang. From top to bottom every worker should be treated the same. Every brother or sister is a unit. Equality is the only way to success and the way to practice genuine mutual love. Of course, some brothers who work as managers have outside needs which require special subsidy. The corporation can decide how much more they should receive. Except for this, the brothers and sisters should all live more or less on the same level. There should not be too big a gap. If the gap is too big, our practice will not be Christian-like. Every brother and sister should be treated equally, and everyone has to work diligently. If there is any excess, it should be spent on the gospel.

From now on, every business and every organization need proper arrangements to go on in coordination. No one should live in luxury while others suffer in poverty. If we have more, we are in excess, while those who have less are in want. If the households with an excess take the lead to make their resources available, the poor in the church will be given proper care. There will be few who need special care, and their needs will be covered easily. The church will behave like the church. If we hold on to our own things and care only for ourselves without any concern for others, we can never live the life of the Body of Christ, and we can never express it in our living.

Equality does not make us lazy. It allows us to share our excess. Suppose twenty brothers in a locality go into business together. All twenty have handed themselves over and join themselves to the business on that basis. The proceeds of the work of these twenty people are split up according to the number of units. These twenty people may each receive double the amount that other units receive. For example, ordinarily each unit may receive two loads of rice, but these ones may receive four loads of rice. They take in more, but they also give away more for the Lord's use. Actually, the amount they retain does not increase; they still take two loads of rice as others do. The extra two loads are sent to other places, to saints who have needs. In addition, by working this way, these brothers also supervise each others' production.

I am speaking the truth here. If the Lord is gracious to us, all of our businesses will support each other in the future; all the units will strengthen each other, and the work of migration will be greatly enhanced. This kind of migration is the church preaching the gospel. On the one hand, we must take care of the local needs. On the other hand, we must take care of the needs of other places.

The brothers in Tsingtao are planning to migrate to the northwest. In order for the church to rise up to preach the gospel, all the brothers and sisters have to endeavor for the gospel and for the work, not for themselves. All the working saints should consecrate themselves for the gospel. When the brothers and sisters who hold jobs join the coordination, the preaching will be prevailing, and the gospel will spread throughout China in a few years.

The province of Chekiang alone has over three hundred churches. The total number of local churches in the other parts of China combined do not match the number in Chekiang. With so many churches and so many brothers and sisters in one province, many should hand themselves over. This handing over will greatly increase the power of the gospel.

The Working Saints Coordinating to Preach the Gospel

Brothers who are holding one kind of job should coordinate with other brothers who are holding similar jobs; they should preach the gospel together. Around Sar-Di by the city of Hangchow there are six to eight hundred brothers. The amount they handed over last year is only enough to supply the need of the one hundred brothers who migrated to Yi-Yang. When one migrates to a new place, he is starting everything afresh. He needs to have food and clothing before he

can engage in farming. In over ten counties around Yi-Yang, the footsteps of the gospel have been planted by our brothers. Some churches have sprung up in a few areas already. They market the produce of the land, the livestock of their farm, and the fabric they produce from their own weaving. They coordinate together for the gospel while selling their products on the side. Shanghai is supporting Yi-Yang as well; more men are migrating there now. In the near future, some will move there from Nanchang. Perhaps in the future Nanchang will head up Yi-Yang.

We should never despise the wisdom of the simple villagers. Among the leading brothers in Yi-Yang, no one has graduated from high school; everyone has received only a primary education. However, they all have a burning heart for the Lord, and they all have handed themselves over. Generally speaking, all of them are full of wisdom. They have wisdom in their service. Their judgments are sound, and they are rich in experience. According to my observation, many so-called wise brothers in China cannot match them. Their judgments leave no room for criticism. One can only lower his head and worship the Lord, saying, "Lord, You are in our midst." If their judgments were not so wise, they would not have been so successful. They conduct business and do everything in an orderly fashion.

Now a few dozen brothers and sisters from Shanghai are getting ready to migrate to Yi-Yang. There are not just one or two people preaching the gospel there, but the whole church is working together in coordination on the basis of its consecration. The gospel is weak today among us because brothers and sisters have a selfish motive; they use the mammon they have in their hand for their own business with the view of making money for themselves. Their business is not for the gospel, and they have not handed themselves over. If no Christian lives for himself, and if everyone lives for the Lord and the gospel, the gospel will spread from province to province all over China.

The Principle of Selling

Let me fellowship a little concerning the principle of selling our possessions. Suppose a brother has a piece of real estate. I hope that he can hand it over and sell it. Any real estate that is left in an unproductive state is useless. Moreover, real estate is not doing well today. It is better to sell it and use the proceeds to start a business that engages in a form of production. I hope the responsible brothers will make good and proper arrangements for this matter.

Suppose some brothers are sharing a business with unbelievers or family members. If they want to hand themselves over, they have to work hard to separate their assets from the assets of others. Be generous in splitting the assets. If one is in a joint venture with others, he can buy the others' shares and then sell it. In selling real estate, a person may not get the full price of the land, in which case we can help them to dispose of the land. We would rather take a loss than have our money locked in the land.

Possible Businesses That One Can Consider

Hong Kong is rich because it is linked to Swatow. A great part of the investment in Hong Kong comes from Swatow. If we go into business at all, there are a few things we can consider. The first is cotton spinning. Some can try this. Starting a business this way helps Swatow indirectly. The capital is retained in Hong Kong and does not need to return to Swatow. Some can try this in Manila. The shipbuilding industry is in existence already. Presently, it is somewhat unprofitable. Some are doing it with a view to the future; they are waiting for better days to come. We have to carefully consider this matter. Should we wait, or should we sell such a business and come back to it later? We should have much fellowship and prayer before making any decision.

One brother is starting a very large fabric manufacturing company. Some time ago I heard that some brothers were starting a fabric company which both spins and weaves. I think that spinning is too much for us; it takes a considerable amount of capital to handle spinning and weaving together. But weaving is easier; it does not take much capital. We can hire brothers and sisters for the weaving work. A few of our brothers can dye; they are more skillful than others in this trade. If we manufacture our own dye, we can help many brothers and sisters from other places to learn the trade. Weaving is convenient; it can be done anywhere and at any time. A weaving machine costs approximately three hundred dollars. We can put one in the living room and two in the bedroom. This does not violate local ordinances, because it does not require an office. In this way, we can do our own dyeing and even sell our goods locally. Alternatively, we can form some kind of cooperative and sell our product together.

If the cost of traveling is not a problem, we can ask many out-of-town brothers and sisters to come to Hong Kong to learn such skills. We can recruit twenty people from Hangchow, Peking, Tsingtao, Foochow, and Swatow. In the beginning they can be apprentices. In a year or two, we can buy off the unbelievers' shares and work with brothers and sisters. In this way we will not

need to be yoked with unbelievers. Tonight I am touching this matter in brief. There is not enough time. Perhaps we can have a more detailed discussion later. I hope that we all will understand the proper principle to exercise such matters before the Lord.

A FEW THINGS TO NOTE IN HANDING ONESELF OVER

In making judgments concerning the saints' handing themselves over, we have to be accurate. Otherwise, there will be undesirable consequences. Some brothers handed themselves over in another place already. We should not dictate their pathway for them.

From now on, all the arrangements we make should be centered around the church. In other words, they should be centered around the Lord and the gospel. The schooling of the young people also should be done in coordination. We do not expect all of you to quit work, but some should change jobs and work with the brothers and sisters. Others can be scattered among unbelievers and strive to gain more of them. If we all practice this, the Lord will bless us.

If the things that you handed over should be sold, you should dispose of them as quickly as possible. If not, you will get into trouble. One brother started out as an officer in the navy. Later he was promoted to be a commander and then an admiral. He owned much land and had a nice house. It was built at the cost of sixty thousand gold dollars. He loved antiques, and he kept a great deal of precious metals and antiques in the house. I exhorted him to sell his things. Even if he had to discount his house by ten percent, he could still get back fifty thousand gold dollars for it. He was reluctant to give up these things. As a result of this delay, his house has been turned into the headquarters of the Communist government. He could not take one article from his house, and he did not get a single dollar back of what he had put into it. During these few days, I hope you will gather together and make suitable arrangements for the things that the brothers and sisters have offered up. In this way the church will not suffer any loss.

HANDING OURSELVES OVER OPENING THE WAY FOR US TO LOVE THE LORD

Finally, I would like to say that during the past few days I have had a deep feeling that our handing over of ourselves opens the way for us to love the Lord. If a man does not hand over himself, he can never succeed in loving the Lord. Mr. F. B. Meyer was a person very experienced in the matter of consecration. One young

sister consecrated herself over ten times at the age of twelve. She kept saying that she consecrated her heart to the Lord, but there was no breakthrough. She said to Mr. Meyer, "I do not know why I fail all the time. Whenever I pray and give my heart to the Lord, I still feel as if it is with me." Mr. Meyer answered, "Tell the Lord that you cannot give your heart to Him, and ask Him to take it away instead."

Let me say this: Our heart cannot go to Him, because it is stuck in the world and in its treasures, the mammon. This is the reason our mouth can say as much as we want about loving the Lord but our heart will not follow. If we send our treasures and our mammon to the Lord, our heart will follow. We cannot control our heart, and we cannot consecrate ourselves. The Lord said that where our treasure is, there is our heart also (Matt. 6:21). How do we consecrate? There is no need to deal with the heart, just deal with the treasure. When we give the Lord our treasure, our heart will go to Him. The happiest experience on earth is when our heart goes to the Lord. We can jump up and sing, "Hallelujah!" A Christian suffers when his heart cannot love the Lord. In order for our heart to love the Lord, we must not pay attention only to our heart, but to our treasure. Once we hand over our treasure, our heart will surely follow. We can only love the Lord when we hand over ourselves.

HANDING OURSELVES OVER

OPENING THE WAY FOR US TO LOVE

THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS

From the day we hand ourselves over, not only do we love the Lord, but we begin to truly love the brothers and sisters. If we have not handed ourselves over, we can only give what we have in excess to others; we cannot love the brothers and sisters. When we hand over everything, the Lord breaks our shell of self-love. We are delivered from our own little domain and begin to practice brotherly love. We become one who is good at giving. Once we see something we have that others do not, we feel uneasy and want to give it up as well.

I can testify to you honestly that Brother Philip Luan was a brother who handed himself over long ago. He sold everything he had. He was a strong person. He offered up many of his possessions the day after he was saved. He terminated many relationships. He even closed his tobacco factory. Originally, he was known as the king of tobacco in Manchuria. Every factory under him was very large. He had twenty-seven companies and over a hundred retail branches. However, he closed all these businesses a day or two after he believed in the

Lord. He paid all the debts he owed, but he forgave all the debts that others owed him. Later, when Brother Luan came to Hong Kong, he went through severe trials financially. He had been a rich man in his own place, but he volunteered to take the way of poverty. He did more than just love the Lord. Many people can testify that he loved the brothers and sisters. Perhaps his speaking could not match that of Brother Witness, but he was a person who was absolutely free from self. God saved many people and perfected many others through him. Here we see a brother who was free from mammon. He loved the Lord and the brothers and sisters. No one who is constantly calculating can love the brothers.

HANDING OURSELVES OVER OPENING THE WAY FOR US TO LOVE SINNERS

Finally, handing ourselves over enables us to love not only the Lord and the saints but sinners as well. Before we hand ourselves over, we always count our money and consider it more precious than the human soul; we do not believe that a sinner is worth more than the whole world. But after we hand ourselves over, we feel that every soul is precious. It is worthwhile to spend the riches of the whole world in exchange for a single soul. The Lord asked, "What shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?" (Matt. 16:26). When we fearfully hold on to our money, all the souls in the world mean little to us. We argue over three or five dollars while allowing a soul to go to hell. When we let go of our money, our heart will love all the sinners in this world. During the past two or three years, I have had the deep feeling that we can never treasure what is true unless we cast away what is false.

Only those who are truly delivered from the power of mammon can love the Lord, the brothers, and sinners. If mammon continues to have a hold on us, our love for the Lord is false, our love for the brothers is false, and our love for sinners does not exist. It is nothing but doctrine, good only for deceiving and mollifying ourselves. We will have love and joy only after we have handed ourselves over. Christ will be precious to us only after we have done this. Only then will the church and all the brothers and sisters be precious to us. When we walk on the street, we will feel that every soul is precious and every sinner lovable. While we are waiting for the bus to come, we will have a different feeling when we see the crowds passing by. Even if some argue and fight in front of us, we will still love them and treasure their souls. When we see someone engaged in a brawl, we

will pray earnestly for him. Others may consider him a demon, but we will find his soul very precious.

There is only one thing in the world that takes away our love for the Lord, for the saints, and for sinners—mammon. Once mammon goes away, our senses will be clear, our eyes will be opened, our minds will see, and our judgments will be right. May God grant us this kind of seeing.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CONSECRATION

AS REVEALED IN ROMANS 12

Date: Friday evening, February 10, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:1-5

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

PRESENTING OUR BODIES

THROUGH THE COMPASSIONS OF GOD

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

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

THE POWER OF CONSECRATION COMES FROM GOD'S SHINING

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

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

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

THE CONSECRATION OF THE BODY BEING

THE MOST PRACTICAL AND SPECIFIC CONSECRATION

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

THE PRACTICE OF PRESENTING OUR BODIES

Three things are involved in the presenting of the body. The first is time, the second is money, and the third is physical energy. The presenting of our body is the presenting of our time. Our time must be available. We cannot squander our time; we have to devote our time to the service of the Lord. We cannot say that we have consecrated ourselves, yet still have our time in our own hand. Once

our time is offered up, our body is offered up, because the body is bound up in time. We also have to present our money. Many poor people and poor brothers and sisters are around us. They all have needs. There is also the need of money in the work of the gospel. Saying that our heart is consecrated without offering up our money is like shutting up our affection (1 John 3:17). Affection may be there, but it is shut up and useless. We have to remove the things that shut up our affection before we can love God and serve Him.

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

The second year after I was saved, I read the books of Chronicles, and found that David had many mighty men. When David was ready to build the temple, these mighty men were assigned to guard the gates (1 Chron. 26). I was very touched when I read this. Even David, who was being served, and who was a

mighty man himself, longed to serve at the door of the temple of God (Psa. 84:10). Our service to the Lord is a personal thing. Today the co-workers are serving the Lord with their mouths, but just presenting our mouth is not enough; we have to present our hands as well. Here we should not have any worldly concepts or private habits. The sisters in Shanghai organized a sewing group to wash, mend, and iron the items that the saints offered up, and then they gave them away. This is not a simple thing. It is easy for the sisters to offer money to buy new clothes to give to the poor, but they collected worn items and washed, mended, ironed, and folded them, and then gave them away. Of course, we should not think that this is all that consecration involves. Nevertheless, there is a principle here: We have to make our consecration practical and specific.

THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSECRATION

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

THE MEANING OF BEING A LIVING SACRIFICE

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

sacrifice. This means that we can constantly present ourselves to the hand of the Lord. We can offer up ourselves as sacrifices to the Lord continually, and the Lord can use us continually. The first thing a Christian should be to the Lord is a living sacrifice.

THE RESULT OF PRESENTING OURSELVES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE

Spiritual Understanding

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

Not Being Conformed to This Age

Romans 12:2 begins with the conjunction and. The second practical result of consecration is that we are not fashioned according to this age. The word fashioned means to be molded into a shape. God's intention is that we not be molded by the world. We should not have a worldly appearance, and we should not give others the impression that we are a "walking abacus." As long as we are in the world, we have the shape of the world. It is possible to take the way of

worldly property brokers when we negotiate for meeting halls; it is possible that we give others an impression of the world. Once we are consecrated, we should be free from any worldly appearance on the negative side, and we should be transformed by the renewing of the mind on the positive side. This means that we have spiritual understanding. Presenting the body comes first, renewing of the mind follows, and finally one has the spiritual understanding. Originally we were very dull, but now we are sensitive, and it is easy to understand God's will.

Knowing God's Will

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

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

our consecration. This is something very subjective; no one can be arbitrary about it.

Bringing In the Coordination of the Body

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

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

I hope that God will speak to us. Our only wish today is that no one would keep back anything for himself. If we do this, God will have a way among us. May the

church in this end time live like the first church. May none of us live our own life any longer. We only have one occupation—preaching the gospel. No one will try to start a private business within this gospel enterprise. We pray for God's will to be done on this earth. May He grant us the grace to learn to serve Him. He does not want a wavering mind in His service. May we all give ourselves for this.

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

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
A FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING
HANDING ONESELF OVER
IN AN ABSOLUTE WAY

Date: Saturday evening, February 11, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

CONSECRATION BEING
THE LORD'S GRACE AND OUR JOY

God wants us to consecrate ourselves. What a joy this is to us! Paul told the Corinthians that the Lord died in order that we who live would no longer live to ourselves but to Him who died and was raised for us (2 Cor. 5:15). If the Lord died and resurrected for us but did not give us a chance to live for Him, it would indeed be a suffering and a pain to live the Christian life.

Once I was moving my home. I was the only person doing the work and could not move the heavy furniture. Two brothers came to my rescue and helped me move. When they were finished, they were all covered with dirt. I asked whether they were hungry and thirsty. They said no and returned home immediately. That night I did not sleep well. I thought of the two brothers who helped me move. They were covered with sweat and dirt and returned home late at night. Yet I did not repay them anything. I felt bad, and the whole night I could not rest my head or sleep well. The Lord has accomplished a great redemption for us. His work is many times greater than moving a house. If we asked the Lord, "What do You want me to do?", He could answer, "Everything is done. You do not have to do anything." If He said this, we would feel terrible. I often have felt that it is a great

grace of the Lord that we are redeemed. It is also a great grace to be allowed to consecrate ourselves to Him. If a man receives the matchless grace of the Lord's redemption yet has no intention of living for Him, either he is not saved at all or he must not have a clear idea about his salvation and the greatness of God's grace.

If a Christian does not serve the Lord, he will feel that he owes the Lord something. He will feel queasy. Even though the Lord has everything and even though the cattle and sheep on a thousand hills are His, He wants our consecration. Man is created by God. All men belong to Him, but He wants our consecration. We often think that if God commissioned the angels to preach the gospel, they would probably do a better job than us. Their emotions are not finicky as ours are. We preach according to our feelings. The angels could preach eight hours a day without being affected by their emotions. They would also preach better. Our preaching is flawed, but the angels would not have this problem. Yet if the angels were given the responsibility of preaching the gospel, they could only preach about a sinless Savior; they could only preach a sinless salvation. However, we can speak as sinners saved by the Lord from our sins. Our preaching is so much richer than the preaching of the angels. For the same reason God also sees our consecration as being so much richer. We all love money, but if we see how much the Lord has done for us, we will gladly offer up everything for Him. I hope all the brothers and sisters will see that it is a great grace to be allowed to serve Him. It is also our greatest joy and peace. I hope all the brothers and sisters will strive to enter into this supreme peace and joy. If our consecration falls short of giving our all and if our standard is anything less than absolute, we will know the difference; the difference will be great, and the gap will be wide.

LEARNING TO WOUND OURSELVES AND TO PLEASE THE LORD

We have many young people here with us. We have to be prepared to give away all our things. When we come to God we should not come empty-handed. We should pick out our possessions, pack them up, and send them to other cities. We can also send them to the poor in our own city. In order to please the Lord, we often have to learn to wound ourselves. A man's spiritual future depends on how much he is willing to hurt himself for the Lord's sake. This will build up our Christian character.

Sometimes we have to pay a great price to please the Lord. There is nothing precious and valuable about giving up our excess. This will not touch the Lord's heart. Only by giving all that we have will we please the Lord. Many rich people dropped their gifts into the offering box, but the Lord was not touched. When the poor widow dropped two lepta into the box, the Lord considered that greater than what the others had given, because out of her lack she cast in all the living that she had (Luke 21:1-4). The two lepta that she cast in equaled less than a cent. It was not a matter of how much, but of giving everything. Some brothers and sisters wrote on their consecration slip that they did not have anything extra to give. Let me say a solemn word: We do not give what extra we have to the Lord; we must give all that we have to Him. This is a good thing in the eyes of the Lord (cf. Mark 14:6, 8).

Do you remember the story of the widow from Zarephath and how she treated Elijah? She only had a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a jar, but Elijah asked her to make a little cake for him (1 Kings 17:8-16). Humanly speaking, Elijah's word was cruel. While the widow was making the cake for Elijah, how her heart must have ached because she knew not what was to become of her living. The little cake, however, was not the last but the first. In the days of Elijah, there were many widows, but only one was remembered (Luke 4:25-26). She was remembered because she offered all she had in an absolute way to God's prophet.

An absolute consecration is not something we do on the spur of the moment or by accident. It has to be done again and again. It may hurt us, but it will also cheer us. A joy that hurts is the greatest kind of joy. This joy brings tears. We rejoice so much that we praise in tears. This kind of joy is very particular; it is something that the world and worldly Christians do not have.

BUILDING UP CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Some may consider that offering something to God is a favor to Him or an honor "bestowed" on Him, but God considers it as His way of saving us and building up our Christian character. Many brothers and sisters hand over their possessions because they do not want to tear down these things themselves. They want to hand them over to the church and let God tear them down, but neither God nor His church will do this. We have to sell all our gardens, houses, and properties ourselves. We do not have many opportunities during our lifetime to learn such a lesson. It is very good for building up our Christian character.

A WORD TO THE BROTHERS WHO ARE IN BUSINESS

Terminating the Past

The brothers and sisters who are in business and who have not terminated their past must deal with this matter as soon as possible. We have to deal with all the improper objects in our house, all the things that we owe others, and all our worldly attachments.

Selling Land as Soon as Possible

If we have any land, we should sell it as quickly as possible. Brothers and sisters throughout China from the north to the south have lost over ten thousand mu (a Chinese measure) of land. Several thousand mu were consecrated but not yet sold when they were confiscated. This is because some were not willing to take up their own knife to "kill their own son." Some in Shanghai offered up fourteen hundred mu, some eight hundred mu, and others two hundred mu. Over three thousand mu were offered up, but the church did not receive anything. Neither were the brothers and sisters able to enjoy a single mu. This is because they did not sell immediately. In addition to losing all their land, they have brought many problems upon themselves.

Why were they unwilling to sell the land? One brother spent ten years to collect eight hundred mu of contiguous land. He bought two or three parcels at a time. Although he offered them up, he handed them over two or three parcels at a time. When the church saw his hesitation, it returned the land to him and asked him to sell it himself. He was too lenient on himself and eventually kept it all. Eventually, all eight hundred mu were confiscated. This is happening to many brothers and sisters. When Nebuchadnezzar beheld the city of Babylon, he boasted, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I have built up as a royal house by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:29-30). Many brothers and sisters have bought land and built houses for the glory of their own majesty and power. The Lord wants us to destroy what we have built with our own hands just like Abraham did when he prepared to kill his son Isaac with his own knife.

Dividing Up the Joint Assets

with the Unbelievers as Soon as Possible

If any brothers or sisters have entered into a joint investment of land with unbelievers or family members or jointly own shares with Gentiles, the joint assets should be divided up as soon as possible. Otherwise, they will face

difficulties when they try to serve the Lord or consecrate their assets to Him. Never hold on to joint assets or joint shares for too long.

**Making Suitable Arrangements Immediately
after Handing Something Over**

After one hands something over, he has to select a few experienced and respected brothers with spiritual wisdom and discernment to make suitable arrangements for him. We want every penny that the brothers and sisters have handed over to be put to proper and good use.

A WORD TO HOUSEWIVES

**Doing the Best to Hand Everything Over
while Acting on the Ground of Righteousness**

Housewives must not offer up their husband's belongings. Neither should they offer up what belongs to their children. They should not be criticized for acting unrighteously. We have to know that God is the master of all things. He does not need anyone to steal or rob. We can only offer up everything that we have a right to dispose of. Before we offer up anything, we have to ask, "Do I own this? Will I cause a problem in my family by offering this?" God does not want us to steal; neither does He want us to rob. Unless our husbands and children are being unreasonable, we should not violate their rights.

Not many people in this world have consecrated themselves, and not many riches have been consecrated. This is the reason every consecrated person is precious and treasured by God. Not only is such a one precious; even his children are precious, and every hoof that he owns is precious. The money he consecrates to God is precious. When the Israelites left Egypt, God told them to not go empty-handed, but to take all their belongings with them. They did not leave one hoof behind (Exo. 10:26). A believer should learn to preserve his wealth so that he can offer it to God. God treasures the children of the believers, and He treasures every hoof that belongs to the believers. On the one hand, we should not take anything that does not belong to us, even if it is but a thread or a shoelace. On the other hand, as much as possible we should offer God everything that belongs to us.

Whatever we do, we have to stand firm on our ground. Brother Witness said that in the denominations, the number of men falls short of the money offered, but with us the money does not match the number of men. We have the people, but not the money. We do not want there to be any unnecessary disputes in the

family because of our consecration. We do not want the Lord's name to be shamed. We should only consecrate by acting on the ground of righteousness.

Jewelry Should Be Sold as Quickly as Possible

Concerning the jewelry offered up by sisters, we have to pay special attention to the teaching in Peter's Epistles. He said that it is always wrong for Christian women to have any kind of adornments (1 Pet. 3:3-5). Both male and female alike in the world consider gold more attractive than brass, and pearls and gems more precious than plastic goods in the streets. In the past some of us collected jewelry ourselves, or it was given to us by husbands or relatives. Now we have to sell all the items that are under our disposal. We spent time and money to acquire these objects. Now we have to spend time and effort to dispose of them. In particular, we should deal with our most cherished objects by disposing of them personally. We do not want another sister to buy them. Objects that have been consecrated to God should be sold to unbelievers, not to other Christians. We should be lenient and not criticize others, but we should be strict with ourselves. These things are dragging us down; they are sinking us. How can we place them on other sisters and burden them?

The money that we have offered up can be used to print gospel tracts or can be given away to needy saints or the poor. If we do not know how to give it away, the church can prescribe certain instructions on a slip of paper and you can send the money accordingly. It is all right to ask others to forward money for you, but the church will not do this for you. This makes it clear where your money has gone. All jewelry should be disposed of as soon as possible.

The Principle of Owning Things

Anything that you do not have complete ownership of does not necessarily have to be handed over. These items are the property of your husband or your family members. Household decorations and ornaments can be retained as long as they are tasteful and not too extravagant. Follow the principle of keeping what is practical. It is all right to keep things that are reasonable and tasteful, but it is wrong to go beyond this principle. Objects like ivory antiques should not be kept for display in the house. These things do not have any practical value. We have to carefully consider what we want to buy. It may be better to use the money to print or purchase gospel tracts instead. A certain brother loved to collect ivory antiques before he was saved. He loved them so much that he would sleep with them. Others talk to their wives before going to bed; this brother looked at his

antiques before going to bed. He loved his wife, but that love could not match his love for his antiques. Every night he looked at his antiques until midnight. When he woke up he fondled them for another two or three hours. But thank God, the Lord saved him. After he was delivered from these things, he declared, "The Lord has taken away my love for ivory antiques. These objects are beautiful, but the Lord has saved me. What a release it is to be delivered from these antiques!" I hope that no useless, valuable objects would be found in a Christian's home. If we have the financial means, we can buy something practical and tasteful, but a Christian should not collect expensive antiques in his home.

A sister consecrated her piano, and two other sisters consecrated their sewing machines. The piano can be stored in the meeting hall; we can use it at a later date. The sewing machines can also be stored in the meeting hall. In the future we can make them available to the saints. I am not saying that it is wrong to have items such as a piano or sewing machine in the house. But if others do not have them, it is not good for us to have them just for ourselves. When everyone has them, it is quite all right for us to have them. Christians do not practice asceticism; they practice the denial of the self. When all the brothers and sisters have these things, I will have them, but I should not be so impatient that I must have them immediately.

Dealing with the Lust for Shopping

The greatest temptation facing housewives is shopping or the habit of shopping. Some objects are acquired only because the eyes need them. They are good to look at, but the husband and family have no need of them, even though the eyes have need of them. The more she buys, the more closet and drawer space she needs. Eventually, she runs out of space for the things she needs; all the spaces are filled with objects that only satisfy the lust of the eyes. One sister bought a bed sheet which she did not use for four or five years. She bought a dozen stockings which she kept unused in her closet for a year. This puts money in a dead place. A housewife must overcome the lust of shopping. Otherwise, she will want to buy what she likes when there is some money in her pocket. This is a buying lust. She buys something only for the purpose of looking at it. This is the lust of the eyes. She has to overcome this. When she stands in front of a department store with money in her pocket, she should ask, "Am I about to buy something practical and useful, or is it only for display?" A Christian should always reject the lust of buying. Except for meeting some immediate need, we should not buy anything too quickly.

Cutting Our Expenses for the Gospel's Sake

The housewives should discuss with their husbands how much they should spend a month and how much pocket money should be set aside. After taking care of the normal expenses, all excess should be saved and offered up. This does not mean that a housewife has to lower the quality of the food. It means that she should save what can be saved in order to offer it to the Lord. She should not neglect proper nutrition for her husband and children.

If she has too many garments, she should sell some. Any dress that is too nice should be sold. She should not live in rags, but neither should she be overly adorned. A housewife always should have a seasonal clean-up. She should consider how much can be saved and how much can be given away. It is best to designate a specific amount of offering for the gospel each month.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL HINGING ON CONSECRATION

I hope that in handing ourselves over and in our consecration, we will not fail in any area this time. Consecration cannot fail. Once it fails, the gospel stops. In order to maintain the impact and power of the gospel, our consecration cannot stop. Today all Christians admire the power of the early church and the early apostles, but they have forgotten the consecration of these people. The power of the gospel comes from consecration. I hope that we will all remember this. May the gospel never lose its power in us.

The assembly in Hankow has had problems for a long time because the brothers and sisters were not thorough in their consecration. During the past two months there has been a revival, and ninety people have been baptized. The underlying reason for this change is that some saints have begun to hand themselves over. If a man does not hand himself over, he cannot love the Lord or the brothers and sisters, much less sinners. Under such circumstances, the gospel surely will not go out. Many people cannot love the Lord and cannot love sinners because their love is for their treasure. Where our treasure is, there is our love as well. The greatest secret to loving the Lord is storing up one's treasure in heaven. Spontaneously, we will love the Lord. I hope that we will wrap our heart around our treasure and send both to the Lord.

THE PRINCIPLE OF DEALING WITH ITEMS THAT HAVE BEEN HANDED OVER

During the past three years, we practiced a particular principle in Chefoo, Shanghai, Nanking, Foochow, Hangchow, and Tsingtao in regards to the things handed over to the church. The brothers who bear special responsibility before the Lord should first let the brothers and sisters know that they should not hand themselves over foolishly. We should let them know where the consecrated items are being sent. From the first day we practiced handing over in China until this very moment, none of the co-workers has had the right to touch any of the consecrated goods of the brothers and sisters. We cannot use one penny of this money. The co-workers must, as Paul said, exercise foresight for what is honorable (2 Cor. 8:21). The money from the brothers' and sisters' consecration should be given to poor saints, local or otherwise, or it can be used for the propagation of the gospel.

Let us make this solemn declaration again: No co-worker has permission to touch a penny of this money. This word should be unnecessary in the first place. If a person is truly consecrated, he has no problem in this area. But I want to clarify this matter for the sake of helping some brothers and sisters understand our practice.

Being Absolute in Our Practice

In handing themselves over, the brothers and sisters have to learn to do it in an absolute way. If we keep back anything or if we are not absolute in any way, we will not have the joy. Handing oneself over releases the burden that is upon us. If we only hand over half of what we have, we will still have half the burden on us. Even if we hand over ninety percent, we will still have ten percent of the burden on us. We will only be happy when we hand over everything.

Coordinating Together to Make the Gospel

Our Primary Occupation

Preaching the gospel is the basic and primary occupation of the church. This is the reason the Lord requires His church to forsake everything for the gospel (cf. Mark 8:34-35; 10:29). Our primary occupation is preaching the gospel; we do not preach the gospel "on the side." Perhaps some among us had great ambitions to be prominent, to be famous industrialists, musicians, engineers, or doctors before they were saved and before they handed themselves over. Now that they have handed themselves over, their ambition has to change. From now on they have to strive to please the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9). This does not mean that they can no longer be a doctor, engineer, or musician, but it does mean that they should

be satisfied with just food, clothing, and a dwelling. The gospel is our proper occupation. All other works are sidelines. We do not seek promotions in this world as far as our position or profession is concerned. We are here to promote the gospel. We should have an occupation on the side because both the Bible and the government say that we should work.

Nevertheless, the gospel should always remain our primary occupation. Everything should be for the gospel. The first thing we should consider when we interview for a job is not how much it pays, but whether or not this work will profit the gospel. If it does, we should take it even if it means accepting a lower position. If we work in a place and can only make a hundred dollars a month, other families will make up any lack. The gospel is not an individual enterprise. We must work in coordination. In the future the responsible brothers have to take the initiative to fellowship with the brothers and sisters about their schools and occupations. In the past we paid attention to what profited the individual the most. We paid attention to remuneration; now we must pay attention to coordination. The brothers and sisters have to fellowship with the church about all their moves. We should make the gospel our primary occupation. We should not preach the gospel haphazardly. Instead, we should preach resolutely, systematically, and deliberately. Wherever we are, we have to make the gospel our top priority.

I must repeat that consecration is not a matter of handing over some material possessions. We expect all the brothers and sisters to put their occupation, time, future, schooling, and place of residence under the direction of the gospel. We should pay any price to do what is profitable for the gospel.

Presently, Shanghai is preparing to send a hundred brothers to Nanchang. About two hundred families have already moved to Yi-Yang. This is like moving a whole church to a new place for the gospel. It is easy to speak of, but once one gets into the matter, he will discover all the difficulties that must be faced. How many people should be moved? How much do they need? How many dwellings should be prepared? All of these require careful consideration. This is not a work that eight or ten people can accomplish. In Yi-Yang the gospel has spread to over ten counties. If some can migrate to Nanchang, I believe God will greatly bless us and will add groups of people to us.

We have been in Hong Kong for decades. What is our condition compared to Yi-Yang? The brothers and sisters in Hong Kong may be more eloquent in preaching, but the brothers and sisters in Yi-Yang have the increase; they know

what they are doing. All who have migrated to Yi-Yang have uprooted themselves from their background; they have handed over everything and have relocated in an absolute way. I hope that none will misunderstand us. When we say that we should hand our possessions over, we are only touching the negative side of the matter. This is just a basic and fundamental requirement. Our real goal is to coordinate with others. If we have no heart to hand ourselves over for the coordination, we can continue to be rich while others remain poor. May the Lord grant the church in Hong Kong the grace to give itself to the gospel in an absolute way. This is the meaning of Philippians 1:27, which speaks of striving together with one soul with the faith of the gospel. This is what many other places have done. If we are desperate every day, a great part of China will be evangelized within a year. In a few years, we can spread the gospel to other parts of the world.

The situation in Nanking is very good at present. The opportunity for the gospel is unprecedented. Although many people have left, many others have been added. Not only have the original ones handed themselves over; even the new ones have handed themselves over. They are asking for the regions outside and around Nanking be given to them as well. I know you receive news here: The number of attendants in every locality is increasing in multiples, not simply percentages. When some move away, more are added.

THE WAY BEING TO HAND ONESELF OVER ABSOLUTELY

I hope that Hong Kong can be absolute in this matter this time. Once it becomes absolute, it can spread the gospel to the southern part of China and move out to southeast Asia. We hope that everyone would be for the gospel, including those who have a job, who are in school, and who are working at home as housewives. No brother or sister should be a spectator or a bystander. Everyone should jump off the diving board. If the more mature and advanced ones take the absolute way, the ones who have a heart to serve will follow. The deeper we prepare the channel, the more the water will flow. The more violent, absolute, and strict we are, the more others will want to serve the Lord in sincerity. The more convenience we give others, the less they will come. Either we should not do this at all, or we should do it in an absolute way. The most foolish thing to be is a halfhearted Christian. The Lord's intention is different from our thoughts. We care for our money; our eyes are always on our money. This is the reason we cannot be happy Christians.

May the Lord make us clear concerning the truth that is being released here. May this burden increase more and more. The Lord came to cast a fire upon the earth. At that time He could not say that the fire was cast. I hope that He can say that the fire has been cast today. This is the only way to have an unhindered and unimpeded future. This is the only way to take the fire to the uttermost part of the earth. Today many places have caught fire. I hope that Hong Kong will catch fire as well.

The Lord will gain His way only when we have handed ourselves over in an absolute way. I hope that we will offer ourselves to God in an absolute way. We should consecrate ourselves to Him and offer up everything for the gospel's sake. If the church does not exist for the gospel, what is it here for? Is it wrong for the whole Body to offer itself up to the Lord? The Lord will have a way only when the whole Body has offered itself up. Only then will the gospel have a way, and only then will the church have a way to go on.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A SIGN BEFORE THE LORD'S COMING

Date: February 13, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Scripture Reading: James 5:1-5

1. How shall I follow Him I serve?
How shall I copy Him I love?
Nor from those blessed footsteps swerve,
Which lead me to His seat above?
2. Privations, sorrows, bitter scorn,
The life of toil, the mean abode,
The faithless kiss, the crown of thorn—
Are these the consecrated road?
3. Lord, should my path thro' suffering lie,
Forbid it I should e'er repine;
Still let me turn to Calvary,
Nor heed my griefs, rememb'ring Thine.
4. O let me think how Thou didst leave
Untasted every pure delight,
To fast, to faint, to watch, to grieve,
The toilsome day, the homeless night:

5. To faint, to grieve, to die for me!
Thou camest, not Thyself to please;
And, dear as earthly comforts be,
Shall I not love Thee more than these?

(Hymns, #462)

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

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

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

In 1924 I chose this hymn for the brothers and sisters to sing in the meeting. They sang well with spirit and with much feeling; their voices were loud. While they were singing, I was meditating on the song. It is sometimes difficult to meditate on some hymns if they are sung too loudly. Some hymns which are suitable for meditation cannot be sung loudly at all. Between 1923 and 1924, a

few of us young people were zealous for the Lord. One couple among us considered quitting their jobs to work full-time for the Lord. They felt unsure about their future. While they sat quietly this way, they began to sing this hymn. As they sang they made the decision to serve the Lord. This hymn has a grand feeling to it, yet it is not overbearing. Some people are carried away by the grand feeling of a song, yet they do not touch the tender spirit behind the song. When this couple sang this song, they touched the tender feeling behind it. If we feel that our future is unsure, we can try to sing this song and offer ourselves once more to God.

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

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

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

OVER-ACCUMULATION BEING THE GROUND OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:8 that we should be content with having food and covering. Today men not only have food and covering; they have many more things. They have much gold and silver in the bank. This is the reason James sighed that the garments of the rich have become moth-eaten, and their gold and

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

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

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

The book of James was written nineteen hundred years ago. Yet it speaks of the worker-capitalist dispute. It says that problems arise because the rich are too rich, and the workers are exploited. It is unfortunate that the Marxists do not pay attention to the word of the Bible which precedes them by eighteen hundred years. The word withheld means to keep back the wages of the workers. Everyone who studies Marxism knows that this is the exploitation of workers, the so-called "surplus value" of the workers. Karl Marx lived in the last century. He wrote a book called Das Kapital in which he talked about the capitalists investing money in factories and hiring workers to manufacture goods. Does the profit belong to the capitalists or to the workers? I have no interest in discussing who is right and who is wrong. My interest lies in his claim of the usurpation of the

workers' surplus value. The profit is earned through the labor of the workers, yet the employer takes it into his own pocket. While a worker receives a dollar, he actually may be making two dollars, with one of the dollars being retained by the employer. James said that the wages retained by the employer cry out and reach "the ears of the Lord of hosts." Today the changes in China are under God's sovereign hand. It is hard to believe that one-fifth of the inhabitants of this earth are undergoing such a change without God's intervention. I believe God's judgment is in it.

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

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

Once a brother told me that a certain man always wears a platinum ring, and the ring is always new because he discards and replaces it when it becomes rusty. This is just like what the Bible speaks of in regard to the rusting of gold and silver. Once it rusts, the owner discards it. For such hedonists and seekers of pleasure, anything that becomes rusty is no longer an enjoyment to them. Some people have hoarded enough goods to last them two thousand years. No wonder many rich men seek longevity and everlasting life after reaching middle age. They know that they cannot enjoy all their wealth; they cannot use up all their riches even if they live another two thousand years. They seek longevity so that they can enjoy more.

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

THE PROPER CHRISTIAN WAY—

FORSAKING ALL FOR VOLUNTARY POVERTY

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

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

When I returned to Shanghai from Foochow, many brothers and sisters came to me in tears and said, "Had I listened to your word, the brothers and sisters as well as the church would have had a chance to enjoy my consecration. I do not

feel sorry because I have lost my possessions. My greatest sorrow is seeing the things disappear without giving the brothers, the sisters, and the church a chance to enjoy them. The poor did not get them, and neither did the gospel." Letters from many places reported the same thing to me. If we do not seize the opportunity to answer the Spirit's call, one day we will find that our greatest sorrow is the Lord not gaining anything, the church not gaining anything, and the poor not gaining anything.

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

CHRISTIANS BEING A PECULIAR PEOPLE

The brothers and sisters in Yi-Yang were thoroughly checked out by the Communists. They investigated them even to the bone and marrow. Their searching was in a sense sharper than the two-edged sword, but they were so surprised by our brothers and sisters. They forced others to share everything in common because they were afraid that no one would do it, but we practice this voluntarily. They said that the biblical practice of having everything in common was wrong, and they told the brothers and sisters in Yi-Yang that no one was allowed to practice this. They said that such a practice would make everyone

lazy. We practice having everything in common because we love the brothers, but they thought this was wrong because it would encourage laziness. However, even though we have everything in common, we are not lazy. This bewilders them. The world cannot do this, but we can. This is what it means to be a Christian. The world does not understand that Christians are a peculiar people, but this does not mean that we are promoting Christian socialism. We only do this as a practice. Christian conduct is not based on a set of Christian doctrines or creeds, but is according to the life we have received. Christian behavior has nothing to do with doctrines and teachings; it is related to life. The father did not embrace his prodigal son according to a set of rules. When the prodigal son returned, the father spontaneously stepped forward to kiss him. A Christian acts according to the life within him. For this reason, it is impossible for him to take the way of the world.

A TESTIMONY

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

DISCERNING THE SIGN OF THE LORD'S COMING

AND ANSWERING THE CALL OF CONSECRATION

I am saying this to you not for the purpose of fund-raising. I am saying this to let all the brothers and sisters throughout the whole world know that the day of the Lord is approaching! We have to spend whatever we have on the Lord, while the

money is still useful. In this passage, James does not tell us the result of the capitalist-worker dispute. That is not his point. He tells us that the Lord is coming! Let me shout again, "The Lord is coming soon!" Perhaps we cannot see other signs, but we can surely see this sign. We have to endure. While the sign is still here, we have to offer up the money we have in our hand. I truly hope that when the Lord comes back the second time, none of us will miss Him again. It is bad enough to miss Him once. It is bad enough to fail once. We must not miss Him the second time. We must not fail the second time.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS

Date: February 14, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

From now on, we have to carry on the work in the church in Hong Kong in a steady way. Therefore, tonight we will officially ask a few brothers to serve as overseers. The condition of some brothers is not up to the point of such an appointment yet. I hope that all of us will humble ourselves. I hope that no one will be so proud as to think that he is qualified to be an elder. None of us should feel that we are trustworthy in ourselves, because none of us satisfy the conditions spoken of in the Epistle to Timothy. Perhaps the Lord has to oversee all of us directly.

In Hong Kong we had some responsible brothers in the past, but there was not a clear distinction between the co-workers, the responsible brothers, and the elders. Some co-workers reside here, while others do not. I will take the opportunity while everyone is here tonight to make a clear arrangement. The elders are responsible for local affairs, while the co-workers are responsible for the work in the region. Tonight, no co-worker is from outside this region. If you are a co-worker working as an elder, you have to remember that while you are living in Hong Kong, you have to coordinate with the brothers and sisters in the church in Hong Kong to serve the Lord together.

For the eldership we have four brothers: Brothers James Chen, K. H. Weigh, Chu Ze-yuen, and Hsu Jin-chin. Brother Cheng Him-yuen is very responsible in many things. He is burdened for many practical affairs, but I hope that he will have not only a feeling for practical affairs but a feeling for the brothers and sisters also. I hope that the young brothers and sisters will learn to submit to these few elderly ones.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD ELDER

What is an elder? The word in Greek is presbuteros. Elder is an accurate translation, but many people do not have an accurate understanding of this word; at least they do not have an accurate understanding of the matter of eldership. An elder is not only a person who is older in age, but someone who is stronger. A young brother calls his older brother "big brother." This means that the two have the same life, but that one is older and stronger than the other. Many brothers and sisters have a wrong concept that the young saints are burning while the older ones are conservative. To them the church consists of two families, not one. Some people think that the young ones are zealous while the older ones are cautious. However, the elders are presbyters; they are the "big brothers," which means that they possess something more than the younger ones and are even stronger than the young ones. The young ones may say that they love the Lord, but the elders must love the Lord more. The young ones may say that they are zealous, but the elders must be more zealous. They must be more consecrated than the others. Their zeal is the same as the others' in nature, but it must be stronger in degree. Their consecration is the same as the others' in nature, but it must be stronger in degree. In the church the elders must live a testimony of sacrificing more and forsaking more than the young brothers and sisters.

The elders are responsible for overseership. They should take the lead among the brothers and sisters, not put pressure on them from behind. Unless they can do this, they are not qualified to be elders. In the next five or ten years, there will be mass migrations to Hong Kong. If the elders do not have the proper leadership, Hong Kong will become useless. The church should have elders who are not only cautious but strong as well. Perhaps the elders are not as physically strong as the younger ones, but in consecration, love, and zeal, they cannot fall behind the younger ones. The Bible does not say anything about old Christians. If there is an old Christian, he must be old in the sense of ancient, like an old tree that flourishes by the stream. Such a one has to be more zealous than others. If anyone should be extreme, he should be the first one. The elders and the young people are two ends of the same sugarcane stick. The young people are the top end, while the elders are the bottom end. They are more juicy than the younger ones. Do not think that one is a sugarcane stick while the other is a barley stalk. No, both are the same in nature.

THE WORK OF THE ELDERS

The work of the elders is to oversee. This means to inspect and supervise things from a height. All the brothers and sisters are working, and these ones are observing. No one can escape their eyesight. They know as soon as someone moves. They know who is loving the world, who is naughty, and who is in sin. They know who is not honest and greedy for material things, but their job is not just to look, but to help those who err. As soon as a brother gets into trouble, the elders have to adjust him and render him help immediately.

Moreover, in the church, every brother and sister should be serving. Every member should exercise his function. The elders should not replace others' work while they are exercising the overseership; they should only oversee them in their work. They must not be the only ones who are occupied but must make many other brothers and sisters busy. Good overseers must know how to initiate and must know how to bring all the brothers and sisters into the work. They have to remember that they are overseers; they are not replacement workers. They have to work with the brothers and sisters, not work for them.

An elder must devote his time to his work. If a hundred brothers and sisters are working and one among them is an elder, he has to devote his time to oversee the rest. He has to ensure that they are indeed working and that no one is standing idle. He has to be like the master of the vineyard who stands at the gate to observe everything. He has to make sure that no one is lazy. He has to equip everyone to serve, whether in physical chores or in spiritual matters. Everyone needs to see that he cannot be idle. If everyone does this, the gospel will spread in a prevailing way.

ALL THE ONE-TALENTED ONES

HANDING THEMSELVES OVER TO SERVE THE LORD

If we label one brother as useless and another sister as unsuitable, sooner or later all the brothers and sisters will become useless and only we will be useful. We have to perfect others to serve. We have to make the useless ones useful. The church is the Body of Christ, and all the brothers and sisters are members of this Body. We cannot call anyone useless. The Lord does give some five-talented ones to the church, but we must remember that the church is not built upon five-talented gifts or two-talented gifts. The chief factor in the building up of the church is the one-talented ones. There are not too many five-talented ones in the church; perhaps, we can only find one in a few centuries. There are also very few two-talented ones. It would be hard for the church to be built up with five-talented ones. In the past we paid too much attention to the five- and two-

talented ones. As a result, all the one- talented ones were buried. The way of the church today is to have all the one-talented ones dig up their one talent.

Today we are not afraid that the Lord would only give one-talented members to the church. We can ask Him to give us more of these members. As long as we all dig up our one talent, the church will have a way to go on. Today it is hard to find a five-talented one, but five of the least gifted ones will add up to five talents. The church is not short of men. The service of the church is manifested when all the one- talented ones are mobilized, when the whole Body rises up to preach and serve. Thank the Lord that His Word tells us clearly that no saved person has less than a talent. We all have at least one talent. Luke 19 says that we all have at least a mina. Matthew 25 says that we all have at least one talent. Everyone who serves the Lord has at least one talent of gift. No one has less than a mina; no one has less than one talent. We can only excuse ourselves by saying that we have not offered up our one talent. We cannot tell the Lord that we do not have one talent. Even the slave who was judged evil and slothful handed one talent back to the Lord, not half a talent.

An elder does not replace the brothers and sisters with his greater gifts. His function lies in bringing out the one talent that lies within all the members. No matter how capable and gifted an elder is, his contribution can never match the functioning of the one-talented ones. It is wrong for two or three highly gifted elders to do the work of the whole church. The result would be much better if these two or three elders stepped aside and the whole church stepped in to do the work. The Lord has given every saved person at least one talent. If we say that we have received less than a talent, then we must not be saved. Since we have a talent, we should serve in the capacity of a one-talented member. This is the reason the elders must exercise overseership. They must not allow anyone to bury his one talent in the ground. When I come to Hong Kong again and see people burying their talent, I will not rebuke them; I will rebuke the elders.

Whether or not a church can go on depends on whether all the one-talented ones are mobilized. I am shouting here: All the one-talented ones have to be mobilized! No power on earth can withstand the force of all the one-talented ones rising up together. No matter how "useless" a person seems to be, every person has to be used. We have to use everyone, unless we have the thought that some members in Christ's Body are lame.

One characteristic of Brother Witness is that he can use a person, no matter how "useless" they think they are. If they do not know how to do certain things, he will

take them by the hand and teach them. Every smart and gifted person likes to do things by himself, but this requires him to pay a high price. If one is truly wise, he should stir up the one- talented ones to dig up their talent from the earth. He has to make everyone busy. The elders should be very sensitive in their spirit; they should be able to detect buried talents and should encourage them to be dug out. If the responsible brothers do not know whether a brother or sister has hidden his or her talent, they must bear the blame.

May the Lord bless the church so that it would see what it really is. The church is built upon one-talented ones. We do not have to stir up five- and two-talented ones; they rise up by themselves; they do not want to hide their talents. Only the one-talented ones have a danger of hiding their talents. In order for the church to be built up, the one-talented ones have to rise up. No matter how much we have and what kind of persons we are, we have to dig out our talent. When all the one-talented ones rise up, the church will be manifested. Once the church is manifested, the gates of Hades will not overcome it. The gospel will spread throughout the world. If we all pour out our lives, Satan will tremble.

THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS NEEDING TO SUBMIT TO THE ELDERS

God builds His church upon His authority. He has appointed deputy authority in all human government and institutions. All the brothers and sisters in the church have to learn to submit to the authority of the elders. We obey the elders because they are the Lord's deputy authority in the church. The basic principle governing Christian conduct on this earth is submission. It is interesting that believers are exhorted to obey in all the Epistles, but these Epistles do not say anything about authority itself. Where there is a demand, there must be the object of demand. For example, without the Word of God, we cannot have faith. If we talk about faith all the time, but do not give others God's Word, no one can have faith. Similarly, if there is no authority, there can be no submission. God wants all the believers to practice submission in the church. This means that there must be an object of submission. The object of submission is the authority in the church. In the church the elders act as God's deputy authority. God wants us to learn submission. If a man truly knows authority, he will learn to submit. The young brothers and sisters should learn to have a proper response. I am not talking about a kind of deliberate performance. Rather, it is a spontaneous reaction that comes when a person is confronted by something. If we have a

proper response, the first thing that will come to our mind when we are confronted by a situation is, "Who should I check with in this situation?"

Every time Brother Witness faces a situation, he asks, "Who should I check with concerning this matter? To whom should I submit?" Once we hand over ourselves, we enter into the coordination of the Body, and no member can be independent any longer. Every member is under the authority of the Head. Any member who does not submit to the authority of the Head is a lame member.

CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF THE ELDERS

I would say a word to the elders concerning their authority: We have to have the basic understanding that there is no authority within ourselves. The authority in the Body of Christ is Christ, the Head. It is the Holy Spirit who is operating in the Body. Therefore, only the Holy Spirit is the authority. The Holy Spirit is the authority of Christ in His Body. From where do the responsible brothers derive their authority? Do not think that as long as a person is an elder he has authority. We have to know and understand authority. Only those who understand authority have authority. If the elders do not understand authority, they are not qualified to be elders, and they are not fit to be an authority. We do not have any authority in ourselves. The only difference between us and the brothers and sisters is that we know the authority of the Holy Spirit a little more clearly, and we are able to communicate the thought of the Spirit to them. The elders do not have any authority in themselves. They are able to help the younger ones in the church because they recognize the authority of the Holy Spirit in Christ's Body, the church. The elders should never say, "I am the authority. I have the authority to make decisions for you." Rather, they should say that they recognize the Holy Spirit more. This is the reason they can open their mouth and speak, and this is the reason they can represent God's authority before the brothers and sisters. An elder becomes God's authority by knowing God.

Let me relate a story to you. In Shanghai, Brother Du, Brother Chu-chen, and Brother Yu Cheng-hwa are elders. Brother Du is the most senior among them. As far as his human stature is concerned, he is as mature as Brother Witness. The social and political condition in Shanghai is such that the church has little to offer to out-of-town visitors in terms of hospitality. Once a brother from the church in Shanghai was led by the Spirit to open his house to a midnight visitor. Brother Du came and told me that the brother was wrong. It was right for him to provide hospitality, but it was wrong for him to do so without fellowshiping first with the elders. I told him that there was nothing wrong with it as long as it was done

under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Besides, how can a person seek fellowship from the elders in the middle of the night? We are helping the brothers and sisters know the authority of the Holy Spirit, not to submit to us as elders. It was right for this brother to obey the Holy Spirit.

The elders are here not to build up their own authority, but to lead the brothers and sisters to know the authority of the Holy Spirit. All the brothers and sisters have to learn to submit to authority, but all the responsible brothers have to see that they do not have any authority in themselves. If the brothers and sisters make a mistake, we have to rebuke them, not because they have offended our authority, but because we know the authority of the Holy Spirit. We should rebuke them because they have offended the authority of the Holy Spirit. The young brothers and sisters should remember that in disobeying the responsible brothers, they are disobeying God. The responsible brothers should not try to build up their own authority; they should not consider that they have authority in themselves. The whole church must help the brothers and sisters submit to authority. They should know that they are rebelling against the authority of the Holy Spirit when they do not listen to the elders. This is the meaning of submitting to authority.

We have spent a great deal of time to select the elders. We have had much consideration in this matter. In appointing the elders, we are not saying that these ones have any authority in themselves. We are merely saying that they know more of the authority of the Holy Spirit. This is the reason the church has to accept their decision. It does not mean that their decision is the authority. The elders should not set their heart on the matter of authority. Rather, they should set their heart on whether or not the one-talented gifts are being utilized. If the one-talented ones are not utilized, the church is dead. Of course, once the one-talented ones are called into use, their flesh will easily follow. These one-talented ones may serve happily in the church, but their service will bring in confusion if they do not submit to authority. Therefore, the church must not only recover the function of the one-talented ones, but it must recover the practice of submission. In this way, the church will have a way to go on, and the service will be proper. It is unprofitable to drag someone into the service without the proper discernment.

THE NEED FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE ELDERS TO BE OPEN

The elders' spirit must be open to the Lord all the time. Their spirit must be meek. In order for a person to be an elder, he must receive uninterrupted impressions from the Holy Spirit. It is useless for an elder to force others to obey his own judgments. This kind of judgment is no better than that of a young sister who has just been saved. Both are nothing more than sinners saved by grace. In making any judgment, an elder must be able to say that it is the Lord making such a judgment through him. This is the reason he has the capacity to touch a matter while others do not have the capacity. This is the reason he can claim that the authority of the Holy Spirit is upon him, not upon others. However, he must realize that this does not come from his private, individual authority. He does not assume authority in himself. He only carries out God's authority upon him. The validity of his authority lies in his fellowship and enlightenment. All the brothers and sisters have to learn to accept the result of the elders' fellowship with God and the enlightenment they have received from God. If they do not accept it, they are being rebellious.

The elders must have an open spirit as well as an open heart. They must be pliable before the Lord. They have to be quick in listening to the brothers and sisters, and they have to discern God's speaking in their speaking. Suppose a brother or a sister is speaking. The elders have to learn to listen carefully. Their ears have to be quick, and they have to understand the very meaning of what the Spirit is trying to say. Someone may speak fifty sentences, but only one is a word from the Holy Spirit. They should identify this word. For example, when I was in Shanghai, I once spoke with Brother Luk. Another brother, a foreigner, was also present in the meeting. In the course of our conversation, we forgot about our foreign brother. After we finished our conversation, the brother said that he had understood a few of the words we spoke. From these few words, he was aware of the nature of our conversation. Actually, he only understood a few English phrases that were interspersed in our conversation. An elder should be like this foreign brother in his ability to pick up the "English." He should be able to catch the few words that God is saying in the brothers' and sisters' speaking.

THE ELDERS MUST BE RICH

The elders must be the richest persons in the whole church. They must be able to freely dispense themselves to others. They must also be able to receive a supply from every member. Only a rich person can give to others, and only they can receive the supply from the Body and learn from the brothers and sisters. The elders must be this kind of persons. They must be able to make others rich,

and they must be able to receive a supply from others. They must be able to draw out the good points of the brothers and sisters. This means not only that their spirit must be open but that they must humble themselves to learn from others.

THE ELDERS MUST BE COORDINATED

When there is no authority in the church, there is no coordination. Among the elders there must also be mutual submission; they must learn to coordinate among themselves. This is the only way for the church to be in order. This kind of coordination will result in the whole church serving together. At the same time, the elders have to learn to not build up their own authority. I hope our arrangement and fellowship this time will direct the service of the church on to a good track.

A CONCLUDING WORD

The church is the Body of Christ. Every brother and sister is a member of this Body, and everyone is useful. If the elders can call the whole church into function and bring out all the one-talented ones and if everyone submits to authority, we will gospelize all of Hong Kong in a short time. The church will be able to build up itself as well as spread outward to gain more people. May we pray much for this.

CHAPTER TWENTY

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING SERVICE

(1)

Date: Wednesday evening, February 15, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

1. My King will soon come back again,
The sky be filled with Him;
The universe to be redeemed
Will see His light therein.
The Lord will soon fulfill His plan,
His footsteps now I hear;
His glorious frame I faintly see
Beginning to appear.
2. I'm longing for His presence blest
And dare not slothful be
While waiting for my Lord's return,
His own dear self to see.

- My only hope—that He may come
And change my faith to sight;
There is no other joy on earth
Which gives my heart delight.
3. My heart is always with Himself,
My eyes are heavenward,
My lips would utter nothing else
Than meeting with my Lord.
The coming of the Lord draws nigh,
His coming is for me;
His promise ever standeth firm
And soon fulfilled I'll see.
4. My Savior, all Thy holy words
Can never doubted be;
With them encouraged day by day,
I'm faithful unto Thee.
Oh, may Thy glory soon appear,
The foe be overthrown;
Thy promises be realized,
And we brought to Thy throne.
5. Thy saving arm a refuge is,
My Savior God, to me;
Thou as the Father keepeth them
Who put their trust in Thee.
The sheep and shepherd are of one,
The head and body same;
None e'er can pluck from out Thy hand
The child who trusts Thy Name.
6. A thousand hands won't hinder me,
Nor will ten thousand eyes;
The thorns upon the road but help
Me onward to the prize.
Arise, my spirit and my heart,
And let the world go by;
The Lord of life will take me soon
To be with Him on high.

7. Thou healing sun! Thou hope of man!
I really love Thy ray.
Oh, righteous Lord! oh, glorious King!
I bow to Thee and pray:
Oh, may Thou soon ascend Thy throne
And quickly show Thy face;
Thy heav'nly kingdom may Thou found
And grant all men Thy grace.
8. The truth should triumph and be king,
And freedom should be queen;
But falsehood, which has rampant run,
Head of the world is seen.
We ask Thee, Truth, to quickly come
And bring Thy light from heav'n;
The foe be crushed and all Thy sons
Into Thy bosom giv'n.

(Hymns, #960)

THE WELSH REVIVAL

The Welsh revival was brought in through Evan Roberts. He was not educated at all; in fact, he was only a coal miner. Yet he brought in the greatest revival in the world—the Welsh revival. Wales was a big place, but Roberts worked mainly in one small chapel. He did not have complete sermons ready for delivery. His speaking was only a few sentences. Sometimes he would pray a little, but the congregation would always leave weeping or leave dancing. Their meetings did not have a set time for opening and closing and were not held in fixed places. They met at any place and at any time. People could come in the middle of the night or in the early morning. Almost every family was revived, and prayer meetings were conducted in every household. No one knew who the preachers were. Sometimes one person would stand up and call a hymn. At other times someone would stand up and read a verse.

Mrs. Penn-Lewis came from a Quaker background. She was a very strict person. Out of curiosity she joined these meetings. The scene she saw was a mess: Some mothers were nursing their babies; others were taking their meals. Some were praying, while others were singing. Outwardly, there was mayhem; the

whole place looked like a market. However, she testified that there was something inexplicable and mysterious in the atmosphere. It was very unusual. Outwardly the scene was very noisy, but inwardly these people were all one. This happened in 1903 and 1904. By 1909 some brothers visited them from England and were told by one of the local pastors, "We have fewer and fewer converts every year. During the last one or two years we have hardly converted anyone." The visitors asked if this meant that the revival had taken a step back. The pastor answered, "No, all the people here are converted already." Roberts was able to bring in such a great revival because he was a fully consecrated person. He was willing to give up everything and spare nothing.

Today while we were singing this hymn, we touched the spirit of the author. It is a spirit unmatched in power in all the ages. The word presence is *parousia* in Greek. It refers to the Lord's descending, His manifestation. Although the Lord has not physically come again, we can bring His presence to our midst. This presence will bind us and restrict us; we will not dare be slothful. May all our walk and work be constrained and bound by His presence, and may we not deviate from this pathway in any way.

THE APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES

Presently, we have appointed eleven deacons and twenty-two responsible ones. We hope that these brothers and sisters will take up more responsibility in the five districts.

From now on, our work has to pay special attention to the care and perfecting of the young brothers and sisters. In addition to these five districts, we have asked a few saints to open up their homes and make them a kind of fellowship station. We have also asked a few sisters to care for these homes like governesses or nursing mothers. They should spend time to talk to the young brothers and sisters, read the Bible together with them, or cook for them.

THE NEED FOR TRAINING

Presently, there is an immediate need for saints to migrate to all parts of China, but the condition of the saints here is far from ready. If they move now, they will just create problems for the churches in other localities. Therefore, we need to actively conduct more trainings. Do not underestimate the matter of migration. This is more serious than fighting a war, and the training that is required for such a move is more severe.

The first crucial thing to learn in this training is coordination. The next most important thing to learn is to be bold. The trainees have to learn to preach in the open air. They also have to learn to speak to unbelievers, to care for new believers, and to study the Bible.

Training on the Study of the Bible

We want to implement the following in the training for the study of the Bible: We will ask ten brothers to help the saints study the Bible. This does not mean that these ten are experts on the Bible. They are merely guides to lead the others into the right path. If anyone wants to dig deeper, they have to spend more time to study by themselves. We will first study Romans. We can use such commentaries as those by Moule, Darby, F. G. Grant, and F. L. Godet. We can also use Conybeare's paraphrase translation and writings by Kelly. We should also spend time to study the Interlinear Greek New Testament. These ten brothers should first study carefully at home. They can read through Romans in half an hour. The first time I studied Romans, I spent fifty-seven hours on it. Some may think that it is a waste of time to read through the whole book of Romans in one sitting, but I can only say that there are more words in a day's newspaper than in the entire book of Romans, yet many people can read through a newspaper in one sitting. Therefore, we should not complain about finishing Romans in one sitting.

When we come together, the first thing we should do is study the meaning of the words in the text. One of the ten should be designated to study the English translations. The best version to use is the Revised Version. Do not use the King James Version. Next consult the Interlinear Greek New Testament and study the text word by word. We can also study the writings of Philip Schaff, the Greek concordance of Alfred Schmoller, and the Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament. This will help us to rightly divide the truth. Never base a message on a word or expression which Paul did not use in the original language. If we do, we will twist the word as Peter said and bring destruction upon ourselves (2 Pet. 3:16).

The best English reference is Dean Alford's Greek New Testament. There is a branch of research called "low criticism," which is somewhat similar to the textual research on Chinese classics that was prevalent during the Ming and Ching Dynasties. This method takes every word of the Bible and analyzes it carefully

according to the text. The best work in this field was done by Alford. His writing can be considered the representative in the field.

If we have all these tools with us, we are quite complete as far as reference material is concerned. In the course of our study, we should spend much time discussing and fellowshiping among ourselves before making the appropriate judgments. We should not think that we can make proper judgments as long as we understand the original language and the meanings of the words. Proper judgment depends on the amount of light and revelation we receive from God. In this respect we must all humble ourselves and learn. Like Paul, we should say that we have not yet come to know as we ought to know (1 Cor. 8:2).

In my early days in Foochow, I studied the Bible every morning with over forty young brothers. We spent three and a half hours each day but sometimes covered only two verses. Three or four were seminary students. After this kind of study, they began to know what the Bible is all about, and they readily admitted that they still had a long way to go.

Here we are asking ten brothers to lead others to study the Bible. These ten will have to spend more time to study and fellowship. They can neither be ignorant nor proud. They should not think that they only need direct fellowship with the Lord. Our head and feet do not have direct communication with each other; they communicate through the other members. If we are a foot, we should not try to link up with the head directly. Instead we should learn to be restricted and learn to accept others' judgment. The church is the Body of Christ. Some of us may not need to read one reference book at all, while another may concentrate on just one reference book. We have to fellowship no matter what we do, and we have to coordinate together. Paul said that we should not despise prophecies (1 Thes. 5:20). This means that we have to respect the revelations that others have received. We have to honor the light that others have obtained.

The Need for Training to Meet the Need

From the beginning I have said that the ones who migrate have to be very strong. This is more serious than fighting a warfare. It would be terrible if we gave them a reed instead of arms for battle. We can only meet the need by going through strict training and by being equipped with the proper provisions. The leading brothers must exercise vigilance over the whole flock. We must equip them with the best supplies. We must study the Bible seriously according to the above method. We have to dig into a few reference books before we can understand

what studying the Bible really means and before we can train the other brothers and sisters to study in the same way.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK

There are still too few young brothers and sisters among us. Some of the children, relatives, and friends of our brothers and sisters are still not saved and in the church.

The brothers and sisters who serve as the nursing mothers should consider and think carefully before the Lord. They have to pray to find out the way to help the young brothers and sisters around them and to provide them a place where they can speak and fellowship freely. At least once a week they should lead these young ones to have a Bible study during the day or pray with them. If the young ones have some problems or some physical illnesses, these ones should help them solve their problems and pray for them. In other words, all the nursing mothers should exercise much care over the young ones. Every house that is opened should provide the best care, and all the houses should help each other. The thirteen sisters should get together more often to discuss and pray. They have to provide a place for the young people to go to and a place for them to speak up.

WORK IN THE DISTRICTS

The bread-breaking meeting will be conducted in five districts; they will meet in five homes. Every district will be supervised by some responsible brothers. We have not assigned any other tasks to these brothers. If they are encumbered by other tasks, they will be too busy to exercise supervision over others; they will not have the time to visit or to get into the situations. The first work of the responsible ones is visitation. The main work of the church is visitation. If we cannot take care of the visitation in a proper way, we will be like a man whose nervous system has broken down; there will be no communication. There are several kinds of visitations, including gospel visitation, new believers' visitation, and special visitation.

THE VISITATION WORK

Gospel Visitation

In gospel visitation we wrestle with Satan over men's souls; we try to snatch people out of Satan's hand. Of course, whoever pulls harder wins. If we have five hundred people who have signed up after a gospel meeting, we are not doing them any good by merely "sending their names to heaven" without visiting them

one by one. This is like going to someone's house and presenting a business card at the door without entering into the house at all. What good does this do? Satan is evil in many ways, but he has one virtue—he is not slothful in zeal. If we preach the gospel on the Lord's Day and a hundred people sign up and express their willingness to receive the Lord, we have to follow up with a second step. We have to arrange for saints to visit them immediately. Within a week, we have to arrange for a hundred to two hundred brothers and sisters to visit them. We must not just invite people to come to the gospel meetings; we must send brothers to make personal calls to these ones. We have to surround them and gain them at any cost. The more gospel meetings we have, the more visitation work we need. If visitation falls behind, our gospel will fail miserably. The failure of the gospel mainly lies in the lack of visitation.

For the sake of efficiency, we will not centralize the arrangement of the visitation work. Instead, every district will take care of its own visitation. The responsible brothers of each district will make proper arrangements for this work. The period of time when a man is about to escape Satan's grip is the most dangerous time for him. If we visit him in that time and surround him, we will strengthen his faith. I believe that with the proper arrangement and the diligent visitation of the brothers and sisters, the number in the church will double in one to two months time. In one year our number can increase seven or eightfold. Someone once said that the sea is full of fish and the earth is full of people. This is absolutely right. Today two babies are born in China every five seconds. May our gospel match the increase in our population.

Visitation and Edification of New Believers

The new believers' edification has to be done with proper arrangements as well. Once our gospel visitation is strengthened and the number of new believers increases, there is the need of proper edification and perfection. Otherwise, the church will be overburdened. If we do not have a good new believers' edification program in the first year, it will be harder to make it up in the second year. If a baby does not open his mouth the first year after his birth, it will be hard to open his mouth eight or ten years later. This same principle applies in the church. If a man does not open his mouth in the first year, he will remain dumb after ten or twenty years. Dumbness is a matter of habit.

If we do not edify the new ones properly, we will add more burden to the church; many brothers and sisters will be brought into the church life in a muddled way.

This easily will bring in worldly elements and human opinions. If this is the case, case the more people we save, the less spiritual the church will become, and the more problems we will have. Every worker must be clear that he has a double responsibility. On the one hand, he has to push people through the gate. On the other hand, he has to lead them on the way.

The goal of the new believers' meeting is to develop the proper habit and character in the new believers. Let me use myself as an example. When I was saved in 1919, I sometimes prayed twenty times a day and sometimes did not pray at all. I was very loose. The same could be said about my reading of the Bible. It was unstructured. When I was stirred up, I would read fifty or sixty chapters a day. When I was cold, I did not want to touch the Bible at all. It was only for conscience's sake that I would read one or two verses. I lived this way because I had not received good training and edification during the first year of my Christian life. The second year after being saved I went to Shanghai and met Miss Groves. She was a co-worker of Miss Barber. She asked me, "Do you read the Bible?" I was very clever, and I answered, "Yes." But she pressed further by asking, "How much?" I felt ashamed and dropped my head, saying, "Sometimes more, and sometimes less when I do not feel like reading." She testified, "From the time I was seven years old until now, I have memorized one verse a day. I am fifty-seven years old now. (She lived until well over seventy years old.) From the day that I became a Christian, I have never woken up after six o'clock." Her word pinned me down. During those few months, I was trained by her. This was a tremendous help to me in my later walk with the Lord.

We have to do the same with the new believers. Sometimes we have to walk with them for a while or stand on the street corner and recite a verse with them before letting them go. We have to learn to pick up the proper habit. We can prepare a prayer list and pray for the new ones every day. We have to study the Bible and remind each other to do the same thing every day. Then we have to help the new ones to do the same. This kind of training helps all of us develop a habit of godliness.

Reading the Bible and praying are not the only things that we should do; we have to help the new ones develop the habit of leading others to Christ. During the above mentioned period of time, I went to see Miss Groves every Saturday. She would ask me how many people I had saved that week. If I said that no one had been saved, she would say, "See, you have not saved anyone for a whole week. How many will you save this month? How many will you save this year?" The

leading brothers have to learn to pin down the young ones step by step. We have to tell them that if they do not run a straight course, the ones coming after them will follow their example and will not have a proper walk. Once we relax in the new believers' edification, the church will be full of worldly Christians. Hong Kong has over two million people. We can easily gain some people if we work. We must not allow the brothers and sisters to have a concept that they can sit back comfortably in the church life.

The first year after I was saved, I brought a person to the Lord who was working as a cook for a Western missionary in Kuling. That was the result of preaching to him continuously for a few days on the mountain. I forgot his name and thought that no one would listen to me because I was just a boy. The first time I met Miss Groves, she asked, "You have been a Christian for a year. How many people have you saved?" I had been afraid that she would ask, and I lowered my head and said, "One." She said, "Do you have the audacity to tell me that you have saved only one?" She asked for the name of the person. I only knew that this one was a cook. She said again, "You only brought one to the Lord, and you don't know his name!" Later, she taught me how to deal with my sins. She taught me to make a prayer list and to persevere in prayer. Thank the Lord, in the second year I brought over sixty to the Lord.

If we do not study the Bible conscientiously, we cannot be a proper Christian. Throughout church history, it has been commonly recognized that no one can know the Lord properly if he does not study the Word properly. Not only do the young ones have to study; even the older ones have to do the same. The older ones have to check with the younger ones about their reading, and the younger ones have to check with the older ones about their reading. I give the younger ones the authority to check with the older ones so that the older ones will not be lazy. This is the only way for the church to become strong.

If a person develops the proper Christian habits at the beginning of his Christian life, it will be easy for him to go on as a Christian. Prayer, reading the Word, and leading men to salvation—these are things that we have to build up in a proper way. If we do, there will not be so many easygoing Christians. Once the number of easygoing Christians increases, the proper church service will disappear. Before we can go on in a proper way, we must build up these habits from the beginning. The fifty-two lessons for edifying new believers are the foundation. If you did not pick them up last year, you have to do so this year. We spoke about them in 1950. We still will speak about them in 1960. The subjects do not need to

change. There is no need for improvement, because there is no need for advancement with foundational work.

Special Visitation

There are always special occasions which arise in the families of the brothers and sisters, such as marriages and funerals. All these occasions call for visitation and consolation. Special visitation includes receiving and sending off out-of-town visitors. Many brothers and sisters come to Hong Kong from other places for a week only. If they do not meet any brothers during their stay here, they will feel that this is a lonely and inhospitable place. They will feel that the church does not look like a church at all. If five brothers come to Hong Kong today, we have to visit them immediately. We have to find out if they have any difficulty in lodging or in finding direction. We have to find out which church they are from. By warming their heart we may set their whole church on fire. We should pay a visit to any brother or sister who is passing by. We should render them practical help, fellowship with them, and get to know their church. Some churches are over ten years behind others in terms of life and spiritual condition. If we establish good fellowship with the visiting brothers, and they receive our help, they will pass on the help to their church. In this way our visitation will be the same in effect as sending these ones out in a migration.

The local brothers sometimes travel abroad. They may go to Canton, Swatow, or southeast Asia. When a brother leaves us, we often lose contact with him. When our brothers go away, we have to send them away like sending away missionaries. When a brother moves to another place, we must not only send him off with a letter of recommendation; we must assign a special person to correspond with him all the time. The letter of recommendation should only be the first letter regarding him; it should not be the last letter. The elders should write to the locality and inquire about his condition. After two weeks, they should write a third letter to follow up on the matter. Many times good brothers are lost as a result of moving to a new place. If the responsible brothers in the other localities are reminded again and again, they will know that the brothers in Hong Kong are persistent and that they should not ignore them. We should never allow a person to leave and become lost. Of course, this works the same way for brothers moving in from other localities; we cannot drop them.

Some of the responsible brothers in the districts are too busy. They can assign other brothers and sisters to write and maintain correspondence with the

travelers. We can write to these travelers and tell them about the message covered during the last Lord's Day morning meeting. We should not let go until we know that our brothers and sisters are well established and settled. In this way we will be able to answer to the Lord. The elders have to make sure that the district's responsible brothers are faithful in the assignment of this work. The Closed Brethren in England do a marvelous work in this kind of visitation. Some of their brothers work as sailors. We know that sailors are just about the most unsettled kind of people on earth. But these brothers look for places to meet wherever they go. In Shanghai sailors looked us up often. Once a sailor knocked on my door late at night. I was surprised that he had my address. When asked about it, he told me that the responsible brothers from his locality had given it to him. These sailors came and went frequently. One time one of them was sick and stayed four months. He would come and visit me a few times a week. In the meetings he would sit in the last row. Sometimes he would read letters that he had received from brothers of his local assembly. The letters would keep him informed of what one brother had said and what another sister had prayed, etc. It seemed as if the whole church was following him wherever he went.

THE LORD IS TAKING THE WAY OF THE CHURCH

The church is advancing step by step. Today the Lord is taking the way of the church. This way requires the whole church to rise up to serve together. In fact, it is not enough for all the saints to rise up; they have to coordinate together. The church must never relax on these three kinds of visitations. They must be covered properly in the districts. When the whole congregation serves this way, the Body will be built up, and day by day the church will move closer to the glorious church spoken of in the Bible, and more and more it will be known as a spiritual church.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING SERVICE

(2)

Date: Thursday evening, February 16, 1950

Place: Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

The hymn that we sang tonight tells us that the manifestation of God's glory enables us to consecrate ourselves. We all know that sin is evil and the world is attractive. It is impossible for us to drop the world by ourselves, but the Lord's glory enables us to drop it.

THINGS TO PAY ATTENTION TO IN THE VISITATION WORK

Concerning visitation we have a few more things to say.

Not Gossiping

In visiting others it is best to restrict the conversation to spiritual things. We should not be loose in our talk. Those who are talkative should pay special attention to this point. It is bad enough to speak loosely at home. The consequence of loose speaking is much greater when visiting others on behalf of the church! In visiting others, we have to maintain the church's purity. We have to deal with nit-picking, criticism, and slandering as soon as they surface. The purpose of making visitations is to build up others, not to tear them down. Therefore, we must not be loose in our conversation. We should not get into right and wrong, and we should not argue.

Not Assuming the Place of a Teacher

In making gospel visitations, it is inevitable that there will be some who have a problem with believing, even though they have put down their name and shown an interest in the gospel. In visiting them, we have to adopt the attitude of a learner. We should not visit them by assuming the air of a teacher. If we go as a teacher, the result will not be good. It does not take many doctrines to get a person saved. One grain of wheat can bear many grains. In the same way, one seed of the Word is enough to save a person; one does not need many doctrines for salvation. As long as there is life, there will be sprouting and growth. Some brothers continue to bring many people to the Lord through just one sentence of God or even half a sentence of God. The preaching of the gospel depends not on the preponderance of doctrines but on the impartation of life to others.

First Giving Our Own Testimony

My suggestion is that the first time we visit someone, we should tell them our spiritual age and condition. We can testify, saying, "I was more or less the same as you. Although I have believed in the Lord for many years, I was unclear about many things when I first believed. Only now am I learning to serve. I may not be clear about many things, but there are one or two things that I am very clear about: My sins are forgiven, and I have joy and peace through my faith in the Lord." Once we testify to them in this way, they will be stirred up to seek the joy that we have. When they are in darkness, they rejoice in their sin, but once they come under the light, they will grieve over their sin.

Touching the Heart Rather Than the Head

Next, we can say, "The church realizes that you have put down your name and expressed a desire to receive the Lord. It is sending me to come and visit." This will touch their heart. We have to seize the opportunity to contact them and touch their heart. We should not try to touch their head. After the heart is turned to the Lord, the head will pose no problem at all. Our visitation will give the new ones an impression that the church cares for them, that it takes an interest in the affairs of their soul. If they ask any question, we can defer it in a gracious way. We should not pay too much attention to their mind, but we should pay much attention to the reaction in their heart and spirit.

Deferring to the Right Ones

When We Cannot Help Them

After we have made a few visits, we should evaluate whether or not we are able to help them to get through. If we cannot, we should ask the responsible brothers to send one or two others. If they cannot help the new ones to get through, then perhaps the responsible brothers should visit them.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEACONS

Tonight we will consider the responsibilities and services of the deacons. The work of the deacons is absolutely different from that of the elders. The elders oversee with the eyes; their main responsibility does not lie in doing the work themselves. However, the deacons have to work with their hands. They also must involve the brothers and sisters in the work. The word deacon is diakonos in Greek; it means a serving one. In English it is translated as servant, minister, or deacon. A deacon does not propose any plans to the brothers and sisters. The elders do the planning, while the deacons work together to carry out the assignment by taking the lead among the brothers. When a church is strong, the elders take care of the overseeing and the deacons take care of the execution. The deacons should work more than the saints. The basic principle of service for the elders is oversight, while the basic principle of service for the deacons is implementation. Hence, the deacons have to understand the elders. In other words, they have to understand God's will through the elders.

The biblical principle is not to do anything rashly or impulsively; we have to make good arrangements ahead of time. When the deacons encounter something, they should not tackle it right away. Instead, they should first think and consider carefully before the Lord. In carrying out the task, they should not work alone but should ask the brothers and sisters to watch them and learn from them.

In distributing the bread to the five thousand, the Lord asked the disciples to sit the crowd down in groups of fifties and hundreds. At that time no one knew the reason for doing this, but at Pentecost three thousand people were saved, and had to be baptized. If the disciples had not been trained by the Lord to face such a large crowd, they would not have known what to do. If they did not know what to do with a hundred and fifty-three fish (John 21:6, 11), how could they know what to do with three thousand people? It is harder to deal with men than with fish. When a man believes in the Lord, we do not consider our job to be finished and then ask him to go home. In the Gospels the Lord trained the disciples to take care of practical affairs. He fed a multitude twice, one of five thousand people and another of four thousand (Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-9). In both cases he asked the crowd to first sit down. The crowds were divided into groups of fifties and hundreds. If they remained standing, they would bump into each other easily; fifty can easily become seventy-five, and a hundred can easily become seventy-five. Human beings move around, and when their legs are free they do not tend to remain still, but once they sit down, they are not mobile and do not move easily. Perhaps the disciples divided the three thousand into thirty groups. This would be much easier to handle than a mob of three thousand. Whether it was the feeding of the multitude or baptism, arrangements brought in order and avoided confusion.

THE PROPER WAY FOR THE DEACONS TO CONDUCT BUSINESS

Actual Practice Sessions

We can identify three basic steps or principles for management from the way the Lord trained the disciples to conduct business. First, we should provide sessions for the brothers and sisters to have a chance to do some actual practice. The Lord believed in practice sessions. This is the reason He took the lead to train the disciples this way. In Acts we see that all the believers had everything in common. They distributed to each according to the need. Actually, the Lord had trained the disciples to do this already. This was the reason the disciples were able to carry this out later. The deacons should never be afraid of trouble. They should take the lead to show the brothers and sisters how to do things first. Consider how we set up our chairs in Shanghai. Sometimes some saints set up the chairs in such a way that no one can sit down. The chairs must be spaced far enough apart, and there must be enough chairs. There are skills to doing the

work. One does not pick up such a skill the first time. The deacons have to provide opportunity for the brothers and sisters to have actual practice.

I always attach one condition to officiating a marriage ceremony: The involved parties have to come together the day before the marriage and make a trial run to get things right. Otherwise, they can ask someone else to officiate the ceremony; I will have no part in it. We will know how to act only by having a trial run. Otherwise, the wedding procession music may play five times and the bride still may not be ready. The Gentiles will think that we are too sloppy, and they will laugh at us. Once a sister, Miss Kingston, observed the order in our wedding meeting and remarked, "It's too bad that I am so old. Otherwise, I would surely be married at Wen-teh Lane and let you officiate my wedding. Your way is right. If we do not have proper order, we will not glorify the Lord."

Finding the Way

The second point about management is that we have to find the way. Consider again the example of the Lord feeding the multitude. He did not charge the disciples to tell the crowd, "Just come and eat." What would they do when the crowd came? Nor did He ask the multitude to come to Him one by one to get their bread. If He had done this, the first one would have taken half a minute and the second would have taken a minute. By the time the last one stood in line, four or five hours would have passed. The Lord's way was to divide the crowd into groups of hundreds and fifties. He gave the bread to the twelve disciples, who in turn passed it on to the groups. This is the meaning of finding the way to manage things.

Making Assignments and Distributing the Work

In managing affairs one has to find the proper way. In dealing with people one has to make proper assignments. We have to distribute the work to the brothers and sisters. We should not allow any one of them to be idle. In distributing the bread, the Lord called all twelve disciples to Him. He gave bread to all twelve. In this way all thirty or fifty groups were taken care of properly. The deacons have to do the same. They have to know how to distribute the work in their hand. They have to know how to assign men to do different tasks. If one does one thing and another does another, the work will be finished in a short time.

There will be no confusion in the church if we have trial runs, come up with the right way, and make the proper assignments in every situation. The elders have to help the brothers in all the districts do this. Never act rashly. Rash action only

brings bad results which do not glorify the Lord. The deacons have to be careful and diligent in their service in the church. The church is the house of God; it is not the laboratory of the saints.

If we practice all these points, the church will reap the benefit. If we learn our lesson well in the preaching of the gospel, we will become very useful for the migration. Even if we remain in our locality, we will become useful in managing affairs. I sincerely hope that a hundred people will migrate from Hong Kong to Chungking. Chungking is a strategic place for the gospel. The gospel must go out, and we must learn to do things the right way. We must not only know how to do things ourselves, but we must help the brothers and sisters do the same, until their work is as good as God's.

We all have to exercise and train ourselves this way. This is not a matter of a day's zeal; we have to learn to do this patiently day by day. I hope that the brothers and sisters in Hong Kong will be ahead of those in other places. We have to use every day to the fullest. Every day we have to learn something new and gain something new before God. Our theology is different from others' theology. They learn it in the seminary, outside the church. Our theology is in the church. We are learning to work "in Christ," while they are being perfected in doctrine and procedure only.

ASSIGNMENT OF WORK FOR THE DEACONS

Managing Finances

The first time the deacons are spoken of is in Acts 6. There we are told that there was a problem of supply, yet the apostles considered it unfitting for them to forsake the word of God to take care of food. They selected seven men of good reputation, who were filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to manage this matter (vv. 1-6). These seven deacons took care of the distribution of food. The brothers who worked as apostles then devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Here we see that deacons are responsible for the business affairs. Management of food means management of finances. It means distributing to each according to his need and making sure that no one is in want. The first work of the deacons in the church is to manage the finances. We ask two brothers to manage the finances, and another two brothers and sisters to do the bookkeeping.

Managing finances does not mean taking over the finances. The deacons have to work in a proper way under the supervision of the elders. In particular, special

designated funds must not be used arbitrarily; the elders must be the ones who make the decisions.

Caring for the Students

Schooling is a very important matter to the young people. We have to learn to take care of their education. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. This is the reason God could reveal to him "the pattern on the mountain" (Acts 7:20-22; Exo. 25:8-9). However, had he not been taught by his mother from his youth, he would not have known that he was one of God's people, a people of promise (Exo. 2:1-10). We have assigned six deacons to specifically take care of this matter, and we have asked two sisters to head up this work.

If possible, try not to study in a Catholic school. The Lord's commandment is to come out of her and to be separated from her. We should not think that we can be broad in this matter. Even if it means delaying a school term, we have to help such ones to change schools.

No brother or sister should study in a school alone. There should at least be two. It is better to have more than five or six. Putting a person in a school is like putting his head in the mouth of a lion; it is hard to tell a lion not to close its mouth. We should not presume that every brother and sister is a Daniel. If we do not want to fall into a well, it is best to stay away and not loiter around it.

The deacons must also care for the young people and perfect them in every way. They have to be like Miss Groves, checking with them about their gospel work on the campus and their persistence in the study of the Bible. We have to train them to do things properly and nurture them in their consecration. In this way they will gospelize their school. What does it matter if they delay their graduation for half a year for the sake of the gospel? We are going to school for the sake of preaching the gospel. What difference does it make if they graduate half a year sooner or later? We have to put this goal before them.

The young ones have to go to school faithfully. If they do not study well, their parents will be critical. They should do everything for the gospel's sake. This is true not only with their schools but with their friends as well. They should make friends for the sake of the gospel, putting down the names of their friends and classmates in a prayer list and praying for them every day. They have to work on a few at a time. For example, they may concentrate on two persons for two months, praying for them every day. Whenever the opportunity arises, they

should bring them to a gospel meeting. If they are faithful, I believe they will gain school after school in a short time. They have to spend time to pray and to seek the Lord, not being loose in any of these matters.

The brothers who serve as the elders have to supervise the deacons. The church is full of activities, but we must not neglect the care and perfection of men just because of busy activities. We have to pray and consider everything carefully before the Lord. I hope that from now on the church in Hong Kong will preach the gospel in one accord.

CONCERNING THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO ARE IN BUSINESS

Many brothers and sisters have handed over everything. In the future when they have needs, we have to remember them. The items that they have handed over are very useful to the migration. It costs a great deal of money to move a group of people to Yi-Yang. Some items are worth little here because there is no demand for them. But in Yi-Yang they cost a great deal of money. We should not "kill the chicken to get the egg." The brothers and sisters should still manage their business properly, but they have to be touched to such an extent that "the money disappears while the person remains." This means that the person is captured by the Lord while the money is released. Statistics all over the world prove that the amount of money spent on the gospel determines the number of souls saved. I hope that the brothers and sisters will manage their business well so that they can offer up the money they earn to gain more people.

Presently, we have eleven brothers who are quite successful in their business. I hope that they will continue to manage their business. What they earn above their needs should be offered up as much as possible. In the future when we have more migrations, the money will be useful to help the migrating ones. Some from Tsingtao are ready to migrate, but there is not enough money to support their move. I sincerely hope that their lack can be made up from here. We have to make proper arrangements for all the brothers who are in business and who have handed themselves over. Our occupation is for the gospel.

The goal of a business is to make money. Once we have money we can send it out for the gospel. The brothers who have incomes and who are holding jobs should no longer seek to earn money for themselves; they should be for the gospel, and they should seek to open up more opportunities for spreading the gospel. In the same way, the students should go to school for the gospel's sake. The purpose of our job is to sustain our living; but it is also to propagate the

gospel. Whatever kind of business we do, we need to pray much and look to the Lord to make provisions beyond our plans. The motive of our taking up an occupation should be for the gospel.

LEARNING SKILLS THAT WILL HELP US IN MIGRATIONS

Migration requires training. The brothers and sisters must be able to study the Bible, manage practical affairs, and preach the gospel. In particular, the young brothers also need a vocational skill. This skill has to fit the requirements of the government everywhere. We cannot move an ordinary wage earner into the interior of China, because this does not fit the requirements of the local government. The church in the inland regions cannot support us, and we become a burden to them instead. If we have some special skill, we will not only support ourselves when we move inland, but we will be able to support others as well. Those who are migrating should know some Bible truths. They should be able to manage practical affairs, and they should be able to preach the gospel. But they must also be able to sustain themselves with a living. Shanghai shortly will move another group to Yi-Yang. Two hundred people have signed up already, but we can only choose thirty among them for the move. In Yi-Yang saints go for months without a single dollar of pocket money to spare. This is the reason everyone has to have a skill and be able to support himself.

In choosing an occupation, we should not have the concept that some jobs are noble while others are lowly. The age has changed. The young brothers and sisters in particular should change their concept. Do not be ashamed of being a manual laborer. On the contrary, all of us have to learn to be manual laborers. When the need of migration arises and we have the desire, the church can send us, and it will be easy for us to coordinate with others. If possible, I hope that some will go to the university to study medicine. Today there is a great need for doctors and nurses everywhere. There are too many doctors and nurses in the cities, but there is a shortage in the villages. There is a need for doctors and nurses all over China from the north to the south. In the future, professional people like doctors, nurses, and chemists will be welcomed everywhere. Some brothers in Shanghai are starting a dye factory and desperately need chemical technicians. Perhaps some pharmacists can go back to school to learn something more about medicine. The dye factory can also train some specially skilled workers and dye technicians. Yi-Yang can buy four or six mills and provide jobs for the brothers and sisters.

Wherever we go we form large cooperative farms. This matches the land reform policy of the government. In addition to farming, we can also do some small scale ranching. Concrete workers, carpenters, and accountants are also good professions. These professions or skills can be very useful to the migration. Hence, we should not study a subject that does not support long term employment. I hope that the twelve leading brothers here will spend time to get into this matter. Our job should be permanent in its usefulness, and it should be good for coordination with others.

Some saints in Chefoo have migrated to the northwest. That can be considered the first migration of the church. Yi-Yang is our second migration. In the future there will be more and more migrations. All the migrants should be able to sustain their living by working with their two hands. Today we should never choose a job that is easy. May the Lord grant the brothers and sisters the grace to offer up everything in an absolute way. May we prepare ourselves for the migration. We should not wait until a migration comes to discover that we cannot do anything.

THE WORK OF MIGRATION

EVERYWHERE AND THE CENTERS

The centers of our work in the coming days include: Shanghai for Kiangsu province, Swatow for the Hakka dialect region, and Ch'ang-ch'un for Manchuria. In the future, six or seven co-workers will go to Ch'ang-ch'un. Presently there are sixty assemblies in Manchuria, and about twenty to thirty of them need men. The co-workers will be leaving next week.

The provinces of Hopeh, Shuiyuen, and Chahar have Peking as their center. K'un-ming will oversee the province of Yunnan. There are many Miao natives in Yunnan. Most of them are populated around the Nu River. There is the need for people to give themselves to care for these ones. Presently, we do not have any work in Kwaichow; there is the need of some positive pioneering. The northwest is centered in Lanchow, which takes care of Sinkiang and Tsinghai also. Presently, there are three assemblies in Tsinghai. In the future some will need to migrate to Lanchow. Presently, the province of Shensi cannot be under Lanchow; it can have Sian as its center. The "ministry house" that is set up now is for training the young brothers and sisters in Bible study. The work of migration in Shanghai is going on smoothly. Some have migrated to Nanchang. Therefore, we can set up a region in Nanchang now.

The work of migration in all these places requires financial support. We hope that the amount of work and the amount of money offered can match one another. When we told you to sell some of your possessions the last time, half of those proceeds should be left in Hong Kong for the purchase of the meeting hall. The other half should be given to the responsible brothers and distributed to the above mentioned places. Let the money you have offered be sent to other places and let it work for the furtherance of the gospel.

A WORD OF CLARIFICATION

I must say a word of clarification here. In a sense it is redundant to say this, but I will speak of it in passing for the sake of those who want to be clear about everything. This is not the greatest thing to say, and many of you can say this for me, but the list of places that we just spoke of does not include Kuling. The Lord forgives me for boasting. From the first day until now, Kuling has not received any income from anyone. Hong Kong offered a little sum once, and Swatow also offered once, but it was used for food expenses in Kuling; these offerings were not designated for the work. We will only accept the offering of those who have passed through the training in Kuling. This is not a narrowness of heart on my part. I simply do not want to give others an opportunity for criticism. Since 1934 I have not received any offering from the churches. It was only two weeks ago that I first received an offering of fifty dollars, but I have transferred it to those who are in need of food.

If I relax my standing, the Lord's work will suffer a setback. I make this declaration because I want to be honest to you. I have to maintain my standing as a worker of the Lord. It is not a matter of being too proud to bow my head to receive offerings from others. I want to maintain the honor of a worker of God. I do this to make sure that my mouth is not shut up. This is my standing, and this is Kuling's standing. I have not allowed any of my co-workers to touch one penny of the work's money. Brother Witness is here. Please excuse me for saying this word to you: Any attack on him is an attack on me. If Brother Witness makes a mistake in anything, it is my mistake. Many people have offered us very cheap criticism, but in the end they will not move a little finger of their own. It is wrong for us to love money. It is wrong for us to love the world. Please forgive me for saying "a foolish word." I say this to show you that the sincerity of Christ is in me. No one can stop me from boasting this way. My word is not to lower my own standard. In every place our co-workers have to do the same; they should not do this only in Hong Kong. I expect our testimony to be above the criticism of the

fault finders. I want to show that all the criticisms are untrue. The reason there is so much criticism is that some people love money. This is the reason they made up all the slander. We have to know that our co-workers are laboring with a burden on their shoulders. This is a little word of clarification from me to those who are listening as bystanders here. May the Lord be merciful in regard to what I have just said.