

## SERVICE FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

### The Service That Is from God

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 8:6; Rom. 11:36; 1:9; 7:6; Acts 13:2; 2 Cor. 3:5-6; Col. 1:29

- I. Like Abraham, we should believe in God as the unique source, as the One who “calls the things not being as being”—Rom. 4:17; 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6:**
  - A. As the creating God, He needs no material to work with; He can create something out of nothing simply by speaking—Psa. 33:9.
  - B. To know God as the Father is to know that He is the source, the unique Initiator, and that everything originates from Him and proceeds out from Him—Eph. 4:6; Matt. 15:13; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6:
    1. God the Father is the only legitimate Originator in the universe, and His Holy Spirit is the only legitimate Initiator in our hearts—Gen. 1:1; Acts 13:2, 4.
    2. God must be the Originator of all spiritual work, and His will must govern the beginnings of all our service—Matt. 7:21-23.
- II. All our work and service in the church must be initiated by God and must be according to His desire—v. 21; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 1:9, 11; 3:2, 7-11:**
  - A. Genuine service comes only from God, not from us; only that which is initiated by God is service according to revelation—1:17; 3:3-5.
  - B. Anything that is initiated or started by man, regardless of how much it is for God, is a religious activity—Gal. 1:13-16:
    1. In God’s eyes this kind of activity is not His service or His work.
    2. God considers only what He has initiated and started as a service and work for Him—Acts 13:2, 4.
  - C. In all our service we should have a regard for God and fear God; we should be fearful that what we are doing for God is not initiated by God but by ourselves.
  - D. We must learn deep within that God wants only our cooperation; He does not need us to do anything for Him—1 Cor. 3:9; 16:10; 2 Cor. 6:1:
    1. God wants us to cooperate with Him, but He does not want us to initiate anything.
    2. We must stop all our opinions, decisions, and ideas and let God speak, come in, and command.
    3. All those who serve God must see a principle: God’s work needs man’s cooperation, but it does not need man’s initiation.
    4. We need to stop everything of ourselves in order to know God’s will—Eph. 1:9; Rom. 12:1-2.
    5. The unique prerequisite for receiving God’s revelation is, by dying, to stop our speaking, our opinion, our view, and our self—Gal. 2:20.
    6. In the matter of serving God, we must stop ourselves in order to give God the absolute opportunity to speak—Ezek. 1:25.

- E. Those who serve the Lord need to see that their service must originate from God—Isa. 6:1-10; Acts 9:3-6, 15-16; 26:18:
  1. If we see this and are enlightened inwardly, we will not dare to initiate anything related to the service of God—2 Cor. 1:9; 3:5.
  2. In our service to the Lord we must have a definite experience and come to a clear point of being enlightened by the Lord to see that our service must be of God, not of ourselves—Rom. 11:36.

### **III. In 2 Corinthians 3:5 and 6 there are two different sources of service:**

- A. These two sources are ourselves and God—v. 5:
  1. “Ourselves” in verse 5 is joined with “letter” in verse 6, and “God” in verse 5 is one with “Spirit” in verse 6.
  2. Serving God by the letter is actually serving God by ourselves, and serving God by the Spirit is serving God by God Himself.
  3. Just as the service by the letter is the service in ourselves and from ourselves, so also the service of the Spirit is the service in God and from God.
- B. There are only two kinds of services with two kinds of sources: one kind of service is by the letter and from ourselves, and the other kind is by the Spirit and from God—vv. 5-6:
  1. The service that is from ourselves takes ourselves as its source, and it is performed by us according to the ordinances and rituals of the letter; it can be carried out by us outside of God and independently of God, without any need to rely on God, seek God, or have fellowship with God.
  2. The service that is from God requires us to rely on God, seek God, fellowship with God, be in God, and absolutely take God as our source—John 15:5; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6:
    - a. This kind of service is from God’s revelation, relies on the Holy Spirit of God, and is for God’s purpose—Eph. 1:17; 3:3-5; Col. 1:9.
    - b. This kind of service requires us to live in the spirit and by the sense of the spirit, walking according to the leading of the Spirit—Rom. 8:4.
- C. The service that is from God requires us to have fellowship with God and not be detached from God—1 John 1:3; John 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:9; 6:17:
  1. Serving God requires a moment-by-moment, fresh contact with God.
  2. Every service that is from God and pleasing to Him is carried out by contacting and touching Him; we serve Him while contacting Him—Rom. 1:9; 7:6.
  3. If we serve outside of God, regardless of whether it is by our zeal or anything else, our service is not from God and therefore has no spiritual value.
  4. A service that is from God and has spiritual value must be one in which we are joined to God and in fellowship with Him by abiding in Him—1 Cor. 6:17; 1 John 2:27-28:
    - a. On the one hand, He operates within us, and on the other hand, we serve Him outwardly—Rom. 1:9; 7:6.
    - b. This kind of service is an activity issuing out of God’s operation within us; outwardly we are serving Him, yet inwardly He is operating.
    - c. Paul was serving God, but his serving was a matter of God operating in him—Col. 1:29:

- (1) Paul served God because he gave and yielded himself to the indwelling God, putting his mind, emotion, and will under God's control to be occupied and filled with God—Eph. 3:16-17.
  - (2) Because Paul was moved by God inwardly, there was a strength that compelled him to serve God outwardly; it was God in him, mingling with him and motivating him to serve—Col. 1:29.
- D. The source of our service should be God, it should be the spirit, it should be God's operation in us, and it should be the operation, direction, and leading of the Spirit of God in our spirit; only the service that comes out of these things is the service that is from God—Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Acts 13:2; 2 Cor. 3:5-6.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**TWO SOURCES OF SERVICE**

Verses 5 and 6 of 2 Corinthians 3 each mention two different sources. The two mentioned in verse 5 are “ourselves” and “God,” and the two in verse 6 are “letter” and “Spirit.” Although these two verses speak of four sources, it does not mean that our service has four different sources. These four sources are actually only two. The first two sources are embodied in and joined with the latter two. Just as “ourselves” is joined with “letter,” so “God” is also one with “Spirit.” Just as serving God by the letter is actually serving God by ourselves, so also serving God by the Spirit is serving God by God Himself. If we intend to serve God by ourselves, we must serve by the letter. Likewise, if we intend to serve God by God Himself, we must serve by the Spirit. Just as the service by the letter is the service in ourselves and from ourselves, so also the service by the Spirit is the service in God and from God. Therefore, there are only two kinds of services with two kinds of sources. One kind of service is by the letter and from ourselves, and the other kind is by the Spirit and from God. If our service is not from the first source, then it is from the second source, and if it is not from ourselves, then it is from God. Or conversely, if it is not from God, then it is from ourselves. Besides these, there is no third source.

**THE SERVICE THAT IS FROM GOD**

We do not have time to closely examine these two sources of our service. We can only consider one of these two: the service that is from God. This kind of service is not from ourselves or by ourselves, and of course, it is also not for ourselves. Rather, it is from God and by God, and certainly it is also for God. The service that is from ourselves takes ourselves as its source, and it is performed by us according to the ordinances and rituals of the letter. It can be carried out by us outside of God and independently of God, without any need to rely on God, seek God, or fellowship with God. But the service that is from God is not like this! It requires us to rely on God, seek God, fellowship with God, be in God, and absolutely take God as our source. This kind of service is not from man's wisdom, does not rely on man's power, and is not for man's pleasure. Rather, it is from God's revelation, relies on the Holy Spirit of God, and is for God's purpose. Hence, it requires us to live in and by the spirit. We must reject the mind, emotion, and will of the soul and live in the spirit and by the sense of the spirit, walking according to the leading of the spirit. Only then can we

have fellowship with God and receive His revelation to render the service that is from God, that takes God as its source, that relies on God, and that is for God.

#### THE NECESSITY OF FELLOWSHIPING WITH GOD

This kind of service from God requires us to have fellowship with God and not be detached from God. In order to have this kind of service, we must be in fellowship with God; we cannot act independently of God, God and we being separated. Every service that is from God and pleasing to Him is carried out by contacting and touching Him. We serve Him while contacting Him. We cannot stand apart from Him and lose touch with Him. If we serve outside of Him, regardless of whether it is by our zeal or anything else, our service is not from Him and therefore has no spiritual value. A service that is from God and has spiritual value must be one in which we are joined to God and in fellowship with Him by abiding in Him. On the one hand, He operates within us, and on the other hand, we serve Him outwardly. Therefore, this kind of service is an activity issuing out of God's operation within us. Outwardly, we are serving Him, yet inwardly He is operating.

Brother Andrew Murray said that prayer is the Christ within us praying to the Christ on the throne. This word is both deep and to the point. What is prayer? Prayer is Christ praying to Christ, and it merely passes through us. A genuine, spiritual prayer does not originate with us or come from us and is not prayed by ourselves alone. Rather, it originates with Christ and comes from Christ and is prayed by the Christ abiding in us to the Christ sitting on the throne.

Just as it is with prayer, so it is also with all other kinds of service. Any kind of service must be a service rendered through us by the God abiding in us to the God sitting on the throne. This is the service that God wants and accepts. We cannot serve Him without Him having any ground in us. We cannot merely serve Him on earth and He merely receives it in heaven—He and we, we and He, standing apart from each other instead of being joined with one another. We cannot merely think of Him one minute and then immediately serve Him zealously without contacting Him or being mingled with Him. This kind of service is from ourselves and by ourselves, not from God or by God. Therefore, it has no element of God in it.

The apostle said that his service in the new covenant was not from himself or by himself; it was from God and by God. It is true that he served God, but it was more a matter of God operating in him and bringing him along to serve God. He served God not because he was happy and convinced and therefore made up his mind to do something for God. No! He served God because he gave and yielded himself to the indwelling God, putting his mind, emotion, and will under God's control to be occupied and filled by God. In this way God was able to gain all the ground in him and to operate in him through His Spirit, motivating him to work and serve. Because he was moved by God inwardly, there was a strength that compelled him to serve outwardly. He was not compelled by his own zeal or his mind, emotion, and will. No! It was God in him, mingling with him and motivating him to serve. This service did not come out of himself; instead, it came out of God. Apparently, it was he serving; actually, it was God operating and motivating within him.

Before Paul was saved, he was Saul. At that time he also served God, but his service then was not from God but from himself. He was exceedingly zealous for God according to the religious education he had received. He was a young man with a strong will and great passion, with talents and courage. He served God with these qualities according to the Jewish religious ordinances. In such a service there was no ground for God or the element of God. Such a service was not from God or by God but from himself and by himself. At that time he served God by his own zeal, courage, and talent instead of by God.

After he was saved, God lived in him and he was joined to God. He and God were no longer two, but the two became one. God's life became his life, God's nature became his nature, God's feeling became his feeling, and God's view became his view. God's everything became his everything, his content. When he gave God the ground in him in this way, and when he and God fellowshipped together, God operated in him, giving him a sense that motivated him to serve God by preaching the gospel. His service was from God and by God. It issued from his passing through God and allowing God to pass through him. This kind of service was not just a work or an enterprise but the flowing out of God and the overflow of God's life.

In the matter of service we cannot do it out of our enthusiasm, determination, or capability, nor can we serve merely according to what we were taught. None of these things should be the source of our service. The source of our service should be God, it should be the spirit, it should be God's operation in us, and it should be the operation, direction, and leading of the Spirit of God in our spirit. Only the service that comes out of these things is the service that is from God and by God.

Therefore, it is not possible to have the service that is from God without meeting, touching, or contacting Him. We must meet Him, touch Him, and contact Him inwardly in order to be able to render the service that is from Him. For example, some preach the gospel merely out of their zeal and excitement without touching, meeting, or fellowshipping with God. Their preaching of the gospel in this way is from themselves; it is not motivated by God's operation in them. In contrast, others preach the gospel because, while they were drawing near to God, confessing their sins before Him, and dealing with all the things that are not pleasing to Him, they have received the burden from the Spirit of the Lord who has gained the ground to operate and motivate in them. Their preaching of the gospel in this way is not motivated by their zeal. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit motivating them inwardly like a burning fire, causing them to be desperate to preach the gospel to their friends and relatives. This situation is like an electric fan; after coming into contact with electricity, the fan begins to turn by the inward driving force of the electricity. This kind of gospel preaching is from God and is spiritual. This is to serve God, and this is to serve God by Him and through Him. This kind of service cannot be disconnected or separated from God.

When we render service to God, we cannot be detached from Him. Rather, we must rely on Him moment by moment. Therefore, it is not sufficient merely to have experience and thus know how to do things and know how to serve God. Serving God can never depend on our "know how." You cannot say that because you were able

to give a good message yesterday, so today you can give the same message again. Yesterday you spoke by relying on God; today when you speak, you still must rely on God. Service to God is carried out not by relying on experience but by depending on God through fellowship and contact with Him.

Some have often said to me, "Brother Lee, teach us some of the secrets of service, because once we have the secrets, we will be able to do it." I said, "There is not such a thing! If there were any secrets to serving God, it would be this one secret: fellowship with God." One can do anything for a long period of time and be considered a veteran, an experienced hand, in that thing. However, this is not possible in the service of God. Serving God requires a moment-by-moment, fresh contact with God. The electric fan cannot say that because it has been turning for two years, it has become a "veteran," an "experienced hand," and does not need to contact the electricity anymore. Regardless of how long it has been turning, it must maintain its contact with electricity. On the first day it turns, it must contact the electricity, and on the last day it turns, it still must contact the electricity. Even if we have served God for a long time, we still need to contact Him. Even Paul would have to contact God if he were here serving today. Paul could not say that he is an old-timer, so he does not need to contact God or fellowship with Him. If this were the case, what he would do would be merely a work, and God's element could not be found in his work.

Our service and our work are not so much a matter of having some accomplishments as they are a matter of expressing God and flowing out His life. If we do not serve or work according to God, and if we do not have the presence of God, then how can He be expressed or flowed out in what we do? Therefore, our service must come from our fellowship with God and our relying on Him. Every time we serve, we must fellowship with God and allow Him to operate in us. We must set aside our excitement, thoughts, and opinions to allow Him to gain the ground in us, to fill us, and to operate in us. This is the source of our service, and it is the most precious source.

In the early days, in the church in Antioch there were five prophets and teachers. While they were praying together, ministering to the Lord, and fellowshiping with Him, the Holy Spirit came and sent two of them out to work for the Lord. These five men did not hold a meeting for discussion or use their mind to think and then make a decision to send two of them out to work. It was not like that at all! They gave themselves to the Lord and allowed Him to have the ground in them. Under these circumstances, the Lord was able to get through and operate in them, thus sending them out to preach the gospel. When they went out, they were filled with God, relying on Him, and brought Him with them. When people came across this kind of work, what they felt and obtained was not a thing but God and the life of God.

Is our work for the accomplishing of an enterprise, or is it for the overflowing and release of God? If we want our work to flow out and release God, we must learn to reject our zeal, thought, emotion, and decisions and to always prostrate ourselves before God, looking to Him and fellowshiping with Him. We should do this not only when we pray, but all the time we should be fellowshiping with God inwardly, giving Him the throne and authority in us, allowing Him to occupy us and operate

in us as He pleases. When we fellowship with God in this way and allow Him to occupy us, He can easily reveal His heart's desire to us and flow Himself out of us. This is especially true of the brothers who are elders in the churches. If they do not receive God's leading in fellowship, God's burden, or God's commission, the service in the local churches will rarely flow out God.

Some brothers who are elders have asked me how they can receive a burden or commission from God. The way is this: You should turn yourself to God, allow Him to occupy your every part, and give Him the first place in every part. Instead of allowing your emotion, mind, and will to be number one, you should give Him the preeminence in you. Thus, when you draw near to God and fellowship with Him, it will be easy for you to receive God's burden. God gives His burden only to this kind of people. If you give God the ground and opportunity, it will be easy for God to operate in you, causing you to receive a commission and a burden. This kind of burden causes your service to be a service that comes out of God's motivation within you. Hence, you will be able to flow out and release God. (*The Spirit and Service in Spirit*, pp. 105-111)