International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Fall 2012

THE UNIQUE WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

The Iniquity of the Sanctuary versus Building with Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones

Scripture Reading: Num. 18:1; 1 Cor. 3:6-7, 9, 11-12, 16-17

Num 18:1 Then Jehovah said to Aaron, You and your sons and your father's household with you shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.
1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he who plants anything nor he who waters, but God who causes the growth.
1 Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.
1 Cor 3:11 For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,
1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
1 Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

I. The book of Numbers shows us that the sins of the priests were iniquities committed against the sanctuary; using today's terminology, they are sins committed in God's work—18:1; 1 Cor. 3:12b:

Num 18:1 Then Jehovah said to Aaron, You and your sons and your father's household with you shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.
1 Cor 3:12b But if anyone builds upon the foundation … wood, grass, stubble,

A. There are sins committed in our daily life, but a worker of the Lord can commit an additional kind of sin; they are sins in God's work.

B. Sinning in the work means offending God in His holiness, glory, and sovereignty; in God's work everything that is incompatible with God's will is a sin and is an iniquity of the sanctuary.

C. There are three very important considerations in God's work that we should never forget; if we fail in any of these three points, we have committed an iniquity against the sanctuary:

1. The initiation of God's work must be according to His will; no work can be initiated by ourselves—Rom. 11:36.

Rom 11:36 Because out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

2. The advance of God's work must be according to His power; no work can be carried out by our own strength—Acts 1:8; Zech. 4:6; Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:1.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
Zech 4:6 And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts.
Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.
2 Tim 2:1 You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;

3. The result of God's work must be for His glory; no work should result in our own glory—John 7:18; Eph. 3:21; 2 Cor. 4:5.

John 7:18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.

Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

D. There are three results or punishments for the iniquity of the sanctuary:

1. There is a loss of the power of life; a man becomes stale.
2. There is the experience of spiritual death; there may even be sicknesses or physical death; God does not allow those who sin in this way to continue— cf. Num. 18:1-7; 1 Cor. 11:29-30.

Num 18:1 Then Jehovah said to Aaron, You and your sons and your father's household with you shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

Num 18:2 And your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, bring near with you, so that they may be joined to you and minister to you, while you and your sons with you are before the Tent of the Testimony.

Num 18:3 And they shall keep your charge and the charge of all the tent, but they shall not come near to the furnishings of the sanctuary and to the altar, so that they do not die, neither they nor you.

Num 18:4 And they shall be joined to you and keep the charge of the Tent of Meeting for all the service of the tent, but a stranger shall not come near to you.

Num 18:5 And you shall keep the charge of the sanctuary and the charge of the altar, so that there may be no more wrath upon the children of Israel.

Num 18:6 And I Myself have taken your brothers the Levites from among the children of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to Jehovah, to do the service of the Tent of Meeting.

Num 18:7 But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and within the veil, and you shall carry out your service. I give you the priesthood as a service of gift, but the stranger who comes near shall be put to death.

1 Cor 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not discern the body.

1 Cor 11:30 Because of this many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

3. There will be judgment at the judgment seat of Christ; at the judgment seat no sin will be greater than the iniquity of the sanctuary—2 Cor. 5:10.

2 Cor 5:10 For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad.

E. The initiation of God’s work must be His will and His will alone:

1. We have no right to initiate anything; God’s will must be the unique beginning of all His works.
2. We cannot consider any of God’s work as a common thing; whether or not we are fresh to others depends on whether spiritual things are fresh to us.

F. The advance of God’s work can only be carried out by His power; we can never fulfill God’s will by our own ability:

1. Only God’s power—God’s “money”—will be accepted by Him.
2. Even after a man knows God’s will, there is still the danger that he will try to accomplish it by his own power, ideas, charisma, or eloquence; Abraham’s begetting of Ishmael is one example—Gen. 16:15—17:1.

Gen 16:15 And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

Gen 16:16 And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Gen 17:1 And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Jehovah appeared to Abram and said to him, I am the All-sufficient God; / Walk before Me, and be perfect.

3. The goal of a work must be spiritual, but the method and means by which we reach God's goal must also be spiritual; otherwise, we will commit the iniquity of the sanctuary by bringing the flesh into the sanctuary of God— Num. 18:7.

Num 18:7 But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and within the veil, and you shall carry out your service. I give you the priesthood as a service of gift, but the stranger who comes near shall be put to death.

G. The result of God's work is for God's glory and not for our glory:

1. God has chosen the ones who are weak, foolish, and despised by the world for His work; 1 Corinthians 1:29 says, "So that no flesh may boast before God."
2. God does not wish to see us getting the glory; we can only enter into the Lord's glory.
3. We may be very poor and weak, but as soon as we render a little help to some brothers and sisters and as soon as we save a few people, we begin to steal God's glory; stealing His glory is committing the iniquity of the sanctuary.
4. When some gain more spiritual knowledge and experience, it is possible for them to increase in spiritual pride; they still work by themselves and seek their own glory.
5. There is nothing more abominable in the eyes of God and nothing more evil in His work than pride; God "rejects" (1 Sam. 15:23) and "resists" the proud (1 Pet. 5:5); the word reject means to be finished with someone, whereas resist is a word that is used against Satan (James 4:6-7).

1 Sam 15:23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, / And insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim. / Because you have rejected the word of Jehovah, / He has also rejected you from being king.

1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

James 4:6 But He gives greater grace; therefore it says, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:7 Be subject therefore to God; but withstand the devil, and he will flee from you.

6. In this world everyone under Satan's deception is a proud person; a proud person does not know himself; those who know themselves will not be deceived—Gal. 6:3.

Gal 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

H. Ordinary sins must pass through the priests' judgment, but the iniquity of the sanctuary is a direct offense against God, and God judges it directly:

1. This is because the sanctuary belongs to God, and the iniquity of the sanctuary is an infringement on God's glory and on God Himself.
2. "This is a very serious matter; I can only speak of it under the precious blood. I ask for the Lord's forgiveness, and I also ask for the brothers' forgiveness" (The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 42, p. 366).

II. We need to be God's fellow workers who are "working the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 16:10) and "abounding in the work of the Lord" (15:58) by allowing Christ to work Himself into us (Eph. 3:17a) so that He may grow in us (Col. 2:19), transform us (2 Cor. 3:18), and flow out of us (John 7:37-38) to work Himself into others for the church as God's farm, God's building (1 Cor. 3:9):

1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, …

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
1 Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.

A. The church is God's farm, which produces gold, silver, and precious stones—vv. 9, 12.
   1 Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.
   1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

B. First, we have the growth on God's farm; then the plants on this farm become the precious materials for God's building—vv. 6-7, 12.
   1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
   1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he who plants anything nor he who waters, but God who causes the growth.
   1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

C. Gold, silver, and precious stones signify the various experiences of Christ in the virtues and attributes of the Triune God; these precious materials are the products of our enjoyment of Christ—v. 12; 15:45b; 6:17.
   1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,
   1 Cor 15:45b … the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
   1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

D. The precious materials for God's building are related to the Triune God—to the Father's nature, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's transforming work—2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12; 2 Cor. 3:18.
   2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
   Eph 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace,
   Heb 9:12 And not through the blood of goats and calves but through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, obtaining an eternal redemption.
   2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

E. We are becoming gold, silver, and precious stones for God's building—1 Cor. 3:12:
   1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,
   1. In God the Father, we have His life and nature as the gold; in God the Son, we have His redemption as the silver; and in God the Spirit, we have transformation as the precious stones.
   2. In order to build with these materials, we ourselves must be constituted with them; we need to be constituted with the Father's nature, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's transformation.
   3. We need the growth in the nature of God the Father, the redemption of God the Son, and the transformation of God the Spirit; this growth makes us gold, silver, and precious stones for God's building—vv. 12, 16-17.
      1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,
      1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
      1 Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

4. Through our eating of Christ along with our spiritual digestion, assimilation, and metabolism, Christ becomes us, and we become Him; then we become the precious materials for God's building—John 6:57; Eph. 3:17; Gal. 4:19.

John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,

F. God's eternal goal is the building—the temple built with precious materials on Christ as the unique foundation—1 Cor. 3:11-12, 16-17:

1 Cor 3:11 For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

1. The growth in the divine life produces materials for the building of God's habitation; this habitation, the church, is the increase, the enlargement, of the unlimited Christ—Eph. 2:21-22; John 3:29-34.

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:31 He who comes from above is above all; he who is from the earth is of the earth and speaks out of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

John 3:32 What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies, and no one receives His testimony.

John 3:33 He who receives His testimony has sealed that God is true.

John 3:34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for He gives the Spirit not by measure.

2. First, we have the farm for the growth in life; then we have the building for God's eternal purpose—1 Cor. 3:9; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20-22; 4:16.

1 Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Eph 2:20 Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone;

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

3. The actual building of the church as the house of God is by the growth in life of the believers—1 Cor. 3:6-7, 16-17; Eph. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:2-5:

1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.

1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he who plants anything nor he who waters, but God who causes the growth.

1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

Eph 2:20 Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone;
Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
1 Pet 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,
1 Pet 2:3 If you have tasted that the Lord is good.
1 Pet 2:4 Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious,
1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

a. True building is the growth in life; the extent to which we have been built up is the extent to which we have grown.

b. In order to have the genuine building, we need to grow by having ourselves reduced and by having Christ increased within us—Matt. 16:24; Eph. 3:17.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

4. We also need to learn to coordinate with the transforming Spirit to perfect the saints by ministering the Triune God as gold, silver, and precious stones to them for their transformation by the Triune God's attributes being wrought into them to become their virtues; this is portrayed in Song of Songs 1:10b-11:

S.S. 1:10b … Your neck with strings of jewels.
S.S. 1:11 We will make you plaits of gold / With studs of silver.

a. Transformation is a heavenly, spiritual, divine metabolic change in our being.

b. Transformation in the church life is carried out by the transforming Spirit—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

c. After the lovers of Christ enter into the church life, they begin to be transformed by the remaking of the Spirit—S. S. 1:9-16a; 2:1-2.

S.S. 1:9 I compare you, my love, / To a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.
S.S. 1:10 Your cheeks are lovely with plaits of ornaments, / Your neck with strings of jewels.
S.S. 1:11 We will make you plaits of gold / With studs of silver.
S.S. 1:12 While the king was at his table, / My spikenard gave forth its fragrance.
S.S. 1:13 My beloved is to me a bundle of myrrh / That lies at night between my breasts.
S.S. 1:14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna flowers / In the vineyards of En-gedi.
S.S. 1:15 Oh, you are beautiful, my love! / Oh, you are beautiful! Your eyes are like doves.
S.S. 1:16a Oh, you are beautiful, my beloved; indeed, pleasant! …
S.S. 2:1 I am a rose of Sharon, / A lily of the valleys.
S.S. 2:2 As a lily among thorns, / So is my love among the daughters.

d. In this transforming work there is the need of the coordination of some "transformers"—the perfecting ones who help the seekers to know God in His nature and to experience Christ—1:11; Eph. 4:11-12.

S.S. 1:11 We will make you plaits of gold / With studs of silver.
Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

G. To build the church with wood (the nature of the natural man), grass (the fallen man, the man of the flesh), and stubble (lifelessness) is to commit the iniquity of the sanctuary; it is to mar the church as God's temple, God's building; instead, we should build with gold, silver, and precious stones—1 Cor. 3:12, 16-17.

1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE INIQUITY OF THE SANCTUARY

God's Word shows us that some sins are committed before man, while others are committed before God. Some sins are committed against ordinary laws, while others are iniquities committed against the sanctuary. In short, there are sins committed in our daily life and sins committed in the work. The book of Numbers shows us that the sins of the priests were iniquities committed against the sanctuary. Using today's terminology, they are sins committed in God's work. Most people only commit sins in their daily life, but a worker of the Lord can commit an additional kind of sin. Most sins are common sins, but a worker of the Lord can commit some special sins—sins in God's work. We have to pay special attention to this matter. A sin pertaining to the work may not necessarily involve such things as pride or jealousy. When the flesh is manifested, when the self-will is exposed, and when one speaks rashly or makes suggestions rashly, one often commits the special sin that pertains to the work. Those who do not engage themselves in God's work will not commit the iniquity of the sanctuary. But those who work for the Lord are liable of committing the iniquity of the sanctuary in addition to all the other common sins. Sinning in the work means offending God in His holiness, glory, and sovereignty. In God's work, everything that is incompatible with God's will is a sin and is an iniquity of the sanctuary.

I have often said to others as well as to myself that there are three very important considerations in God's work which we should never forget. First, the initiation of God's work must be according to His will. Second, the advance of God's work must be according to His power, not our own power. Third, the result of God's work must be for His glory. If we fail in any of these three points, we have committed an iniquity against the sanctuary. No work can be initiated by ourselves, no work can be carried out by our own strength, and no work should result in our own glory.

THE INITIATION OF THE WORK BEING OF GOD AND NOT OF US

In the meetings the sisters have their heads covered with respect to the brothers. This signifies that everyone is covered before Christ. He is the Lord, and only He is the Head. Only He is worthy to be the Lord of all, and only He is worthy to initiate any work. In God's work, no decision should be made through the discussion of two or three brothers. The result and worth of a work, whether or not it is spiritual and pleasing to God, depend not on the amount of work that has been done, but on how much of the work is initiated by ourselves and how much is initiated by God. The less we initiate, the more spiritual, worthwhile, and acceptable it is to God. I thank God that I do not have to initiate anything. He arranges everything. I do not have to be responsible for coming up with anything. We often think that we should do this or that, but God has His own agenda. We do not have to be His counselor. We only need to do His will and find out if something is according to His will. We do not have to worry about the result. The initiation of God's work must be His will and His will alone. We have no right to initiate anything. God's will must be the unique beginning of all His works.

I would like to ask the local responsible brothers a question: In your locality, do you embark on a work just because this is what many people want or because it is a logical thing that produces good results? Or do you do it because you know that it is God's will? Brothers, to initiate anything rashly is to commit an iniquity against the sanctuary. In spiritual things there is no ground for your own proposals or directions. God does not need you to be His head. In the book of Job God said to Job, "Who is this who darkens counsel / By words without knowledge?… / I will ask of you, and you shall inform Me" (38:2-3). Every time I read this, I laugh within myself. Man likes to be God's counselor. But God does not hire any counselors. Paul said, "Who has become His counselor?" (Rom. 11:34). I am afraid the co-workers have not been as serious about the work in the sanctuary as they should have been. Perhaps you were quite careful at the beginning, but today you have become quite careless and loose. Those who have a little more authority speak more and dominate more. Those who have just

entered the Lord's work may be more careful than those who have been working for eight or ten years.

The book of Numbers shows us the distinction between holy things and common things. We should not fall into unholiness through touching something in a common way. Many things are holy and not common. Have you ever baptized someone? The first time you baptized someone, you were probably quite serious. But after five or ten times, it becomes common to you. There is nothing new in the sanctuary. The priests changed the showbread, dressed the lamp, and burned the incense. They did the same things day after day and year after year. But if they were just a little bit careless, they would have committed the iniquity of the sanctuary and died. Therefore, no priest could consider his work a common thing. The first time a worker has to give a message, he is very serious. But after he speaks a few more times, it becomes a common thing to him. Many have said to me, "You seem to be prepared all the time." But I can testify that every time I read the New Testament, I feel as if I have never read it before, and every time I speak, I feel as if it is the first time I have ever spoken. Brothers, we cannot consider any of God's work as a common thing. Whether or not we are fresh to others depends on whether spiritual things are fresh to us.

Take the example of the breaking of bread. The first time we have to bless the bread we are solemnly aware of its significance. We are very careful before the Lord, and we are truly like the priests. Subconsciously, God's power and His Spirit come upon us. But gradually, we become more relaxed. Our spiritual feeling is not as strong as before, and we have little spirit for prayer and worship. A person may realize that God has not given him the power and the anointing at a particular time; however, he may think that since he has done it before, he can do the same thing today. In this way he loses his spiritual freshness and the power of life. There are three results or punishments for the iniquity of the sanctuary. First, there is a loss of the power of life; a man becomes stale. Second, there is the experience of spiritual death; there may even be sicknesses or physical death. God does not allow those who sin this way to continue. Third, there will be the judgment at the judgment seat. I have the deep sense that at the judgment seat no sin will be greater than the iniquity of the sanctuary.

Brothers, we have to take this matter seriously. We cannot initiate the work. A man can only be satisfied when his desires are met. In the same way, God can only be satisfied when His will is fulfilled. We have no other choice than to do God's will. We cannot replace God's will with anything else. All the sacrifices in the world cannot replace God's will. Men may think that their work is better than God's will and that His will may be wrong, but please remember that God does not need any counselors. He only wants us to do His will. We may have done a lot of things for God, but no matter how much we have done, the only thing that counts is God's will.

THE ADVANCE OF GOD'S WORK BEING BY GOD'S POWER AND NOT OUR POWER

The advance of God's work can only be carried out by His power. We can only accomplish God's will and purpose by means of His power. In order to accomplish God's will, not only must the beginning be of God, the process of carrying it out must also be according to His will. We can never fulfill God's will by our own ability. Once I went to Hong Kong with three hundred dollars in my pocket. I had to cross the harbor from Kowloon to Hong Kong, which cost five cents. I asked a man to give me change, and he said that my money was no good. I showed him the three hundred dollars, but he insisted that my money was useless. He then told me that in Hong Kong only Hong Kong currency is accepted. This is like the Chinese Customs Department which accepts only currency issued by the Chinese Central Bank. The same kind of relationship exists between God's will and His power. It does not matter how much "money" you have in your pocket, you cannot buy anything in God's kingdom with it. Only God's power—God's "money"—will be accepted. Even after a man knows God's will, there is still the danger that he will try to accomplish it by his own power, ideas, charisma, or eloquence. Abraham's begetting of Ishmael is one example. This is where the problem lies. The starting point and final goal of a work may be according to God, but the means and power that a man

uses to accomplish His will are of great significance. Every worker of the Lord must check with himself about the means that he uses to accomplish God's will.

The goal of a work must be spiritual. But the method and means by which we reach God's goal must also be spiritual. Otherwise, we will commit the iniquity of the sanctuary by bringing the flesh into the sanctuary. God said, "The stranger who comes near shall be put to death" (Num. 18:7). The accomplishment of God's work has nothing to do with our power. The question is not how much we have done, but whether we have done something according to God's power. A brother said, "Only that which is from heaven can go back to heaven." A sister also said, "If the Lord comes, we can go home." Let me ask whether we will be going home or visiting as a guest when we go to the Lord. The answer lies in whether or not we come from the Lord. If I came from the Lord, my return would be like going home. Otherwise, it would be like a visitation. I cannot say that I am returning to Amoy, because Amoy is not my home. If we are to return to heaven, we must first come from heaven. If a man derives his strength from Adam, he can only return to Adam; he can never return to God. A worker must remember that God's work can only be accomplished by God's power. Otherwise, no work can please God.

THE RESULT OF GOD'S WORK BEING FOR GOD'S GLORY AND NOT FOR OUR GLORY

The initiation of God's work is His will and the advance of His work is His power. These two things have nothing to do with us. In the same principle, the result of God's work is God's glory, not our glory. After I preached in a place, a brother came to me and said, "Brother Nee, you spoke so well tonight! Are you proud of it?" I did not answer him immediately, because no one had ever asked me such a question before. I thought about it, and asked myself if I was proud of my speaking. Then I answered him, saying, "I have never thought about this question before. Perhaps I am very proud, but I have never thought of it." That evening I learned that as long as we are only for God's will and glory, we will never think of usurping His glory. If we have the thought of usurping His glory, we will surely have a problem with the first and second point.

One thing which may be superfluous can be brought up at this point. Why does God not allow man to be saved by works (Eph. 2:8-9)? What is the purpose of God monopolizing the work of salvation? The purpose is that God wants to have all the glory. The amount of work one does determines the amount of glory he receives. God does not want us to share His glory. Therefore, He does not allow us to do anything. This is why He has chosen the ones who are weak, foolish, and despised by the world for His work. First Corinthians 1:29 says, "So that no flesh may boast before God." God does not wish to see us getting the glory. He can give everything to man. He is even willing to give His Son to man. But He will not give His glory to man. We can only enter into the Lord's glory. We may be very poor and weak, but as soon as we render a little help to some brothers and sisters and as soon as we save a few people, we begin to steal God's glory. Stealing His glory is committing the iniquity of the sanctuary. It is very easy for us to commit the sin of stealing the Lord's glory.

None of us wants to be a thief. However, stealing God's glory is the act of a thief. God requires that we not only remove outward, evil acts, but also that we do not steal His glory. God is the God of all goodness, and we are men of all evil. We can only say that all goodness is found in Him alone. Stealing God's glory is committing the iniquity of the sanctuary. The showbread, lampstand, and incense altar are all Christ. Other than Christ, there is nothing in the sanctuary. God does not want us to have any glory of our own in the sanctuary. If a man enters the Holy of Holies, he should only see the ark, which is Christ, and the cherubim above the ark, which represent God's glory. Everything that we see in the tabernacle is related to God's glory. The temple was filled with God's glory. In it we see only Christ; we do not even see the sacrifices.

The question today is who is qualified to share God's glory. Last year God might have called some brothers to His work. He might have given you the experience of the outpouring of the Spirit, and you might have received the overcoming life. During the past year, I have heard that many have worked for the Lord in a wonderful way, but I am afraid that some will begin to become proud. I am afraid that when some have more spiritual knowledge and experience, they will also increase in spiritual pride. They have not yet seen God's will and glory. Therefore, they still work by themselves and seek their own glory. Please listen to the Bible. It says that God "rejects" (1 Sam. 15:23), and "resists" the proud (1 Pet. 5:5). It is difficult to find stronger words than these in the Bible. The word *reject* means to be finished with someone, whereas *resist* is a word that is used against Satan. There is nothing more abominable in the eyes of God and nothing more evil in His work than pride. We have no ground to stand on other than being in dust and ashes.

In this world, everyone under Satan's deception is a proud person. A proud person does not know himself; those who know themselves will not be deceived. When we come before God, we have to realize that everything we have is unclean. Unless the Lord's blood covers me constantly, I dare not work for Him. In fact, I cannot even be a Christian if I do not have the covering of His blood. What do you have that is not from the Lord's grace? Do you think that you are better than others in any way? Are you holier than others in any way? If God exposed everything within you, you would find out how much uncleanness there is within. During the past few days we talked about the excommunication of a certain brother. Every time we came to God, we came with fear and trembling. Had it not been for the Lord's grace, we would have been worse than our brother is.

We are under God's grace today. We cannot enter into God's glory yet. We have to wait for the time of resurrection before we can obtain God's glory. Today we can only remain humble and useless like Lazarus the beggar, who was always begging under the table. We can only be those who receive and accept grace in true humility before His face.

It is unfortunate that those who partake of God's work can commit the iniquity of the sanctuary. How evil is the sin against the sanctuary! If you read Numbers 18, you will see that the punishment for sins committed in the sanctuary was primarily death. The sin of coming near to the sanctuary results in death (vv. 1-7). The sin against the sanctuary does not need to go through man's judgment; God judges it directly. Those who come near to the sanctuary die immediately; there is no need for the priests to judge it. Ordinary sins must pass through the priests' judgment, but the iniquity of the sanctuary is a direct offense against God, and God judges it directly. Many sins offend God indirectly, but the iniquity of the sanctuary is a direct offense against God. This is because the sanctuary belongs to God and the iniquity of the sanctuary is an infringement on God's glory and on God Himself. This is a very serious matter; I can only speak of it under the precious blood. I ask for the Lord's forgiveness, and I also ask for the brothers' forgiveness. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 42, pp. 359-366)