

The Relationship Between the Work & the Church

by Stephen Kaung

The church and the work are different, but they cooperate and should work together to accomplish God's purpose.

Duration: 1:34:06

Scripture: Acts 14:23, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Church Ministry", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the church and the work of ministry. He explains that God has given four types of people - apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors/teachers - to the church as ministers of the word. Their role is to perfect the saints and help them grow in their faith. The speaker also warns against the danger of completely cutting off the work from the church, using the example of someone who is successful in the world but disconnected from the church. He encourages workers to remain rooted in the church and maintain their position as members of the body of Christ.

Transcript

Lord, every time we think about you, on the one hand we rejoice, on the other hand we fear and tremble. Lord, we rejoice because you are such a Lord full of mercy and loving kindness. We fear and tremble because before you we fall short.

Lord, so we come before you, again we prostrate before your feet, we ask you to enlighten us and support us with your grace so that from now on we can be found pleasing to you. There's only one ambition in our heart, that is to please you. We have only one hope, that is you would have a way in us.

We hope, we wish that you would not forsake us but use us, that in your hand we would become useful vessels. Lord, we thank you and praise you. We commit this time fully in your hand.

Lord, we praise you, pray that you speak to us in your precious name. Yesterday we have fellowship a little bit and reviewed a little bit concerning the church and the work, the essence of church and work. In other words, after a certain period of time there's a need for us to return to the Lord, to again allow him to examine us, to again allow him to remind us so that we would not forget what we are here for.

So we thank the Lord for allowing us the opportunity yesterday for us to fellowship in this aspect. In other words, whether regarding the church or our work, we need to have the heavenly vision. Without the heavenly vision we do not have a direction or a goal, neither do we have the strength, but sometimes God has mercy on us so that we would gain his vision, but as we serve him, many times we will be distracted by the outward things so that we will be obscure toward this heavenly vision, and therefore our service on the earth will be distorted.

Therefore there's a need for us to often return to the Lord so that in a real way before the Lord we will see what the church is. We are all those who serve in the church. So what is the church after all? We all have a portion in the work, so after all, every day, every month, every week, the kind of work that we do, what are they for after all? In other words, as we serve in such a way, do we serve out of ourselves or do we serve fully out of our Lord to accomplish his purpose? So these are the questions that we need to ask after a certain period of time.

After some time we need to review and return to the Lord, to be still before the Lord so that he would again remind us within us. And this morning we would like to occupy the time to fellowship and remind each other and encourage each other concerning the relationship between the church and the work. Yesterday we mentioned the essence of the church and the work.

What is the church? Why is there a need for the church? What is the work? How should we carry the work to work? Today we need to look at the relationship between these two. Or in other words, concerning the heavenly vision, how do we carry it out? First of all, we are here just to review. I believe Brian's sisters already know these things.

We are here but to remind each other. So first of all, what we need to see is the work is for the church. In the scripture this is a very important principle.

Today we are on the earth. We often discover a condition. That is, we have replaced the church with our work.

Or put it another way, the work becomes our goal. Instead of the church, instead of the work is for the building of the church. Suppose we are working here.

We work. What do we work for? The work is for the church. The church is not for the work.

I believe there is a great difference. If the church is for the work, then the church has become a pulpit for the work. There are many places that we have seen the existence of the church.

Or the meeting of the saints is for the supporting of a ministry. Rather than the ministry is there for the purpose of building the church. But it becomes the church supporting the ministry.

In this way we have seen that the work has replaced the church. In other words it has lost what God wants to gain in his heart. Because what God wants to gain is his church, the body of Christ.

The Lamb's counterpart. This is what the Lord is after. The work is merely for the accomplishment of that purpose.

Therefore if we take the work and put it as a main purpose, and the church has become something to support, to maintain the work, then the church has become a platform, thereby losing God's heart's desire.

So I think on this point we do need to often remind each other as we work. Today we are working in this way, not for the purpose of achieving a certain kind of work.

The day we are here working is fully for the purpose that God can gain his church. So we see in the book of Acts. We see clearly that there is a group of apostles.

They began from Jerusalem all the way to the end of Acts. When we see Paul in the city of Rome. All of his work, all of the ministries, all of the apostles.

They are working. They are not for the purpose of building their own ministry. They are not building their own activity.

They are not for themselves to build their own territory. Rather we have seen that all their work there is for the building of God's house, God's church. In Jerusalem we see the twelve apostles.

After the Lord's training for a few years, till that time, they have manifested their functions. In Jerusalem they are there to serve. They are helping building the church.

They are not there to bring these people into their own ministries or into their own works. Rather they bring these people into God's house, God's church. And furthermore they serve them faithfully.

And then we look further. We see Paul and Barnabas. As they went out to work, they did the same thing.

Wherever they went, you see that their work is altogether for the church. Not for their own selves. Paul's work or God through Paul has produced the church.

But this church does not belong to Paul. This church belongs to God. So you see, whether other apostles or other teachers or God's many ministers, they can all build upon the foundation that Paul has established.

Like Paul has planted Apollo's water. And you didn't see that Paul says, this is my work. This is my territory.

This is my kingdom. My domain. Other ministries cannot enter into my domain.

Rather we saw that Paul would rather Barnabas or Apollo would go to Corinth. Paul had not one iota of thoughts to build his own work. He was altogether for God's house, God's church.

So today whatever we do, wherever we go, we need to remember one thing. The work is for the church. The church is not for the work.

The work derives its existence for the church. And the church did not exist for the work. I believe this is very clear.

But in God's word we also see that there is a relationship between the church and work. And it is an intimate relationship. The church is different from the work.

But the church cannot fully separate from the work. It is different. But we cannot mix church and the work.

We cannot discern or separate the work from the church. When we mix up the church with the work, the result is that you will see the church becomes one which is for the work. This is sure.

It is not work for the church anymore. So we have to see that church is different from the work. But they are not fully separate either.

Why? Because we see that the church and the work should cooperate. But they are not one. They are not one entity.

The Bible showed us the church and the work are two entities. But these two entities should cooperate. Only under this cooperation can we ever see that the work will develop and the church can be established.

We see the relationship between the church and the work which is an intimate one. But it doesn't lose the difference because of its intimacy. They still are different.

For instance, we see Paul and Barnabas as God sent them forth from Antioch. These two apostles, they went forward to different places preaching the gospel of God. They went to Galatia.

And they went to all the different cities and worked. As they were working, a group of people were saved. The apostles assembled them together.

Then Paul and Barnabas went to another place. When they went to another place, after a certain period of time, maybe a couple of years, they would return. On the return trip, they revisit all these brothers and sisters.

As they revisited these brothers and sisters, in Acts 14 it showed us, they discovered that among the brothers and sisters, there was already a group of brothers and sisters that it seems as though before the Lord, these group of brothers and sisters are seeking more and know the Lord more than the other brothers and sisters. Not that they are perfected, but they are a little bit more advanced. Therefore, spontaneously, these brothers and sisters in the church have already been bearing certain spiritual responsibilities.

And the Holy Spirit had already manifested these brothers and sisters. Paul and Barnabas merely confirmed them and appointed them as the elders to govern the churches locally. So from the Word of God we see, yes, the producing of the church is a result of the work of the apostles.

Realistically speaking, there are two ways for the producing of the church in Scriptures. One, through the apostles going to so many places to work. And the result of their work produces the church.

Just like the churches in Galatia, or the church in Corinth, or the church in Ephesus. We see they are the result of the work. We also see the producing of the church has another way, which is not through the apostles, not through work, but through the brothers and sisters.

They themselves went to other places. As they went to many places, they brought the gospel with them. So at that time we saw the church in Jerusalem as they met together for a number of years.

But because they met together and it was so good, they were unwilling to leave each other. And the Lord raised up persecution to disperse them to many places. Because God's desire is that they would go from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to the remotest part of the earth to testify of the Lord.

But the saints in Jerusalem, they met together for about seven years. They had it so good, they were unwilling to leave it. So as far as God's commission is concerned, they neglected it.

So God used persecution to disperse them. And Scripture said that brothers and sisters were scattered all over the place. And the twelve apostles were left in Jerusalem.

And all the brothers and sisters, they went abroad. Wherever they went, they brought God's gospel to the place. The result is we see that some of the churches had their beginning not as a result of work, but as a result of brothers and sisters being used by God to raise up the churches.

For instance, the church in Antioch was a clear example. The church in Antioch was a result of these brothers and sisters who were persecuted and were scattered abroad. They not only preached the gospel to the Greek Jews, also they preached the gospel to the Greeks.

So God greatly worked and the church was raised up. So the church in Jerusalem heard about God's work in Antioch and then they sent Barnabas to visit them. I believe this is so beautiful because they did not send an apostle or apostles to go to Antioch.

If they sent apostles to Antioch, people would mistake them. Now that the apostles come to Antioch to take over, so the church in Jerusalem is the parent church. And then the parent church would take over the other churches to come under the jurisdiction of the parent church.

We praise the Lord. That didn't happen. They in turn sent Barnabas because Barnabas was a Grecian Jew.

He was born in Greece. He was not born in Palestine. Neither was he an apostle.

He was merely a brother. He was a brother who loved the Lord and he was the son of consolation. In other words, he possessed the heart of love and consolation.

Because between the Jews and the Gentiles, their characters were quite different. Therefore they sent him to visit them. In other words, not to take over, but to help.

As he went there and saw God's work, he felt inadequate. Therefore he went to Tarsus and sought out Saul. So the two of them had spent one year to help the local brothers and sisters with God's word.

So he saw the producing of the church in Antioch. It was not the result of work. It was the result of the apostles' work.

The church in Antioch was the result of faithful brothers and sisters preaching God's word. Afterwards they received help from Paul and Barnabas. So in Acts chapter 13 we saw at that time the church in Antioch.

There were five prophets and teachers. These five prophets and teachers, they were there to help. Or to be responsible for the ministry of the word locally.

They were not the apostles. They were merely prophets and teachers for the service locally. As they ministered to the Lord, the Holy Spirit separated two out of the five, Paul and Barnabas, to do the work that the Holy Spirit sent them for.

At that time, Paul and Barnabas could be considered as the apostles. In today's language they become workers. At that time they became the apostles.

So you see, yes, the church produces the apostles. Not that the apostles set up the churches. Contrarily, in Antioch the church produced apostles.

Today we know some have used this kind of insistence. They said, without the apostles there is no church. If there is a group of brothers and sisters, they meet together, they pursue the Lord, but if there is no apostle, it cannot be considered possibly the church.

This is a misconception. Antioch clearly showed it. Not only was it established by the apostles, but the apostles were produced out of the church in Antioch.

So the way of God setting up the church are two ways. One, through the apostles, or the so-called workers, and through their work produces the church. The other way is the brothers and sisters, in their scattering abroad, they serve faithfully, thereby producing the church.

So we see that, at the time, the attitude of the apostles, what did they have? We saw their attitude toward the church was not that they treated the church as their own property. Remember the Lord in Matthew 16 says, I will build my church upon this rock, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Therefore, the church belongs to the Lord, and it does not belong to the workers, and it does not belong to the apostles either.

Contrarily, we see, as brothers and sisters, we are not clear. For instance, in Corinth, they said, some said, I belong to Paul, I belong to Apollos, I belong to Cephas. Even some said, I belong to Christ.

As though, you people are wrong, we belong to Christ. But Paul said, was Paul crucified for you? Did Paul die for you? Therefore, we must see here, the work is different from the church. There is a difference.

You do not put your work in the position of replacing the church. Contrarily, Paul was there saying, was Christ divided for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Paul did not consider this to be his church, because rather he reminded brothers and sisters, the church belongs to Christ. Not only Paul said, we servants belong to you, Paul belongs to you, Apollos belongs to you, Cephas belongs to you.

All belongs, all is for you, you are for Christ, Christ belongs to God. So we see that all the work is for the church. And all the work is not for building up your own work.

And there is not one work can claim, this is the result of my work, so this church belongs to me. There is not such a thing. Because of this, you will see, the church can accept all of God's ministry.

Otherwise, the church will become one who can receive only one ministry. For instance, if this is the result of Paul's work, then they will receive only Paul's ministry. Then they will reject Apollos' ministry.

But if today, this work is for the church, then you will see, all the ministries that God has given to the church, this church will receive all. In this way, the riches of the church will be very greatly enriched. So whatever ministry, whether Paul's, even Paul's ministry is not all-inclusive, but God loves the church.

He wants the church to receive the all-inclusive supply. So he gives all different gifts to cherish and nourish the church. He uses all ministries to build up the church.

This is the point of departure for the church from the work. Even though they are different, they cannot be separated. In other words, the church must receive God's service of all God's ministries.

The church cannot reject any of God's ministers. Cannot reject God's minister. So you see in the Church in Corinth, some were there wanting to reject Paul's ministry.

The Church in Corinth was established through the work of Paul. But the Church in Corinth should continue to receive Paul's ministry, and also receive other people's ministry. But the Church in Corinth had some problems.

Some were there to neglect Paul's ministry. They thought Cephas was God's establishment among the twelve apostles. So they rejected Paul's apostleship.

Even some rejected Paul's supply. So we see that the relationship between the church and work had a problem. But on the other hand, Paul didn't... Just because the Church in Corinth was established by his ministry, it did not possess the absolute authority.

We saw that he did not. Before a church is established in the infancy, if the church is produced from the work, we often see that in the infancy, it's as though the worker is there to bear all responsibilities. For instance, the Church in Jerusalem, we saw in the beginning, as though the twelve apostles in the Church in Jerusalem, they bore all responsibilities.

Even setting up tables was their responsibility. And because of that, they had problems. The Hellenistic widows were neglected in the daily supply.

It's not that the twelve apostles played favoritism. They were all Hebrew believers. But they were not clear about the needs of the Hellenistic needs.

Regardless of how capable or faithful or diligent the twelve apostles were, when there were ten or twenty thousand saints, you had to preach, you had to pray, you had to take care of the setting up tables. You could not do it all. This was not God's original intention.

So you see that through these problems, He caused the apostles to see that they were not all capable. There was a need for the brothers to be raised up. So there were seven brothers who were raised up and full of the Holy Spirit and possessed a good reputation.

They took care of the tables, so that the apostles could devote their time for preaching, prayer. When they distributed their responsibilities in this way, we saw God's Word was greatly increased. Later on, we saw that they were elders in the Church in Jerusalem.

They were the elders. So in Acts 11, we saw when Paul and Barnabas brought the Gentile saints' supply to the elders in Jerusalem. In other words, because the Church had been established, a group of brothers had been raised up by the Holy Spirit to bear the responsibility of the eldership, to govern the local church.

So the apostles devoted their attention to the work, and they no longer took care of the affairs of the Church. Of course, the Church in Jerusalem was unique, because not only it was a local assembly, you can say it was a center of work. Therefore, we see that even among the elders, some apostles also were elders.

But not all of the apostles were elders. We saw Peter, he was an elder. We could see John also became an elder.

They attended the work of the elders. In other words, they wore two hats. They were apostles at the same time they were the elders.

But the other apostles did not do such thing. Not every apostle became an elder. If every apostle is an elder, then there would be a... Since all the apostles supplied the ministry of the Word, you would see that unbeknownst to them, that these apostles, when they become elders, they would become the chief of the elders.

And then you would see that the work would all again control the Church again. So you saw in the other churches there was no such a condition. Church in Antioch did not have such a problem.

Churches in Galatia did not have such a condition. Church in Corinth did not have such a condition either. At the infancy of the work, the so-called workers, it seems as though they bore all the responsibilities.

But when the Church had more or less established itself, then they should relinquish the responsibilities to the local brothers. So as we see Ephesians 4, in Ephesians 4 we see Our Lord resurrected and ascended, and He gave some gifts to men. At the same time, He showed us He gave four kinds of people, He gave them to His Church.

These four peoples are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Of course, pastor, in some renderings, they should really be translated shepherds. So you see, God gave these four kinds of people, especially to His Church.

These four people all are connected to the ministry of the Word. We can say they are ministers of the Word. They all minister God's Word to the Church.

These four ministries, God gave them to the Church, to do what? The Bible tells us, for the perfecting of the saints. Their work is to perfect the saints, using God's Word to perfect the saints. This perfecting, in the original language, has two meanings.

One is that they would mature in life, that they would mature the saints, because of the supply of God's Word, that they would mature in life. The other meaning is to equip the saints, to equip the saints, to help them, to equip them, so that they can use the gifts that God has given them. Because they are members of the Body of Christ.

Every member, God has given them a certain gift to His grace. And this gift is something that the apostles are trying to equip. They are there to help them, so that they can function and develop, so that their gifts can be manifested, and they will have opportunity to develop that function.

These are the goals of the ministries of these four types of workers, four types of gifts, that they perfect the saints. As they perfect the saints in this way, we see in Ephesians 4, for the perfecting of the saints, verse number 13, until for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry to the building up of the Body of Christ. For the work of ministry, shows us that this work of the ministry is for the saints to do the ministry.

It doesn't mean that the four kinds of people, in verse 11, to do the work of ministry. It's clear in Chinese. In English it says, with a view, for the work of ministry.

It is for, the perfecting of the saints is for the work of ministry. And that ministry does not refer to the previous four people's ministries. This ministry points to the ministry of the Body, Body ministry.

It is a Body ministry. Today in the Body of Christ, there are many members, there are many saints. All these saints, they have been perfected, they are matured, they are equipped.

Then, these members of the Body would work and function in their capacity. So this ministry mentioned in verse 12, it is a Body ministry. It is not the ministry of the workers.

It is a Body ministry. They fulfill their ministry unto the building up of the Body of Christ. In other words, the building up of the Body of Christ, building up the Church, is not directly involved by the workers.

The workers, what they do, is an indirect work of building up the Body. The direct work of building up the Body of Christ is done in the Body, through the members. The Greek scholars, such as Leifert, these kind of people, he was the bishop in the Episcopalian Church, as well as other scholars, they all acknowledge that the work of ministry here in verse 12, this ministry does not refer to the previous four people, rather refers to the Body.

So I believe this is rather clear. Today God's servants, they are there working, and their work is for the perfecting of the saints. When the saints are perfected, the saints spontaneously rise up unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

So, our brothers and sisters, he became like this. He taught us in this way. He said, when you go out to work, as you work, it's just like as you build a building, you have to set up scaffolds.

Once the house is built, the scaffolds are torn away, they are torn down. In other words, today as you go out to work, the success or failure of your work hinges upon whether your work could extend that you would be unemployed. When you are unemployed, then your work is successful.

If as you work, brothers and sisters, that's always to rely upon you. You cannot be unemployed, then you are in utter failure. Recently I've seen that even Hudson Taylor said a similar word.

He said, our work is merely to build a scaffold. Praise the Lord. You see, Hudson Taylor, in his days, he had seen that also.

His China Inland Mission was merely a scaffold, but to the regret. Later on, within the China Inland Mission, the missionaries didn't see that. So later on, they encountered difficulties because the missionaries had taken full control of their work.

They were unwilling to relinquish and turn over to the Chinese local people. They took full control of it. They didn't see that they were merely a scaffold.

Once a church is built, it should be turned over to the local people. So in the Sino-Japanese War, the CIM director was Bishop Halter. He was the bishop of the Episcopalian, but he was the field director of CIM.

And this brother was rather clear. He wanted to turn over all of the missions of CIM to the Chinese because he wanted to do so. And the younger co-workers drove him out.

And when the political situation took a turn in China, and you saw that all their churches was without a leader because they were in the controlling hands of the missionaries. So we saw that what God has shown us in his word is so clear, so precious. This is only one example.

So we'll see here. In the beginning, the apostles' work was like this. They would go to a place to work.

Yes. In the infancy, it was as though they would do everything. But their work was to build up the saints.

So the saints would be raised up. And the saints have been raised up. The Holy Spirit had manifested.

And they were relinquished the ruling and the governing of the local assembly to the local brothers. And they would no longer bear the responsibility of course they still maintain the spiritual responsibility just like the parents. Once the children have grown, they should allow the children to be independent.

They should always control the children. Of course, the parents' heart towards the children are so very intimate. This is without a question.

So we see that. Paul was like that towards the church in Corinth. He was there for a month, a year and six months.

Once he left Corinth, the church in Corinth had been independent. They bore their own responsibilities. But they had problems within themselves.

So Paul, as a parent, of course his heart was heavy, therefore he wrote them a letter. But here we see that even when Paul was writing them the epistle, he was there exercising spiritual authority, but he did not have administrative authority. He could not give an order to excommunicate the sinner.

He could only show them that people like these, they should excommunicate and you should go according to your conscience to deal with this problem. But he could not directly deal with the problem. He could only use spiritual authority to touch their conscience so that the local brothers would see how they neglected in dealing with this matter so that they would rise up to deal with the problem.

Here we see that the relationship between the church and the work. Before the church was established, it was under the work. But once the church was established, you would see that the scaffold is torn down.

You could stand on the sideline and help them using your spiritual support supply of the word. But you should never directly interfere. If you do, the church will never be independent.

God's word shows us clearly that all the local assemblies are independent. Not only is there no control of other churches or parent churches but we saw that every local assembly is independent. There is no work or ministry to control any church.

This is what we have seen. But on the other hand, it is not because the church is established then the church becomes independent then they cut off the work of the local workers. We don't need you anymore.

We don't accept you anymore. they did have the authority not to receive. But if they did it, it would reveal.

They should maintain a humility feeling that we still need the ministry. We will never go to an extent that we don't need the work anymore. We are fully independent.

We don't need the work. We are completely separate from work. So we see the church is different from the work but not separate.

They need to support each other. So we see that the church in Corinth as far as the church is concerned the church in Corinth was abnormal. Their relationship towards the worker towards the work is abnormal.

Paul's relationship towards Corinth is very normal. He knew how he cared for the church in Corinth. Even he was weeping to exhort them.

He knew that he could directly meddle. Even some wanted to reject him to disavow his apostleship. But he would not justify himself.

But he would show them the spiritual office that they could not fully reject the work. So we saw Paul's relationship towards Corinth was clear. It was very right.

But Corinth's the church in Corinth's relationship was abnormal towards Paul. Not only there were some within them that did not acknowledge Paul's apostleship wanting to reject his supply we also saw the church in Corinth did not even support Paul in terms of financial support. Paul was not willing to receive their gift.

It was right for the worker to receive his pay. Materially speaking men should support. The church received the help of the ministry.

They should rise up to maintain and support the needs of the livelihood of the workers. This is needful. Of course workers were sent by God.

They should never look to the church to support them. If today a worker looks to the church to support him this becomes an employee of the church. He is controlled by the church.

He is not sent by God. The one whom God sent God will be responsible. You should always look directly to the Lord.

You should never look to the church expecting any ulterior motive. This is as far as a worker is concerned because we are not employees of men. Neither did the scripture show us that the church would send out workers.

No. Even in Antioch we see that it was the Holy Spirit sending Paul and Barnabas. Not the church sending them out.

At the same time it wasn't the church that laid hand on them. It was those brothers who served with them together laying hand upon them. In other words, formerly we worked together now the Lord has sent you out to work.

The Lord didn't send us but we wanted to go out with you in terms of work. So the church never sent the workers out because the workers are sent by God alone. If the church could send out then the church can control them.

But because it was sent out by God so the church could not control them. It is the Holy Spirit. Outside of the church what relationship do we have with the work? Since we have received spiritual help we should support them it is our responsibility.

The workers should not look to the church but the church should know. You saw Paul's relationship with the Philippi it was different. That relationship was very normal.

We see that Paul was sent out by God from Asia Minor in the ocean to Europe. The church in Philippi was the first church in Europe. Paul and Silas and Timothy Paul and Silas were mistreated but praise the Lord

the church was born.

From day one if you read the letter to the Philippians you saw Paul from first day on saying you and I together for the advancement of the gospel even until now. Even when Paul was in prison the saints there were in one heart advancing the gospel. This is very precious.

They were there supporting the work. The work is different from the church but not separate from the church. They were there supporting the work.

Not only in terms of spiritual to support the work they were also there economically supporting the work. So when Paul went to Thessalonica they still once and again sent people to support Paul. When Paul was in prison in Rome they still sent with supply to Rome to support him.

Not only in terms of financially Epaphras was sent not only with the supply but he was sent also to serve Paul. But he was sick. Not only he couldn't serve Paul it turned out so when he was healed Epaphroditus Paul sent Epaphroditus back.

He said you brothers feel Epaphroditus did not fulfill his function. So you saw the relationship was very normal. The church and the work if it's normal it should have this kind of condition.

When it's abnormal it's just like Corinth. Let's fellowship further. The workers do not belong to the church.

They belong to the Lord. The church cannot regard the workers as their property. Since the workers do not belong to the church but the worker cannot be separate from the church either.

Today we see especially in America a preacher as he comes out of seminary he begins to look for a job. Of course when he comes out of seminary he will not go to a big church. So usually you see that he would go to the countryside to be a country church.

And he would get a salary because of a small church. So the supply is not that good. But he's there as a pastor.

If he works in a faithful way at the same time there's the blessing of God and he's preaching he's successful and then his fame went abroad. So you see after a few years the big churches in the big cities would hire him. So his supply becomes better.

And if this person becomes a pastor in a big church he's ruling the church. So here you see the pastoral system what is it? It is that we here have a group of Christians we need a person to bear our responsibility. Everything is done by this person.

And the rest of us can just sit there and listen. We just put up a little money to feed you and you serve us. All the affairs of the church are done by the pastors.

We're too busy. We have so much things in the world. We cannot possibly have time.

We cannot read the Bible well and pursue the Lord. We don't know the Word of God. Since you graduated from seminary you're an expert.

You've been trained. You bear responsibility. Everything is yours.

You do everything for us. Not only you do the preaching you do the visitation and even there's so many mundane chores. We're too busy to do.

You have time. You don't have any other jobs. So everything is upon your shoulders.

And that's the way it is. So you see work becomes united with the church becomes one. This is totally unscriptural.

So later on when this person goes to the big church and preaches and then you get more and more famous. Everyone wants you. And the result is you relinquish your responsibility to the assistant pastor.

Even to the extent you don't see this pastor anymore because he is visiting everywhere. He's too busy. His work is demanding.

And the end result is he's no longer a pastor. He's no longer a local pastor. He devotes his full time to become a conference speaker.

He goes everywhere preaching. He's a roaming pastor because of his greatness of his fame and his gift. He's no longer a pastor shepherding the church.

But he becomes a missionary. This is the condition in America. In the eyes of men he's successful.

But people like them what relationship do they have with the church? He's separated from the church. The church is completely cut off from the church. He himself has no church life to speak of.

He himself is no longer a member of the body of Christ. Yes, these four ministries were in the body. But on the other hand he should still remain a member in the body.

In this way you see that he has lost the position of being member in the body and the living also in the body. He's cut off. This is a great danger.

Great danger. Like Paul when he went out to work you will see after a period of time he will return to Antioch. He has roots.

He's not without roots. So we must see work cannot be completely cut off from the church. Today a worker even though he is a servant of God he's still a brother a sister.

He's brother or sister in the church. So regardless where you are you are still you still should have roots. What I mean is Peter's roots are in Jerusalem.

Paul's roots are in Antioch. At any rate we should have roots. What good is the roots? On the one hand they are a group of brothers and sisters who are there to support.

You're not a lone ranger. They will pray for you. They will support you.

On the other hand you can never just roam around in everywhere. You have to settle in one place. In that place you have to be a brother or a sister.

In the work you are a worker. But in the church you are a brother. You are a sister.

Today's problem many workers they no longer know how to be a brother or a sister anymore. Even in the church he doesn't know how to be a brother or how to be a sister. In the church he still wants to be a worker.

This is a problem. So those of us who serve must remember in your local assembly you serve, yes. In the work you have a direct relationship with the Lord.

The church cannot interfere. You are not controlled by the church. Of course you should fellowship with the church because you are a brother.

You are a sister. But when you are in the church you do not consider yourself as a worker as though you are unique. You are still just a common brother a common sister.

You must obey the responsible brothers in the local assembly. In this way you can still learn when you are at home. You must have a home in a local assembly.

You cannot be without a home. In your home assembly you are a brother you are a sister. At the same time if the church needs your help you can render some help in the ministry of the word.

Not because you come so you take over the church. Everything becomes yours. Preaching is yours.

Ruling is yours. Administration everything is yours. Brothers and sisters you can never do such a thing.

Work and the church must be different but cannot be separate. This is very needful. You need to know.

I say this is something we workers must understand. Those of us who serve in the church those of us who are elders what do we pay attention to? We see that if a church is already built the Holy Spirit would raise up and manifest some brothers to fulfill the functions of being elders. The elders in the church is to rule over to administrate God's house.

In the Bible there is no universal elders. Even in Revelation there are 24 elders those are universal elders. But in the local assembly there is no universal elders.

There is only local elders. It's not that when you are an elder in a certain locality when you go to another place you automatically become the elder. No.

Not necessary. You are a local. Because you are a little bit mature a little older in the local assembly you are a little more advanced therefore you can lead them and help them to go forward.

Therefore you become the local assembly's elder. So you see the elders are always local. You cannot borrow an elder from another locality.

The elders is produced locally. You can never borrow an elder from another assembly. There is no such thing.

So the elders are local in nature. Because he is in the local assembly he knows the condition of the local assembly. And he knows how to serve brothers and In reality the elders are most diligent.

They are not there to sit on top to give orders. They are really the servants of all brothers and sisters. To serve brothers and sisters.

These are the elders. So today in the church if the elder is not progressing spiritually other brothers and sisters are pursuing the spiritual thing. He doesn't pursue.

He formerly was more advanced. Now the other brothers and sisters are more advanced than he. But because he is an elder he still takes his position to rule over.

This way the church cannot go forward. It becomes a problem. The Bible didn't show us how to terminate the eldership.

If the elders sin then we can deal with it. But if he doesn't sin what do you do? The Bible didn't tell us how long is the term of the eldership. Three years, five years or forever.

The Bible didn't show us. So today we encounter these problems. There are some problems.

Was elders set up by the apostles and therefore the apostles would have the authority to terminate the eldership because he appointed them. If this is the case the church will never become independent. The church will always fall into the hand of the worker.

Because if the elders you have appointed doesn't listen to you then you terminate them. So all the elders that are left are those who listen to you and are controlled by you. So the work and the church becomes one again.

There is no different again. It becomes a mixture. It's not right.

It cannot be independent. So under this circumstance what do we do? I fellowship with you my personal feeling because I feel this is a real problem among us. Even though the bible show us some apostles have appointed elders but the bible didn't show us that all the elders were appointed by the apostles.

In other words apostles appointed elders it was merely one way. It was not the unique only way. Secondly or at one place there is a group of brothers and who are learning.

If there is no apostle among them then does it mean in this church there are no brothers who take the lead. We see that the Holy Spirit will manifest there will be some wherever it is. As long as there is a group of brothers and sisters meeting spontaneously after some time the Holy Spirit will manifest.

There are some brothers that are able to stand in leadership. They are more diligent. sisters have problems they will go to these brothers and sisters.

This shows us that the Holy Spirit has manifested it. For the apostles to appoint elders they merely confirm what the Holy Spirit had already appointed. So in Acts 20 the apostle said to the elders in Ephesus it is the Holy Spirit who appointed you as overseers.

It is the Holy Spirit not the apostles. The apostles because they have a spiritual discernment they saw how the Holy Spirit already appointed. They only come merely to confirm.

So we see that this confirmation is for what? My personal feeling is this confirmation is for the brothers and sisters who are not spiritual. Spiritual brothers and sisters inwardly they are already clear. They know who the ones are that the Holy Spirit had appointed.

But those fleshly brothers who do not see because they do not see so once the apostles come along to confirm then they would see okay these are the others and I would obey. So you see that this is for the sake of the unspiritual brothers and sisters to give them a little help. In reality it is not needful.

It is not necessary. If you really are reverent if you fear God you know inwardly you do not need mentioning. So in the scripture my personal feeling the appointment of the elders is done by the Holy Spirit.

The apostles merely come along to confirm. So sometimes there is no need to confirm. Some places there is no confirmation.

Some places there are confirmation. every assembly would have elders. What about today? Today the condition is different.

We today as far as the church is concerned the church have degraded have been in ruin. We see God's children are scattered all over the place. Formerly the elders were local.

His family service is to serve the local saints. But today we see that in one locality God's children are scattered everywhere. Not only are there different denominations there are also the so called independent groups.

Then God's children are scattered in everywhere. Even in one locality there are so many divisions. So today in the way of God's recovery can we recover the so called outward things? This is a great dilemma.

On this way of recovery what God is recovering is it the inward spiritual reality? Or is he recovering to the extent of the original outward formalities? This is something we need to know before the Lord and to seek after before the Lord. According to the viewpoints of men to recover back to the original outward condition is impossible. It's impossible.

In the beginning in Jerusalem there was only one church. All of God's children were one. The elders in the church in Jerusalem was one eldership.

These elders were one unit to administrate the church in Jerusalem. today in order to recover to that kind of condition it's impossible. God's children are in dispersion into all different groups.

And every group has its own leaders. How can you combine all the groups to set up one class of leaders or elders to administrate all of brothers and sisters? This is absolutely impossible. Impossible.

So my personal in my reading of scripture I feel in the way of recovery what God is recovering is the spiritual reality not the outward formality. In other words we need to recover the way of testimony of oneness. But we have no way to combine all of the groups together to relinquish all the groups and bring them together under one rule.

And then to set up a so called local church in so and so place. It is impossible. So today the so called ecumenical movement saying that we in Christ should be one and therefore we need to combine all the groups together so we still maintain all the groups.

We merely unite the groups together. This is not the oneness that the Lord is looking for. In John 17 the oneness is the oneness of the Son and the Father.

The oneness between the Father and the Son is in spirit. It is spiritual. Because there is a spiritual oneness then can we have outward oneness.

It is not to have outward federated oneness. So when you work outwardly even if you do a work it is still not the reality. It is inwardly we need to achieve the strive for the oneness in the spirit.

Same thing with the elders. We have no way to recover the so called position of the elders. The titles of the elders.

There is no way to recover that. Because the elders of the bible is the elders in the church. not the elders of a certain meeting or a certain group.

It is the elders of the whole church. That's impossible to recover. Praise God.

The functions of the elders we see they are being recovered in every locality in every meeting. There is a group of people who are there bearing responsibility toward God bearing responsibility toward the saints. They are there.

It is very spontaneously unavoidable. And there is no need for you to give them a title of elders or to go through a formality the Holy Spirit already manifested. If this is the case then you see that.

There is no need to set up. There is no need to terminate according to the spiritual condition. If other brothers have gone further than you naturally the other brothers bear the responsibility of the church.

If you lag behind naturally you are not fulfilling your function and you do not have the function. If this is the case then you see that the spiritual reality can be recovered. we do not need to insist upon the outward formality.

My personal feeling is that the recovery of the outward formality is not possible. Not even when we read the scripture we see this. The church has come to the end times.

We go further and further away from God. Even there is the falling away, the apostasy. But thank the Lord there is a group of people there maintaining the oneness in the Holy Spirit.

A group of people who are there before the Lord, bearing spiritual responsibilities just like in the seven letters, the messengers in the seven letters, bearing spiritual responsibilities. They may not be set up by men at all, but they are the result of the Holy Spirit's work. We thank the Lord.

In the way of recovery, all of the spiritual reality are there, but the outward things may not necessarily be recovered. I don't know what the British sisters feel. I merely give you a reference point.

It shows us that the relationship between the Church and the In terms of the work, we should know in what position we stand upon to relate to the Church. In terms of the Church, the Church should know where she stands and what relationship she has with the work. Then these two entities, we will see that they are different, but not severed.

It is not one entity, but they need cooperation of all. If this is the case, then we will see God's purpose will be accomplished. So this morning, I will fellowship this a little bit.

Just to review, we still have a little time to have some prayer.

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