HWMR: THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND GOD'S DISPENSING FOR GOD'S ECONOMY (Week 4)

The Measure of God's Rule and Ministry on Spiritual Warfare

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 10:12-15; Eph. 2:6; 6:10-12

2 Cor. 10:12 For we do not dare to class or compare ourselves with any of those who commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding.

2 Cor. 10:13 But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.

2 Cor. 10:14 For we are not extending ourselves beyond our bounds, as if we did not reach you, for we were the first to come even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ.

2 Cor. 10:15 We are not boasting beyond our measure in others' labors, but have the hope, as your faith is increasing, to be magnified in you according to our rule unto abundance,

Eph. 2:6 And raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.

Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,

Eph. 6:12 For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.

Day 1

2 Cor. 10:13-14 - *But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you. For we are not extending ourselves beyond our bounds…*

Gal. 2:8 - *(For He who operated in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcision operated also in me for the Gentiles).*

Day 2

2 Cor. 10:15-16 - *We are not boasting beyond our measure in others' labors, but have the hope, as your faith is increasing, to be magnified in you according to our rule unto abundance, so that we may announce the gospel unto those parts beyond you, not so that we may boast in another man's rule in things already prepared.*

I. **"We will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us"—2 Cor. 10:13:**

A. The apostle Paul was bold, but he was not bold without limit; this shows that he was under the restriction of the Lord:

1. Paul's boasting was according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure, the ruling God, had apportioned to him.
2. His ministry to the Gentile world, including Corinth, was according to the measure of God (Eph. 3:1-2, 8; Gal. 2:8); hence, his boast was within this limit.

B. The word *rule* in 2 Corinthians 10:13 literally means "a measuring rod," like the rule of a carpenter:

1. The word *measure* in verse 13 indicates being ruled by God; God has allotted us just so much for our work and experience.
2. There is One who is ruling and measuring—the God of measure, the God who rules; therefore, we must stay within the limits of God's ruling, of God's measuring.

C. From 2 Corinthians 10:13-15, we can see that although we expect the Lord's work to spread, we must learn how to be under God's restriction:

1. We should not expect a spread that is without measure; that kind of spread would certainly not be within the limit of a walk according to the Spirit—Rom. 8:4-5, 14.
2. From experience we can testify that if we spread the work according to the Spirit, there will always be a limit:
   a. Inwardly, we do not have the peace to spread the work beyond a certain point.
   b. Outwardly, the environment does not allow us to go beyond a particular boundary line.

Day 3

Eph. 3:1-2 - *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you.*

D. Paul had to learn to take the Lord's restriction:

1. Paul wanted to go to Rome, but he did not expect to go there in bonds—Acts 26:29.
2. Paul told the believers in Rome that he expected to go to Spain by way of them (Rom. 15:24), but he never went to Spain.
3. Paul was willing to be subject to God's measuring; his bonds and imprisonment were God's sovereign restriction.

E. Based on the principle of God's measuring, Paul told the Corinthians that whatever he did and spoke was not beyond his measure; Paul always acted and behaved within his measure—1 Cor. 2:1-5, 12-13.

F. The apostles always moved according to God's ruling; whatever God measured out to them became their jurisdiction.

G. In the church service we need to realize that God has measured out only a certain amount to us, and we should not extend ourselves beyond our measure; we need to know our limitations—2 Cor. 10:12, 14.

H. Like Paul, we should move and act according to how much God has measured to us—v. 13.

If I am in a certain city, regardless of how I feel about those who are meeting there as the unique local church and regardless of how they treat me, I have no choice. I have to learn the lesson of the cross. I must learn the lesson of brokenness and self-denial. I have no ground, no right, and no standing to start another church in that locality as long as a unique one is there already. I must be restricted and limited. This is the real lesson.

We must read Matthew 18:15-20 again and see not only the church but also the authority of the church. There is restriction and limitation. How I thank the Lord for His restriction and limitation through the church. Many times we wanted to do something, but because of the limitation and restriction of the church, we could not do as we pleased. We felt somewhat unhappy at the time, but later, when we looked back, we had to say, "Lord, how we thank You. That was a real protection and blessing to us." It was not only an outward blessing but also a subduing and reducing of the self. We all must be reduced and restricted.

By the Lord's wisdom and sovereignty, wherever there is a local church, that must be the unique expression of the Lord's Body in that city. If we are going to stay in that locality, we must be one with that church. Then we will learn the lessons, and there will be no divisions, back doors, or "fire escapes." Every side will be closed. We must be restricted. But praise the Lord, it is by these restrictions that we are protected. The expression of the church is the local churches, and a local church is always unique. It is this unique expression of the church in every locality that is a lesson and restriction to us as well as a protection. (*The Practical Expression of the Church, Chapter 3*)

Day 4

Matt. 6:10 - *Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.*

Eph. 2:6 - *And raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.*

II. As we live with Christ in His ascension as a new creation in resurrection, we engage in spiritual warfare for the kingdom of God—S. S. 4:8; 6:4, 10; Eph. 2:6; 6:10-12:

A. In ascension we look with Christ "from the lions' dens, / From the leopards' mountains"—S. S. 4:8b:
   1. The lions' dens and the leopards' mountains signify the heavenlies, where Satan and his subordinates are.
   2. The victory has been gained, but Satan and his evil forces are still in the heavenlies; we must have our living in ascension, far above the evil powers—Eph. 3:10; 6:12.
   3. Here we fight with Satan and his power of darkness by being empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength, and by putting on the whole armor of God (vv. 12-20); this is the reality of living in the ascension of Christ.

B. Spiritual warfare is necessary because Satan's will is set against God's will; our fighting is to subdue the satanic will and defeat God's enemy—Matt. 6:10:
   1. We need to understand what the will of the Lord is—Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9.

2. God's will is what He wants and what He intends to accomplish—Eph. 1:5, 9, 11:
   a. God has an eternal will, which is the source of His eternal purpose—v. 11; 3:11.
   b. Since God is eternal, without beginning or ending, His will is also eternal; it lies at the heart of the origin of the universe—Rev. 4:11.
   c. God created all things for His will so that He might accomplish and fulfill His purpose—Eph. 3:11.
   d. The will of God is concentrated in Christ and is for Christ to have the first place in all things; Christ is everything in God's eternal will—Col. 1:15-18; 3:4, 10-11.
   e. God wants to have Christ with the church; the will of God is to obtain the church as the Body of Christ—Eph. 5:32; 1:9, 22-23; 2:21-22; 4:16.

C. In order to engage in spiritual warfare, we must maintain the position of ascension—S. S. 4:8; Eph. 2:6:
   1. The spiritual warfare mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-12 is based upon the position of ascension in 2:6.
   2. The position of ascension causes us to be victorious in battle because only in the position of ascension can we have heavenly authority and pray with authority to deal with God's enemy.

D. Spiritual warfare is based on the victory of Christ; through death the Lord Jesus destroyed the devil, bringing him to nothing—Matt. 27:51-54; Heb. 2:14.

Day 5

Eph. 1:10 - *Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.*

1 Tim. 6:12 - *Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life…*

E. We engage in spiritual warfare to conquer the satanic chaos and triumph in the divine economy—Eph. 1:10:
   1. The history of the universe is a history of God's economy and Satan's chaos—Gen. 1:1-2, 26; Rev. 20:10—21:4:
      a. Satan is the source of chaos, and God Himself is the divine economy.
      b. Both in the Bible and in our experience, the satanic chaos always goes along with the divine economy—2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:4.
   2. Instead of delivering us from chaos, God wants us to be one with Him to conquer the destructive satanic chaos in the old creation and to carry out the constructive divine economy for the new creation—Eph. 3:8-10; 2 Cor. 5:17.
   3. As we are suffering the chaos, we need to stand for and live out the divine economy—1 Tim. 1:4, 18; 2 Tim. 4:7.

F. We need to engage in spiritual warfare for the divine building, the church as the Body of Christ; the building up of the church is a service of warfare—Matt. 16:18; Num. 4:3; 26:2; Neh. 4:14-23; 1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.

The position of prayer is the position of ascension. All who do not pray from the position of ascension fall under the control of Satan. Genuine prayers are always uttered in the heavenly realm. Mrs. Penn-Lewis once said that one must first see clearly the position of ascension in Ephesians 2 in order to have the fighting prayers in Ephesians 6. Once you fall to the earth you are under Satan's hand, and you will not be able to deal with him. Daniel's prayer was, on the one hand, on earth, and on the other hand, in the heavenly realm. His condition and nature were entirely heavenly, so his prayer was able to deal with the enemy.

Take the example of a family where both the husband and the wife are saved ones. One day, however, the husband and wife quarrel with one another. Being unable to settle the dispute between themselves, both come to the responsible brothers to present their accusations. The husband says how much the sister is giving him a difficult time, and the wife says how much the brother wrongs her. Upon hearing the case, some immediately say, "This sister is unreasonable! She is altogether out of line. She doesn't have her head covered, nor does she stand in her position." But some who stand on the sister's side say, "That brother is unreasonable. How can he be so unsympathetic and inconsiderate?" May I ask you, when a brother and sister quarrel in this way, are they in the heavens, on the earth, or in the air? I believe we all know that by quarreling everyone invariably tumbles down from heaven. Maybe a week ago we were praising God, saying, "We have been seated together with Christ in the heavenlies, hallelujah!" But before we have sung hallelujah for very long, we all tumble down from heaven. We all are on the earth. And not only so, even those who have heard this brother and sister's case also become involved and fall from the ascended position. Some fall to the earth together with the sister, and others fall with the brother. Those in defense of the sister and those in defense of the brother all come to pray. Those who take the side of the sister go before God saying, "Lord, see how unbecoming that brother is. We cannot imagine that one who serves You can be such." And those who take the side of the brother also pray, saying, "Lord, what shall we do? If even such a sister who serves You behaves like this, henceforth, how can the church help the sisters?" Let me ask you, what are these prayers? If you would allow me such an expression, I would say that this is a prayer of rolling on the ground. It is a prayer of the blood and of the flesh. Blood and flesh are earthly, so these are prayers of the earth.

You must be an ascended one in order to pray for others. If you are stirred by a particular matter and act in your flesh, you fall from the heaven to the earth and cannot pray. You cannot pray for those things until the Lord shows His mercy, and you recover your ascended position. One who is unable to pray surely is on the earth. When others quarrel and you become involved in it, you lose your position to pray. Under such circumstances, you have no way to deal with God's enemy.

This is the principle of prayer, not only when we pray for big things such as God's will and God's work, but even when we pray for ourselves—our health, our family, and our business. Always keep in mind that Satan's position is in the air. Therefore, if we pray on the earth, we will be under his control. But if we move to the heavens and pray, we pray down from above. In military strategy, this is to observe and control the situation below by occupying the high ground. This is exactly like the prayers in Revelation 8. As far as fragrance is concerned, the prayers ascended to God; but as far as God's accomplishment is concerned, the prayers were prayed down from heaven. They were poured down from heaven, because they were all uttered in the heavenly realm. Concerning God's acceptance, our prayers should be like sweet-smelling incense ascending to the throne; but with regard to the dealing with the enemy, our prayers should be poured down from the throne. All true men of prayer are seated together with Christ in the heavenlies and pray from the throne. (*Lessons on Prayer, Chapter 18*)

Day 6

Rev. 12:10 - *...Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.*

Rom. 5:17 - *...Those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

G. The purpose of spiritual warfare is to bring in the kingdom of God—Rev. 12:10:
   1. Spiritual warfare is the warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—Matt. 12:26, 28-29.
   2. The **kingdom of God** is the exercise of the divine will and the overthrowing of the power of Satan by the power of God—6:10; 12:28.
   3. The work of the church is to bring in the kingdom of God, and through prayer the church must release the power of the kingdom of God upon the earth—16:18-19; 6:9-10, 13; 18:19; Rev. 11:15.

III. On the day of His wedding, Christ will marry those who have been fighting the battle against God's enemy for years; that is, Christ will marry the overcomers, who have already overcome the evil one—19:7-9, 11-16:

A. When Christ comes to fight against Antichrist and his army, He will come as the Son of Man, and as the Son of Man, He will need a counterpart to match Him and complete Him; this counterpart will be His bride—14:14; 19:7-9.

B. The overcomers who constitute the bride of Christ fight the battle against all the enemies of God and defeat them—2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21:
   1. The overcomers engage in the warfare of life against death and reign in life over death—Matt. 16:18; John 5:24; 1 Tim. 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 John 3:14; Rom. 5:17, 21.
   2. The overcomers conquer the destructive chaos and triumph in the constructive divine economy; instead of being delivered out of the present chaos, they conquer the chaos by the processed and consummated Triune God as the all-sufficient grace—2 Tim. 1:9, 15; 2:1, 17-18; 4:22.

All prayers that are expressed in the heavenly realm and from the throne of God are prayers of warfare. He who prays in this way is one who has passed through the cross, resurrected, and ascended. He is on the throne, far above the earth, and is not touched by any earthly thing. The prayers that he expresses from such a realm are prayers that can defeat the devil in the air and bring down God's authority. Like Daniel's prayer, such prayer is able to bring the things of heaven to the earth. It is able to get the heavenly authority through the air and bring it to the earth. This is the fighting prayer.

Please consider: Is there a sinner who does not want to be saved? Is there a saint who does not want to love the Lord? All sinners want to be saved, and all saints desire to love the Lord. But because there is someone in the air who usurps men and controls the men on earth, sinners are prevented from receiving the gospel, and saints are hindered from seeking the Lord. So it is not enough that we only preach the gospel and minister the Word. We must rise up and live in the heavenly realm to touch the throne of God as Daniel did. We must pray to God that God's heavenly authority may be brought down to the earth. If this is done, you will see that one by one sinners will be saved, and one by one saints will rise up to seek and love the Lord, for here there are fighting prayers driving away the power of darkness, bringing in God's authority and, as a result, causing God to have His will done on earth. They enable God to carry out His salvation and give grace to His children according to His good pleasure.

So every praying person should be one who is in the heavenly realm, touching God's throne, and therefore, able to pour down prayers from heaven. As you are above the earth, the air, and the power of darkness and are seated together with Christ on the throne of God in the heavenlies, the prayers that you utter are prayers of warfare. Having understood this point, you will turn the focus of your attention from man to the devil. When a sinner fails to receive salvation, you should pray, "O God, it is not that he would not repent, but it is the devil that is usurping him. I pray that You cast out the devil from him." When the husband and the wife are in a family quarrel, you will not blame the brother or the sister. Your eyes will see that the brother and the sister are under the power of darkness. So the target of your prayers will not be the brother or sister but the power of darkness that is behind them and on them. This is the wrestling spoken of in Ephesians 6. This is not wrestling against blood and flesh but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies. The target with which we are dealing in our prayers is not man but the devil. All the problems in the church are not with the brothers and sisters but with Satan. The problems in the family also are not with the husband, the wife, or the children but with Satan. The object of the prayer of spiritual warfare is not at all men of blood and flesh but the devil of the spiritual realm. If we are in the heavenly realm, we are able to pray such prayers of ascension, that is, prayers of warfare. Such prayers of warfare are for the driving out of Satan and the ushering in of God's kingdom. (*Lessons on Prayer, chapter 18*)