

- I. In the eyes of the Lord there is just one ministry**—2 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 4:12:
- A. Speaking of the need of a replacement for Judas, Peter said that Judas “was numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry” — Acts 1:1:
- The apostles prayed for the Lord to show them clearly the one whom He had chosen “to take the place of this ministry and apostleship” — Acts. 1:24-25.
  - As used in verses 17 and 25, the word *ministry* refers to the ministry that bears the testimony of Jesus—Acts. 1:8:
    - Though the apostles were twelve in number, their ministry was uniquely one—*this ministry*, a corporate ministry in the principle of the Body of Christ.
    - All the apostles carried out the same ministry to bear the unique testimony of the incarnated, resurrected, and ascended Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all.
- B. In 2 Corinthians 4:1 Paul says, “Having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart”:
- The ministry in 2 Corinthians is the corporate ministry of the New Testament ministers:
    - All the ministers have their own portion of the ministry.
    - In this corporate ministry Paul had his portion, Peter had his portion, and Timothy had his portion—2 Tim. 4:5d.
    - When we add all the portions together, we have “this ministry,” which is the New Testament ministry.
  - The many ministers have one ministry—the ministry of the new covenant for the accomplishment of God’s New Testament economy.
  - All the apostles’ works are to carry out this unique ministry, the ministering of Christ to people for the building up of His Body.
- C. Second Corinthians 3:6 tells us that God has made us “sufficient as ministers of a new covenant”:
- The Spirit, the ultimate expression of the processed Triune God, imparts the divine life, even God Himself, into the believers and the apostles, making them ministers of a new covenant.
  - Hence, their ministry is constituted with the Triune God of life by His life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b.
- D. “I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry” —1 Tim. 1:12:
- In this verse Paul does not say, “He appointed me to my ministry.”
  - Paul says that the Lord appointed him to the one unique, corporate New Testament ministry.
  - We all should praise the Lord that by His mercy and grace He has appointed us to the corporate ministry that builds up the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12, 16.
- II. Although the foregoing verses reveal that the ministry in the New Testament is corporate, certain other verses indicate that the ministry is also personal:**
- A. Acts 20:24 refers to Paul’s personal ministry because Paul speaks of the ministry which he had received from the Lord; the ministry in this verse is the personal ministry:
- Paul’s ministry was his being; he and Christ had become one—Eph. 3:17a; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 3:8-9; 4:1.
  - What he preached was what he was; he ministered his very being to others.
  - Paul was one with Christ and had been constituted of Christ; thus, his ministry was a ministry of the Christ who had been constituted into his being.

**II. (cont.):**

- B. Acts 21:19 definitely and clearly refers to Paul's personal ministry: "He related one by one the things which God did among the Gentiles through his ministry."
- C. Colossians 4:17 says, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it"; Archippus had a ministry, and in the same principle, we all have a ministry.
- D. In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul charges Timothy to fully accomplish his ministry:
  - For Timothy to fully accomplish his ministry was for him to fill up the full measure of his ministry.
  - This ministry denotes the ministry of the word, which is to minister Christ in all His riches to both sinners and believers for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 3:8, 4:11-12.
  - Such a ministry is desperately needed to counter the trend of decline, as prophesied in 2 Timothy 4:3 and 4.
- E. Because the New Testament ministry is the service of the Body of Christ and because the Body has many members, every member has his own ministry—Eph. 4:11-12:
  - According to the members, there are many ministries; however, according to the Body as a whole, there is just one ministry—1 Tim. 1:12.
  - Our personal ministry should not be separate from the corporate ministry.
  - The Body has a corporate ministry, and all the members of the Body have their individual ministries.
  - As we have seen, all the ministries of the members of the Body added together equal the corporate ministry—Eph. 4:12.
- F. There should be the same speaking from different angles—1 Cor. 1:10::
  - There is a need for many to be raised up to speak the same thing from different angles.
  - We believe that the Lord will raise up many more to carry out the unique ministry—2 Cor. 4:1.
  - We all have a part in this ministry, which is the one ministry with different functions, different angles, and different aspects—Eph. 4:11-12.
  - We are not following a man or imitating anyone; however, we are ministering the same thing.

**III. "For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ"—Eph. 4:12:**

- A. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers are for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry mentioned in verse 12—Eph. 4:11-12.
- B. The many gifted persons in verse 11 have only one ministry, that is, to minister Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ; this is the unique ministry in the New Testament economy—2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12.
- C. The perfecting of the saints is unto the work of the ministry, and the work of the ministry is unto the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12, 16.
- D. "This is the Lord's recovery, this is our commission, this is our burden, and this is our ministry. How blessed we are to have a part in this ministry!"—*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1978*, vol. 3, "Truth Messages," p. 323.

**I. In the eyes of the Lord there is just one ministry**

- In Acts 1:17, 25 Peter and the apostles prayed for a replacement to take up Juda's allotted portion of the ministry and apostleship. Though there were 12 apostles, their ministry was a unique, corporate ministry in the principle of the Body of Christ. They all carried out the same ministry to bear the unique testimony of the incarnated, resurrected, and ascended Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all. [Acts. 1:17] For he was "numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry [Acts. 1:25] To take the place of this ministry and apostleship ...
- In 2 Corinthians 4:1 Paul says, "Having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart". This is the corporate ministry of the New Testament ministers; each minister has his own portion. When all the portions are added together, it becomes the one New Testament ministry, ministry of the new covenant, for the accomplishment of God's New Testament economy. All the apostles' works are to carry out this unique ministry, ministering Christ to people for the building up of His Body. [2 Tim. 4:5d] ... fully accomplish your ministry.
- By the Spirit, the embodiment of the processed Triune God, imparting the divine life, even God Himself, into us, God has made us "sufficient as ministers of a new covenant". Hence, our ministry is constituted with the Triune God of life by His life giving Spirit. We all should praise the Lord that by His mercy and grace He has appointed us to the corporate ministry that builds up the Body of Christ. [1 Tim. 1:12] I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry.

**II. Although the foregoing verses reveal that the ministry in the New Testament is corporate, certain other verses indicate that the ministry is also personal**

- Acts 20:24 refers to Paul's personal ministry which he had received from the Lord, it was his being. Paul was one with Christ and had been constituted of Christ; thus, his ministry was a ministry of the Christ who had been constituted into his being and he ministered his very being to others. Acts 21:19 further confirms Paul has his personal ministry, likewise, we all have our personal ministry. [Acts. 20:24] But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
- In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul charged Timothy to fully accomplish his ministry, to fill up the full measure of his ministry of the word, which is to minister Christ in all His riches to both sinners and believers for the building up of the Body of Christ. This ministry is desperately needed to counter the trend of decline. Since the New Testament ministry is the service of the Body of Christ with many members, every member has his own ministry, but each personal ministry is not separated from the just one corporate ministry. As we have seen, all the ministries of the members of the Body added together equal the corporate ministry. There should be the same speaking from different angles. We believe that the Lord will raise up many more to carry out the unique ministry of speaking the same thing from different angles. We all have a part in this ministry, which is the one ministry with different functions, different angles, and different aspects to minister the same thing. [2 Tim. 4:5] But you, be sober in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelist, fully accomplish your ministry. [1 Cor. 1:10] Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

**III. "For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ"**

- The many gifted persons, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers are for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the unique ministry in the New Testament economy, ministering Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ. "This is the Lord's recovery, this is our commission, this is our burden, and this is our ministry. How blessed we are to have a part in this ministry!" [Eph. 4:11-12] And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. [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.

In the New Testament there is one unique ministry. From the time of the Apostles until now, this ministry has not been terminated. I believe that we are the continuation of this ministry. I am happy to say that I am in this ministry, that I am part of this ministry. We are in the unique ministry according to the New Testament economy.

I expect the Lord to raise up many more to carry on the unique ministry. We all have a part in this ministry, which is one ministry with different functions, different angles, and different aspects. You have your part and I have mine.

When we have all the functions and aspects, we have the ministry of the Body.

*<Excerpts from "Truth Messages", Chapter 4, "THE MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY">*

We need to be clear that we are not following a man nor imitating anyone. However, we are ministering the same thing from different angles and in different aspects. By doing this the riches are manifest; yet we have a glorious oneness. This is the one ministry, which encompasses many ministries. We all are ministering Christ as life and as everything for the building up of the local churches. This is the Lord's recovery, this is our commission, this is our burden, and this is our ministry. How blessed we are to have a part in this ministry!

*<Excerpts from "Truth Messages", Chapter 4, "THE MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY">*