

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)**

**Numbers 3:1-10**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we're going to read Numbers chapter 3. Today we'll read from verses 1 to 10.

The Israelites' life and movement in the wilderness were all centered around the tabernacle. The twelve tribes of Israel were organized into an army and divided into four camps. These four camps encamped around the four sides of the tabernacle. When the Israelites moved forward, the camp of Judah went first, followed by the camp of Reuben, then the camp of Ephraim, and finally the camp of Dan.

After God revealed to Moses the order of the twelve tribes' encampment and marching, in chapter 3 He began to reveal the details of the responsibilities and divisions of labor of the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi was set apart to serve God. Actually, God's original and perfect will was that the entire congregation of Israel would come and serve God. However, because the Israelites fell into sin, worshiped idols, and turned away, they lost the privilege of serving God. After this, the tribe of Levi was set apart to replace the Israelites in serving God. This was God's permissive will.

Within God's permissive will, God understood mankind's weakness and failure. Therefore, He first arranged for people to carry out some indirect, practical types of service. Through these divisions of labor and cooperation, people would be trained to fear God and know God. When the appointed time was fulfilled, Christ would return to establish His kingdom. At that time, the entire congregation of Israel would become priests, leading the nations to worship God and fulfilling God's original perfect will.

The same principle applies to the church. God's perfect will is that every saint would be a royal priest and serve God. However, the church often fails to keep up with God's perfect will. Therefore, God permits a smaller number of saints to serve full-

time, with the purpose of helping all the saints grow in life and be perfected in their gifts. Ultimately, all the saints will come to the unity of the faith, grow into maturity, and reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Therefore, God first gives special gifts to the church, so that through these gifts the saints may be perfected, and ultimately all may become priests, fulfilling God's original perfect will.

Paul clearly tells us in Ephesians 4:11-13, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot be satisfied with God's permissive will; rather, we should pursue God's perfect will with all our strength. Therefore, I want to encourage every working saint to diligently read the Bible and learn how to serve in the church. When you are prepared, God's calling will come upon you; that will be the time when you answer God's call and serve the Lord full-time. Therefore, we must especially learn from Numbers chapters 3 and 4, where God revealed to Moses the responsibilities and divisions of labor among the Levites. These are matters of service that we must learn.

**Verses 1-3: "Now these are the records of Aaron and Moses when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. And these are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister as priests."**

Before entering into the responsibilities and divisions of labor of the Levites, this passage first briefly explains the historical background. When Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the law and the blueprint for the construction of the tabernacle, Scripture says, "these are the records of Aaron and Moses."

Notice that Aaron is placed before Moses here. Moses was the leader of Israel; he was faithful in all God's house, and God spoke to Israel through Moses. However, Aaron's family carried the priestly office. In leading the Israelites to offer sacrifices and worship God, the priests carried the most important responsibility. Therefore, here Aaron is placed before Moses, and Aaron's descendants carried the priestly office, which was passed down from generation to generation.

But the leadership position among Israel did not go to Moses' descendants; rather, it went to Joshua. Therefore, the position of leadership was not hereditary but depended on a person's measure of life and maturity of gifting.

Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Aaron was anointed by Moses to become the high priest, and Aaron's four sons were all anointed as priests. In Leviticus chapter 8, Moses performed the ceremony of consecration for Aaron and his four sons, enabling them to serve in the priestly office. Leviticus chapter 9 records the first time Aaron and his sons carried out their priestly service. They first offered the sin offering and burnt offering for themselves. After making atonement for themselves, they were able to offer sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings, and peace offerings for the people. However, during their very first service as priests, Aaron's oldest and second-oldest sons made a mistake.

**Verse 4: "Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered profane fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father."**

This event is recorded in Leviticus chapter 10. When Aaron and his sons finished offering sacrifices for the first time, the glory of the LORD appeared to the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. All the people fell on their faces and shouted, praising and worshiping God.

What a glorious scene! God accepted the offerings of the Israelites and sent down fire from heaven. This fire had to continue burning and become the source of fire

for all future offerings and incense. We must understand that worshiping God, offering sacrifices to God, and burning incense before Him are serious matters. They cannot be treated lightly; everything must be done according to God's commands.

Aaron's oldest son Nadab and his second son Abihu lacked a heart of reverence. When they helped their father Aaron offer sacrifices, they saw all the people bow down and praise loudly. This was a scene they had never witnessed before, and their hearts became lifted up. They forgot that the people were worshiping God, and that they themselves were only servants of God. They could not share in God's glory. Because they treated it lightly, they took their own censers, put incense in them, and offered profane fire instead of taking fire from the altar. They did not follow God's command. The LORD God did not overlook their mistake. Immediately fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them.

This is a very serious warning: those who serve God cannot be careless before Him, otherwise God's judgment may come immediately. Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD at once, and at that time they had no children. Aaron's third son Eleazar and fourth son Ithamar then continued in their brothers' place and ministered as priests before Aaron their father.

**Verses 5-6: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.'"**

Aaron as the high priest, and Aaron's sons as priests, were appointed by God to help the Israelites offer sacrifices to God. This was the office God established.

Then God spoke to Moses, commanding him to bring the entire tribe of Levi near, to stand before Aaron, and to serve Aaron. Here we see that God is a God of order. The priests served God, while the tribe of Levi served the priests. In other words, the tribe of Levi was to listen to Aaron's instructions and commands. During Aaron's service, whenever help was needed, the Levites were to respond immediately and carry out whatever Aaron instructed.

Generally speaking, the priestly office was to bring God to people and bring people before God. Through teaching God's Word, priests helped people know God; through sacrifices, they brought people before God. These were spiritual services. The service of the Levites focused more on practical matters, such as guarding, maintaining, and managing the various affairs of the tabernacle. Through their assistance, the priests could properly fulfill their spiritual priestly ministry.

Therefore, the Levites came to help the priests; they could not reverse their roles and take over. For the church today, this means that all practical service exists for the purpose of spiritual service and cannot rise above it. If a church has no Word of God and no reality of brothers and sisters loving one another, then no matter how large the building is or how beautiful the decorations are, it has no true value.

Of course, a church that has God's Word and a loving church life among brothers and sisters also needs practical service. Only through the perfect cooperation between practical service and spiritual service can the richness and glory of God's testimony be manifested.

**Verses 7-8: "Both Aaron and his sons you shall attend to, and they shall attend to their duties for all the congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle."**

The responsibility of the Levites was to take care of the affairs of the tabernacle. Since ordinary Israelites were not allowed to enter the tabernacle, all the practical services within the tabernacle had to be handled by the Levites. On one hand, the Levites were under the priests and completely listened to the instructions and arrangements of the priests. On the other hand, they represented the entire congregation of Israel in carrying out the work of the tabernacle.

Originally, the entire congregation of Israel belonged to God and should have taken on the priestly office. However, the Israelites fell and failed, losing the privilege of

directly serving God. Therefore, God raised up the Levites to replace the congregation of Israel in carrying out the work of the tabernacle. The work of the tabernacle included the service of the priests. In other words, the Levites had to obey the instructions of the priests and help them fulfill their priestly duties in offering sacrifices. At the same time, the Levites were also responsible for guarding and taking care of the various furnishings of the tabernacle. The details of these responsibilities will be explained very thoroughly in the following passages.

**Verse 9: “And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel.”**

God seemed to repeatedly remind Moses that the Levites were chosen from among the entire congregation of Israel in order to help Aaron and his sons properly fulfill their priestly ministry.

The same is true of the saints who serve in the church today. They are specially chosen by God and belong to the service of the priesthood. When saints are young in the Lord, they are often assigned some practical forms of service. This is a learning process that every saint goes through, until they can faithfully and responsibly complete every task entrusted to them.

When saints learn to face every service with faithfulness and responsibility, God will call them and entrust them with the priestly ministry. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...” We are all able to share in the priestly office.

**Verse 10: “So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”**

Once again, God commanded Moses to instruct Aaron and his sons that they must guard their priestly office carefully. They were always to remember Nadab and Abihu, who were consumed by heavenly fire, as a warning, and they could not act

carelessly. Especially, they had to preserve the holiness of the tabernacle. Any outsider who came near was to be put to death.

In today's terms, when we receive the priestly ministry, we must preserve our holiness and not become contaminated by the uncleanness of the world. Especially those saints who participate in the ministry of God's Word and in worship service must separate themselves from the world, so that when they fulfill their duties they do not defile the ministry God has entrusted to them.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. You have shown us that Your desire is for all Your children to become a royal priesthood, so that each one can bring God to people and bring people before God. You also remind us that when we carry out the priestly ministry, we must completely follow Your commands and must not treat it lightly. All service in the church is for the purpose of allowing You to receive glory.

Those who lead worship and those who serve as the mouthpiece of Your Word must especially be careful not to be contaminated by the uncleanness of the world. Those who are learning to serve must faithfully and responsibly complete every task entrusted to them, training their character. When we are prepared, Your calling will come upon us: that we may lay aside earthly occupations and serve You wholeheartedly. Help us in this process of learning, that through the supply of Your Word our lives may grow, our gifts may be perfected, and ultimately we may bear the responsibility of the priesthood. Bless the road ahead of us. We pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ.