

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

Numbers 18:1-7

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters; this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord that we have come once again to our Bible reading time. Today, we are going to read Numbers chapter 18, verses 1 to 7.

The main reason for the rebellion of Korah's faction was that Korah, despite coming from the tribe of Levi, was not satisfied with the service of the Levites. He attempted to seize the priesthood by winning over and hijacking public opinion, which provoked God's wrath and prompted Him to step forward and judge them personally. On one hand, He passively eradicated all those who rebelled; on the other hand, God more actively manifested and confirmed Aaron's office as the high priest among the Israelites by making his wooden rod sprout.

Numbers chapter 17 concludes with the Israelites witnessing God's actions and crying out, "Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die." The Lord established an inviolable image for Aaron's identity as the high priest among the Israelites. In Numbers chapter 18, God further and explicitly defined the duties and boundaries of the priests and the Levites. At the same time, God also cared for the livelihood of the priests and Levites by establishing the ordinance of the tithe.

Verse 1: "Then the Lord said to Aaron: 'You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood.'"

In this verse, God speaks directly to Aaron rather than passing the message through Moses, because what God wants to say concerns the duties and boundaries of the priests and Levites. As the high priest, Aaron must bear the ultimate responsibility for the worship and service within the tabernacle. Aaron's rod was placed in the

Most Holy Place along with the rods of the leaders of the twelve tribes, which signifies that Aaron was the head of the tribe of Levi. The entire tribe of Levi was set apart to serve God, and now God more explicitly defined their duties as well as the guilt they had to bear.

First of all, the tabernacle is God's dwelling place and must be kept holy; if irrelevant people enter the tabernacle, they profane the sanctuary. This iniquity of profaning the sanctuary must be borne together by Aaron, his sons, and all the Levites. In other words, stopping unauthorized people from entering the tabernacle and profaning the sanctuary is the responsibility of the Levites. If the Levites fail to guard it, it becomes the priests' responsibility; if the priests also fail, it becomes the high priest's responsibility. When God brings punishment, He will hold them accountable level by level in this upward manner. Therefore, the high priest Aaron, his sons, and the descendants of Levi must jointly maintain the holiness of the tabernacle, ensuring that unauthorized Israelites cannot enter it. Basically, this is the Levites' duty, supervised by the priests, with the high priest bearing the final responsibility.

Secondly, the priests must strictly follow the ordinances revealed by God when performing their duties. If there is even the slightest deviation, it constitutes an iniquity associated with the priesthood. The guilt of profaning the priestly office must be borne by Aaron and his sons. Similarly, the first line of defense is the priests themselves, whom God will hold accountable first, while the high priest serves as the final line of defense. Therefore, if the high priest sees a priest neglecting his duty, he must correct him immediately; if he fails to correct it, the high priest must also bear the guilt.

For New Testament saints, we must all work together to maintain the holiness of the church, as well as the holiness of every service within the church, and we absolutely must not take this lightly. If we are negligent, everyone from the saint who made the error to the deacons of the church, and ultimately to the elders of the church, must bear the responsibility together. For example, the Holy Communion every Lord's Day is meant to remember the Lord. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore, 1

Corinthians 11:27-29 says, "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Thus, every saint must come with a pure and clean heart on the Lord's Day to eat the Lord's bread and drink the Lord's cup. If the saints serving the bread and cup fail to discern, allowing someone to be guilty of the Lord's body and blood, it is not only the offender who eats and drinks judgment to themselves, but the saints serving the bread and cup must also bear the sin together. Therefore, every time we partake in the bread and cup, we must respectfully remind the saints to confess their sins and appropriate the precious blood of Christ to receive forgiveness, so that they do not sin against the body and blood of the Lord.

Verse 2: "Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness."

Aaron was the high priest, and his sons were priests; only the priests could serve before the tabernacle of witness. The entire tabernacle was centered around the ark, which was the ark of the testimony, meant to bear witness for God; it was also the most sacred object in the entire tabernacle. Therefore, God called the tabernacle the tabernacle of witness, and only the priests could minister before it. Aaron was also to bring the entire tribe of Levi forward, that they might be joined with him and serve him.

Verses 3-4: "They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die—they and you also. They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of

the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you."

The duty of the Levites was to guard the tabernacle of meeting and to handle all matters concerning the tabernacle according to the priests' instructions. The three major families of the tribe of Levi—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari—each had their respective responsibilities. When setting up camp, they guarded the items assigned to their care, and when breaking camp, they transported the items they were responsible for. The Levites were to follow the priests' commands to guard the entire tabernacle, ensuring that outsiders could not come near it. However, they themselves could not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, which only the priests were allowed to touch. If the Levites carelessly touched these most holy things, it constituted the sin of profaning the priesthood, and they would die, and the priests would also die.

Here, the Lord strictly warns Aaron to do his utmost to maintain the holiness of the tabernacle and the holiness of the priesthood. If they violated God's command, the outcome would be death, and they would be struck down directly by God. Unlike other criminal offenses that require gathering evidence and a trial before a conviction is made, violating God's holiness within the tabernacle would be dealt with directly by God, who would administer the most severe punishment.

From the perspective of New Testament application, Christ is our High Priest, and the church is the tabernacle. Every saint willing to serve in the church, whether in the service of a Levite or the service of a priest, must be united with the High Priest. If a saint is not connected to Christ, they cannot serve; any service that does not originate from Christ will bring about spiritual death.

In the church, Christ is the head, and all spiritual services—such as worship, preaching, and Holy Communion—must be connected to Christ and minister Christ to every participating saint; this is the service of the priests. All administrative and practical services—such as cleaning, preparing meals, and handling miscellaneous tasks—must also be connected to Christ and serve the spiritual ministries. If practical services lack a spiritual purpose, they are no different from a social club's

gathering. The goal of practical service is to warm people's hearts and help them receive spiritual nourishment. Here we see the most important thing: whether it is a spiritual ministry or a practical service, it must be connected to Christ the Head and be under His administration in order to align with God's heart and please Him.

Verse 5: "And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel."

Aaron and his sons were to bear the ultimate responsibility for guarding the sanctuary and the altar. If the sanctuary and the altar were defiled, God's wrath would once again fall upon the Israelites, and the incident of Korah's rebellion would be repeated. If the priests held their ground and fulfilled their priestly duties as God commanded, the Levites would be able to faithfully guard the tabernacle, the Israelites would not dare to overstep their bounds, and even though the people of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, they could live in peace.

Verse 6: "Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the Lord, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting."

The entire tribe of Levi was chosen by God from among the Israelites to be consecrated to God Himself, and they were to be given as a gift to the priests to help them manage the affairs of the tabernacle.

Dear brothers and sisters, our ability to serve in the church must originate from God's choosing, and we must be fully dedicated to God Himself; service cannot stem from our own preferences and choices, but must come from God's selection. If we notice a need in the church that no one is paying attention to, we must first bring this need before God in prayer. If, during our fellowship with God, we receive a prompting from Him that moves us to rise up and meet this need, the next step is not to immediately begin serving, but to see who is responsible for this area of

service in the church. God chooses us to present us as a gift to the saints in charge of that specific ministry. We should first fellowship with that saint and learn to handle the matter under their covering.

God not only wants us to recognize that the beginning of all service should be God, but He also wants us to learn to coordinate with the saints. Through the process of serving, we can dedicate ourselves entirely to God, letting go of our own opinions and thoughts, and instead obeying God's commands.

Verse 7: "Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

Aaron and his sons were to maintain their priestly duties and manage the offerings on the altar. They were to handle services such as lighting the lamps, arranging the showbread, and burning incense within the sanctuary; furthermore, the high priest was to enter the Most Holy Place once a year to meet with God. The priests received the priesthood as a gift from God, granting them the identity and status to serve Him, which outsiders could not approach, or else they would be put to death.

Among the Israelites in the Old Testament, only males born into the family of Aaron could serve in the priesthood, which was God's special gift. New Testament saints, through faith in the salvation of Jesus Christ, have all become children of the Heavenly Father; we not only possess life from God but also have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 2:9 also tells us that we are a royal priesthood; therefore, we have all received God's reward and can fulfill the priestly duties to serve God.

Dear brothers and sisters, our ability to serve God is a tremendous grace and a great reward from Him. Therefore, when we work for God and rise up to fulfill our duties, we must pay attention to this: the beginning of the work must stem from God's will, the execution of the work must rely on God's power, and the result of the work

must give glory to God. As priests, the holiness of the church is our responsibility. Every ministry in the church can only begin when we have understood God's will in faith. During the process of serving, we must draw upon the power that comes from God so that we can serve the saints in love. If our service is fruitful, it will allow people to see hope and give glory to God.

God told Aaron that the Levites must be united with him to manage the affairs of the tabernacle. The priests were also to fulfill their priestly duties under his administration. Similarly, for us to serve in the church today, whether it is a spiritual ministry or a practical service, it must be connected to Christ the Head.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You. You are the head of the church, the church is Your body, and we are all members of Your body. What immense authority You have given us to be able to serve You in the church. Help us not to be negligent, enabling us to connect every service to You, to accept Your arrangements, and to learn to coordinate with the saints around us. Only when brothers and sisters serve in unity can others see that You are truly among us. Bless the church where I am; we pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.