

**WCCC 1987**

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**The Witness and The Testimony (3)**

*Gospel of John 15: 26 – 27 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father, He shall bear witness concerning Me; and you too bear witness, because you are with Me from the beginning.*

*Acts 1: 8 But you will receive the power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

This time we want to fellowship before the Lord the matter of the testimony and the witness. We see that testimony is a central point of God's word. God, for Himself left His testimony on the earth. When He created heaven and earth, He had put His testimony and glory in His creation. Through His creation, He wants us to know His power and His deity. But we see that the testimony in His creation is a small one. Thus, in the Old Testament times, He gave the law to the Israelites. The law is the testimony of God. To God, it is His testimony. To man, it is the law. The testimony in the law advanced a step from the testimony in creation. But because of the weakness of men, the testimony could not be carried out through men. So the law did not accomplish anything. We praise and thank the Lord. When it comes to the New Testament times, we see our Lord came to this world. In our Lord Jesus, the testimony of God is accomplished. Our Lord came to this world not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Today the testimony of God on this earth is in His Son, Jesus Christ. Those who know the Son are those who know the testimony. In God, it is testimony. In us, it is grace.

We have to be able to see, hear and personally experience the testimony of Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself testified that He is the Alpha and He is the Omega. He is the beginning of all things. He is the conclusion of all things. All the will of God is in Him. And it is through Him that they are accomplished. And they will be given back to Him. He is the living one because He is the source of life. Whatever comes from Him is life. Whatever does not come from Him is not life. Because He loves us, He died for us. And through His death, He conquered over Satan who has the power over death. He resurrected from the dead. And He lives into eternity. He is the resurrected Lord. He is the victorious Lord. In His hands there are the keys of death and hades. Our Lord is such a

Lord. And today this is His testimony. His testimony is now entrusted to the church. The church should be His witness.

### **God Needs Witnesses**

And this morning we are going to share on the subject of the witness. If there is a fact out there but no one sees or hears it, and no one personally experiences it, there will be no witness. Because there is no witness, this fact will be buried. Man cannot benefit from it. So there should be the fact of the testimony, and there should also be a group of witnesses to testify to the fact. We praise and thank the Lord that through the ages, God has reserved witnesses for Himself.

### **Only Men Can Give a More Complete Testimony of God**

One of the purposes of God for creating man is for man to be His witness. So, when He created man, He created man according to His own likeness. We know all created things are there to testify to God's glory. But the testimonies of all the created things are limited and passive. The created things do not have the experience of God Himself to declare God subjectively. They express the eternal power of God and can express to a limited extent God's deity. But that testimony is passive. It cannot be subjective and cooperate with God to give the testimony. Thus, God for His own testimony created man according to His own image. The image here speaks of the inner nature of God. God is spirit, so man when created also has a spirit in him. God has free will. The man that God created also has a free will. In all the creations of God, only man is created according to His own image. So, man is able to know God. He is able to receive God into himself. He is able to unite with God in life. He can experience God himself. He is able to partake of the nature of God and to have God's character be formed in him. That is why among all created things, only man can give a more complete testimony of God. And the testimony that man gives of God is active. Man has partaken of God's character, so his testimony is more powerful. This is one of the purposes of God's creation of man.

### **The Fall of Man**

Men are created so that they can testify for God. But sadly, in the garden of Eden, man was deceived by Satan and sinned because man has a desire of 'self' inside of him. Not only was man not able to carry out a good testimony for God so Satan could see what kind of a God man has, he was fooled by Satan. The result was that man did a false testimony. It was as though our God was a very narrow hearted and jealous God, and that He kept a lot of good things for Himself and not gave them to man. Thus, from the time of Eden until now, the testimony

of men on this earth is a false testimony. Man cannot manifest God. Man cannot manifest the character of God. The testimonies of man are all false. Not only are the testimonies false, they are opposing testimonies.

### **The Recovery Work of God**

But we praise and thank God. Man can fail, but God will never fail. We remember our Lord Jesus once said a precious statement. He said, 'My father works till now and I work too'. After man failed, God the Father started working. And He works until the time when our Lord came to this earth. And our Lord also worked when He was on earth. The work of God is to recover His own testimony. He wants to recover man so that man can be His testimony. And this is the work of God through all the ages.

### **A Cloud of Witnesses Surrounding Us**

After man was exiled from the garden of Eden, God started to work among men to recover His testimony in the second generation. Hebrews 12: 1 tells us we have a cloud of witnesses surrounding us. These witnesses are those mentioned in Hebrews 11. It tells us that in the past there were many people who had obtained proof because they had faith in God. They testified for God and God testified for them. These people are like clouds surrounding us. When the testimony was lost on this earth, God gained a group of people among men and they continued with the testimony of God.

### **Abel**

In the second generation after the fall of man, God gained Abel. Abel testified for God. He testified that God is a righteous God. Abel admitted that he had sins. He admitted that the wages of sin is death. But he also testified that there is salvation in God. Men cannot save themselves because they are sinners and should be put to death. But we thank our God. He has grace and mercy. So we see that Abel was there offering sacrifices to God. His offering was a lamb because in the will of God, the forgiveness of sins is through the blood of the lamb. And His testimony of God was a true testimony. Although Abel was killed by his brother Cain, he still spoke from the ground.

And how was Cain? Cain acknowledged that there is a God, and also could be counted as one who worshipped God. Most likely they went to the outside of the east gate of the garden of Eden to offer sacrifices. (After man sinned, God placed the Cherubim and the flame of the flashing sword towards the east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.) But Cain denied the

testimony of God. He denied that he had sins and thought that his own work could satisfy God. So he offered the best of his produce from the ground to God. He did not acknowledge God is a righteous God. He did not admit he needed the salvation of God. God rejected Cain and rejected his offerings because his testimony was false. His testimony was an opposing testimony. We thank God that He kept Abel on earth to be His witness.

### **Enoch**

When men multiplied on earth, they started to get corrupted. The corruption grew worse as time passed. God again gained Enoch among all the people. When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he started to walk with God for three hundred years. Before he was sixty-five, he might be like all the other people. He had children and raised them up. He loved the world and worked hard for the worldly things. (At that time the civilization of the world was pretty advanced. We saw the descendants of Cain invented musical instruments. They built cities. They had ironworks. They tilted the land. Men focused on the enjoyment of material things. They neglected spiritual things). Maybe Enoch was one of those people before he was sixty-five. But when he was sixty-five, suddenly there was a big change in him. God started to use Enoch to be His testimony on earth.

Enoch had a child when he was sixty-five. He got a revelation at that time. The revelation was that when this child died, the earth would be judged. Methuselah lived for nine hundred and sixty-nine years. He was one who lived the longest on earth. Thank God for His mercy that Methuselah lived that long. God is willing that all will be saved and not one soul will be lost. Enoch received this revelation and he started to have a fear of God. So he rose up and walked with God. If we read the book of Jude, we see that not only did Enoch walk with God, he was also there testifying for God. He told the people that the time would come when the Holy One will come with thousands of angels and He will judge the ungodly people who speaks ungodly words and do ungodly deeds. We know this prophecy not only referred to the coming judgement of the flood, that prophecy also talked about the end of the ages. That is, one day our Lord will come back. At that time, He will judge all the ungodly. So we see that his testimony stretches far into the future. God raised Enoch up to testify for Him in that generation.

Do not think it is easy to walk with God. We all hope we can walk with God. Actually, we all hope God walks with us. It will be so comfortable if God is willing to walk with us. But to walk with God is not easy because our God is such a holy God. And we are so sinful. To walk with God, we have to be holy. You have to receive much discipline from God. This Enoch was willing to be totally disciplined by God. He wanted to walk with God. As a result, God testified for him. And God took him. Some said he walked with God for three hundred years; and the last day he walked into heaven. Hebrews 11 tells us, *'But without faith*

*it is impossible to please Him. For he that draws near to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who see Him out'. You have to believe that God is. It is not just to believe there is a God, but you have to believe God is. This is the name of God. God said I am. God said, I am the all sufficient one. I am your all in all. This is the testimony of God. Enoch accepted the testimony of God. He walked with God and seek God. The result was that God took him.*

### **Noah**

But the people on this earth still rebelled against God's testimony. They still refused to repent.

So later on, God raised up Noah to receive grace from Him. God gave Noah a revelation. God told Noah the days left in this world was only one hundred and twenty years. Our God is a very patient God. He said there were still one hundred and twenty years. And there stirred up a fear of God in Noah. And Noah built an ark according to the instructions of God. At that time there had not been any rain on the earth. The vegetables grew because of the mist in the air. It never rained. But Noah built an ark. I am sure when he was building the ark, many people came to look. They wondered what he was building because no one had ever seen an ark before. And he would be there testifying of God to the people. He said this earth would soon be destroyed by a flood. They all needed to repent. Everyone laughed at him. They thought there was something wrong with him because it had never rained before. But Noah had a fear of God. He was there testifying for God. He was there preaching. Sadly, not even one person believed him. So it was only Noah and his family, altogether eight people, entered the ark. Here we see that there was not only one person testifying for God, but God has gained a family to testify for Him. And because Noah believed, he was deemed righteous. And he inherited the new land.

### **Abraham**

But brothers and sisters, even after such a big disaster of the flood, men still refused to turn back to God. When men multiplied again, the sins of the world also multiplied. At that time, the people built the tower of Babel. They said let us build a tower that reached into heaven to show off our names. They despised God in their sight. They just wanted to show off their own names. So God confused their languages. Although they were confused in their language and were dispersed to different places, yet men's fall continued to become worse and worse. They did not worship God and started to worship idols. And idols filled the whole earth. This was about two thousand years B.C.

But for His own testimony, God again called witnesses for Himself. And among men, He called Abraham. The God of glory appeared to him. Abram, by

faith, rose up and followed God. Although he went through a lot of trials, yet Abraham had faith in God. He believed God can call something into existence out of nothing and He can resurrect man. This is Abraham's faith. And God promised to give him descendants.

At one hundred years old, He begot Isaac. But in fact, what he saw was not Isaac. What he saw was Christ, the type in Isaac. Because in the Gospel of John, our Lord Jesus once testified: your forefather, Abraham saw my days and his heart rejoiced. In Isaac, Abraham saw Christ. God gave the land of Canaan to Abraham. But he was wandering in the land of Canaan his entire life. He did not acquire any land. He only bought a burial ground. But His faith was strong. The book of Hebrews tells us, what he looked for was the eternal country. Not only did he see Canaan, he saw the new Jerusalem. He said that city is one built by God Himself. That city has a firm foundation. We know that is the New Jerusalem.

Dear brothers and sisters, He rose up to be a witness for God at that time. Among his descendants God raised up a nation to testify for Himself. But we know that Jacob and his descendants went down to Egypt. And when they were in Egypt, their numbers increased. A king that did not know Joseph raised up and the Egyptians persecuted the Israelites. They put them into slavery. They did not even have the hope for living.

### **Moses and the Nation of Israel**

Thank and praise God because He was working again. At that time, it seemed that God did not have a witness on earth. But God raised up Moses. This was about fifteen hundred years B.C. When Moses was born, he was supposed to be put to death. But God kept him. Moses was willing to suffer for God's people. He was not willing to enjoy the treasures in Egypt. He saw the sufferings of Christ more precious than all the enjoyments in Egypt because he saw the invisible One. Moses saw the glory of Christ. He was willing to embrace the sufferings of Christ. He despised all the treasures of Egypt. God used him to save the Israelites out of Egypt. After the Israelites were saved out of Egypt, they were brought to Mount Sinai by God. At Mount Sinai God gave His law to the Israelites. God entrusted His testimony to a nation. That nation has been called out from among all the nations. They were to testify for God to all the nations. If they were faithful in keeping the law of God, they would be first among all nations. But if they violated the testimony of God, God's hand would be heavier on them. We see finally the Israelites failed. Not only were the Israelites not able to be witness for God, they worshipped idols. As a result, they were no different from all the nations on earth. Although God sent prophets to call them back, yet they refused to repent. So the nation of Israel died. It seemed that God again had no witness on earth for His testimony. For four hundred years, God did not

speak. No one heard the voice of God on this earth. But we thank and praise God. When the fullness of time came, God sent His Son to come to this earth.

### **Our Lord Jesus – the Complete Testimony**

Through the ages, although God has reserved for Himself some witnesses, yet the testimonies of these witnesses were limited because men are limited. Our capacity is limited. So the revelations that God gave us are also limited. The testimony that we can give for God is also limited. It is only here a little, there a little. God did not have a complete testimony on earth then because there was not one perfect man that can carry out the testimony for Him.

We thank and praise God. For His own testimony, God sent His own Son to this earth. When His Son came to this world to be a man, God has obtained His complete testimony in Him. Our Lord said: when you see Me, you see the Father. I cannot do anything by Myself. What I see my Father does, I do. I do not speak anything according to Myself. What I spoke is what I heard from My Father. Here is a man who is one with God. That is why He can be a complete testimony of God. Men who saw Him saw the Father. Men who heard Him heard God. When men touched Him, they touched God. He wholly declares God. 'No one has seen God at any time; the begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him'. (Gospel of John 1: 18) When our Lord was on the earth, He was a faithful witness. What a faithful witness He was. The bible tells us that He made a beautiful testimony before Pontius Pilate. When we read Revelation, He has a name which is 'an honest and faithful witness'. Our Lord is that witness. His testimony is so complete. Thus, the testimony of God is the testimony of Jesus Christ. If you know Jesus, you know God. He is that perfect witness.

### **Yoked with Christ**

When our Lord was on earth, not only did He testify for God, He also called disciples. Some of the disciples were called to be with Him. They were with Him day and night. They were there to listen to His words, to see how He lived and worked. They were not with Him to learn how to preach but they were to learn how Christ lived.

Our Lord Jesus said: take up My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. Our Lord was one who took up His yoke when He was on earth. His yoke is the will of God. He submitted to the will of God all His life on earth. His heart is meek and lowly showing that He willingly submitted to God. He did not rebel against God but rather completely carried out the will of God. If the will of God is that He goes to the cross, then He will go. He would not choose to do anything apart from God's will. Thus, our Lord said: you are

My disciples. You need to yoke with Me. I am on this side of the yoke and you take up the other side. You have not been trained so you will be like wild oxen, living and walking your own way. But now you are yoked with Me. In whatever manner I submitted to My Father, you should learn to do the same. Then My character will be built in you. And you can serve God and work the work of God. And then you can be my witnesses.

The Lord said: The Holy Spirit comes to bear witness for me because the Holy Spirit knows me. The Spirit and the Son are one. But the Lord also said: you also have to bear witness for me because you have been with me from the beginning. You also know me. So you can be my witnesses. When our Lord ascended into heaven, He said to His disciples, you have to wait in Jerusalem. You have to receive the Holy Spirit from heaven. Then you will be my witnesses from Jerusalem, the entire Judea and Samaria to the end of the world. Be my witnesses. Our Lord bore a beautiful testimony on earth. He let us see God. He led us to know the will of God.

### **The Testimony of the Early Church**

Now He entrusted His own testimony to the church. He said you have to bear witness for me. Today the church is the vessel for the testimony of God. Just as how God entrusted His testimony to the nation of Israel, now among all nations, He called some people together and made them a body in Himself. And this body is to bear witness for the head that is in heaven. This testimony of Jesus Christ has already been entrusted to the church of God. This is a glorious matter. But this is also a grave responsibility.

If we look at the Book of Acts, we see that the testimony of the early church was very powerful. On Pentecost day, Peter stood up with the eleven apostles and they said: the Jesus that you crucified, God has set Him as Lord and Christ. They gave the testimony under the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, three thousand were saved. All those who believed in the Lord were with one accord, continuing with the teachings and fellowship of the apostles. They broke bread and prayed and had fellowship with one another. They broke bread from house to house. They prayed with one accord. We see at that time their testimony was so powerful. The church at that time testified of the resurrection of Christ. They let people see that Christ is the risen Lord. They saw with their own eyes and personally experienced the testimony of the Lord. That was why their testimony for the Lord was so powerful. They testified the Lord is a living Lord. In the short period of thirty years, the gospel was already preached to the world at that time. Not only in Asia, but also preached to Europe and Africa. The church was built up in many places and continued to testify for the Lord, Jesus.

## **The Failure of the Church**

Towards the end of the apostolic age, corruption started in the church. There was also persecution on the outside. In the Book of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we see the last days of the apostolic time. It was at the end of the first century. John was still living then and he received the revelation of the seven letters to the seven churches from our Lord. Our Lord saw the beginning of corruption in the church. In the letters, the seven churches were represented by the seven lampstands because the church is a lampstand. The church is not the light. The church is not the testimony. The church is the vessel that gives the testimony. The church does not exalt herself. The church exalts Christ. At that time, the church at Smyrna was persecuted. The church of Philadelphia was one with brotherly love. But the light of the other churches in other places was flickering. Some light was dying out with smoke. Dear brothers and sisters, how holy and complete are the testimony of God and the testimony of Jesus! But when it came into men's hands, because of the corruption of men, they have destroyed the testimony.

## **Call for Overcomers**

Thus, God calls for overcomers. Who are the overcomers? An overcomer is not an extraordinary Christian. An overcomer is a normal Christian. The Christians at that time were not normal, they had lost the testimony. The Lord entrusted Himself to the church, He revealed Himself to the church. But the church was too different from the Lord. So the Lord was there calling Christians to repent and to return to Him, so they can be His witnesses. Overcomers are those witnesses. At the end of the first century, God was already calling for overcomers.

Dear brothers and sisters, we see from that time till today, when we look at the church history, it is just the official history – the history of Christianity. (We are not very clear about the church history in the second and third century. But from the fourth century we see the so-called history of the church was not the real history of the church). It is not the actual history of the church where there is the testimony of our Lord. Those who were real witnesses for the testimony of Jesus Christ were all rejected by men. And in some instances, they were considered heresies. And many of the witnesses were martyred. But if we really look into it, we see that God still kept some of His witnesses on the earth throughout these two thousand years.

## **Witnesses in the Church Throughout the Ages**

In the second and third centuries, the Romans started to persecute the Christians. There were ten big persecutions. If you were a Christian, then you

would be sentenced to death. There were gaps in the history when there were no persecutions. And during those times, the life of the Christians and their testimonies slacked off. In the second century, Christianity started to pay attention to the outward form. Then slowly they turned their attention to organization. We also see the beginning of the system of the bishop.

### **Witnesses in the Time of Persecutions**

At that time, God raised up a brother. His name is Origen. His father was a God-fearing man. When Origen was seventeen years old, his father was put into prison for God. Origen entreated with his father to be faithful till death. Eventually his father was martyred. This person later became a famous biblical scholar. But at that time, he firmly proclaimed God's church is spiritual. It is not an organization and does not depend on its external form. The church has to pay attention to the spiritual nature.

Also, at that time a group of people called Montanists was being raised up. They felt that the church was too conforming to the world and loved the world too much. They said the church should return to the original purity and godliness. They should wait for the return of the Lord. They should give the Holy Spirit the full authority in their meeting and in their lives. Among them were two sisters who were famous in the history of martyrs. One was Perpetua and the other was Felicitas. In the third century there was another famous person among them. It was Tertullian. The people said his tongue was like tongue of gold. God raised all these people to maintain the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In the same century, God again raised up people. There were two groups. One group was called Novations and another group called Donatists. They paid attention to strict discipline. At that time there were persecutions. Some people denied our Lord because of the persecutions. After the persecutions were gone, these people came back again. There were some arguments among the brothers and sisters. Some said to receive them back. Others said they should not receive them back and that they needed strict discipline. They wanted to have a good testimony for the Lord.

### **Witnesses During the Time of the Roman Church**

In the fourth century, Christianity became state Christianity. Throughout the two centuries of persecutions, the Roman empire was the one which persecuted the Christians. The Roman empire declined. The church of God prospered. At that time Constantine became the emperor of Rome. He opened up and encouraged Christianity. But at that time Christianity began to deteriorate. During the persecutions, there was still a group of Christians who

stood firm for the testimony for God. But now it was opened, many other kinds of people came into Christianity. But we thank and praise God. He raised up a group of Christians called Priscillians. They paid attention to God's words. They said Christians should separate from the world. They paid attention to the union with Christ.

Then later we see the establishment of the Roman religion. Christianity slowly became a large organization. And it started to have its own power and position in the world. But we thank and praise God. Coming to the seventh century, we see that God raised up a group called Paulicians in the Mesopotamia area. These people said their worship meeting should be very simple. Later on, some of them migrated from Bulgaria to Asia minor. These people were called Bogomils. It means the friends of God. These people also testified of God Himself.

These people that I mentioned were the hidden seeds. In the history of Christianity, these people were considered heresies because they did not walk in the canonical way of Christianity. Many people were martyred for the sake of testifying for God. They were not martyred at the hands of the Roman Empire. They were martyred at the hands of the Roman Christianity. Thousands of people forsook their lives for upholding the testimony of Jesus Christ.

When it came to the twelve and thirteenth century, there were Waldenses and Albigenses in Europe. They felt that their lives should be a simple one. They said all our church truths, church lives and conduct should be according to the bible. We gave them the nickname of Waldenses. But they did not admit they were Waldenses or Bogomils. They called themselves Christians. They called each other brothers. Waldenses did not start from Peter Waldo. But Peter Waldo's influence on them was great.

Peter Waldo was a very wealthy business man, but he did not know much about the things of God. One time when he was giving a speech, suddenly a guest died. This startled him. He sold all his possessions to give to the poor. He started to preach the word of God. A group of people went along with him to preach. They called themselves poor man of Linden and they went to many places to give testimony of God.

In the fourteenth century, a group in Europe called Mystics rose up. At the time Christianity was becoming more and more corrupted. And this is called the Dark Ages. Men did not know God. So God raised up the 'mystics' group, like master Eckart and Johannes Tauler. They called themselves the friends of God. They paid attention to the communion with God. Among them some did really know the life of the Lord.

## **In the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century**

In the fourteenth century, the churches in England also focused on the outward forms. So God raised up a person called John Wycliff who was a very learned man. He attacked the corruption of the contemporary church. He stated that they had to return to the bible and had to rise up and follow Christ. His major contribution was translating the bible into English. A lot of people could read the bible in their own native language. At the same time, there was another group of people who went about preaching the gospel. They were called Lollards. Lollards mean people who talk a lot. That was the condition in England. Under the influence of Wycliff, a person called John Huss in Europe rose up. And the people that gathered with him were called Hussites. And they testified faithfully for God at that time. But they were arrested and burned by others because in the eyes of the Roman religion, they were all heresies.

In the fifteenth century, there were two groups being raised up in Europe. One group was called United Brethren. This group of brethren advocated when baptized people have to be submerged. They stated that Christian life has to be holy. They also advocated that one should respect the freedom of the conscience. They particularly proclaimed that the children of God should be one. They did not want to be a different organization. They were willing to be one with all the children of God.

At the same time there was another group called Brethren of the Common Life. They supported opening schools. They insisted the school curriculum and their living had to be according to the gospel. They had a great influence on the Christians at that time. And a book called the Imitation of Christ came from this group.

## **After the Reformation**

The sixteenth century was the time of reformation. Christianity had really lost the testimony at that time. The bible was chained and common people could not read the bible. The result was that people did not know how one could be saved. They thought salvation was according to their works. They sold indulgences to build cathedrals and to build up the treasuries of the pope. They sent people to all over Europe to sell indulgences. All sins would be forgiven if one buys the indulgences. One could even buy indulgences for the sins one was going to commit. So there was this one person who bought this indulgence because he prepared to sin. It turned out that the sin he was to commit was to rob the box with the indulgences. He was arrested. He showed his indulgence and he was then considered innocent. And this was how corrupt Christianity was at that time. The testimony of Jesus Christ was totally lost.

We thank the Lord. I think everyone knows this history. God raised up Martin Luther, Calvin and Zwingli and others. They proclaimed justification by

faith. They advocated for the open bible so that all people could read the bible. But sadly, this reformation was not thorough. What Martin Luther saw was much more than what was reformed. But because of the circumstances at that time, he stopped at that point.

And then there was another group of people who felt that the reformation was not thorough. And they returned back to the bible and had to do all things according to the bible. And these people were called Anabaptists, which means to be baptized again. Because at that time babies were baptized and the baptism was done with water sprinkled onto the forehead. This group said there was no such things in the bible. One needed to believe in Christ before being baptized. And baptism has to be submerged in water so as to die, to be buried and to resurrect with the Lord. These people also advocated for the fellowship with the Lord. They proclaimed the church is a group of believers gathered together in the Holy Spirit. They needed to separate from the world. They also advocated for peace and for the separation of the state and the church. This was the situation at the end of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century. At the same time in Europe, a group called Huguenots was raised up to testify for God.

In the seventeenth century the reformation was finished. There was already the Orthodox church of England. Again, it became just an outward form. Thus, God raised up a group called Puritans. They were the first immigrants to the United States because they wanted religion freedom. There was one called George Fox. He advocated for the inward peace and the inward leading of the Holy Spirit. And people called him and his followers Quakers. Then there were Independents, Baptists and Presbyterians. They were all dissenters – who advocated for the separation from the church of England. They upheld the testimony of God at that time.

At the same time in Europe, the Pietists were raised up. They were a group of godly and quiet people – like Spener and Franke. They wanted to live a life like that of the apostles. They wanted to keep the church meeting like the one mentioned in I Corinthians 14. These people had a good testimony in Europe.

### **Revival in Recent Times**

In the eighteenth century, there were Zinzendorf and the Moravians in Europe. In England there were Wesley, George Whitefield and others. They kept a spirit of brotherly love in their fellowships. They were all testifying for God.

In the nineteenth century, a group called the Brethren Movement began. In 1828, a few brothers gathered together. They did not want to belong to any one organization but they wanted to have fellowship with all the saints. And because of this, all the other churches closed their doors on them. They did not have any church to go to, so they started gathering at home. They felt that they should

break bread to remember the Lord and to encourage each other. And they called each other brother. Even though among them, some were officials and some were scholars, they all put away their worldly titles and just called each other 'brother'. And God used this group at that time to testify for Himself. Within twenty years, this testimony spread from England to all Europe and many other places. This is what we know of the Brethren Movement. And they pay a lot of attention to the bible. And many bible truths that we know today came out from that time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Christianity again fell into the outward organization. God raised people in California and Kansas. That was the Pentecostal movement. In England there was the Wales revival. The revival was to such an extent that the judges put on their white gloves because there were no cases to try. The Keswick convention which started at the end of the nineteenth century then expanded into the twentieth century.

Around 1960, the New Charismatic Movement rose up. Because at that time most of the churches were too dead, so God raised up this New Charismatic Movement. Many people were then saved. Although some areas were a little too extreme but thank God because I think this is one of God's way of responding to the deathly atmosphere of Christianity. And in England God raised up a brother, T. Austin-Sparks. This brother particularly knew the eternal purpose of God. He knew the spiritual nature of the church. In China, God also raised up Brother Watchman Nee. He showed us what spiritual life and spiritual warfare are.

Dear brothers and sisters, from the beginning of the church, although because of the weakness of men, the testimony of Jesus Christ was lost. People in the world could not see Jesus. What they saw were false testimony and anti-testimony. But through the ages, God for Himself, has kept a remnant to carry on His testimony. And all these witnesses were persecuted by the other people in Christianity. They were raised up to give the testimony to target the situations at certain times. So we see that it is also not complete. But we thank and praise God, generation after generation, the testimony of Jesus Christ becomes fuller. And today we come to the end of the twentieth century, the testimony we have received is what has been revived of the testimony of Jesus Christ. All that were lost of the testimony that God recovered are our inheritance. We have inherited an abundant inheritance. But brothers and sisters, we not only need to stand firm on the testimony that God has recovered for us, we need also to go forward. If we do not move forward, then we will be lost.

Dear brothers and sisters, before our Lord comes back, His testimony on this earth has to be established. Even though most of the Christians have failed, but God still has His own faithful witnesses. May God have mercy on us; so that we can receive this testimony and we can be good witnesses for the testimony of Jesus Christ in this generation. When this testimony is complete, our Lord will return.

Dear brothers and sister, may the Lord have mercy on us that we will not go astray from the testimony of God. Whatever He has entrusted to us, what we have seen and heard and personally experienced, we have to rise up and hold fast and we have to testify. Not only so, we have to open our hearts and let God lead us forward to enter into the fullness of Christ, because the church is the body of Christ.

Prayer:

Our Lord, we thank and praise You. Though men can fail, yet You are always victorious. We praise you. Throughout the ages, You have kept Your testimony on this earth. Our Lord, may You have mercy on us, so that we who have inherited the inheritance of the church will not lose our inheritance. But rather, we can add onto the inheritance by being good witnesses to your name. Please listen to our prayers. In Jesus name. Amen.